

## Transformational Leadership and Quality Culture Formation at Miftahul Akhlaqiyah Islamic Elementary School Semarang

**Yuda Agustian**

Universitas Islam Negeri Walisongo Semarang  
[2203036003@student.walisongo.ac.id](mailto:2203036003@student.walisongo.ac.id)

**Baqiyatush Sholihah**

Universitas Islam Negeri Walisongo Semarang  
[baqiyatush\\_sholihah@walisongo.ac.id](mailto:baqiyatush_sholihah@walisongo.ac.id)

**Zuanita Adriyani**

Universitas Islam Negeri Walisongo Semarang  
[zuanita.adriyani@walisongo.ac.id](mailto:zuanita.adriyani@walisongo.ac.id)

**Nur Asiyah**

Universitas Islam Negeri Walisongo Semarang  
[nur\\_asiyah@walisongo.ac.id](mailto:nur_asiyah@walisongo.ac.id)

**Widodo Febri Utomo**

Fakultas Keguruan dan Ilmu Pendidikan, Universitas Sebelas Maret  
[widodo\\_febrirutomo@student.uns.ac.id](mailto:widodo_febrirutomo@student.uns.ac.id)

**Abstract:** Despite the extensive literature on transformational leadership in general schools, empirical research examining its contextual application within Indonesian Madrasah Ibtidaiyah remains scarce. Existing studies tend to be definitional and fail to capture the cultural and religious mechanisms through which leadership shapes institutional quality. This study addresses the question: How does transformational leadership enacted by the principal of MI Miftahul Akhlaqiyah Semarang contribute to the formation of a quality culture within an Islamic elementary school context? Using a qualitative case study design, data were collected from seven participants, comprising the principal, four teachers (with a minimum of two years' service), one administrative staff member, and one madrasah committee representative, through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. Data were analyzed using Miles and Huberman's interactive model. The principal's enactment of four Bass-Avolio dimensions, idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration, functioned synergistically to transform organizational culture from a conventional to a performance-oriented, religiously grounded institution. Notably, a contextual mechanism termed presence-based leadership emerged as culturally specific to the Islamic school environment. This study extends Bass and Avolio's framework by identifying contextual enrichments specific to Islamic educational settings, offering a transferable model for madrasah leadership development in Indonesia.

**Keywords:** Transformational Leadership; Madrasah Quality Culture; Islamic Elementary Education; Qualitative Case Study.

**Abstrak:** Meskipun literatur mengenai kepemimpinan transformasional di sekolah umum sangat luas, penelitian empiris yang mengkaji penerapan kontekstualnya pada Madrasah Ibtidaiyah di Indonesia masih langka. Kajian-kajian yang ada cenderung bersifat definisional dan gagal menangkap mekanisme kultural dan

*religius yang melalui kepemimpinan membentuk mutu kelembagaan. Penelitian ini menjawab pertanyaan: Bagaimana kepemimpinan transformasional yang dijalankan oleh Kepala MI Miftahul Akhlaqiyah Semarang berkontribusi terhadap pembentukan budaya mutu dalam konteks sekolah dasar Islam? Menggunakan desain studi kasus kualitatif, data dikumpulkan dari tujuh partisipan, yang terdiri dari kepala madrasah, empat guru (dengan masa kerja minimal dua tahun), satu anggota staf administrasi, dan satu perwakilan komite madrasah, melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi partisipatif, dan analisis dokumen. Data dianalisis menggunakan model interaktif Miles dan Huberman. Penerapan empat dimensi Bass-Avolio oleh kepala madrasah, yaitu pengaruh ideal, motivasi inspirasional, stimulasi intelektual, dan pertimbangan individual, berfungsi secara sinergis untuk mengubah budaya organisasi dari institusi konvensional menjadi institusi yang berorientasi pada kinerja dan berlandaskan agama. Secara khusus, mekanisme kontekstual yang disebut kepemimpinan berbasis kehadiran muncul sebagai sesuatu yang spesifik secara budaya di lingkungan sekolah Islam. Penelitian ini memperluas kerangka kerja Bass dan Avolio dengan mengidentifikasi pengayaan kontekstual yang spesifik pada lingkungan pendidikan Islam, menawarkan model yang dapat ditransfer untuk pengembangan kepemimpinan madrasah di Indonesia.*

**Kata Kunci:** *Kepemimpinan Transformasional; Budaya Mutu Madrasah; Pendidikan Dasar Islam; Studi Kasus Kualitatif.*

## INTRODUCTION

Education constitutes a fundamental pillar in nation-building, functioning as a strategic vehicle to optimize human potential across cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains.<sup>1</sup> Within the landscape of Indonesian Islamic education, the Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI) occupies a distinctive position. As a formal institution integrating a general curriculum with religious education, the madrasah is simultaneously expected to deliver academic competence and nurture the moral and spiritual formation of students. The elementary school period represents a critical phase in child development; thus, the quality of education at this level serves as the foundation for subsequent generations. Consequently, madrasah quality remains a strategic issue continuously prioritized in national education policy. Quality in this context is multidimensional, encompassing not only final academic achievements but also quality learning processes, teacher professionalism, effective institutional management, and strong character formation.<sup>2</sup>

In the effort to achieve such complex educational quality, institutional leadership occupies a determinant position. The madrasah principal holds a central role in mobilizing all components of the school, as leadership quality directly influences organizational culture, work climate, teacher motivation, and

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<sup>1</sup> Ismail Hussein Amzat, Prima Gusti Yanti, and Suswandari Suswandari, "Estimating the Effect of Principal Instructional and Distributed Leadership on Professional Development of Teachers in Jakarta, Indonesia," *Sage Open*, 2022, <https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440221109585>.

