

AN EVALUATION OF TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP IMPLEMENTATION IN ISLAMIC EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS: A CASE STUDY OF MAN 2 TRENGGALEK

Kukuh Budianto¹, Muhamad Sidiq Asyhari²

^{1,2} Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam (STAI) Muhammadiyah Tulungagung, Indonesia

Email : kukuhlibrahimy@gmail.com¹, sidiqasyhari@gmail.com²

Abstract

This study examines transformational leadership practices in outstanding madrasah aliyah, emphasizing their role in enhancing Islamic Religious Education (PAI). The research addresses the need for a leadership model that transcends administrative management, integrating transformative approaches grounded in Islamic values. Employing a qualitative case study design, data were collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and document analysis at Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 2 Trenggalek. The findings reveal that the four dimensions of transformational leadership, idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration are implemented synergistically to foster a reflective, collaborative, and spiritually rooted work culture. The principal functions not only as an administrator but also as a murabbi (spiritual mentor) and facilitator of teachers' professional growth. Despite these strengths, implementation faces challenges, including varied teacher readiness, structural limitations, and policy support that remains insufficiently contextualized. The study concludes that Islamic values-based transformational leadership has strong potential to improve PAI learning management and can serve as an alternative leadership model for Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia.

Keywords : Transformational Leadership; Islamic Religious Education; Outstanding Madrasah; Islamic Educational Management; Case Study

INTRODUCTION

Leadership is a central element in the implementation of education, including within the context of Islamic educational institutions. The madrasah principal, as the leader of the educational institution, is not only responsible for administrative aspects but also plays a strategic role in shaping organizational culture, improving the quality of learning, and directing all components of the institution toward the established vision. In an era of global competition and the disruption of educational values, Islamic educational institutions such as madrasahs are required to have leaders who are capable of transforming challenges into opportunities without losing the roots of Islamic values that form their identity.

However, realities in the field indicate that not all madrasah principals are able to perform their leadership functions effectively. Many leading madrasahs possess great potential yet have not demonstrated optimal performance due to weak leadership capacity. In this context, the transformational leadership approach becomes relevant to be examined and implemented. Transformational leadership emphasizes not only institutional outcomes or targets, but also the process of individual transformation



within the organization, the development of a shared vision, and the formation of a collaborative and inspiring work culture.

Transformational leadership has four main dimensions: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. A transformational leader is able to serve as a role model in terms of values and behavior, provide inspiration through a strong vision, encourage innovation and creativity in problem-solving, and offer individual attention and guidance to members of the organization (Zaini, 2025). In the context of madrasahs, the application of these four dimensions has great potential to drive positive changes in learning, particularly in Islamic Religious Education (IRE) subjects, which constitute the core of the institution's identity.

A number of previous studies have highlighted the importance of leadership in improving educational quality. For example, one study indicates that the transformational leadership style of school principals contributes to improved teacher performance and a conducive working environment (Slamet Riyadi, 2025). The second study concludes that transformational leaders in madrasahs have a significant influence on strengthening religious values within the curriculum and learning practices (Fitriyana, 2024). Nevertheless, most of these studies remain descriptive in nature and have not yet thoroughly evaluated the implementation of transformational leadership within the context of high-performing and highly competitive Islamic institutions.

This gap constitutes an important background for the present study. Comprehensive evaluations of the implementation of transformational leadership, particularly in leading madrasah aliyah institutions, remain limited. This study seeks to fill this gap by exploring in greater depth how madrasah principals apply transformational principles in educational management, teacher development, and the creation of a learning atmosphere that supports the holistic achievement of Islamic educational objectives.

The purpose of this study is to evaluate how transformational leadership is implemented by principals of leading madrasah aliyah institutions, as well as to identify the supporting and inhibiting factors in this process. In addition, this study aims to examine the impact of such leadership on improving educational quality, particularly in the implementation of Islamic Religious Education learning.

The uniqueness of this study lies in its focus not only on leadership in general, but specifically on evaluating the implementation of each dimension of transformational leadership within the context of leading Islamic educational institutions. Furthermore, the qualitative case study approach provides analytical depth that enables the identification of distinctive and contextual leadership patterns that have not been widely explored in previous studies (nasarudin, 2024).

The implications of this study are expected to provide practical contributions for madrasah principals and Islamic education administrators in strengthening their leadership capacity. Theoretically, the findings of this study may also enrich the body of

knowledge in Islamic educational management through the integration of modern leadership theories with Islamic values and educational practices.

METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach using a case study design. This approach was selected because it allows the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of the implementation of transformational leadership within a complex and specific context, namely leading madrasah aliyah institutions. The case study approach provides opportunities to explore leadership phenomena holistically within the context of Islamic education, taking into account the social, cultural, and organizational dynamics involved.

The research site was selected purposively, namely one leading madrasah aliyah in Indonesia that has a strong reputation for institutional management and the quality of Islamic Religious Education learning. The selection of this site was based on the consideration that the madrasah has demonstrated strong leadership characteristics as well as consistency in improving educational quality. The research subjects included the madrasah principal as the central figure in the implementation of transformational leadership, Islamic Religious Education teachers as those who directly experience the impact of such leadership, and several educational staff members who are relevant to the managerial processes within the madrasah.

Data were collected through three main techniques: in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. The interviews were conducted directly with the madrasah principal, Islamic Religious Education teachers, and managerial staff to explore their understanding, experiences, and perceptions of leadership practices within the institution. Participant observation was carried out by engaging in various institutional activities, such as teacher meetings, professional development programs, and instructional supervision, in order to obtain data on the leader's actual behavior in daily practice. Meanwhile, document analysis focused on collecting documents such as the madrasah principal's work programs, teacher evaluation reports, as well as records of religious activities and student character development.

The primary instrument in this study is an interview guide developed based on the four dimensions of transformational leadership according to Bass and Avolio, namely idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Khodir et al., 2026). These four dimensions serve as a framework for evaluating how the madrasah principal acts as a role model, a source of inspiration, a driver of innovation, and a mentor who attends to individual needs within the work environment.

Data analysis in this study employs the interactive model developed by Miles and Huberman, which consists of three main components: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing or verification (Thalib, 2022). After data from interviews, observations, and documentation are collected, the first step is data reduction, which

involves filtering information relevant to the research focus. Subsequently, the data are presented in the form of thematic narratives based on the dimensions of transformational leadership. The final step is to systematically draw conclusions while remaining open to data re-verification through a careful interpretative process.

To ensure data trustworthiness, this study applies several validation strategies, including source and technique triangulation, member checking, and an audit trail (Judijanto, 2024). Triangulation is conducted by comparing information obtained from various informants and data collection methods. Member checking is carried out by requesting confirmation from the research participants regarding the analyzed interview results to ensure the accuracy of meaning and interpretation. In addition, an audit trail is implemented by transparently documenting the entire process of data collection and analysis, allowing it to be reviewed and traced by other parties if necessary

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

General Overview of the Research Site

Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 2 Trenggalek, located in Panggul Subdistrict, Trenggalek Regency, East Java, is one of the prominent secondary education institutions in the development of Islamic education in the southern coastal region of East Java. Established in 1997, this madrasah upholds the vision of “Realizing an Islamic, High-Achieving, and Competitive Generation,” which is implemented through the integration of Islamic values with the mastery of science and technology. The current principal, Drs. H. Syaiful Anwar, M.Pd.I., is known for his participatory leadership that emphasizes collaboration with teachers, students, and the surrounding community.

The results of the observation indicate that MAN 2 Trenggalek is equipped with relatively adequate facilities, including science laboratories, a computer laboratory, a library with collections of Islamic and general literature, a mosque serving as the center of worship activities, and sports fields used to support students’ character development. In the interview, the principal stated, “*We want the students here to grow into individuals with strong faith and moral character, while also being able to compete in the wider world. Religious education serves as the foundation, while technology and scientific knowledge become its wings.*”

Organizationally, this madrasah follows the standard structure of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, in which the principal is assisted by vice principals responsible for curriculum, student affairs, facilities and infrastructure, and public relations. Based on data from the 2024/2025 academic year, the madrasah employs 38 teachers, including five Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers who teach subjects such as Qur’an and Hadith, Aqidah Akhlak (Islamic creed and ethics), Fiqh, and Islamic Cultural History.

