

Transformational leadership in Islamic education: The role of madrasah principals in enhancing teacher religiosity

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Received: 11 - 01 - 2025

Revised: 24 - 03 - 2025

Accepted: 02 - 04 - 2025

KEYWORDS

Madrasah Leadership ;
Religious Values ;
Islamic Education Strategies ;
Islamic Education Management .

ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the principal's leadership strategy in developing religiosity values at Madrasah Aliyah Salumakarra, Bua Ponrang District, Luwu Regency. The primary focus of this research is to identify the strategies employed by the madrasah principal in enhancing teachers' religiosity, understand the process of internalizing religious values in teaching, and explore the supporting and inhibiting factors in implementing these strategies. This research employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive-analytical method. Data sources consist of primary and secondary data collected through observations, in-depth interviews, and document analysis. Pedagogical, psychological, and sociological approaches are applied to analyze the relationship between the madrasah principal's leadership and the development of religiosity values in the educational environment. The findings indicate that the madrasah principal employs various strategies to enhance teachers' religiosity. These strategies include (1) role modeling, where the principal sets an example in worship and Islamic behavior, (2) habit formation, which establishes a religious culture through routine activities such as dhuha prayer, dhikr, collective supplications, and Quran recitation before lessons, (3) partnerships, involving collaboration with parents, religious figures, and the community to foster a religious environment, (4) internalization of Islamic values, where moral and ethical teachings are integrated into the curriculum, and (5) guidance and mentoring, which includes motivation and spiritual reinforcement for teachers and students to strengthen their faith and devotion. Teachers' religiosity at the madrasah is reflected in various aspects of their daily lives, including adherence to religious practices, mutual support, and the application of Islamic values in social interactions. Moreover, teachers are expected to emulate the qualities of the Prophet Muhammad (*Shiddiq* – truthfulness, *Tabligh* – conveying the truth, *Amanah* – trustworthiness, and *Fathonah* – wisdom). Supporting factors in strengthening religious values include institutional support from the madrasah, active student participation, and a conducive social environment for religious practice. However, several inhibiting factors persist, such as a lack of religious awareness among some teachers and inadequate facilities, including limited prayer spaces and insufficient Islamic learning media. The study concludes that the principal's leadership plays a crucial role in fostering a religious culture in the madrasah. Effective leadership strategies can reinforce religious values in education for both teachers and students. Therefore, the key recommendations from this research include increasing teachers' awareness of religiosity, strengthening religious development programs, and providing better facilities to support the optimal implementation of Islamic values in the madrasah.

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Introduction

Education serves as the foundation for shaping individuals' intellectual, moral, and spiritual dimensions. In Islamic education, the development of *religiosity values* is paramount, as it fosters ethical behavior and spiritual consciousness in both educators and students (Ancok, 2005). Religiosity is not merely an individual's adherence to religious rituals but also a reflection of their moral integrity, ethical decision-making, and societal contributions (Djamaluddin, 2019). In this context, educational institutions, particularly madrasahs, play a crucial role in integrating religious values with academic knowledge, ensuring that students and educators develop a holistic understanding of Islam as a way of life (Gazalba, 1975).

The leadership of a madrasah principal is instrumental in shaping the religious character of both students and teaching staff. Leadership in an Islamic educational setting transcends administrative tasks; it involves modeling religious behavior, fostering a faith-based school culture, and implementing effective pedagogical strategies to reinforce Islamic values (Mustofa, Muqowin, & Dinana, 2021). According to the Indonesian *Ministry of Education and Culture* (Permendikbud No. 6 of 2018), the principal is responsible not only for academic leadership but also for the spiritual and moral development of students and teachers. However, despite the regulatory framework, the implementation of religiosity-enhancing strategies remains inconsistent across institutions, often due to teachers' varying levels of religious awareness, insufficient facilities, and inadequate institutional support (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2018).