<sup>2</sup> Hillman Wirawan, Muhammad Tamar, and Elvita Bellani, "Principals' Leadership Styles: The Role of Emotional Intelligence and Achievement Motivation," *International Journal of Educational Management*, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1108/ijem-04-2018-0127>.

the effectiveness of program implementation.<sup>3</sup> Quality improvement can only be achieved if all elements work synergistically; high-quality human resources (HR) will not be effective without adequate facilities, and conversely, complete facilities will not yield a significant impact if not supported by competent HR.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, the principal acts not merely as an administrator but as a visionary orchestrator capable of guiding sustainable transformation.<sup>5</sup>

One leadership model considered highly relevant for addressing these complex challenges is transformational leadership. Bass and Avolio posit that transformational leadership is a process of influencing followers to achieve significant change through four main dimensions: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration.<sup>6</sup> Within the educational sphere, this model targets not only structural aspects but also the cultural and psychological conditions of the school community, fostering a professional work culture and encouraging learning innovation.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, it aligns perfectly with the need to build a religious and productive work climate within Islamic educational institutions.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Hadi Widodo et al., “Indonesian School Principals’ Strategic Leadership in Implementing 21st-Century Learning,” *International Journal for Multidisciplinary Research*, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.36948/ijfmr.2024.v06i06.30364>.

<sup>4</sup> Widya Belqis Humairoh and Hasyim Asy’ari, “Comparison of Successful Principal Leadership Models (Literature Study in Indonesia and Finland),” *Gema Wiralodra*, 2025, <https://doi.org/10.31943/gw.v15i3.772>.

<sup>5</sup> Dwi Ramadani Prastianingsih, Hasan Hariri, and Siti Rahma Sari, “Systematic Literature Review: Authentic Leadership Practices of School Principals,” *Jemr*, 2025, <https://doi.org/10.61987/jemr.v4i5.1219>.

<sup>6</sup> Ronit Kark, Boas Shamir, and Gilad Chen, “The Two Faces of Transformational Leadership: Empowerment and Dependency,” *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 2003, <https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.88.2.246>; Heni Mulyani, Danny Meirawan, and Annisa Rahmadani, “Increasing School Effectiveness Through Principals’ Leadership and Teachers’ Teaching Performance, Is It Possible?,” *Jurnal Cakrawala Pendidikan*, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.21831/cp.v39i2.28864>.

<sup>7</sup> Kenneth Leithwood and Doris Jantzi, “The Effects of Transformational Leadership on Organizational Conditions and Student Engagement With School,” *Journal of Educational Administration*, 2000, <https://doi.org/10.1108/09578230010320064>; Azam Othman and Natyada Wanlabeh, “Teachers’ Perspectives on Leadership Practices and Motivation in Islamic Private Schools, Southern Thailand,” *Asian Education and Development Studies*, 2012, <https://doi.org/10.1108/20463161211270464>; Muwahid Shulhan, “Leadership Style in the Madrasah in Tulungagung: How Principals Enhance Teacher’s Performance,” *International Journal of Educational Management*, 2018, <https://doi.org/10.1108/ijem-08-2017-0218>.

<sup>8</sup> Widodo Febri Utomo and Eka Budhi Santosa, “The Role of Transformational Leadership Model of School Principals in Implementing Total Quality Management to Achieve Sustainable Quality in Vocational Schools,” *Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan* 15, no. 2 (2024): 101–8; Majelis Rena Tobasa et al., “Kepemimpinan Berbasis Hasil Dalam Pendidikan: Penerapan Teknik Kepemimpinan Di SMP Negeri 12 Yogyakarta,” *Yasin*, 2023,

Despite the extensive literature validating transformational leadership globally, its contextual application within Indonesian madrasahs remains empirically underdeveloped, leaving three distinct research gaps. First, a theoretical gap: existing studies tend to apply Bass and Avolio's framework merely as a definitional template rather than an analytical lens, failing to capture how culturally and religiously specific mechanisms might enrich the original four-component model. Second, a methodological gap: most madrasah leadership studies rely heavily on quantitative survey instruments that offer limited participant voice and insufficient interpretive depth regarding how quality culture is actually formed.<sup>9</sup> Third, a contextual gap: while transformational leadership has been widely researched in general public schools and foreign Islamic institutions, studies specifically analyzing its application in Indonesian elementary madrasahs, which must balance national curriculum demands with community accountability, remain scarce.<sup>10</sup>

MI Miftahul Akhlaqiyah Semarang presents a compelling case for investigating these gaps. In recent years, this institution has demonstrated a phenomenon of quality development that is highly worthy of study. It has garnered exceptional trust from the community, evidenced by a parent demographic shifting toward higher-educated guardians, including local academics and lecturers.<sup>11</sup> Public trust is further reflected in a rapid admissions process where quotas are typically filled in less than one week. Furthermore, the

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<https://doi.org/10.58578/yasin.v3i5.1903>; Munif Muhammad Zuhri et al., "The Challenges of Industrial Revolution 4.0: The Role of Leadership of Kyai in Islamic Boarding Schools," *Ejbm*, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.7176/ejbm/13-22-06>.

<sup>9</sup> Muslih Muslih et al., "The Effect of Transformational Leadership on Employee Job Satisfaction (Study at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Assaidiyah Surabaya)," *Tadbir Jurnal Studi Manajemen Pendidikan*, 2022, <https://doi.org/10.29240/jsmp.v6i2.4666>; Rifki Nuriza, "Model Kepemimpinan Transformasional Dalam Pengembangan Sumber Daya Manusia Di Madrasah Ibtidaiyah," *Bestari Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Kebudayaan*, 2025, <https://doi.org/10.46368/bjpd.v6i2.4641>.

<sup>10</sup> Tsania Fitri Adenia and Mawarni Mohamed, "The Impact of Principal's Transformational Leadership and Compensation Satisfaction on Work Motivation: A Case Among Honorary Teachers of Private Islamic High Schools in Indonesia," *International Journal of Academic Research in Progressive Education and Development*, 2022, <https://doi.org/10.6007/ijarped/v11-i4/15880>; Vivin Maharani Ekowati and Achmad Sani Supriyanto, "The Interactive Effects of Leadership Styles on Counterproductive Work Behavior: An Examination Through Multiple Theoretical Lenses," *Qas*, 2022, <https://doi.org/10.47750/qas/23.188.21>; David Litz and Shelleyann Scott, "Transformational Leadership in the Educational System of the United Arab Emirates," *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 2016, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1741143216636112>.