Aspect	Description
Year of Established	1997
Status	Public (Ministry of Religious Affairs)
Location	Panggul Subdistrict, Trenggalek Regency, East Java
Number of Students	612

Number of Teachers	38 (5 Islamic Religious Education teachers)
Vision	Realizing an Islamic, High-Achieving, and Competitive Generation
Religious Facilities	School mosque, Islamic library, tahfiz program, regular religious studies
Religious Achievements	1st Place in the MTQ Competition at the Trenggalek Regency Level (2023)

Table 1 : Institutional Profile of Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 2 Trenggalek

Religious activities constitute a distinctive characteristic of MAN 2 Trenggalek. Every morning before lessons begin, students participate in collective *tadarus* (Qur'anic recitation) at the madrasah mosque, guided by Islamic Religious Education teachers. In addition, the "One Day One Verse" program, which requires students to memorize at least one verse of the Qur'an each day, has become an established tradition. One Islamic Religious Education teacher stated, "*The students here are accustomed to engaging with the Qur'an not only during lesson hours but in all activities. We want these values to remain with them throughout their lives.*"

The principal's support for strengthening religious education extends beyond policy formulation to include the allocation of a dedicated budget for the professional development of Islamic Religious Education teachers, the organization of religious competitions, and the improvement of worship facilities. Observations indicate that the madrasah atmosphere is highly conducive to the formation of Islamic character. This is reflected in courteous interactions, the implementation of value-based discipline, and students' involvement in social and da'wah activities within the surrounding community.

Transformational Leadership in Managing Islamic Religious Education Instruction

Idealized Influence

The dimension of idealized influence refers to a leader's ability to serve as a role model and a source of moral inspiration for followers. In the context of a madrasah, this role is closely related to moral exemplarity, consistency in actions, and commitment to Islamic values. Based on the results of observations and in-depth interviews, the principal of MAN 2 Trenggalek demonstrates strong leadership in this aspect.

The principal consistently arrives earlier than other teachers, beginning the day with congregational *Duha* prayer and collective Qur'anic recitation in the teachers' room. These activities are not merely routine practices but serve as symbols of spiritual leadership deeply embedded in the organizational culture. One teacher stated: "*I have never seen him raise his voice in anger, yet through his demeanor, everyone holds him in high regard. He is like a father to us. His presence instills a sense of responsibility, not out of fear, but out of respect*" (Interview, Islamic Religious Education Teacher 2, July 20, 2025).

The principal's leadership is also evident in his consistent commitment to the madrasah's vision and mission. He is widely recognized for his steadfast dedication to

developing the madrasah as an Islamic educational institution that excels in faith, knowledge, and moral character. In various internal forums, such as regular meetings and reflective *halaqah* sessions, the principal consistently conveys moral and spiritual messages that reinforce teachers' motivation in carrying out their educational responsibilities.

In addition, the principal frequently initiates socio-religious activities involving teachers and students, such as the "Teachers Serving in Villages" program, Ramadan social service activities, and teacher training based on *kitab kuning* (classical Islamic texts). These activities are not merely administrative in nature but represent the principal's role as a transformational figure who serves as a source of inspiration and a reference for values within the madrasah environment.

Field data indicate that the principal's success in establishing idealized influence is supported by moral consistency, transparency in decision-making, and the ability to build strong personal communication. An Islamic Religious Education teacher added:

"When it comes to fairness, he is highly attentive. Teachers who perform well are appreciated, while those whose performance is less satisfactory are not reprimanded immediately but are instead guided through personal mentoring. He even helps us with personal matters at times, despite his own busy schedule" (Interview, Islamic Religious Education Teacher 3, July 21, 2025).

These findings are consistent with theories suggesting that idealized influence occurs when leaders demonstrate ethical behavior, build trust, and instill confidence in their followers (Suhifatullah et al., 2020). In the context of Islamic education, this idealized influence is not merely administrative in nature but also spiritual and cultural, as leaders in madrasahs are expected to serve as *uswah hasanah* (a good role model), as stated in Qur'an Surah Al-Ahzab (33:21).

Several previous studies reinforce the importance of this dimension. For example, an earlier study found that madrasah principals with high integrity and exemplary attitudes were successful in enhancing teachers' commitment to implementing value-based learning (Shobri, 2025). Similarly, a second study demonstrated that teachers tend to be more intrinsically motivated when they feel morally and spiritually valued by their leaders (Beruh et al., 2024).

This, the practice of idealized influence at MAN 2 Trenggalek not only succeeds in building leadership credibility but also creates a collegial, spiritual, and productive work atmosphere. The principal's leadership, grounded in exemplary conduct, serves as a primary foundation for driving a more meaningful and sustainable transformation in the management of Islamic Religious Education learning.