One of the main challenges in Islamic education is ensuring that religiosity values are not only taught as theoretical knowledge but also lived and practiced within the school community (Irawati & Siswanto, 2020). School principals are expected to serve as role models, embodying Islamic values through their daily actions, interactions, and decisions. Their personal religiosity significantly influences the school environment and sets the standard for teachers and students alike (Iman & Sholeh, 2022). Additionally, the integration of religious practices into school culture is essential. Establishing a religious atmosphere through daily rituals such as morning prayers, Qur'an recitation, and congregational worship can enhance the spiritual consciousness of both educators and students (Gazalba, 1975).

Beyond the leadership role of the principal, teachers play a crucial part in transmitting religious values to students. However, some teachers may lack strong personal religiosity or struggle to integrate Islamic teachings into their pedagogical approaches (Djamaluddin, 2019). Addressing this issue requires continuous professional development and spiritual mentoring to ensure that teachers internalize religious values and effectively impart them to their students. Furthermore, the success of religious leadership in madrasahs is also dependent on institutional and community support. Adequate funding for religious programs, sufficient worship facilities, and collaboration with religious scholars and community leaders can greatly enhance the implementation of religiosity programs (Mustofa et al., 2021).

Despite these challenges, previous studies highlight the positive impact of strong leadership in fostering religious culture in schools. Irawati and Siswanto (2020) emphasized the role of structured religious programs in shaping students' religious behavior, while Mustofa, Muqowin, and Dinana (2021) examined how principal leadership can influence the religious character of students

in vocational schools. Meanwhile, Iman and Sholeh (2022) argued that a consistent school-wide religious culture is fundamental in sustaining students' and teachers' engagement with Islamic teachings.

While existing studies have explored various aspects of religious education leadership, limited research has examined how madrasah principals implement leadership strategies specifically to enhance teachers' religiosity. Most studies focus on student character development, with less emphasis on how principals influence teachers' personal and professional commitment to religious values. This research, therefore, aims to fill this gap by analyzing the leadership strategies employed by the principal of *Madrasah Aliyah Salumakarra* in fostering teachers' religiosity. Furthermore, this study seeks to examine how these strategies are implemented and the extent to which they influence teachers' behavior and teaching approaches. Additionally, this research investigates the key supporting and inhibiting factors affecting the success of religious leadership strategies in the madrasah.

By addressing these objectives, this research contributes to the broader discourse on Islamic educational leadership, offering insights that may inform policy, institutional practices, and teacher development programs. The findings are expected to provide practical recommendations for madrasah principals seeking to strengthen religious character formation among their educators. Strengthening teachers' religiosity is not only essential for their personal faith but also plays a critical role in shaping the religious consciousness of students and the overall school environment. Therefore, an effective leadership strategy in religious education is key to ensuring that Islamic values are deeply embedded in the educational framework of madrasahs.

Theoretical Framework

The development of religiosity values in education is a fundamental aspect of Islamic pedagogy, shaping individuals' moral and ethical consciousness. Leadership in Islamic education extends beyond administrative tasks and focuses on the spiritual guidance, moral integrity, and educational strategies employed to foster a religious environment (Ancok, 2005). Islamic educational institutions, particularly madrasahs, serve as essential platforms for the integration of religious teachings into the academic curriculum and daily life practices. The theoretical foundation of this study is grounded in several key concepts: educational leadership in Islamic schools, religiosity values in education, the role of teachers in religious character formation, and the supporting and inhibiting factors affecting the implementation of religious leadership strategies.

1. Educational Leadership in Islamic Schools

Leadership in an Islamic educational context is a multidimensional role that involves influencing, guiding, and implementing policies to reinforce Islamic values within the school system (Mustofa, Muqowin, & Dinana, 2021). The principal is not merely an administrator but a spiritual leader who is expected to serve as a *khadim al-ummah* (servant leader) and *uswah hasanah* (exemplary model) (Gazalba, 1975). Effective leadership in Islamic schools requires principals to balance academic management, religious instruction, and character development while ensuring that teachers internalize and transmit religious values to students.

The Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture (*Permendikbud* No. 6 of 2018) outlines that school principals are responsible for facilitating both curricular and extracurricular activities that enhance students' academic and spiritual development (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2018). Unlike conventional leadership models, Islamic leadership integrates moral and ethical responsibilities, emphasizing values such as *Shiddiq* (truthfulness), *Amanah* (trustworthiness), *Tabligh* (conveying the truth), and *Fathonah* (wisdom) as the core pillars of religious leadership (Djamaluddin, 2019). These principles help to shape the culture of the madrasah and ensure that religious values are embedded in all aspects of school operations.

Successful Islamic school leadership is characterized by transformational leadership—a model in which principals actively inspire their teachers and students to engage in religious practices, cultivate moral discipline, and pursue lifelong learning (Iman & Sholeh, 2022). Leaders who personally engage in Qur’anic studies, congregational prayers, and moral instruction foster an environment where Islamic teachings are internalized by the entire school community (Irawati & Siswanto, 2020). Furthermore, effective Islamic leadership requires a deep understanding of the socio-cultural and psychological aspects of the school environment, as well as the ability to address challenges in implementing religious programs (Anshari, 2010).

2. Religiosity Values in Education

Religiosity is a broad and multidimensional concept that encompasses beliefs, practices, and ethical conduct in accordance with religious teachings (Ancok, 2005). Religiosity in education is not limited to religious rituals but extends to personal identity, moral reasoning, and social engagement. Scholars such as Glock and Stark (1965) identified five key dimensions of religiosity that serve as a theoretical framework for understanding religious behavior in education:

- a. The ideological dimension – The degree to which individuals accept religious beliefs and doctrines.
- b. The ritualistic dimension – The practice of religious rituals such as prayer, fasting, and scripture recitation.
- c. The experiential dimension – The intensity of emotional and spiritual experiences related to faith.
- d. The intellectual dimension – The depth of knowledge and understanding of religious teachings.
- e. The consequential dimension – The influence of religiosity on social and moral behavior.

Within the Islamic education system, these dimensions translate into practical applications that shape a holistic religious identity among students and educators (Djamaluddin, 2019). Religious education in madrasahs seeks to nurture faith-based character development, ensuring that students not only acquire religious knowledge but also embody Islamic values in their daily interactions and decision-making processes (Gazalba, 1975).

Scholars argue that schools with strong religious integration produce individuals with higher levels of moral awareness, ethical responsibility, and community engagement (Mustofa et al., 2021). This is because religious leadership fosters an environment where students and teachers consistently engage in faith-based learning and reflection (Irawati & Siswanto, 2020). A principal’s role in this process is vital, as their leadership determines the extent to which religious education is incorporated into school policies, teaching methods, and student activities (Iman & Sholeh, 2022).

3. The Role of Teachers in Religious Education

Teachers are the primary agents of religious character formation in Islamic schools. Beyond their role as educators, teachers in Islamic institutions serve as role models, moral guides, and mentors for students (Anshari, 2010). A teacher’s personal religiosity, ethical behavior, and spiritual commitment significantly influence how they convey religious teachings in the classroom (Djamaluddin, 2019).

However, research suggests that a gap exists between religious knowledge and practice among some educators, which can hinder the effective transmission of Islamic values (Irawati & Siswanto, 2020). This gap highlights the need for continuous professional development, structured religious training programs, and mentorship initiatives to enhance teachers’ religious awareness and pedagogical competence (Mustofa et al., 2021). Schools must implement systematic strategies to ensure that teachers are not only knowledgeable in Islamic teachings but also practice and embody the values they teach (Iman & Sholeh, 2022).