<sup>11</sup> Enceria Damanik and Mulia Sari Dewi, "Kepemimpinan Transformasional Untuk Kepala Sekolah Indonesia: Konsep Dan Pengukurannya," *Pedagogi Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan*, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.24036/pedagogi.v24i2.2278>.

madrasah demonstrates a highly productive learning ecosystem, consistently securing academic and non-academic trophies every month,<sup>12</sup> while maintaining a strong pedagogical orientation toward discipline, ethics, and character building.<sup>13</sup> These outcomes, achieved under a consistent principal leadership tenure, are not spontaneous occurrences but the result of effective and adaptive management.<sup>14</sup>

To address the aforementioned gaps, this study aims to describe and analyze the transformational leadership practices of the principal at MI Miftahul Akhlaqiyah Semarang. Specifically, this study addresses the research question: How does the transformational leadership enacted by the principal contribute to the formation of a quality culture, and what contextual mechanisms emerge within this Islamic elementary school setting? The findings are expected to provide thick descriptive evidence of transformational leadership in an underexplored context, identify potential contextual enrichments to Bass and Avolio's framework, and offer practical, quality-oriented reference models for madrasah principal development programs in the modern era.<sup>15</sup>

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Bass and Avolio's four-component model of transformational leadership, idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration, constitutes the dominant theoretical framework for understanding leader-follower transformation in organizational contexts.<sup>16</sup> The model posits that transformational leaders elevate followers' motivation and performance beyond contractual expectations by appealing to higher-order values and collective vision.<sup>17</sup> Within education, Marks and Printy

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<sup>12</sup> Rama Karo Karo, "Leadership of the School Principal in Shaping Early Childhood Characters: A Literature Review," *International Journal of Current Science Research and Review*, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.47191/ijcsrr/v4-i9-09>.

<sup>13</sup> Margi Jayanti, Hasan Hariri, and Dedy Hermanto Karwan, "The Principal's Leadership in Shaping the Character of Indonesia's Golden Generation: A Literature Review," 2021, <https://doi.org/10.4108/eai.16-10-2020.2305221>.

<sup>14</sup> Nasib Tua Lumban Gaol, "School Leadership in Indonesia: A Systematic Literature Review," *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1177/17411432211010811>.

<sup>15</sup> Sella Fadia Septariani, "Principal's Transformational Leadership for Strengthening Religious Values at SD Negeri Banyuraden Yogyakarta," *Journal of Islamic Education and Ethics*, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.18196/jiee.v2i1.30>.

<sup>16</sup> Bruce J Avolio, Bernard M Bass, and Dong I Jung, "Re-examining the Components of Transformational and Transactional Leadership Using the Multifactor Leadership," *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, 1999, <https://doi.org/10.1348/096317999166789>.

<sup>17</sup> Avolio, Bass, and Jung; Kark, Shamir, and Chen, "The Two Faces of Transformational Leadership: Empowerment and Dependency."

demonstrated that transformational leadership is most effective when integrated with instructional leadership,<sup>18</sup> a finding corroborated by Shatzer et al. in their comparative study of principal leadership models.<sup>19</sup>

However, the literature is not without critical tension. Barnett et al. warned against the uncritical romanticization of transformational leadership as a "panacea," noting that the model's effectiveness is highly context-dependent.<sup>20</sup> Geijssel et al. found that transformational leadership effects on teacher commitment are mediated by teacher self-efficacy and school organizational conditions, a finding that complicates simple causal claims.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, Leithwood and Jantzi demonstrated that transformational leadership's effects on student outcomes are largely indirect, operating through organizational conditions rather than direct pedagogical influence.<sup>22</sup> These debates underscore a critical lacuna: the mechanisms through which transformational leadership operates in culturally specific contexts remain undertheorized.

Studies from Islamic school contexts suggest that Bass and Avolio's model, while applicable, may require contextual enrichment. Othman and Wanlabeah found that teachers in Islamic private schools in Southern Thailand attributed motivational effects to the principal's religious credibility, a dimension absent from the original framework.<sup>23</sup> Shulhan demonstrated that madrasah principals in Tulungagung who combined transformational behaviors with Islamic moral exemplarity (*uswatun hasanah*) achieved stronger teacher commitment than those applying technical leadership alone.<sup>24</sup> Mohammad Hani

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<sup>18</sup> Helen M Marks and Susan M Printy, "Principal Leadership and School Performance: An Integration of Transformational and Instructional Leadership," *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 2003, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161x03253412>.

<sup>19</sup> Ryan H Shatzer et al., "Comparing the Effects of Instructional and Transformational Leadership on Student Achievement," *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 2013, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1741143213502192>.

<sup>20</sup> Kerry Barnett, John McCormick, and Robert Connors, "Transformational Leadership in Schools – Panacea, Placebo or Problem?," *Journal of Educational Administration*, 2001, <https://doi.org/10.1108/09578230110366892>.

<sup>21</sup> Femke Geijssel et al., "Transformational Leadership Effects on Teachers' Commitment and Effort Toward School Reform," *Journal of Educational Administration*, 2003, <https://doi.org/10.1108/09578230310474403>.

<sup>22</sup> Leithwood and Jantzi, "The Effects of Transformational Leadership on Organizational Conditions and Student Engagement With School."

<sup>23</sup> Othman and Wanlabeah, "Teachers' Perspectives on Leadership Practices and Motivation in Islamic Private Schools, Southern Thailand."

<sup>24</sup> Moh. Sulhan and Ilyas Rifa'i, "Personality Competence, Authority and Change Vision; Transformative Leadership in Building Madrasah Competitive Advantage," *Al-Tanzim Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam*, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.33650/al-tanzim.v7i2.5274>.

identified a comparable pattern in Saudi university leadership, where spiritual authority amplified the inspirational motivation dimension.<sup>25</sup>

Taken together, these studies suggest an emerging theoretical argument: in Islamic educational settings, a fifth implicit dimension, religious-moral modeling, may interact with or amplify Bass and Avolio's four components. This study seeks to examine whether this pattern is operative in the Indonesian MI context and whether it constitutes a contextually specific mechanism warranting theoretical attention.

Educational quality in madrasah settings is multidimensional, encompassing academic achievement, character formation, teacher professionalism, and community trust.<sup>26</sup> Critically, quality in Islamic education is not reducible to output metrics; it includes process dimensions such as the cultivation of religious culture, moral habituation, and the integration of general and Islamic knowledge.<sup>27</sup> This broader conception of quality demands a leadership model capable of addressing both managerial and spiritual-cultural dimensions simultaneously, a demand that positions transformational leadership as theoretically relevant but empirically underexamined in this context.