Inspirational Motivation

The dimension of Inspirational Motivation in transformational leadership refers to a leader's ability to articulate a meaningful vision, foster collective enthusiasm, and cultivate followers' intrinsic motivation. At MAN 2 Trenggalek, the principal not only provides direction but also inspires teachers particularly Islamic Religious Education

(PAI) teachers to become agents of change who guide learning toward more reflective, contextual, and spiritual approaches.

Interview results indicate that the principal consistently communicates the institutional vision through various forums, both formal and informal. At the beginning of each semester, he conducts a *halaqah tarbiyah* for all teachers with the theme "Educating with Meaning," aimed at strengthening intention and spiritual awareness in teaching. One teacher stated: "The principal often says, '*Teaching is not merely the transfer of knowledge, but a form of social worship.*' *The statement is simple yet deeply impactful. It makes us feel that we have a mission, not merely a job*" (Interview, Islamic Religious Education Teacher 4, July 22, 2025).

The communication of this vision does not stop at rhetoric but is translated into concrete policies. The principal encourages Islamic Religious Education teachers to design learning that is not only cognitive in nature but also incorporates elements of reflection and exemplarity. He has also established the "Reflective PAI" program, in which PAI teachers are required to produce monthly reflective notes on the processes and dynamics of their teaching. These reflections are then discussed in collective forums using a mutually reinforcing rather than judgmental approach.

One form of inspirational motivation that is highly appreciated by teachers is the non-material recognition provided by the principal, such as publicly acknowledging dedicated teachers in forums, assigning symbolic religious roles (such as serving as the *khatib* for internal Friday prayers), or simply writing personal letters of appreciation. According to the teachers, these small gestures have a significant impact on work motivation. One Islamic Religious Education teacher stated: "*He once came to my class unexpectedly just to say, 'Thank you for encouraging the students to perform Duha prayer.' I did not win any competition, but that made me feel valued as an Islamic Religious Education teacher*" (Interview, Islamic Religious Education Teacher 5, July 23, 2025).

This inspirational leadership is further strengthened by the principal's ability to construct collective narratives. In every meeting, he consistently links the madrasah's goals with Islamic values and social responsibility. Narratives such as "Islamic Religious Education is the moral bulwark of the younger generation" or "teachers are *da'i* in the classroom" are frequently reiterated and eventually become part of the teachers' collective consciousness. This aligns with the view of Bass and Avolio, who argue that inspirational motivation is effective when leaders are able to create shared meaning and a common vision that resonates emotionally and spiritually (Setiyadi, 2025).

Previous studies also reinforce this finding. An initial study showed that madrasah principals who instill spiritual meaning into teaching responsibilities successfully enhance the work engagement of Islamic Religious Education teachers significantly (Anwar et al., 2025, 2025). A similar finding was reported in a second study, which stated that symbolic and cultural motivational strategies are more

effective in the madrasah context than approaches based solely on administrative targets (Hamdanah, 2025).

From these findings, it can be concluded that the inspirational motivation of the principal of MAN 2 Trenggalek serves as the main driving force behind the paradigm shift in Islamic Religious Education learning. The principal successfully integrates spiritual, symbolic, and communicative aspects in articulating the vision and motivating teachers. This fosters a work atmosphere oriented not only toward academic outcomes but also toward the achievement of holistic and transformative Islamic educational goals.

Intellectual Stimulation (Encouraging Critical and Innovative Thinking)

The dimension of Intellectual Stimulation in the theory of Bass and Avolio indicates the extent to which a leader is able to stimulate subordinates to think critically and creatively, and to move beyond entrenched or conventional ways of thinking (Sutiyatno, 2025). At MAN 2 Trenggalek, intellectual stimulation is strongly evident in the principal's leadership pattern, particularly in his efforts to encourage Islamic Religious Education teachers to function not only as instructors but also as thinkers and innovators in the learning process.

The principal actively creates spaces for academic discussion and internal scholarly forums, such as the Islamic Religious Education Teachers' Scientific Forum (*Majelis Ilmiah Guru PAI*), which is held biweekly. This forum does not function merely as a coordination meeting but serves as a platform for exchanging ideas, developing thematic learning strategies, and discussing contemporary issues in the field of Islamic education. One teacher expressed:

"The principal often poses questions such as, 'How did the Prophet Muhammad teach?' or 'How would the Companions teach Islamic Religious Education today?' These questions prompt us to rethink and critically examine our own lesson plans" (Interview, Islamic Religious Education Teacher 1, July 25, 2025).

