



QUALITY
JOURNAL OF ISLAMIC EDUCATION MANAGEMENT
<https://journal.iainkudus.ac.id/index.php/Quality/index>
P-ISSN 2355-0333; E-ISSN 2502-8324
Vol. 14 No. 1 Tahun 2026 | 81 - 100
10.21043/quality.v14i1. 37243

Transformational Leadership of Madrasah Principals in Improving the Islamic-Based Pedagogical Competence of Teachers

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Abstract

This study analyzes the transformational leadership strategies employed by the madrasah principal at MIT Nurul Islam Ngaliyan, in Semarang City to enhance teachers' pedagogical competence based on Islamic values. A qualitative case study design was adopted for this research. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and document analyses using purposive sampling; the principal served as the key informant. The findings reveal that the principal integrates four prophetic attributes Shiddiq (truthfulness), Amanah (trustworthiness), Tabligh (conveying the message), and Fathanah (wisdom/intelligence) into three management dimensions: planning, implementation, and evaluation. During the planning stage, the integration of prophetic values achieved through the principal's personal example and by strengthening teachers' spirituality through guidance on Quranic recitation and memorization targets. During implementation, this integration is achieved through professional development programs and continuous mentoring, including comparative studies and curriculum training. In the evaluation stage, the integration is achieved through a tiered assessment model that prioritizes behavioral role modeling as the primary criterion. This strategy has proven effective in enhancing both teacher pedagogical competence and student achievement. Approximately 140 young students successfully memorized Juz 30 and the school secured second place in a district-level Siaga (Scout) skills competition involving 43 educational institutions. However, implementing this strategy also encountered internal resistance from some teachers and confusion

about adopting instructional innovations. This study contributes to the development of a holistic Prophetic transformational leadership model for Islamic educational institutions.

Keywords: Transformational Leadership; Pedagogical Competence; Islamic Values

A. INTRODUCTION

In the era of globalization and rapid technological development, Islamic education in Indonesia faces increasingly complex challenges. Madrasahs, which are formal Islamic educational institutions, are required to produce graduates who excel academically and possess strong Islamic character. In this context, the role of the madrasah principal as an educational leader is crucial, especially in improving the pedagogical competence of the teaching staff. A recent study at the Salafiyyah Al-Muhsin Islamic Boarding School in Yogyakarta demonstrated that a transformation toward participatory and democratic leadership enhances members' independence without causing them to lose their identity or original Islamic values (Nihayatuzzain, 2025). Although many studies have been conducted on transformational leadership and teacher quality evaluation in madrasah environments, gaps remain that need to be filled. El Rizaq (2021) shows that the transformational leadership of madrasah principals can foster a culture of quality through intracurricular activities and the cultivation of noble character. However, this study was limited to the Madrasah Aliyah level and employed a macro approach. Thus, it failed to address how prophetic values are internalized to improve teachers' pedagogical competence in the classroom. On the other hand, Bariroh et al. (2025) revealed that teacher performance evaluations in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah are often bogged down by administrative formalities, making them unsustainable and unable to significantly improve the learning quality. However, this study also failed to offer an alternative leadership model capable of stimulating teachers' intrinsic spiritual motivation. Thus, the causal relationship between prophetic values-based leadership and improving the pedagogical competence of elementary madrasah teachers remains unanswered empirically. This study aims to address this gap by offering a leadership model integrating a conventional transformational approach and the four prophetic qualities of *Shiddiq*, *Amanah*, *Tabligh*, and *Fathanah* as foundational values. Unlike previous studies, this study specifically examines how the principal of MIT Nurul Islam Ngaliyan applies Islamic, value-based leadership strategies across three management cycles: planning, implementation, and quality evaluation. This

approach transforms teachers' practice from merely fulfilling administrative paperwork to significantly improving the quality of classroom learning.

The term "transformational leadership" consists of two words: "leadership" and "transformational." According to Susiloningsih (2023), leadership is defined as "any action taken by an individual or group to coordinate and provide direction to other individuals or groups within a specific organization to achieve predetermined goals." In contrast, transformational leadership increases commitment without relying on reward or punishment systems. This leadership style directly influences the level of member participation and must demonstrate a connection that aligns with involvement in the organization. Member commitment is a crucial factor in maintaining organizational sustainability. This commitment reflects an individual's desire to remain, work, and give their best dedication to the organization (Hasanah et al., 2023).