This study operationalizes Bass and Avolio's four dimensions as analytical lenses rather than as a measurement template. Each dimension is treated as a domain of leadership practice through which quality culture formation may be traced. Additionally, the concept of contextual mechanism, drawn from realist evaluation theory Pawson & Tilley, is introduced to capture culturally specific leadership behaviors that emerge beyond the four standard dimensions. Figure 1 presents the conceptual framework guiding this study.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Sylvia Ismail Mohammad Hani, "The Role of Transformational Educational Leadership in Developing the Saudi University System," *Era Journal for Humanities and Sociology*, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.33193/ejhas.7.2023.244>.

<sup>26</sup> Wirawan, Tamar, and Bellani, "Principals' Leadership Styles: The Role of Emotional Intelligence and Achievement Motivation"; Paul T Balwant, "Transformational Instructor-Leadership in Higher Education Teaching: A Meta-Analytic Review and Research Agenda," *Journal of Leadership Studies*, 2016, <https://doi.org/10.1002/jls.21423>.

<sup>27</sup> Sulhan and Rifa'i, "Personality Competence, Authority and Change Vision; Transformative Leadership in Building Madrasah Competitive Advantage."

<sup>28</sup> Avolio, Bass, and Jung, "Re-examining the Components of Transformational and Transactional Leadership Using the Multifactor Leadership."

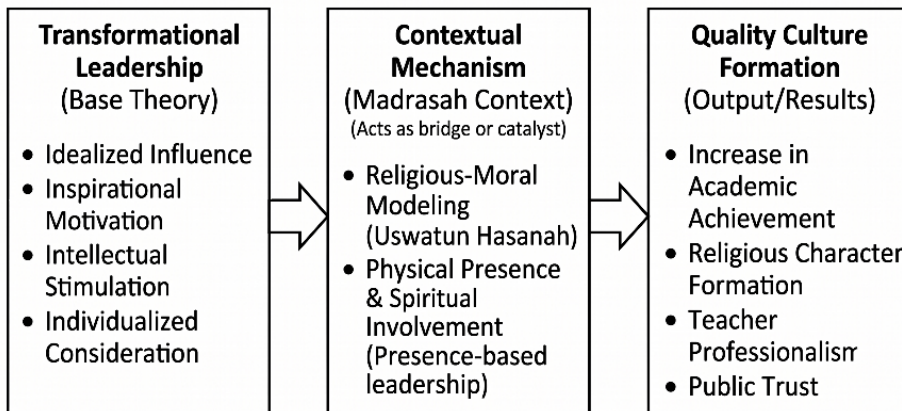


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

## RESEARCH METHOD

### Research Design

This study employs a qualitative case study design,<sup>29</sup> selected for its capacity to illuminate the "how" and "why" of leadership practice within its natural institutional context. A single embedded case design was adopted, with MI Miftahul Akhlaqiyah Semarang as the bounded case and its four transformational leadership dimensions as embedded units of analysis.<sup>30</sup>

### Data Collection

Data were collected through three complementary methods. In-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with all seven participants between September and November 2025, each lasting 45–75 minutes, totaling 10 interview sessions. Interviews were conducted in Bahasa Indonesia and audio-recorded with participants' consent. Sample interview questions included: "How does the principal's daily behavior shape the work culture at this madrasah?"; "Can you describe a specific instance when the principal's approach changed how you teach or work?"; and "What challenges have you encountered in implementing the principal's programs, and how were these addressed?" Participant observation was conducted over a period of 8 weeks, focusing on principal-teacher interactions during supervision sessions, weekly briefings, and religious program activities. Document analysis encompassed the institution's

<sup>29</sup> R K Yin, *Case Study Research and Applications: Design and Methods* (SAGE Publications, 2017), <https://books.google.co.id/books?id=6DwmDwAAQBAJ>.

<sup>30</sup> Muslih et al., "The Effect of Transformational Leadership on Employee Job Satisfaction (Study at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Assaidiyah Surabaya)."

vision-mission statement, teacher assignment decrees, student achievement records, and meeting minutes.

### **Data Analysis**

Data analysis followed Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña's interactive model through three concurrent processes. First, data reduction involved initial coding of interview transcripts using open coding, followed by focused coding to identify recurring patterns. Second, data display involved the construction of thematic matrices to map relationships between codes and participants. Third, conclusion drawing involved iterative interpretation of emerging themes against the conceptual framework. The final thematic structure yielded four primary themes corresponding to Bass and Avolio's dimensions, plus one emergent contextual theme (presence-based religious modeling). Theme development was documented in an audit trail.

### **Trustworthiness**

Credibility was established through source triangulation (cross-checking interview data against observation notes and documents) and technique triangulation (comparing interview and observation-derived data for each thematic category). Member checking was conducted by sharing preliminary interpretations with three participants, who confirmed the accuracy of the thematic representation. Transferability is supported by a thick description of the research context. Dependability is ensured through the audit trail maintained throughout the analysis process.

### **Ethical Considerations**

All participants provided written informed consent before data collection. Anonymity is protected by assigning pseudonyms (Principal-P; Teacher-T1 through T4; Staff-S1; Committee-C1) throughout all reported data. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any time. Audio recordings and transcripts are stored securely and will be deleted five years following publication.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS**

This section presents findings and discussion organized according to the four dimensions of Bass and Avolio's transformational leadership framework. Each dimension is reported in two structured sub-sections: Results, presenting empirical findings from interviews, observation, and document analysis; and Discussion, situating the findings within the broader theoretical literature and identifying contextual mechanisms, challenges, and theoretical implications.

## Results

### ***Foundation of Quality Culture Through Exemplary Behavior and Moral Integrity***

Field findings through participant observation reveal a consistent behavioral pattern from the principal. Observation data show that the principal has a fixed routine of arriving earliest at the madrasah, standing at the main gate before 06:30 WIB to welcome students and teachers, and leaving last after ensuring all operational activities are complete.

Informants noted that this physical presence creates a distinct psychological impact on the madrasah community. One senior teacher described the effect of this routine:

*"When Pak Kepala is already standing there before any of us arrive, it is impossible to come late. It is not that he says anything; he does not need to. His presence itself becomes the standard. It is like a silent agreement that we all hold each other to."* (Teacher T2, in-depth interview)

However, this high standard of discipline also elicited responses from newly joined staff.

