

# Transformational Leadership in Islamic Education: Strengthening Institutional Innovation in The Era of Disruption

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## ABSTRACT

The transformation of Islamic education in the era of disruption demands a leadership approach that is not only visionary but also rooted in spiritual and ethical values. This article provides an in-depth examination of the Islamic transformational leadership model, which integrates prophetic values, principles of adaptation and innovation, as well as collaborative and communicative practices in response to institutional challenges faced by madrasahs and Islamic higher education institutions. Through a systematic literature review and thematic synthesis of various academic sources, it is found that transformative Islamic leadership can promote the improvement of educational quality by shaping an inclusive, ethical, and maslahat-oriented learning ecosystem. Nevertheless, the implementation of this model faces cultural, structural, and normative resistance, requiring policy adjustments, leadership training based on prophetic values, and the strengthening of participatory governance. This article affirms that Islamic transformational leadership is not merely a normative concept, but a strategic praxis that can reinforce the role of Islamic education as a catalyst for equitable and sustainable social change.

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## 1. PENDAHULUAN

Islamic education in Indonesia, particularly within madrasahs and higher education institutions, faces complex challenges in the era of disruption. Technological advancements, shifts in social values, and pressures on traditional institutional systems demand significant adaptation and transformation from educational institutions. One of the most crucial aspects of this adaptation is leadership that is not merely operational but also transformational capable of guiding educational institutions in navigating these challenges.

In line with Marjuni's findings, Islamic education is considered essential in helping society avoid values that conflict with the advancement of modern science and technology (Marjuni, 2022). This perspective aligns with the view of Juhana et al., who emphasize that the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum in higher education must be integrated with the development of moderate character that reflects relevant Islamic values (Juhana et al., 2022). In

this context, effective leadership in Islamic educational institutions must be innovative and responsive to the continuously evolving social dynamics (Mauliya & Wulandari, 2021).

Furthermore, Kadi argues that the values of religious moderation should be incorporated into higher education policies by implementing teaching that reflects unity, tolerance, and commitment to society (Kadi, 2022). This aligns with the demand to create educational environments that foster collaboration and innovation, as highlighted by Desmaniar et al., who stress the importance of adaptive educational management in responding to contemporary challenges (Desmaniar et al., 2022).

In the digital era, Mansir notes that the challenges facing Islamic education have become increasingly complex, with educators expected to keep pace with technological developments to create effective learning processes (Mansir, 2018). Blended learning offers a potential solution to meet educational needs in this era by combining conventional approaches with online media (Habibi et al., 2022). Technology not only accelerates the learning process but also opens opportunities for innovation in Islamic educational methods that are more engaging and relevant to younger generations.

On another front, the religious moderation education promoted by Suhada et al. is crucial in addressing extremism and radicalization among youth, positioning religious education as a tool for fostering social peace (Suhada et al., 2022). Thus, the challenges faced by Islamic education in Indonesia during the disruption era are not limited to internal institutional issues but also encompass broader social contexts. Consequently, clear and transformational leadership in the management of Islamic education is essential to strengthen these institutions in facing future challenges.

The transformation of Islamic education, grounded in innovative leadership, technological integration, and the incorporation of moderation values, is key to preparing Islamic educational institutions to survive and thrive in this disruptive era.

Within the landscape of Islamic education in the disruption era, the need for adaptive and visionary leadership is increasingly urgent. Recent literature highlights that transformational leadership plays a central role in driving institutional innovation, particularly through four core dimensions: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Bass & Riggio, 2006). However, the application of this model remains predominantly explored within corporate and general education sectors. In contrast, Islamic education is often examined through normative and structural lenses, with limited elaboration on the practical implementation of transformational leadership theory.

This study adopts an interdisciplinary approach by integrating transformational leadership theory (Bass, 1985; Ytterstad & Olaisen, 2023) with the prophetic values of Islam *siddiq* (truthfulness), *amanah* (trustworthiness), *fathanah* (wisdom), and *tabligh* (communicative integrity) as an ethical and spiritual matrix for navigating institutional change. This combination is believed to enhance the capacity of leaders to respond to disruptive pressures while fostering a resilient and inclusive Islamic educational system.