According to Law Number 14 of 2005 concerning Teachers and Lecturers, teacher pedagogical competence is one of four required competencies. It includes the ability to design and implement learning, understand student characteristics, develop curricula, and conduct meaningful evaluations of learning outcomes. In the context of elementary madrasahs, however, pedagogical competence is inseparable from Islamic values, the spirit of the entire educational process (Yunita et al., 2022). According to data from the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia (2022), there is still a significant gap between the expected and actual competencies of madrasah teachers in various regions (Meilina, 2025). This phenomenon is also present at MIT Nurul Islam Ngaliyan in Semarang City, where the principal is implementing various leadership strategies to improve teachers' pedagogical competence. This situation underscores the importance of researching the transformational leadership strategies that principals implement to improve teachers' pedagogical competence, especially those integrated with Islamic values (Shopian, 2025). To ensure an effective learning process, teachers must possess pedagogical competence. Teachers with good pedagogical competence can use appropriate learning strategies, understand student characteristics, and deliver material engagingly and enjoyably (Syata et al., 2024). In the context of Islamic education, Wahyuni's research found that madrasah principals who apply Islamic leadership principles, such as *Amanah*, *Shura*, and *Uswah Hasanah*, can increase teachers' intrinsic motivation more effectively than conventional leadership approaches (Wahyuni & Maunah, 2021). In the Southeast Asian context, Wahab et al.'s (2020) published research in the International Journal of Educational

Management revealed that transformational leadership among Malaysian principals contributes significantly to teachers' commitment and pedagogical competence, particularly in curriculum development and learning innovation (Wahab et al., 2014).

This research aligns with previous studies in recognizing the importance of transformational leadership among school and madrasah principals in improving teachers' pedagogical competence (Bass & Riggio, 2005). According to Prim Masrokan Mutohar's research in *Al-Idarah: Jurnal Kependidikan Islam*, the integration of Islamic values in madrasa leadership distinguishes madrasa management from public schools (Prim Masrokan Mutohar, 2020). However, this study differs from previous studies in several ways. First, most previous studies have generically focused on transformational leadership, without systematically integrating Islamic values into their strategies. Second, research at the Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (Islamic Elementary School) level is limited compared to studies at the Madrasah Tsanawiyah (Islamic Junior High School) or Madrasah Aliyah (Islamic Senior High School) levels. Therefore, this study addresses this research gap by examining how the principal of MIT Nurul Islam Ngaliyan integrates transformational leadership strategies with Islamic values to improve teachers' pedagogical competence.

B. RESEARCH METHODS

This research was conducted at the Nurul Islam Integrated Elementary School (MIT) in Ngaliyan District, Semarang City, Central Java Province. The location was purposively selected given the school's unique approach to Islamic-based leadership. The research took place in the third week of April 2026. The study took place during the third week of April 2026. A qualitative case study design was used to analyze the transformational leadership strategies of madrasah principals in improving teacher competency based on Islamic values at MIT Nurul Islam Ngaliyan in Semarang City. A qualitative approach was chosen because it allows for an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon in its natural context (Aris Setiyani, 2026). The case study design was chosen because the research focuses on a specific, information-rich unit of analysis, enabling researchers to explore leadership's meaning, processes, and dynamics comprehensively (Wirawan Endro Dwi Radianto, 2025).

Data were collected from key informants who were selected using purposive sampling techniques based on their roles and involvement in teacher leadership and

development processes in madrasahs (Mauludya et al., 2026). Informants in this study included the madrasah principal, the deputy principal of curriculum, and teachers involved in pedagogical development programs and learning instrument development. Data collection stopped when the information obtained no longer yielded significant new themes or perspectives, as determined by the principle of data saturation (Wahyu Khoiruz Zaman, 2025).