*"For new teachers, seeing how high his standards are can feel overwhelming at first. There were moments early on when I worried I could never measure up. It took time to understand that his expectations were meant to inspire, not to pressure."* (Teacher T1, in-depth interview)

Regarding religious programs, schedules for Duha prayer, Quran literacy (BTQ), and morning prayers are actively supervised by the principal, who consistently participates as a congregant and often serves as the prayer leader (imam). Student profile documentation data also shows a demographic shift in guardians toward a more educated segment, including lecturers and professionals living in the Ngaliyan area of Semarang. Madrasah committee informants stated that their enrollment decisions were driven by the principal's transparent management of funds and open feedback channels.

### ***Building Collective Vision and Achievement Optimism***

Observation data from the academic year's initial work meetings, routine briefings, and digital communication groups (WhatsApp) show that the principal consistently links institutional work programs to the madrasah's vision. The literacy vision is translated into concrete classroom reading corner programs and mandatory library visits.

The principal communicates targeted indicators for MI Miftahul Akhlaqiyah, explicitly aiming for championship acquisitions and superior accreditation. Student achievement documentation shows a sharp increasing trend in academic and non-academic competition trophies collected almost every month.

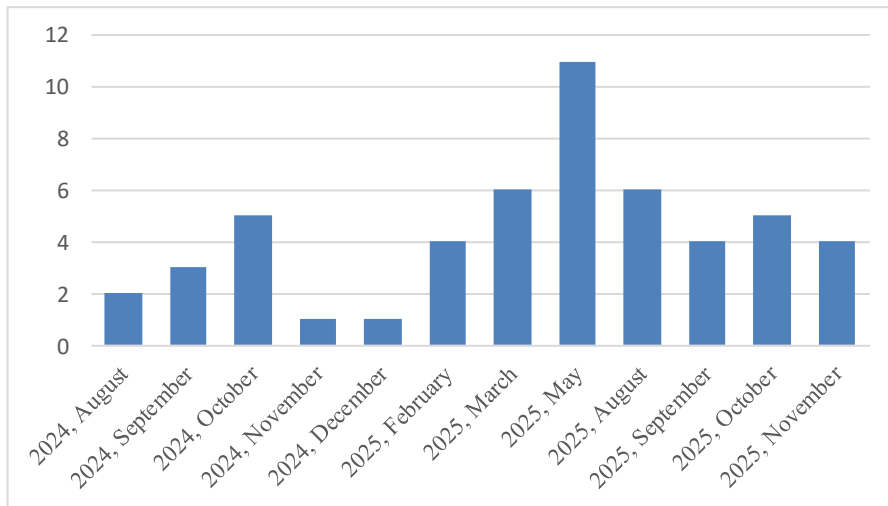


Figure 2. Summary of Student Achievements by Month

Teachers receive verbal and symbolic appreciation during meeting forums for creative instructional media or administrative efficiency. Consequently, New Student Admission (PPDB) data show registration quotas are filled in less than one week.

The shift in perspective among staff was highlighted during interviews:

*"Before, I thought my job was just to make sure the administrative files were complete. After working here for three years, I realize I am part of something larger, supporting a generation. The principal constantly reminds us that even administrative work affects the quality of the students' experience."* (Administrative Staff S1, in-depth interview)

Despite these achievements, a focus on competitive success brought up a specific concern regarding student representation:

*"Not all parents see achievements the same way. A few parents came to me saying they worried their children felt less valued because they were not the 'champion type.'" The madrasah is working on this, but it is a real concern that needs attention.*" (Committee Representative C1, in-depth interview).

## **Encouraging Innovation and Transformation Toward a Learning Organization**

Observation and interview data indicate a shift in academic supervision practices at MI Miftahul Akhlaqiyah. The principal applies a clinical, dialogic supervision approach. Rather than merely checking teaching modules, the principal poses prompting questions regarding the rationalization of teaching methods and the identification of classroom obstacles.

*"In my previous school, supervision meant showing your lesson plan and getting a checklist. Here, Pak Kepala asks things like: "Why did you choose this method for this topic? Which students struggled, and what tells you that?" At first it was uncomfortable, I was not used to explaining my reasoning. Now I actually think differently about my teaching."* (Teacher T3, in-depth interview)

The transition to this approach was initially met with hesitation from experienced staff:

*"To be honest, when this supervision approach first started, some senior colleagues felt it was questioning our competence. We had been teaching for years, and suddenly we were asked to justify everything. It took several cycles before we understood it was about growth, not evaluation."* (Teacher T4, in-depth interview)

Teachers are openly encouraged to experiment with Project-Based Learning (PjBL) and digital media. Meeting minutes show that teacher forums are utilized for egalitarian brainstorming regarding strategic issues, such as student motivation and accreditation strategies, where teachers and school guards are given space to opine. Furthermore, documentation shows the principal actively facilitates teacher participation in seminars and professional training (PPG), requiring knowledge dissemination through peer-teaching mechanisms.

## **Humanist Approach and Personal-Based Potential Development**

Field findings indicate that the principal differentiates approaches based on the tenure and characteristics of the teachers.

*"When I joined, Pak Kepala assigned me a senior mentor teacher and set aside time every two weeks for me to discuss challenges. He did not just observe and evaluate; he asked what support I needed. By my second semester, I felt genuinely capable, not just tolerated."* (Teacher T1, in-depth interview)

Task division decrees document that committee placements align with specific skills: teachers with public communication skills are placed in Public Relations, while those with meticulous administrative skills handle Curriculum or Treasury. The principal maintains an open-door policy, and informants

recounted instances where the principal provided direct moral and material support during personal or family crises.

Student achievement documents reflect a wide variation in talents, ranging from Olympiads and speech to sports and arts. Remedial or enrichment programs are specifically designed for students requiring special attention.

While highly effective, the personal nature of this management style was noted as a potential structural concern:

*"Everything works because Pak Kepala knows everyone personally, their strengths, their personal situations. My concern is: what happens when there is a leadership transition? This personalized system is a strength, but it is also a vulnerability if it is not institutionalized."* (Committee Representative C1, in-depth interview).