In the academic context, several critical gaps remain to be addressed. First, there is a lack of comprehensive studies that examine the practical application of transformational leadership within Islamic educational institutions. Second, research on the internalization of prophetic values into leadership styles is still limited and has not yet been developed into an operational framework. Third, the role of leaders in managing cultural resistance and resource constraints has not been sufficiently explored as a crucial factor influencing the success of institutional innovation.

Based on this mapping, the article formulates the central research problem: how can transformational leadership styles be adapted and operationalized within Islamic educational institutions to strengthen institutional innovation in the disruption era? The objective of this study is to develop a conceptual framework that integrates transformational leadership theory with Islamic prophetic values, while also addressing the literature gap concerning the implementation of innovative leadership styles in Islamic education.

Theoretically, leadership has been discussed as a catalyst for social and institutional change (Strasser et al., 2018). However, within the context of Islamic education, value-based institutional transformation has not yet been fully actualized. The shift from traditional pedagogical approaches toward models that emphasize spiritual and ethical values remains underrepresented in the managerial practices of Islamic educational institutions (Suharto, 2014). This article aims to address that gap.

The primary contribution of this study lies in its integrative proposition that combines transformational leadership theory with Islamic prophetic values as both an ethical foundation and an operational framework for leadership in Islamic educational institutions. The proposed model incorporates principles of adaptive and collaborative institutional transformation in response to the dynamics of disruption. Additionally, the article presents a conceptual formulation that can be empirically tested within the context of madrasahs and Islamic higher education institutions, offering practical implications for leadership strategy development.

This study explores how Islamic prophetic values can be embedded within transformational leadership models to foster institutional innovation. It also examines the potential of such models to address cultural resistance and resource limitations in Islamic education. Furthermore, it investigates the key principles that can guide the translation of spiritual values into applicable leadership strategies.

## 2. METHODS

This study employs a conceptual qualitative approach using a literature review method, aimed at critically examining the concept of transformational leadership in Islamic education through the analysis of relevant scholarly sources. This approach was chosen because it allows the researcher to interpret ideas and values critically without direct engagement with empirical field data. As explained by (Sugiyono, 2013), qualitative research seeks to understand phenomena holistically within their natural context, with the researcher serving as the primary instrument in the interpretive process.

The data sources for this study include scholarly journals, academic books, institutional documents, and both classical and contemporary Islamic articles that discuss education, leadership, and prophetic values. These sources were selected purposively, based on their relevance and the depth of theoretical analysis they offer.

The analytical techniques applied in this research consist of thematic synthesis, theoretical comparison, and normative value interpretation. Thematic synthesis is used to identify recurring patterns and themes within the reviewed literature. Theoretical comparison is conducted to juxtapose Islamic leadership concepts with modern transformational leadership models. Normative value interpretation is applied to Islamic texts to assess the alignment of spiritual and ethical principles with the proposed leadership framework. As emphasized by (Dawis et al., 2023), literature-based research is not merely a process of gathering references, but an analytical endeavor aimed at constructing robust and contextually grounded scientific arguments.

## 3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In responding to the complexities of the disruption era, Islamic educational institutions are required to adapt to rapidly shifting social, technological, and value-based demands. Amid these changes, leadership becomes a decisive factor in determining the direction and sustainability of institutional transformation, particularly within madrasahs and Islamic higher education institutions. Effective leadership is not merely an administrative capability, but a transformative and spiritual capacity grounded in ethical principles and prophetic values. This study finds that two complementary leadership approaches transformational leadership and spiritual leadership serve as the foundational pillars for developing a contemporary Islamic leadership model.

Transformational leadership emphasizes the development and empowerment of followers through inspirational motivation, reinforcement of collective commitment, and the creation of a meaningful vision for change. This approach positions the leader as a change agent capable of driving pedagogical innovation and strengthening institutional identity. Fadilah and Hamami demonstrate that transformational leadership has a significant impact on improving the quality and performance of

Islamic education (Fadilah & Hamami, 2021). Further research by Wahyuni and Maunah reinforces these findings by highlighting the importance of active leadership involvement in human resource development, staff mentoring, and the formulation of transformative academic strategies (Wahyuni & Maunah, 2021). Thus, this leadership style contributes not only to institutional efficiency but also to the cultivation of a constructive collective character.