Another concrete form of intellectual stimulation is the active involvement of teachers in the processes of curriculum development and program evaluation. The principal does not impose programs through a top-down approach; instead, he invites teachers to participate as co-creators of policy ideas. For instance, in the development of Islamic Religious Education modules based on local values (*local wisdom*), teachers are encouraged to contribute ideas related to content, methods, and evaluation approaches. This process generates productive discussions while simultaneously fostering a sense of ownership over the changes being implemented.

The following table presents activities that illustrate the forms of intellectual stimulation provided by the principal to Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers:

Activity	Objective	Outcomes Achieved
Teachers' Scientific Forum	Critical discussion of learning materials and teaching methods	Development of thematic Islamic Religious Education

		modules based on value actualization
Collaborative Curriculum Training	Participatory revision of the Islamic Religious Education curriculum	Curriculum that is adaptive to local and contemporary contexts
Reflective Supervision	Evaluation of learning through a dialogical approach	Emergence of methodological innovations: project-based learning, inquiry-based learning, etc.
Open Classes among PAI Teachers	Peer observation and collegial feedback	Strengthening of pedagogical skills and teacher collaboration

The principal's leadership in promoting scholarly discourse is also manifested in the cultivation of reading and writing habits among Islamic Religious Education teachers. On several occasions, he has even encouraged teachers to compose short articles based on their teaching experiences for publication in the madrasah bulletin or local forums. This practice strengthens a culture of scholarly literacy while simultaneously serving as a medium for reflecting on teachers' professional practices.

An Islamic Religious Education teacher stated: "*He often says, 'Writing is an intellectual jihad.' Therefore, we are encouraged to read a wider range of Qur'anic commentaries, write reflections, and even submit articles to local journals*" (Interview, Islamic Religious Education Teacher 2, July 26, 2025).

This finding shows that the principal of the madrasah not only promotes structural change but also fosters epistemic transformation among teachers. Rather than imposing innovation, he challenges teachers to think critically, question existing practices, and develop new alternatives. This aligns with the principle of intellectual stimulation, which emphasizes the importance of cognitive engagement in the leadership process.

Several studies support the importance of this role. The first study indicates that teachers who are given space for reflection and self-development are more open to innovation and are more likely to engage in pedagogical experimentation (Yudianto et al., 2025). Meanwhile, another study emphasizes that madrasahs with internal intellectual forums are better able to build excellence in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning (Rumra et al., 2025).

Thus, the practice of intellectual stimulation at MAN 2 Trenggalek demonstrates that the principal has successfully created a healthy academic atmosphere, stimulated teachers' creativity, and prevented the educational process from falling into stagnant routines. This has become a crucial pillar in the success of PAI learning management, which is oriented not merely toward administrative compliance but also toward the development of teachers' intellectual and professional quality.

Individualized Consideration

The dimension of **Individualized Consideration** is a key element of transformational leadership that emphasizes personal attention to individuals' needs, potential, and development. In the context of MAN 2 Trenggalek, the principal practices this approach in a concrete and consistent manner toward Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers, making personal attention a strategic instrument for building loyalty, professionalism, and spiritual growth.

One concrete form of individualized attention is the close and intensive communication pattern. The principal regularly schedules personal *muhasabah* sessions with PAI teachers, not only to discuss work performance but also their family conditions, spirituality, and even psychological burdens. He positions himself as both a mentor and a spiritual companion. One teacher expressed: *"He once called me in just to ask, 'Do you still have time to perform tahajud?' I was silent. It turned out that he sensed I was going through a difficult time. That made me feel supported, not monitored."* (Interview, PAI Teacher 3, July 27, 2025).

The principal also adopts a flexible approach to the workload of PAI teachers based on their personal needs. In one case, a PAI teacher was granted a temporary reduction in teaching duties for several months while caring for an ill parent. However, this adjustment was accompanied by intensive guidance to ensure the teacher remained productive in non-classroom capacities, such as developing instructional media or preparing learning modules. This practice reflects a combination of empathy and adaptive resource management.

In addition, the principal implements an individual mentoring system for newly appointed teachers. Senior PAI teachers are assigned as informal mentors who not only teach methodology but also provide guidance in character formation (*akhlaq*), work culture, and spiritual readiness. This initiative indirectly strengthens the culture of *tarbiyah* within the madrasah organization.

A junior teacher stated: *"I was not only taught how to teach, but I was also invited to attend regular Qur'anic study sessions and encouraged to keep learning. He even personally reminded me not to be overly perfectionistic in everything."* (Interview, PAI Teacher 6, July 28, 2025).