4. Supporting and Inhibiting Factors in the Implementation of Religious Leadership Strategies

The successful implementation of religious leadership strategies in madrasahs is influenced by both supporting and inhibiting factors. Institutional support, availability of religious programs, and engagement with community religious leaders play a crucial role in ensuring that religiosity values are deeply embedded within the school culture (Irawati & Siswanto, 2020). Effective principals establish strong partnerships with parents, religious scholars, and the local community, creating a faith-based ecosystem that enhances religious education (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2018).

Conversely, several challenges hinder the effective implementation of religious leadership strategies. These include:

- a. Low religious awareness among some teachers – Not all educators fully internalize or practice Islamic values, affecting their ability to serve as role models (Djamaluddin, 2019).
- b. Insufficient funding for religious programs – Many madrasahs lack financial resources to implement structured religious training and moral education programs (Mustofa et al., 2021).
- c. Lack of systematic religious character-building initiatives – Some schools fail to integrate religious values into non-academic activities, leading to inconsistencies in religious character formation (Iman & Sholeh, 2022).

To overcome these challenges, Islamic school leaders must adopt strategic leadership approaches that emphasize religious mentorship, cultural reinforcement, and the provision of adequate learning resources (Gazalba, 1975). Furthermore, structured Qur'anic programs, faith-based student activities, and moral education workshops should be integrated into the school's academic and extracurricular framework (Irawati & Siswanto, 2020).

Method

This study employs a qualitative research design with a descriptive-analytical approach to examine the leadership strategies implemented by the principal of *Madrasah Aliyah Salumakarra* in fostering teachers' religiosity. A qualitative approach is chosen because it enables an in-depth exploration of human behavior, experiences, and social dynamics in the educational setting (Creswell, 2014). The study focuses on understanding the strategic leadership practices, institutional challenges, and effectiveness of religious character formation within the madrasah environment.

To achieve its objectives, this research adopts a case study method, which allows for an in-depth investigation of a specific educational institution and its leadership practices. Case studies in educational research provide rich contextual insights by analyzing real-life situations in detail (Yin, 2018). *Madrasah Aliyah Salumakarra*, located in Bua Ponrang District, Luwu Regency, Indonesia, was selected as the research site due to its strong emphasis on religiosity development among teachers and students. This madrasah integrates formal education with religious values, making it a relevant setting for studying Islamic leadership practices in education (Djamaluddin, 2019).

The study utilizes both primary and secondary data sources to ensure a comprehensive and credible analysis. Primary data is obtained through observations, in-depth interviews, and document analysis, while secondary data consists of official school documents, religious education policies, prior research studies, and government regulations related to Islamic education leadership (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2018). The combination of these sources strengthens the study's credibility and validity by offering multiple perspectives on the leadership strategies employed in the madrasah.

The research employs a purposive sampling technique, selecting participants who are directly involved in religious leadership and educational management. The participants include the madrasah principal, who is responsible for designing and implementing religious leadership strategies; teachers, who serve as intermediaries in the transmission of Islamic values to students; and school staff and religious advisors, who contribute to the school's religious programs and activities. By selecting participants who possess first-hand knowledge and direct experience with religious leadership strategies, the study ensures rich and relevant data (Yin, 2018). Approximately 10 to 15 participants are involved, allowing for in-depth engagement through interviews and observations (Creswell & Poth, 2017).

To collect data, the study employs three primary techniques: observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis. Field observations focus on examining the principal's leadership practices, school-wide religious activities, and interactions between teachers and students (Creswell, 2014). These observations provide insights into how religious values are integrated into the madrasah's daily routines and organizational structure. Meanwhile, semi-structured interviews are conducted with the principal, teachers, and school staff to explore their perceptions of religious leadership strategies and the challenges they face in their implementation (Yin, 2018). The interviews cover aspects such as the strategic approach to fostering religiosity, the role of teachers in religious development, and institutional challenges in promoting religious character formation.