The primary data collection technique used in this study was semi-structured, in-depth interviews. The interview guide was based on the dimensions of transformational leadership integrated with Islamic values, such as *Amanah* (trustworthiness), *Shiddiq* (integrity), *Tabligh* (discipline), and *Fathanah* (faithfulness). The information obtained from the interviews was transcribed verbatim and analyzed using thematic analysis and a systematic coding process. The process began with open coding to identify text units or statements that reflected the informants' Islamic leadership characteristics. The initial codes were then grouped into more specific categories through axial coding to examine the relationships between concepts. Finally, selective coding synthesized all categories into key themes that theoretically integrate transformational leadership dimensions with prophetic values, answering the research questions in depth (Krislina Pattipeiluhu et al., 2013). The interviews were face-to-face, averaging 45 minutes per session. They were recorded with the informants' consent and transcribed verbatim. In addition to the interviews, data were collected through direct observation of teacher development activities and analysis of madrasah documents.

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based on data collected through in-depth interviews with the principal of Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Terpadu (MIT) Nurul Islam Ngaliyan, its governance and leadership system is implemented through a strategic management structure based on a linear model that includes three stages: planning, execution, and evaluation. This study will examine the systematic efforts to adopt, instill, and standardize the four main characteristics of prophethood (*shiddiq*, *amanah*, *tabligh*, and *fathonah*) to improve the professional and pedagogical competence of teachers and achieve the Madrasah's main vision. The principal directs all of these stages centrally to actualize the institutional vision: "A Madrasah with Islamic Morals and Excellence in Achievement."

1. Madrasah Principal Planning Based on Prophetic Values as a Foundation for Transformation.

During this phase, the madrasah principal develops strategic organizational steps by combining the *uswah* approach (modeling normative behavior) with spiritual aspects of operational management. The madrasah principal does not position himself merely as a manager behind a desk but as a central figure who provides real examples through experience, concrete actions, and direct involvement in carrying out the madrasah's religious activities. This commitment to modeling is demonstrated practically during breaks, when the leader is present to set an example for all his subordinates, including teachers and staff, by leading the Dhuhr prayer. These direct experiences and actions are deliberately designed so that spiritual values are firmly embedded through visual habituation in the work environment and do not stop at the level of textual discourse. In addition to physical modeling, the planning instrument is strengthened by a metaphysical-spiritual approach based on inner nurturing. The principal instructs himself and the teachers to pray continually for the smooth running of the teaching and learning process. The minimum obligation is to send a gift of a recitation of Surah Al-Fatihah specifically addressed to the spiritual soul of each student. Through this prayer, the planning process relies not only on human rationality but also on knocking on Heaven's door to soften students' hearts and facilitate their absorption of knowledge.

By internalizing the character of *Shiddiq* (honesty), the leader established a philosophical foundation based on the main vision of the institution: "A Madrasah with Islamic Morals and Excellence in Achievement." The madrasah principal establishes a planning paradigm in which, if an educational institution can uphold an atmosphere of Islamic morals, then, God willing, the value of honesty will grow within that ecosystem without the need for bureaucratic coercion. The character of *shiddiq* emerges as an intrinsic drive of spiritual awareness. When all madrasah components have good morals, Allah SWT theologically directs, guides, and guards their hearts to stay on the path of honesty. This theological concept is further translated into planning for the character of *Amanah* (trustworthiness). The madrasah principal invites all educators to commit to the madrasah's vision, believing that they will embody the character of *Amanah* through their dedication to teaching. To support this, the principal determined that the "spirit of teachers" at MIT Nurul Islam must absolutely align with the "spirit of the Qur'an." In addition to serving as a universal guide to life, the Qur'an is positioned as the standard of professional teacher competency that must be met at MIT Nurul Islam. Teachers

must have adequate religious competence, measured by the quality of their recitation and their memorization capacity of at least Juz 30 (Juz 'Amma). To facilitate achieving these competencies, the principal planned and led a special Qur'an recitation mentoring program for teachers, held once a week. Through this intensive mentoring program, the principal monitored the quality of the teachers' recitations directly. These recitations would later be transferred to and practiced with the children in the classroom. The long-term goal of this program is to instill the Qur'an in teachers' hearts so that good morals and a trustworthy nature will naturally radiate in their daily work performance.