Another form of individualized attention is career development based on individual potential. The principal identifies the unique interests and expertise of each PAI teacher and then provides opportunities for them to grow accordingly. For example, a teacher with a talent for writing is given the opportunity to serve as the editor of the madrasah bulletin. A teacher with a background in Qur'anic exegesis is entrusted with developing a thematic Al-Qur'an curriculum.

In internal forums, the principal often refers to teachers using positive identities such as "Ustadz of Tafsir," "Inspirational Ustadz," or "Community Ustadz" as an informal form of recognition for the uniqueness of their contributions.

These findings indicate that the principal does not treat teachers uniformly; rather, he acknowledges differences in character and potential through a personal and humane approach strategy. This aligns with the concept of *tarbiyah ruhiyah* and education as a process of *tazkiyah* in the Islamic perspective, where each individual is viewed as a unique subject with the need to grow and develop holistically.

From a theoretical perspective, the principal's practices affirm the view of Bass and Avolio that individualized consideration can foster deep relationships between leaders and followers, which ultimately shape a supportive and collaborative work environment (Wutoy, 2025). This approach strengthens trust, enhances job satisfaction, and reinforces teachers' emotional attachment to the institution.

The first study found that the principal's personal attention to teachers positively correlates with increased loyalty and performance, particularly in the affective and spiritual dimensions (Ariza Fardiatama et al., 2025). Similarly, another study states that flexibility in task management based on teachers' personal needs has a positive impact on long-term job satisfaction and work motivation (Rohmah & Izzati, 2026).

Overall, the practice of individualized consideration at MAN 2 Trenggalek demonstrates that leadership which humanizes teachers, understands the complexity of their roles, and responds with empathy will create a healthy work environment and support the holistic achievement of the madrasah's vision.

Strengths and Challenges in the Implementation of Transformational Leadership in the Management of PAI Teachers

Strengths of Implementation

One of the most prominent strengths is the consistency of leadership values grounded in Islamic spirituality. The principal has successfully internalized transformational leadership values not merely as managerial techniques, but as part of his scholarly and spiritual responsibility (*keulamaan* and *tarbiyah ruhiyah*). This makes his entire leadership approach feel authentic, genuine, and widely accepted by teachers as a form of *uswah hasanah* (exemplary conduct).

In addition, the principal demonstrates strong reflective and adaptive capacities. He is able to identify the individual needs of teachers, respond to contextual dynamics, and formulate policies based on continuous evaluation rather than rigid instructions. This creates a work environment that is flexible yet consistently oriented toward quality. Teachers feel heard, empowered, and not trapped within a rigid bureaucratic culture.

Another strength lies in the ability to build a participatory system in decision-making. No major policy is implemented without involving teachers, including PAI teachers. The principal emphasizes the importance of *musyawarah ilmiah* (scholarly deliberation) in designing learning programs, evaluations, and even the scheduling of religious activities. This approach reinforces teachers' sense of ownership toward the institution's vision and direction.

Finally, the presence of an academic and spiritual culture that mutually reinforces one another serves as the foundation for the success of this leadership model. PAI teachers are not only expected to demonstrate pedagogical professionalism, but are also supported spiritually and morally. This balance sustains work enthusiasm, reduces burnout, and strengthens teachers' loyalty to the madrasah.

Challenges in Implementation

Although these strengths are quite dominant, there are several challenges encountered in the practice of this transformational leadership.

First, the challenge arises from the diversity in character and readiness among PAI teachers. Not all teachers possess the same level of motivation, openness, and adaptability. Some feel burdened by the reflective and innovative approaches introduced, as they are accustomed to instructive systems and long-established routines. The principal must therefore exert additional effort to apply individualized approaches without imposing uniform changes.

Second, administrative and structural demands sometimes hinder the full implementation of transformational leadership dimensions. Reporting requirements to the Regional Office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, accreditation processes, as well as BOS fund administration and the national curriculum, consume a significant amount of the principal's time and energy. This makes it challenging to maintain a consistent rhythm of personal communication with teachers.

Third, external policy support that is not yet fully aligned also becomes an obstacle. For instance, in terms of teachers' career development through scientific publications or independent training, many policies are overly procedural and insufficiently contextualized to the character of pesantren-based madrasahs. As a result, the principal must engage in additional negotiation to ensure that internal programs can continue without violating national regulatory provisions.