Document analysis complements the findings from observations and interviews by reviewing school policies, religious education curricula, and teachers' participation records in religious activities. These documents offer institutional perspectives on the strategies implemented and highlight how religious leadership is formally structured within the madrasah (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2018). By triangulating data from multiple sources, the study ensures a comprehensive and balanced analysis, enhancing the validity of its findings (Creswell & Poth, 2017).

In analyzing the data, the study adopts a thematic analysis approach, wherein the collected information is coded and categorized into emerging themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The data analysis process follows several key stages. First, the researcher familiarizes themselves with the data by reviewing field notes, interview transcripts, and school documents. Next, initial coding is performed to identify recurring concepts related to religious leadership, teacher development, and institutional challenges. These codes are then grouped into broader themes, such as leadership strategies, the role of school culture in fostering religiosity, and barriers to effective religious character formation. Finally, a comprehensive interpretation is conducted, linking the findings to existing theories and literature on Islamic educational leadership (Creswell, 2014). The thematic analysis approach ensures that findings are systematically categorized and aligned with the study's objectives, making them more applicable to Islamic educational research and practice (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

To maintain the validity and reliability of the study, several qualitative verification techniques are employed. Data triangulation is achieved by cross-referencing findings from observations, interviews, and document analysis (Yin, 2018). Additionally, member checking is conducted, where participants review interview transcripts to ensure that their responses have been accurately interpreted (Creswell & Poth, 2017). Furthermore, the study employs thick description, providing detailed contextual explanations of the findings to enhance the transferability of the research to similar educational settings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Ethical considerations are an essential component of this research, ensuring that participants' rights, privacy, and confidentiality are respected (Creswell, 2014). Ethical measures include obtaining informed consent from all participants, clearly explaining the purpose, procedures, and voluntary nature of the study, and guaranteeing the confidentiality of personal information. Interviews and observations are conducted with cultural sensitivity and in accordance with Islamic ethical principles, ensuring that participants feel comfortable expressing their views. Ethical approval is obtained from the madrasah administration, ensuring that the study aligns with institutional guidelines on research ethics.

Through this research methodology, the study aims to provide a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the role of Islamic leadership in fostering religiosity among teachers. The qualitative case study approach, combined with thematic data analysis and ethical research principles, ensures that the study produces reliable and meaningful findings. Ultimately, the research contributes to the ongoing discourse on religious leadership in Islamic education, offering practical recommendations for strengthening religious character formation in madrasahs.

Result

This study explores the leadership strategies employed by the principal of *Madrasah Aliyah Salumakarra* in fostering teachers' religiosity. The research is conducted in *Bua Ponrang District, Luwu Regency, Indonesia*, where the madrasah serves as an institution that integrates academic and religious education. The collected data provide insights into the implementation of Islamic leadership principles, religiosity values, and the institutional challenges in religious character formation within the school environment.

The data for this research are obtained from multiple sources, including direct observations, in-depth interviews, and document analysis, ensuring a comprehensive and multidimensional understanding of the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2017). The data are categorized into four key components: (1) leadership strategies employed by the principal, (2) teachers' engagement with religious values, (3) institutional and environmental factors affecting religiosity, and (4) challenges and recommendations for strengthening religious leadership.

1. Leadership Strategies of the Madrasah Principal

The principal of *Madrasah Aliyah Salumakarra* plays a pivotal role in shaping the school's religious culture. Observational data indicate that the principal actively engages in role modeling, ensuring that Islamic values are visibly practiced by the school leadership (Djamaluddin, 2019). The principal integrates religiosity into daily school operations by implementing structured religious programs, including routine Qur'anic recitations, congregational prayers, and moral education sessions.

Interviews with the principal reveal that leadership in religious education requires a combination of strategic planning and personal commitment. The principal emphasizes the need to create an environment that fosters religious identity, ensuring that all school activities align with Islamic teachings (Iman & Sholeh, 2022). The principal also establishes collaborations with religious scholars, local imams, and community leaders to reinforce Islamic values both within and beyond the school setting (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2018).