## **Discussion**

### ***Idealized Influence***

The behavioral data gathered, such as the principal's early arrival and gate-standing, operate through a contextually specific mechanism this study terms *presence-based leadership*, a pattern that enriches Bass and Avolio's original framework.<sup>31</sup> The principal does not merely give instructions but acts as a central figure, transferring quality values through tangible example.<sup>32</sup> By establishing this routine, the principal builds moral authority, functioning as a highly effective informal quality control mechanism where discipline becomes a prerequisite for learning effectiveness.<sup>33</sup> Harsh verbal sanctions are replaced by the leader's example, functioning as a silent reprimand.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Avolio, Bass, and Jung, "Re-examining the Components of Transformational and Transactional Leadership Using the Multifactor Leadership"; Y C Huang and Lung-Chuan Liao, "A College Leader's Transformational Leadership," *Journal of Management Research*, 2011, <https://doi.org/10.5296/jmr.v3i2.646>; Ursula El Hage and Dina Sidani, "An Exploration of the Role of Transformational Leadership in Times of Institutionalization of Change," *Tuning Journal for Higher Education*, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.18543/tjhe.2130>.

<sup>32</sup> Sam Kris Hilton et al., "Dimensions of Transformational Leadership and Organizational Performance: The Mediating Effect of Job Satisfaction," *Management Research Review*, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1108/mrr-02-2021-0152>.

<sup>33</sup> Beatrice Ndiga et al., "Principals' Transformational Leadership Skills in Public Secondary Schools: A Case of Teachers' and Students' Perceptions and Academic Achievement in Nairobi County, Kenya," *American Journal of Educational Research*, 2014, <https://doi.org/10.12691/education-2-9-15>.

<sup>34</sup> Ghuzayyil Saad Alessa, "The Dimensions of Transformational Leadership and Its Organizational Effects in Public Universities in Saudi Arabia: A Systematic Review," *Frontiers in Psychology*, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.682092>; Aminamul Saidah Mad Nordin, Bity Salwana Alias, and Mohd Hanifah Mohd Haniff, "Organizational Change Through

This extends Bandura's Social Learning Theory into the organizational domain: the principal as a primary behavioral model generates implicit quality standards that spread through observational learning. Within the Islamic education frame, the moral authority of the leader is inseparable from religious credibility, as shown by the principal acting as an *imam*, which strongly communicates the core business of the madrasah.<sup>35</sup> This dimension is corroborated by studies in Islamic schools in Southern Thailand and Tulungagung madrasah, adding the Indonesian MI elementary level as a third comparable context for *uswatun hasanah* (exemplary conduct).<sup>36</sup>

This integrity eliminates the gap between policy and practice, creating a conducive psychosocial climate where noble moral values thrive,<sup>37</sup> and establishing a strong school branding based on character.<sup>38</sup> In Total Quality Management (TQM) theory, customer trust is a vital asset, and the demographic shift of guardians entrusting the institution reflects this success.<sup>39</sup> This willingness to sacrifice for institutional progress forms the core of transformational leadership, acting as the primary anchor of quality.<sup>40</sup> However,

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Transformational Leadership Practices: The Principal's Role," *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.6007/ijarbss/v13-i12/20165>.

<sup>35</sup> Malek Al-edenat, "Reinforcing Innovation Through Transformational Leadership: Mediating Role of Job Satisfaction," *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 2018, <https://doi.org/10.1108/jocm-05-2017-0181>; Sehin Ahresi Zamawi et al., "Implementation of Transformational Leadership of Madrasah Principals in State Tsanawiyah Madrasah (MTsN) 4 and State Tsanawiyah Madrasah (MTsN) 5 Tulungagung, East Java, Indonesia in Improving Performance Quality," *Journal of Education Society and Behavioural Science*, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.9734/jesbs/2023/v36i111275>.

<sup>36</sup> Othman and Wanlabe, "Teachers' Perspectives on Leadership Practices and Motivation in Islamic Private Schools, Southern Thailand."

<sup>37</sup> Mohammad Ali Hosseinpour Feizi, Esmael Ebrahimi, and Nouraddin Beheshti, "Investigating the Relationship Between Transformational Leadership and Organizational Commitment of the High School Teachers in Gerny," *International Journal of Organizational Leadership*, 2014, <https://doi.org/10.33844/ijol.2014.60264>; Siswanto Siswanto and Indah Yuliana, "Linking Transformational Leadership With Job Satisfaction: The Mediating Roles of Trust and Team Cohesiveness," *The Journal of Management Development*, 2022, <https://doi.org/10.1108/jmd-09-2020-0293>.

<sup>38</sup> Marks and Printy, "Principal Leadership and School Performance: An Integration of Transformational and Instructional Leadership."

<sup>39</sup> Fred O Walumbwa and Chad A Hartnell, "Understanding Transformational Leadership—Employee Performance Links: The Role of Relational Identification and Self-efficacy," *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, 2011, <https://doi.org/10.1348/096317910x485818>.

<sup>40</sup> Mohammad Hani, "The Role of Transformational Educational Leadership in Developing the Saudi University System"; Tiffany Keller Hansbrough, "The Construction of a Transformational Leader: Follower Attachment and Leadership Perceptions," *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 2012, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1559-1816.2012.00913.x>.

findings also reveal transitional adaptation costs among early-career teachers who felt initial performance anxiety, aligning with cautions against romanticizing transformational leadership as uniformly frictionless.<sup>41</sup>

### ***Inspirational Motivation***

The findings demonstrate that the principal's inspirational motivation operates at two analytically distinct levels: vision articulation and vision internalization.<sup>42</sup> The multi-channel communication strategy functions to align the shared mental models of all staff.<sup>43</sup> Theoretically, the principal performs a framing process, viewing educational challenges as opportunities to prove madrasah quality.<sup>44</sup> This aligns with Peter Senge's concept of shared vision, where internalization leads staff to work out of awareness rather than command.

By demanding high performance expectations and setting measurable indicators, the principal triggers the Pygmalion Effect or Self-Fulfilling Prophecy.<sup>45</sup> This cultivates an organic performance culture driven by the pursuit of institutional pride.<sup>46</sup> This finding supports Leithwood and Jantzi's argument that transformational leadership raises organizational performance by elevating collective efficacy.<sup>47</sup> Furthermore, the empathetic approach in addressing staff burnout reflects Herzberg's motivation theory, confirming that recognition and

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<sup>41</sup> Nuriza, "Model Kepemimpinan Transformasional Dalam Pengembangan Sumber Daya Manusia Di Madrasah Ibtidaiyah"; Barnett, McCormick, and Conners, "Transformational Leadership in Schools – Panacea, Placebo or Problem?"; Utomo and Santosa, "The Role of Transformational Leadership Model of School Principals in Implementing Total Quality Management to Achieve Sustainable Quality in Vocational Schools."