On the other hand, spiritual leadership offers a transcendental dimension that is essential in institutional practice. Prophetic values such as justice, integrity, compassion, and social responsibility serve as guiding principles in shaping leadership behavior that prioritizes not only outcomes but also ethical and equitable processes. Rahmatika et al. affirm that the implementation of spiritual leadership in Islamic higher education enhances job satisfaction among faculty and staff, while fostering a spiritually meaningful and harmonious work environment (Rahmatika et al., 2023). This emphasis on spiritual components provides space for ethical professional development and strengthens the Islamic identity of the institution holistically.

### *Discussion*

The convergence of transformational and spiritual leadership opens opportunities for formulating an Islamic leadership framework that is both responsive to contemporary challenges and consistent with Qur'anic values. This integration is not mechanical; rather, it underscores the necessity for leaders to internalize prophetic values within their managerial and social practices. A leader must go beyond policy direction to become a moral exemplar, an inspirational communicator, and a facilitator of change rooted in the principles of tawhid and maslahat. Rahima et al. argue that leadership effectiveness lies in the ability to inspire and build relationships grounded in spiritual values, rather than relying solely on technical competence or structural authority (Rahima et al., 2023).

In the study of Islamic leadership ethics, values such as honesty, humility, and compassion play a central role in shaping the character of a leader. Rakhma et al. identify these values as moral pillars that should guide the life of every leader within educational institutions (Rakhma et al., 2022). When prophetic values are consistently embodied in leadership practices, institutional trust and integrity are collectively cultivated. This directly impacts the improvement of performance, the learning atmosphere, and the overall quality of Islamic educational services.

Overall, the findings of this study indicate that the integration of transformational and spiritual leadership, framed within prophetic values, not only strengthens the resilience of Islamic educational institutions in facing the challenges of the disruption era but also fosters a more ethical, inclusive, and reflective institutional environment. Within such an environment, individuals grow not only academically but also spiritually and socially, in alignment with the values upheld in Islamic tradition.

The Islamic transformational leadership model offers a rich conceptual framework designed to enhance the effectiveness and quality of education delivery in madrasahs and Islamic higher education institutions. This study identifies three core components of the model: prophetic values, principles of adaptation and innovation, and collaborative-communicative practices. These pillars provide not only strategic direction for educational leadership but also a robust ethical and operational foundation for navigating the social and technological dynamics of the modern era.

Prophetic values serve as the primary foundation for shaping leadership characterized by integrity. The integration of values such as justice, responsibility, and honesty affirms that the ideal leader in the context of Islamic education is not merely an institutional manager but also a moral and spiritual exemplar. An Islamic leader who internalizes prophetic values is capable of making decisions that prioritize communal well-being and fostering a work environment grounded in trust and solidarity. (Susanto et al., 2021) emphasize that prophetic leadership must be rooted in lived experience and the teachings of the Prophet, embodied in managerial practices that uphold ethics and noble values.

In the face of rapid and unpredictable change, the principles of adaptation and innovation become key to the success of Islamic transformational leadership. Leaders are expected to be sensitive to social contexts and technological developments that influence learner needs and educational governance. (Fadilah & Hamami, 2021) highlight the importance of leaders' innovative capacity in creating educational models that are both relevant and contextual. Through the use of learning

technologies, educational institutions can expand access and provide more engaging and meaningful learning experiences. Research by (Asbari & Novitasari, 2022) shows that the integration of technology into the learning process significantly enhances student interaction and participation. Furthermore, transformational leaders cultivate a culture of creative thinking, providing space for staff and learners to experiment and innovate in response to local challenges.

The final aspect of this model is the practice of collaboration and communication, which serves as the spirit of participatory engagement across all elements within educational institutions. In this approach, the leader acts as a facilitator who fosters dialogue, builds consensus, and strengthens collective ownership of the organization's vision and strategy. Collaborative practices cultivate an inclusive collective culture, while effective communication ensures a healthy flow of information and enhances work motivation. (Natalia, 2021) highlights that communicative leadership directly contributes to increased organizational engagement, the development of supportive learning communities, and the reinforcement of academic solidarity.

The Islamic transformational leadership model holds broad applicative potential in both madrasah and higher education contexts. Within madrasahs, the implementation of this model can be realized through professional development programs for teachers, encouraging the use of technology and creativity-based learning approaches. Qudsiyyah et al., (2024) emphasize that such initiatives strengthen pedagogical capacity while fostering an innovative spirit among educators. In higher education institutions, the model provides a foundation for building academic ecosystems that support active student participation. By creating collaborative spaces for research and social activities aligned with Islamic values, Islamic transformational leadership becomes a catalyst for nurturing resilient and morally grounded change agents. (Tiara et al., 2021) note that student involvement in these processes enhances their identity and social responsibility as members of the broader community.