Fourth, there is a lack of supporting human resources capable of serving as extensions of the principal's leadership. In a transformational model, it is highly ideal to have middle leaders—such as vice principals for curriculum or student affairs—who understand and implement the principal's vision. However, in practice, not all of these figures share a uniform vision or possess comparable competencies. As a result, several transformative programs are not implemented consistently.

These challenges indicate that although the transformational leadership model is highly relevant and effective within the context of Islamic education, structural conditions and the broader policy ecosystem still play a crucial role in determining its success. Systemic support, continuous professional development, and the integration of transformational values into the broader management of the madrasah are therefore essential.

CONCLUSION

This study found that the implementation of transformational leadership by the principal of Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 2 Trenggalek has had a significant impact on

improving the quality of management of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers. The dimensions of transformational leadership idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration are not merely applied in a technical-administrative manner, but are also framed within a strong foundation of Islamic values, reflecting a transcendental approach to leadership.

The principal emerges as a central figure in fostering a spiritual, collaborative, and reflective work culture. He serves as a moral role model, an inspirer of the vision of Islamic education, a facilitator of instructional innovation, and a personal mentor to PAI teachers. This process unfolds organically within the pesantren culture, enabling the integration of traditional values with modern managerial approaches.

The primary strengths of this implementation lie in the authenticity of leadership values, the consistency of actions, and the presence of an inclusive two-way communication system. Meanwhile, the challenges encountered include variations in teachers' characteristics, administrative burdens, external policies that are not yet fully contextualized, and the suboptimal role of middle leaders in supporting the principal's vision.

Overall, this study demonstrates that transformational leadership grounded in Islamic values can serve as an ideal model for reforming human resource management in Islamic educational institutions, particularly in strengthening the strategic role of PAI teachers as agents of character formation and students' spiritual development.

For the Principal, it is recommended to continuously strengthen the practice of transformational leadership by maintaining a balance between spiritual guidance and the enhancement of teachers' professionalism. The principal should also establish a middle leadership team capable of consistently implementing and sustaining the institutional vision.

For PAI Teachers, it is important to enhance their readiness to embrace intellectual stimulation and instructional innovation. An open attitude toward change and a willingness to engage in continuous professional growth will support the development of a dynamic and meaningful learning culture.

For Islamic Education Authorities (Ministry of Religious Affairs, Regional Offices, etc.), it is expected that leadership development policies for principals be designed not only to emphasize administrative aspects, but also to cultivate spiritual and transformational leadership capacities. Training and supervision programs should be directed toward fostering humanistic and visionary leaders.

For Future Researchers, it is recommended to conduct comparative studies between madrasahs that implement transformational leadership and those that do not, or to explore other dimensions of Islamic educational leadership, such as charismatic leadership or spiritual leadership, within the context of pesantren-based institutions.

REFERENCES

- Anwar, A., Hermawansyah, H., & Junaidin, J. (2025). Inovasi Manajemen Kelas dan Etos Kerja Guru PAI di Era Kurikulum Merdeka. *JEMARI : Jurnal Edukasi Mahasiswa*