<sup>42</sup> Andika Eko Prasetyo et al., "Embedding Character Education Through Transformational Leadership: A Qualitative Study of Principal-Led Human Resource Development in an Indonesian Muhammadiyah Primary School Context," *Jurnal Varidika*, 2025, <https://doi.org/10.23917/varidika.v37i2.9037>; Muhamad Luqman Nuryana and Mulyawan Safwandy Nugraha, "Implementasi Kepemimpinan Transformasional Kepala Madrasah Dalam Meningkatkan Mutu Lulusan Lembaga Pendidikan Islam," *Leadership Jurnal Mahasiswa Manajemen Pendidikan Islam*, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.32478/leadership.v5.2730>.

<sup>43</sup> Isma Wardiana, "Penerapan Gaya Kepemimpinan Transformasional Dalam Meningkatkan Kinerja Karyawan Di KSPPS NU Sejahtera: Studi Deskriptif," *Al-Kharaj Jurnal Ekonomi Keuangan & Bisnis Syariah*, 2025, <https://doi.org/10.47467/alkharaj.v7i11.9175>.

<sup>44</sup> Rusi Sun and Alexander C Henderson, "Transformational Leadership and Organizational Processes: Influencing Public Performance," *Public Administration Review*, 2016, <https://doi.org/10.1111/puar.12654>.

<sup>45</sup> Sun and Henderson.

<sup>46</sup> Abdur Rofik and Romi Siswanto, "The Leadership of the Head of Madrasah in Developing the Quality of Education," *CJoTL*, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.31538/cjotl.v3i1.742>.

<sup>47</sup> Leithwood and Jantzi, "The Effects of Transformational Leadership on Organizational Conditions and Student Engagement With School."

appreciation drive job satisfaction and maintain emotional stability.<sup>48</sup> The translation of this vision into solid public trust guarantees the institution's sustainability.<sup>49</sup>

A critical theoretical nuance emerges from the equity tension reported by the madrasah committee regarding non-champion students. Inspirational motivation directed single-mindedly toward visible achievement can inadvertently generate internal equity dilemmas, a dynamic insufficiently theorized in Bass and Avolio's framework. This highlights the necessity for leaders to balance achievement narratives with inclusive quality values.

### ***Intellectual Stimulation***

Intellectual stimulation traditionally involves encouraging subordinates to challenge irrelevant work paradigms.<sup>50</sup> The transformation of academic supervision at MI Miftahul Akhlaqiyah into a Socratic clinical dialogue represents a theoretically distinctive finding. The principal stimulates the metacognitive capabilities of teachers, driving professional accountability.<sup>51</sup> This transformative supervision directly improves the quality of the teaching and learning process by institutionalizing reflective practice.<sup>52</sup>

By fostering an environment of psychological safety for experimenting with PjBL and digital media, the principal successfully builds the adaptive

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<sup>48</sup> Ronit Bogler, "Changing Schools in Changing Times: Implications for Educational Leadership," *International Journal of Educational Reform*, 2002, <https://doi.org/10.1177/105678790201100302>; Ümit Kalkan et al., "The Relationship Between School Administrators' Leadership Styles, School Culture, and Organizational Image," *Sage Open*, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244020902081>.

<sup>49</sup> Muhammad Zaini and Syafaruddin Syafaruddin, "The Leadership Behavior of Madrasah Principals in Improving the Quality of Education in MAN 3 Medan," *Jurnal Iqra*, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.25217/ji.v5i2.649>.

<sup>50</sup> Ahmad Jauhari Hamid Ripki et al., "How Does Transformational Leadership on School Leaders Impact on Teacher Creativity in Vocational High Schools?," *Universal Journal of Educational Research*, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.13189/ujer.2020.081033>.

<sup>51</sup> Yasin Hiçiyılmaz and Semiha Şahin, "The Role of Learning Organization and Talent Management in the Effect of the Transformational Leadership Styles of School Principals in Innovation Management in Their Schools," 2024, <https://doi.org/10.59409/ojer.1459159>; Mohammed Afandi Zainal and Mohd Effendi Ewan Matore, "The Influence of Teachers' Self-Efficacy and School Leaders' Transformational Leadership Practices on Teachers' Innovative Behaviour," *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18126423>.

<sup>52</sup> Jin Tian et al., "The Impact of Transformational Leadership on Teachers' Job Burnout: The Mediating Role of Social-Emotional Competence and Student-Teacher Relationship," *Journal of Educational Administration*, 2022, <https://doi.org/10.1108/jea-04-2021-0075>.

capacity demanded by education in the 4.0 era.<sup>53</sup> This participative decision-making mechanism values collective intelligence. Furthermore, facilitating professional training and peer-teaching turns the madrasah into a living Learning Organization.<sup>54</sup> This demonstrates that investment in teacher intellectual stimulation is a direct investment in student outcomes.<sup>55</sup>

The documented initial resistance from senior teachers toward the clinical supervision model highlights that intellectual stimulation generates temporary professional discomfort before yielding performance gains, confirming Tesfaw's findings.<sup>56</sup> The management of this resistance through sustained collegial dialogue suggests a unique convergence of transformational and instructional leadership at the supervision level, expanding upon Marks and Printy's integration model.<sup>57</sup>

### ***Individualized Consideration***

The principal's humanist HR management relies heavily on differentiated coaching, avoiding a "one size fits all" approach.<sup>58</sup> The findings reveal two analytically distinct sub-behaviors: developmental support (direct mentoring for early-career teachers) and strength deployment (autonomy for experienced teachers).<sup>59</sup> This astutely applies Situational Leadership, allowing

<sup>53</sup> Tadele Akalu Tesfaw, "The Relationship Between Transformational Leadership and Job Satisfaction," *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 2014, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1741143214551948>; Meeka Haestetika et al., "The Influence of Principal's Transformational Leadership and Work Motivation on Teacher Innovation at State Elementary Schools," *Journal of Education Research and Evaluation*, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.23887/jere.v7i4.67348>.