Overall, the modeling of Islamic transformational leadership rooted in prophetic values, adaptation and innovation, and collaborative-communicative practices offers renewed hope for improving the quality and relevance of Islamic education in Indonesia. This approach not only responds to the demands of the disruptive era but also strengthens institutional spirituality, builds social trust, and creates a humanistic and inclusive learning environment.

The implementation of Islamic transformational leadership within madrasahs and Islamic higher education institutions does not occur without challenges. This study identifies three primary forms of resistance that may hinder the successful application of the model: cultural, structural, and normative challenges. These forms of resistance indicate that leadership transformation is not a linear process, but one that requires careful navigation of values, systems, and social expectations.

Cultural resistance represents a fundamental barrier that often remains invisible yet exerts a strong influence on organizational dynamics. Islamic educational institutions, long rooted in traditional norms and stable practices, tend to preserve conventional ways of operating. A rigid organizational culture may reject the changes and innovations introduced by transformational leaders. (Arar et al., 2022) argue that leaders who bring new ideas often face opposition from members who are more attached to established practices. This underscores the importance of leaders understanding the value structures embedded within institutions and fostering dialogue that bridges tradition and innovation.

Structural challenges arise from organizational systems that are inflexible and lack support for active participation and innovation. In many cases, rigid hierarchies and limited managerial backing can undermine transformative efforts. Astra, (2024) emphasize that Islamic transformational leadership requires institutional arrangements that are open to change and capable of accommodating collaborative dynamics. Hakiem et al., (2023) stress that good governance must be built upon inclusive policy support and facilitate participation from diverse stakeholders. Without adaptive structures, the operational realization of transformational ideals becomes difficult to achieve.

Normative challenges, meanwhile, relate to the misalignment between the ethical principles of transformational leadership and the prevailing values within the communities surrounding educational institutions. Islamic transformational leadership emphasizes values such as transparency, equity, and social responsibility, which may sometimes conflict with more conventional community

norms. Dacholfany et al., (2024) suggest that the application of Islamic values in leadership can offer solutions to these normative tensions, but paradigm shifts require time, persistence, and strong communication strategies. Transformation is not merely about ideas it involves the collective reconstruction of perspectives.

To address these challenges, institutional policy adjustments are a crucial step in creating an ecosystem that supports the practice of Islamic transformational leadership. Leadership training programs must be developed not only to enhance administrative competencies but also to cultivate character grounded in prophetic values. Rahmatika et al., (2023) underscores the importance of strengthening ethical and spiritual dimensions in leadership training, enabling madrasah and university leaders to become inspirational and integrity-driven figures.

Strengthening organizational governance is also a prerequisite for transformational leadership to function effectively. This includes establishing structures that promote transparency, accountability, and participation from all institutional elements. Research by Abdelwahed et al., (2024) shows that integrity and openness in leadership practices play a vital role in improving overall organizational performance. Therefore, institutional renewal processes must be continually reviewed within a framework of Islamic values that encourage change while preserving moral continuity.

In conclusion, despite the various challenges encountered, Islamic transformational leadership offers significant potential for Islamic educational institutions to grow in meaningful and relevant ways. Through an adaptive, ethical, and prophetic-value-based approach, educational institutions can realign their leadership strategies to meet contemporary demands without abandoning the spiritual roots that define their identity.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The findings of this study indicate that Islamic transformational leadership offers a comprehensive and contextually relevant approach for Islamic educational institutions facing the complexities of the disruption era. The integration of prophetic values, adaptation and innovation, and collaborative-communicative practices enriches the dimensions of leadership and provides strategic direction for shaping educational organizations that are responsive, integrity-driven, and spiritually grounded. Nevertheless, conservative cultural norms, rigid organizational structures, and social values that are not fully aligned with transformative principles present significant challenges to implementation. Therefore, supportive policy restructuring, ethics-based Islamic leadership training, and transparent, participatory governance are essential. These findings underscore the urgency of systemic reform in Islamic education, where transformational and spiritual leadership can guide institutions toward progress that is not only academic, but also moral and social.

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