Meanwhile, the *tabligh* dimension, which involves conveying information transparently and accountably, is realized through a structured, formal organizational mechanism. All regulations, rules, procedures, and targets are discussed, debated, and decided upon collectively in a participatory manner at the beginning of the year in the work meeting forum. This openness ensures that the rules created are the result of collective agreement, not coercion. In the draft plan for the meeting, the madrasah principal designs a multi-layered oversight system that includes monitoring and evaluation activities. The principal schedules routine monitoring activities to ensure that teachers fulfill their administrative obligations, such as maintaining orderly class administration and preparing Contextual Learning Implementation Plans (RPP) before entering the classroom. The *tabligh* pathway is complemented by periodic evaluation plans embodied in objective teacher performance assessment instruments to measure the extent to which the agreed-upon rules and administration can be implemented in the teaching process.

Finally, the *fathonah* (intelligent/professional) dimension is conceptualized by the principal through ambitious philosophical jargon: producing human resources with "German brains and Mecca hearts." This vision means that MIT Nurul Islam teachers must be intelligent and master a wide range of modern sciences. They must adapt to technological developments and be capable of producing creative learning innovations, representing the intellectual intelligence of German progress. However, this intellectual intelligence must be balanced with a pious and noble inner state. Teachers must possess good morals and an extraordinary relationship with the Qur'an (representing the spiritual purity of Mecca). To realize this vision of a good and clean heart, the principal requires all teachers to attend prayer services regularly. This prayer attendance instrument is intended to maintain work spirituality because the inner clarity of teachers is believed to be directly correlated with their effectiveness in the classroom and their ability to transfer knowledge.

This comprehensive *Fathonah* plan is ultimately projected to produce MIT Nurul Islam students who are intelligent, smart, and highly competitive. The success indicators of this mature planning are not just theoretical assumptions; they have produced real, empirical evidence in the field. Children in grades two and three at MIT Nurul Islam have proven to be intelligent and smart, showing the ability to memorize the entire last part of the Qur'an (Juz 30) fluently at an early age.

2. Madrasah Principal Implementation as an Arena for Internalization and Capacity Development.

During the implementation phase, the transformational leadership strategy of MIT Nurul Islam Ngaliyan focused on capacity building, professional development, and improving teacher competency continuously and dynamically. The principal established the principle that teachers should continually develop in line with the demands of the times and the dynamics of the educational world, rather than becoming static or satisfied with their existing abilities. To this end, the principal implemented an operational strategy in the form of a comparative study program with other educational institutions with superior governance. Through this program, teachers learned an Observe, Imitate, Modify (OIM)-based innovation management method: observing, imitating, and modifying the instructional strengths of partner schools for contextual adoption at MIT Nurul Islam. In addition to external observations, internal competency strengthening was achieved through independent and regular curriculum training. For this program, the school invited competent resource persons, experts, and external speakers to analyze the latest developments in curriculum regulations. This ensured that teachers had a cutting-edge pedagogical understanding and would not be left behind by current developments.

In the area of implementing Islamic values and character development, the madrasah principal uses a contextual, problem-solving approach. He demonstrates the characteristics of transformational leadership by not viewing problems in a fragmented manner, but rather tracing them from an upstream to downstream perspective. For instance, when issues arose regarding the quality of students' worship, such as hurried prayer movements or a lack of focus and reverence among children during congregational prayer, the madrasah principal swiftly identified the root of the problem. Through a managerial investigation process, the principal successfully identified the root of the problem: the teacher's weakness in instilling reverence and the spiritual urgency of prayer in students due to a lack of intelligence, expertise, or special skills. In response to this finding, the principal

invited ustadz (renowned preachers) and special spiritual speakers to the madrasah. This step was taken to reeducate teachers and improve their spiritual and practical skills so they could transfer their energy and enthusiasm for good worship to their students. Amidst the demands of this massive program, the madrasah principal demonstrated a strong commitment to transformational leadership by emphasizing the principle that a madrasah principal must fully fund the training budget without burdening teachers to ensure a comfortable learning process.