- Sunan Giri*, 3(1), 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.47625/jemari.v3i1.901>
- Ariza Fardiatama, Harun Joko Prayitno, & Maryadi. (2025). Strategi Kepemimpinan Kepala Sekolah dalam Meningkatkan Kinerja Guru di Lembaga Pendidikan Islam. *Didaktika: Jurnal Kependidikan*, 14(4 Nopember), 6175–6186. <https://doi.org/10.58230/27454312.2999>
- Beruh, H., Iskandar, I., & Munawar, M. (2024). Kepemimpinan Spiritual Kepala Madrasah dalam Pengembangan Kinerja Guru di MTsN 1 dan MTsN 2 Aceh Tenggara. *Edu Society: Jurnal Pendidikan, Ilmu Sosial Dan Pengabdian Kepada Masyarakat*, 4(3), 1774–1781. <https://doi.org/10.56832/Edu.V4i3.569>
- Fitriyana, F. (2024). Penerapan Kepemimpinan Transformasional Dalam Meningkatkan Kinerja Pengelolaan Lembaga Pendidikan Islam. *JMPA (Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Al-Multazam)*, 6(2), 117–125. <https://doi.org/10.54892/jmpa.v6i2.45>
- Hamdanah, H. (2025). Strategi Manajemen Kepala Madrasah dalam Meningkatkan Mutu Pembelajaran Berbasis Nilai-Nilai Islam di Madrasah Ibtidaiyah. *Auladuna: Jurnal Prodi Pendidikan Guru Madrasah Ibtidaiyah*, 6(02), 173–185. <https://doi.org/10.62097/ad.v6i02.827>
- Judijanto, L. (2024). *Research Design: Pendekatan Kualitatif dan Kuantitatif* (pertama). Sonpedia Publishing Indosia.
- Khodir, A., Anugerah Izzati, U., & Rafidatuddini, I. (2026). Analisis Kepemimpinan Transformasional Pimpinan Pondok Pesantren Modern di Lingkungan Yayasan Tradisional: Penelitian. *Jurnal Pengabdian Masyarakat Dan Riset Pendidikan*, 4(3), 18100–18108. <https://doi.org/10.31004/jerkin.v4i3.4788>
- nasarudin, nasarudin. (2024). *Studi kasus dan multisitus dalam pendekatan kualitatif*. CV gita lentera. https://books.google.co.id/books?hl=id&lr=&id=Ae78EAAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PA1&dq=pendekatan+kualitatif+studi+kasus+memberikan+kedalaman+analisis+yang+memungkinkan+ditemukan+pola-pola+kepemimpinan+yang+khas+dan+kontekstual,+yang+belum+banyak+diungkap+dalam+studi+sebelumnya&ots=uFO0PIWDeW&sig=N565ebLM-w8eU4t9cDZ7gsgzBmg&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false
- Rohmah, I. H., & Izzati, U. A. (2026). Analisis Dinamika Motivasi Kerja pada Guru Non-Formal dalam Perspektif Self-Determination Theory: A Systematic Literature Review. *Paedagogie*, 21(1), 153–164. <https://doi.org/10.31603/paedagogie.v21i1.15732>
- Rumra, M. J. R., Rusmiaty, R., Usman, S., & Ondeng, S. (2025). MADRASAH DALAM PUSARAN TANTANGAN ZAMAN: UPAYA STRATEGIS MEMPERKUAT INSTITUSI PENDIDIKAN ISLAM. *Al-Irsyad: Journal of Education Science*, 4(2), 447–459. <https://doi.org/10.58917/aijes.v4i2.266>
- Setiyadi, D. (2025). *Kepemimpinan yang Menghidupkan*. Alung Cipta.
- Shobri, M. (2025). Peran Kepala Madrasah sebagai Leader Visioner: Strategi Penguatan Mutu dan Integritas Lembaga Pendidikan Islam. *AKSI: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam*, 3(3), 191–210. <https://doi.org/10.37348/aksi.v3i3.720>
- Slamet Riyadi. (2025). Implementasi Kepemimpinan Transformasional Kepala Sekolah

- dalam Meningkatkan Kinerja Guru: Penelitian. *Jurnal Pengabdian Masyarakat Dan Riset Pendidikan*, 4(1), 1983–1989. <https://doi.org/10.31004/jerkin.v4i1.1881>
- Suhifatullah, M. I., Thoyib, M., & Dahlan, J. A. (2020). Kepemimpinan Etis Guru Dalam Pendidikan Karakter. *Kelola: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan*, 7(1), 14–24. <https://doi.org/10.24246/j.jk.2020.v7.i1.p14-24>
- Sutiyatno, S. (2025). *Kepemimpinan Kreatif: Creative Leadership*.
- Thalib, M. A. (2022). Pelatihan Analisis Data Model Miles Dan Huberman Untuk Riset Akuntansi Budaya. *Madani: Jurnal Pengabdian Ilmiah*, 5(1), 23–33. <https://doi.org/10.30603/Md.V5i1.2581>
- Wutoy, M. (2025). *Kepemimpinan Pemerintahan: Paradigma Pemimpin Yang Melayani: Cetakan Pertama*.
- Yudianto, N., Kurniawan, B., Wijayanti, R., & Kholis, N. (2025). Fostering Innovation Through Creative and Collaborative Teaching Approaches: Menumbuhkan Inovasi Melalui Pendekatan Pengajaran yang Kreatif dan Kolaboratif. *Indonesian Journal of Innovation Studies*, 26(3). <https://doi.org/10.21070/ijins.v26i3.1484>
- Zaini, F. (2025). Kepemimpinan Transformasional Berbasis Nilai Spiritual Dalam Peningkatan Religiusitas Pendidik Dan Peserta Didik. *Irsyaduna: Jurnal Studi Kemahasiswaan*, 5(2), 301–318. <https://doi.org/10.54437/irsyaduna.v5i2.2283>