<sup>54</sup> Kwame Bediako Asare, "Are Basic School Head Teachers Transformational Leaders? Views of Teachers," *African Journal of Teacher Education*, 2017, <https://doi.org/10.21083/ajote.v5i1.3475>; Liu Yan, "The Role of an Integrated Model of School Transformational and Instructional Leadership in Support of Teacher Efficacy and Student Outcomes," 2019, <https://doi.org/10.3102/1438763>.

<sup>55</sup> Joseph Malaluan Velarde et al., "Towards a Healthy School Climate: The Mediating Effect of Transformational Leadership on Cultural Intelligence and Organisational Health," *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1741143220937311>; Hiçılmaz and Şahin, "The Role of Learning Organization and Talent Management in the Effect of the Transformational Leadership Styles of School Principals in Innovation Management in Their Schools."

<sup>56</sup> Tesfaw, "The Relationship Between Transformational Leadership and Job Satisfaction."

<sup>57</sup> Tesfaw.

<sup>58</sup> Ahmad Rifai Siregar et al., "Exploration of the Principal's Transformational Leadership Style in Increasing Teacher Motivation," *Didaktika Jurnal Kependidikan*, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.58230/27454312.708>.

<sup>59</sup> Midya Yousefi, Junwen Zhang, and Ziwei Jiang, "Bolstering Teaching Performance in Chinese Universities Through Transformational Leadership and Perceived Organizational

young teachers to accelerate while honoring the expertise of senior staff, keeping work motivation optimal.<sup>60</sup>

Task division decrees confirm a structured "Right Man in the Right Place" approach, increasing organizational efficiency and serving as a key transformational contribution to madrasah management.<sup>61</sup> The principal's open-door policy and empathetic interventions address Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, specifically the need for belongingness and esteem.<sup>62</sup> Teachers who consider the madrasah a second home display high engagement, which directly trickles down to inclusive and equitable educational service for students.<sup>63</sup>

However, a structurally significant challenge is the sustainability risk of highly personalized leadership. When individualized consideration relies on the principal's accumulated personal knowledge, institutional capacity becomes concentrated, creating vulnerability during succession. This implies that high-intensity individualized consideration requires a systematic knowledge-management infrastructure to be institutionally sustainable, echoing findings on talent management and leadership interactions in high-performing schools.<sup>64</sup> Without such infrastructure, the quality culture risks being personality-dependent rather than organizationally embedded.

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Support," *International Journal of Chinese Education*, 2025, <https://doi.org/10.1177/2212585x251321181>.

<sup>60</sup> Yousefi, Zhang, and Jiang.

<sup>61</sup> Cucun Sunaengsih et al., "Transformational Leadership Survey," *Mimbar Sekolah Dasar*, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.53400/mimbar-sd.v8i1.30468>; Maria Tims, Arnold B Bakker, and Despoina Xanthopoulou, "Do Transformational Leaders Enhance Their Followers' Daily Work Engagement?," *The Leadership Quarterly*, 2011, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2010.12.011>.

<sup>62</sup> Geijsel et al., "Transformational Leadership Effects on Teachers' Commitment and Effort Toward School Reform"; Héctor Moreno-Casado et al., "Adaptación Y Validación De La Escala De Liderazgo MLQ-5X Al Contexto Educativo Español," *Anales De Psicología*, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.6018/analesps.425351>; Yaser Sayadi, "The Effect of Dimensions of Transformational, Transactional, and Non-Leadership on the Job Satisfaction and Organizational Commitment of Teachers in Iran," *Management in Education*, 2016, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0892020615625363>.

<sup>63</sup> Ach. Saifullah et al., "Dimensions of Transformational Leadership in Improving the Competitiveness of Islamic Education Institutions," *Cendekia Jurnal Kependidikan Dan Kemasyarakatan*, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.21154/cendekia.v21i2.6702>; Zamawi et al., "Implementation of Transformational Leadership of Madrasah Principals in State Tsanawiyah Madrasah (MTsN) 4 and State Tsanawiyah Madrasah (MTsN) 5 Tulungagung, East Java, Indonesia in Improving Performance Quality."

<sup>64</sup> Hiçylmaz and Şahin, "The Role of Learning Organization and Talent Management in the Effect of the Transformational Leadership Styles of School Principals in Innovation Management in Their Schools."

## CONCLUSION

This study examined how the principal of MI Miftahul Akhlaqiyah Semarang enacted transformational leadership to cultivate a quality culture, drawing on qualitative case study data from seven participants across multiple stakeholder groups. Four principal findings merit emphasis. First, all four Bass-Avolio dimensions were operationalized in contextually specific ways: idealized influence as presence-based moral modeling; inspirational motivation as multi-channel vision internalization; intellectual stimulation as reflective supervision practice; and individualized consideration as talent-aligned, differentiated mentoring. Second, a cross-cutting contextual mechanism, the integration of Islamic moral-religious values as an amplifying medium for all four dimensions, emerged consistently across participant accounts and document data.

This mechanism represents a contextual enrichment of Bass and Avolio's framework specific to the Indonesian MI environment. Third, the study identified genuine leadership challenges alongside successes: initial resistance to reflective supervision among senior teachers, equity tensions arising from a strong achievement orientation, and succession vulnerability inherent in highly personalized leadership. These findings complicate the success-narrative tendency in Indonesian madrasah leadership literature and contribute more nuanced empirical evidence to the field. Fourth, the interdependence of the four dimensions, each reinforcing the others through a shared religious-moral culture, suggests that transformational leadership in this context operates as a holistic system rather than a set of separable practices. Theoretically, this study contributes to the transformational leadership literature by providing thick contextual evidence from an understudied Islamic educational setting and by proposing the concept of religious-moral modeling as a contextually specific mechanism warranting further investigation across comparable settings. Methodologically, the study demonstrates the value of qualitative case study design, with participant voice, critical incident analysis, and member checking, for generating interpretively rich leadership research beyond survey-based correlational studies. Several limitations should be acknowledged.

As a single-case study, the findings carry limitations of generalizability; they are intended for analytical rather than statistical generalization. The predominantly positive organizational climate may have introduced social desirability bias in interview accounts, despite probing for challenges. The absence of student voice limits understanding of how leadership ultimately reaches the learner. Future research should conduct comparative case studies across MI typologies (urban vs. rural; foundation-managed vs. government-managed), explore the sustainability of leadership quality across succession

transitions, and test the religious-moral modeling construct through mixed-method designs in broader samples.

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