Meanwhile, in implementing the prophetic values of *Amanah* and *Tabligh*, the madrasah principal demands that these noble qualities be applied in a disciplined and consistent manner throughout the madrasah's operations. Teachers must first demonstrate trustworthiness in carrying out their professional obligations before demanding it from students. These qualities are enforced at all times, including through a strict daily attendance system. Attendance is not merely interpreted as a bureaucratic control tool but as an embodiment of the honest, responsible, and trustworthy behavior inherent in the prophetic qualities of every teaching activity.

Implementing disciplined, courageous, and spiritually based human resource development management has a linear impact that ultimately results in the concrete realization of the *Fathonah* (intelligence/professionalism) dimension. For MIT Nurul Islam Ngaliyan, the institution's collective intelligence is evident in the numerous awards won by MIT Nurul Islam students in various competitions. The array of trophies brought home to the madrasah is tangible evidence of this success. One of the most prominent achievements and an indicator of the success of this transformational strategy's implementation is the madrasah contingent's success in winning the Ngaliyan district-level alert skills competition. MIT Nurul Islam won second place in this prestigious event, a truly extraordinary achievement considering 43 private and public Islamic elementary schools and public elementary schools throughout the Ngaliyan area participated in the competition. This success clearly shows that combining competency development strategies with spiritual strengthening can boost the competitiveness of madrasahs to the level of, or even surpass, other public schools.

3. Madrasah Principal Evaluation as a Holistic Accountability Mechanism Based on Prophetic Values.

In the final phase of the strategic management cycle at the Nurul Islam Integrated Elementary School (MIT), the principal implemented a comprehensive, circular, and in-depth evaluation system to measure the achievement of all programs, which culminate in the vision of “A Madrasah with Islamic Morals and Excellence in Achievement.” Rather than carrying out this evaluation in a mechanistic-secular manner, the principal strictly deconstructed it from prophetic values. The principal implemented a chain assessment philosophy, or a cascading evaluation model, formulated into an operational postulate that reads: “The principal applies, then the teacher, then the child.” This evaluative formulation indicates that the quality assessment process at this madrasah prioritizes behavioral modeling. This approach is based on the principles of child development psychology, whereby what children see in their daily madrasah environment becomes the basis for their own assessment. Students at MIT Nurul Islam are positioned as active observers who assess the moral consistency of their educators, not passive objects. Therefore, before measuring student achievement, the principal first evaluates the extent to which he and the teachers have internalized prophetic qualities in their daily activities.

When evaluating the implementation of the *Amanah* character trait, which includes the concept of *Shiddiq* or honesty, the assessment focuses on strengthening students’ faith as the basis for developing a solid Islamic character. The principal establishes the paradigm that trustworthiness and honesty cannot be cultivated through formal regulatory coercion; rather, they must first be developed and strengthened within the faith. Through intensive faith-strengthening interventions, the madrasa evaluates student character development with the theological goal of Allah SWT providing students with noble morals. The madrasa aims to produce graduates who are honest, trustworthy, and blessed with intellectual intelligence (*Fathonah*). This periodic evaluation mechanism is formally and bureaucratically realized in three integrated quality reporting documents. These documents include academic reports based on national curriculum standards, quality assurance reports for local excellence programs in the madrasa (e.g., achievement of the *amtsilati* method, daily Qur’an memorization, and moral assessments), and class teacher notebooks. The classroom teacher’s notebook accurately records children’s developmental dynamics in the classroom, their behavior, and the obstacles they face. All comparative data from the notebooks is periodically reported to the

principal for supervisory purposes and submitted to parents or guardians during report card collection. The school hopes that its overall vision can be achieved through synergy between school and home.

Meanwhile, for the *Tabligh* evaluation (openness and transformative communication), the madrasah principal designed various transparent and accountable communication channels through which the results of daily observations and the coaching process could be disseminated. The principal conveyed daily observations of the children's moral and academic development interactively through interview forums or in-depth interviews with parents during report card collection. Furthermore, the madrasah principal conveyed collective evaluations and coaching directly to students when acting as the instructor for the Monday flag ceremony. Class teachers were responsible for daily coordination and monitoring, overseeing children's behavior in the classroom and relaying the madrasah's evaluative messages to parents.