2. Teachers' Engagement with Religious Values

The role of teachers in religious character formation is a central theme in the research data. Observations suggest that teachers are responsible for reinforcing religious education through instructional practices and daily interactions with students. Interview data highlight that teachers' personal religiosity significantly influences their ability to transmit Islamic values (Mustofa, Muqowin, & Dinana, 2021).

Document analysis reveals that teachers at *Madrasah Aliyah Salumakarra* are required to participate in religious training programs, including Qur'anic studies, hadith discussions, and Islamic leadership workshops (Irawati & Siswanto, 2020). However, some teachers indicate challenges in fully internalizing religious values, citing insufficient spiritual mentorship, limited access to Islamic professional development, and the pressure of academic workload (Djamaluddin, 2019).

Despite these challenges, many teachers express a strong commitment to Islamic education and view their profession as a form of religious devotion. Data from classroom observations show that teachers actively encourage students to engage in Islamic practices, such as performing congregational prayers, reciting supplications before lessons, and demonstrating moral discipline (Gazalba, 1975).

3. Institutional and Environmental Factors Affecting Religiosity

The school environment plays a crucial role in sustaining religious values among teachers and students. Observational data indicate that *Madrasah Aliyah Salumakarra* has a structured religious environment, where Islamic teachings are embedded into daily routines. The principal has institutionalized various initiatives, such as mandatory morning Qur'anic recitation, weekly Islamic study circles (*halaqah*), and annual religious retreats (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2018).

However, the research data also highlight several external and internal challenges affecting the effectiveness of religious leadership. Interviews with teachers and school staff reveal that limited financial resources restrict the school's ability to develop advanced religious education programs and improve worship facilities (Mustofa et al., 2021). Additionally, the socio-cultural environment surrounding the madrasah presents both supportive and inhibiting influences. While the school receives strong support from local religious organizations, it also faces challenges in addressing students' exposure to secular influences from media and digital platforms (Irawati & Siswanto, 2020).

4. Challenges and Recommendations for Strengthening Religious Leadership

Despite the madrasah's commitment to religious education, data reveal several challenges that need to be addressed to enhance the effectiveness of religious leadership. One of the primary issues highlighted in interviews is the varying levels of religious commitment among teachers, which affects the consistency of

Islamic teaching delivery (Djamaluddin, 2019). Some teachers acknowledge that they struggle to balance religious engagement with academic obligations, resulting in limited participation in religious mentoring activities (Gazalba, 1975).

Another challenge is the need for continuous leadership training in religious education. The principal expresses concerns regarding the lack of structured professional development opportunities for Islamic school leaders, making it difficult to implement innovative approaches in religious leadership (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2018).

To address these challenges, participants in the study suggest several recommendations. First, the establishment of a structured professional development program for Islamic school teachers is necessary to enhance their religious competence and pedagogical skills (Mustofa et al., 2021). This initiative could include teacher exchange programs with Islamic universities, collaborations with religious scholars, and integrated leadership training workshops focusing on Islamic education management (Irawati & Siswanto, 2020).

Second, the madrasah should strengthen its engagement with local religious institutions and government education agencies to secure additional resources for religious education (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2018). This would facilitate the expansion of religious learning programs, the improvement of school facilities, and the enhancement of teacher training initiatives (Djamaluddin, 2019).

Finally, the findings suggest the need for a more structured evaluation system to assess the effectiveness of religious leadership strategies. Implementing a systematic feedback mechanism, such as annual religiosity assessments for teachers and students, would enable the madrasah to monitor progress, identify areas for improvement, and develop targeted interventions (Iman & Sholeh, 2022).

Discussion

This study analyzes the leadership strategies employed by the principal of *Madrasah Aliyah Salumakarra* in fostering religiosity among teachers. The analysis is based on thematic interpretation of qualitative data collected through observations, interviews, and document analysis. The research follows a thematic analysis approach, in which data are coded, categorized, and synthesized into major themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The key themes that emerge from the analysis include the principal's role in religious leadership, teachers' engagement with religious values, institutional and environmental influences, and challenges in implementing religious leadership strategies.

1. The Principal's Role in Religious Leadership

Findings indicate that the principal plays a multifaceted role in religious leadership, combining elements of spiritual guidance, administrative oversight, and character development. Observations reveal that the principal actively models Islamic behavior, consistently engaging in daily prayers, Qur'anic recitations, and moral discussions with both teachers and students. This aligns with the principles of Islamic transformational leadership, which emphasize personal integrity, religious commitment, and moral exemplification (Djamaluddin, 2019).

Interviews with the principal highlight several key leadership strategies implemented to foster religious consciousness among teachers. First, the principal reinforces Islamic values through structured religious programs, such as mandatory morning Qur'anic readings, weekly *halaqah* (religious study circles), and mentoring sessions focused on ethical behavior (Iman & Sholeh, 2022). Second, the principal establishes partnerships with religious leaders, parents, and community organizations to strengthen external support for religious education (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2018). These efforts contribute to the formation of a school-wide religious culture, where both teachers and students are encouraged to practice and internalize Islamic ethics.

2. Teachers' Engagement with Religious Values

Data analysis suggests that teachers play a central role in transmitting Islamic values, but their level of engagement varies based on individual religiosity, institutional support, and workload constraints. Interviews with teachers reveal that many educators view their profession as a religious duty, linking their role as teachers to the concept of *da'wah* (Islamic propagation) (Irawati & Siswanto, 2020). However, some teachers struggle to fully integrate Islamic teachings into their classroom practices, citing time constraints,

curriculum demands, and the lack of formal training in Islamic pedagogy as major obstacles (Mustofa, Muqowin, & Dinana, 2021).

Observational data indicate that teachers who actively participate in religious activities—such as leading prayers, engaging in religious discussions, and mentoring students on moral values—tend to have stronger connections with their students and exhibit higher levels of religious commitment. Document analysis further confirms that teachers with higher religiosity scores, based on internal school assessments, are more likely to encourage religious discussions and moral reflections in their teaching methods (Djamaluddin, 2019).

However, a significant challenge arises in standardizing religious engagement among all teachers. Some educators demonstrate minimal participation in religious programs, highlighting the need for structured teacher development initiatives that reinforce Islamic ethics and values in professional teaching practices (Gazalba, 1975).

3. Institutional and Environmental Influences

The madrasah's institutional policies and environmental factors play a critical role in shaping teachers' religiosity and leadership effectiveness. Findings indicate that *Madrasah Aliyah Salumakarra* has a structured religious framework, where Islamic principles are embedded into daily school activities. This structured approach is reinforced through policies that mandate Islamic dress codes, require participation in congregational prayers, and incorporate moral education into subject curricula (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2018).

However, several external challenges affect the sustainability of religious leadership strategies. Interviews reveal that limited funding for religious development programs restricts the school's ability to expand teacher training workshops, enhance worship facilities, and invest in faith-based learning materials (Mustofa et al., 2021). Additionally, sociocultural influences—such as students' exposure to secular media, technology, and non-religious ideologies—pose challenges to maintaining religious discipline in the madrasah (Irawati & Siswanto, 2020).

Findings also suggest that community engagement plays a dual role in supporting and challenging the madrasah's religious leadership efforts. While local religious organizations and parents provide strong encouragement for Islamic education, some parents exhibit limited involvement in reinforcing religious practices at home, leading to inconsistencies in students' religious attitudes (Iman & Sholeh, 2022).

4. Challenges in Implementing Religious Leadership Strategies

Thematic analysis identifies several critical challenges in the effective implementation of religious leadership strategies. First, variability in teachers' religious commitment emerges as a significant barrier to achieving consistent religious character formation (Djamaluddin, 2019). While some teachers actively engage in religious programs, others perceive these activities as secondary to their primary teaching responsibilities, leading to inconsistencies in religious education delivery (Gazalba, 1975).