Finally, the *Fathonah* aspect (managerial intelligence and professionalism) is evaluated by examining how teachers' professional rights are fulfilled in the teaching process. In this dimension, the principal's role is to educate teachers by providing all necessary classroom infrastructure and educational support tools, such as sound systems. The basic principle upheld in this *Fathonah* evaluation is open governance. All teaching needs and necessary supporting facilities must be openly communicated in advance between teachers and the madrasah management. Once these needs are met, the next step is a periodic evaluation process. The principal evaluates the extent to which these facilities are utilized optimally and assesses their effectiveness in improving teaching performance, student comfort, and academic quality. The division of evaluation pillars based on the four characteristics of the Prophet Muhammad proves that the principal of the MIT Nurul Islam Madrasah carries out institutional control functions holistically. This involves balancing bureaucratic accountability, communication transparency, facility suitability, and theological accountability before Allah SWT.

4. Transformational Leadership and Prophetic Values: Synergies, Challenges, and Organizational Dynamics at MIT Nurul Islam

Integrating the universal transformational leadership model pioneered by Bass and Avolio with the dimensions of prophetic values (*shiddiq*, *amanah*, *tabligh*, and *fathonah*) at MIT Nurul Islam shows strong conceptual alignment while creating dynamic tensions in practice. The principal's strategy of positioning himself at the

forefront by leading congregational Dhuhur prayers during breaks and mentoring teachers during weekly Qur'anic recitation activities is a concrete manifestation of Idealized Influence and Inspirational Motivation (Nani Zahrotul Mufidah, 2023). In this landscape, leaders do not merely instruct or rely on written regulations; rather, they model behavior directly through concrete actions (behavioral modeling). This managerial syncretism aligns with the blueprint for prophetic leadership (Aziz & Hanif, 2026), which asserts that an effective Islamic transformational leader must integrate spiritual religious authority with formal bureaucratic authority to mobilize followers' intrinsic awareness. The principal of MIT Nurul Islam Madrasah acts not only as an instructional manager pursuing curriculum targets but also as a spiritual leader who fosters commitment among his subordinates (Syamsul Hadi, 2012).

The institution's vision, "A Madrasah with Islamic Morals and Excellence in Achievement," is a powerful shared vision. According to contemporary organizational theory developed by Senge (2006), a shared vision is the primary foundation for creating a learning organization (Toikka & Tarnanen, 2024). Rather than being displayed on the wall, this vision is transformed into a collective energy that unites the "spirit of teaching" with the "spirit of the Qur'an." When the madrasah principal establishes minimum competency indicators of fluency in recitation and memorization of Juz 30 for teachers and organizes curriculum training with external experts, these actions demonstrate the application of Individualized Consideration and Intellectual Stimulation dimensions (Maysaroh et al., 2025). Leaders encourage educators to step out of their pedagogical comfort zones and trigger a process of continuous self-improvement (Saifullah AMM, 2024). Thus, empirical data from MIT Nurul Islam prove that strengthening religious beliefs and increasing professional competence are not separate entities that negate each other but rather two variables that positively impact the madrasah ecosystem (Manaf, 2025).

Despite demonstrating ideal success patterns across several macro indicators, an honest and critical analysis must uncover the dynamic, conflictual, and structural challenges that emerged during the implementation of the transformational leadership strategy at MIT Nurul Islam. Sociological realities demonstrate that the transformation of the work culture from community-based practices to Islamic-based professional standards has sparked internal resistance from some teachers (Didik Setiyadi, 2025). Strict administrative obligations, such as preparing contextual Lesson Plans (RPPs) (Widyastuti & Sakti, 2022), maintaining orderly classrooms, and participating in regular performance evaluations to

strengthen the *Tabligh* (preaching) spirit (Rahman Danial, 2026) and accountability, often clash with limited operational time and teacher burnout (Zalina Ismail, Ikma Amri Noraziwatul, Asilah Abdul Mutalib, & Zahidah Ab Latif, 2023). This mounting workload triggers latent interpersonal conflict between the madrasah principal, acting as an agent of change, and the staff, particularly senior teachers accustomed to a more relaxed work rhythm (La Amin, 2023). This confirms the critical view of Waghid (2024) and his colleagues that transformational leadership is not a peaceful, linear process, but a disruptive managerial intervention that shakes the status quo (Ichsan Adiwijaya, 2025).

Madrasah principals often face a complex ethical dilemma in management, balancing the firmness of enforcing organizational discipline for official professionalism (Burnama et al., 2026) with the obligation to maintain harmonious, family-like working relationships (*ukhuwah*), which are hallmarks of Islamic educational institutions (Sitiudong, 2025). This emotional tension intensifies when policies that aim to fulfill *fathonah* standards, such as instructions for recording in teacher prayer attendance and the obligation to memorize Juz 30 in the weekly program, are perceived by some as an additional psychological burden beyond the formal teaching load rather than as an essential means of enhancing one's spiritual growth (Hermawan, 2024).

The real challenges and partial failures in implementing transformational strategies at MIT Nurul Islam are evident in the pedagogical competency gap and passive resistance to implementing the Observe, Imitate, Modify (OIM) method (Norenta Sitohang, 2025). Conducting comparative studies at leading schools and inviting external curriculum speakers to the madrasah did not result in uniform innovation adoption among teachers (Torrance et al., 2025). The madrasah principal encountered obstacles when translating the philosophical concept of "German-minded and Mecca-hearted" into concrete teaching modules and instructional practices in the classroom. As a result, the anticipated learning innovations often stalled at the "observation" and "copy-paste" stages due to an inability to make contextual "modifications" suited to the characteristics of MIT Nurul Islam students (Sarifah et al., 2025).

This issue is exacerbated by the limited supporting infrastructure at the macro level in madrasahs. Although madrasah principals have demonstrated bold financial commitment by funding training programs and providing physical support equipment, such as optimizing sound systems to enhance teacher performance, broader technological infrastructure limitations often prevent these facilities from

being utilized optimally (Wahyudi, 2018). This phenomenon of field barriers closely aligns with the dynamic critique proposed by Haddade et al. (2024) and the theory of substitutes for leadership (Samsul Arifin, 2026). According to this theory, the effectiveness of a leader's transformational leadership does not exist in a vacuum, but rather is strictly limited by situational factors, environmental readiness, and the adaptive capacity of followers (Fransisco et al., 2023).

Sharp cultural resistance also emerged when the madrasah principal addressed the issue of students' lack of devotion during congregational prayers at the madrasah (Efendy & Ihram, 2025). The principal's strategy of tracing the problem back to the teachers' low spiritual-pedagogical competence and responding by bringing in external religious teachers to retrain them triggered a defensive mechanism among some educators (Murni, 2023). Some teachers demonstrated covert resistance because they felt this strategy questioned their religious authority and undermined their teaching integrity, humiliating their position as educators in front of the madrasah community (Indah, 2025). This dynamic shows that applying prophetic values to transformational leadership requires careful communication to avoid misunderstandings about managerial distrust.

D. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the principal of MIT Nurul Islam Ngaliyan in Semarang City has successfully implemented a transformational leadership strategy that integrates Islamic values into a systematic effort to improve teachers' pedagogical competence. Integrating the four prophetic qualities of *Shiddiq* (honesty), *Amanah* (responsibility), *Tabligh* (inspirational communication), and *Fathanah* (intelligence) into the planning, implementation, and evaluation stages has proven to form an educational ecosystem oriented not only toward technical-pedagogical skills but also toward forming a strong Islamic character. The madrasah principal's exemplary behavior (*uswatun hasanah*) drives educators' intrinsic motivation to see teaching as a divine mandate rather than a professional routine. The success of this strategy is evident in students' academic and non-academic achievements, such as approximately 140 students completing the memorization of Juz 30 and achieving first place in a sub-district-level competition. These findings confirm that an Islamic values-based leadership approach can meaningfully differentiate Madrasah Ibtidaiyah from conventional approaches. Based on these findings, it is recommended that other Islamic educational institutions adopt a model integrating prophetic values into structured leadership management.

Furthermore, more research is needed to measure the model's effectiveness across various levels of madrasah.

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