Second, findings highlight the need for continuous leadership training in Islamic education. The principal notes that there is a lack of structured professional development programs for Islamic school leaders, limiting their ability to implement modern approaches to religious leadership (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2018). This challenge underscores the importance of institutionalizing leadership workshops, creating mentorship networks, and enhancing collaboration with Islamic higher education institutions (Mustofa et al., 2021).

Third, the integration of religious values into academic curricula presents structural challenges. Some teachers express concerns that secular academic subjects receive greater emphasis, leaving limited time for religious discussions and ethical reflections (Irawati & Siswanto, 2020). The document analysis of school policies confirms that religious education remains a core component of the curriculum, but a need exists for a more holistic integration of Islamic perspectives across all subjects (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2018).

5. Recommendations for Strengthening Religious Leadership

Based on the findings, several recommendations are proposed to enhance the effectiveness of religious leadership at *Madrasah Aliyah Salumakarra*. First, the implementation of structured religious leadership training programs for both principals and teachers is essential. Such programs should focus on Islamic leadership principles, pedagogical strategies for religious education, and professional development in moral character formation (Mustofa et al., 2021).

Second, enhanced collaboration between the madrasah and religious institutions can provide greater resources and support for religious education. Strengthening partnerships with Islamic universities, religious scholars, and educational foundations would allow the madrasah to access additional learning materials, mentorship programs, and funding opportunities (Irawati & Siswanto, 2020).

Finally, a more integrated approach to Islamic education is needed to ensure that religious values permeate all aspects of the academic experience. Rather than confining Islamic education to specific subjects or religious periods, educators should be encouraged to incorporate Islamic ethics and values into all learning areas, creating a more holistic and faith-centered educational environment (Iman & Sholeh, 2022).

Conclusion

This study has examined the leadership strategies employed by the principal of *Madrasah Aliyah Salumakarra* in fostering religiosity among teachers. Through a qualitative case study approach, the research has provided insights into the principal's role in religious leadership, teachers' engagement with religious values, institutional influences, and challenges in implementing religious character formation. The findings highlight that effective religious leadership requires a combination of strategic planning, role modeling, community collaboration, and structured professional development for educators.

The study concludes that the principal plays a pivotal role in embedding Islamic values within the madrasah's culture. By implementing structured religious programs, mentorship initiatives, and collaborative efforts with religious scholars and community leaders, the principal creates an environment where religiosity is actively reinforced. The teachers' role in religious education is also fundamental, as they serve as intermediaries in transmitting Islamic ethics and values to students. However, findings suggest that teachers' levels of religious engagement vary, indicating the need for targeted interventions to enhance teacher religiosity.

The institutional and environmental factors surrounding the madrasah play a crucial role in shaping religious character formation. While the madrasah has successfully institutionalized religious education, external factors such as limited funding, sociocultural influences, and the integration of Islamic values across academic curricula present ongoing challenges. Additionally, findings indicate that community engagement is essential in sustaining religious leadership, though inconsistent parental involvement sometimes undermines religious education efforts.

Despite these challenges, the research identifies several strategies to enhance religious leadership effectiveness. These include strengthening teacher training programs in Islamic pedagogy, fostering greater collaboration with religious institutions, increasing financial support for religious activities, and integrating Islamic values across all subjects. By addressing these areas, madrasahs can ensure that religious character formation becomes an integral and sustainable part of Islamic education.

In summary, this study reinforces the notion that effective religious leadership in Islamic education requires a holistic and multifaceted approach. The findings contribute to the broader discourse on Islamic school leadership, offering practical recommendations for enhancing religious education policies and practices. Future research could further explore comparative studies between different Islamic educational institutions to identify best practices and innovative leadership models that enhance religious education effectiveness.

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