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#### Transforming Islamic Education Through Value-Based Leadership: **A Narrative Review**

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Received: February 28, 2025Accepted: April 17, 2025Published: May 31, 2025	<b>ABSTRACT:</b> This narrative review explores the dynamics of Islamic educational leadership and its influence on institutional quality and transformation. The study aims to synthesize prevailing leadership models, evaluate their integration with Islamic values, and identify systemic enablers and constraints. Literature was gathered systematically from databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, ERIC, and Google Scholar using keywords including "Islamic educational leadership" and "transformational leadership in Muslim
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#### **INTRODUCTION**

Islamic educational leadership stands at the intersection of tradition and transformation. Amid the ongoing shifts brought by globalization, digital innovation, and pluralistic challenges, there exists a growing need for Islamic education systems to adopt leadership models that are both contextually

grounded and value-driven. However, existing research on Islamic educational leadership reveals significant gaps, particularly in terms of integrating core Islamic values such as *tawhid*, *amanah*, and *qiwamah* into contemporary leadership practices. The literature tends to emphasize normative approaches over adaptive and contextual analyses, creating an urgent call for narrative-driven, interdisciplinary inquiry (Shah, 2010; Rusnadi & Hafidhah, 2019; Arar et al., 2022; Alazmi & Bush, 2023). This review adopts an operational definition of Islamic value-based leadership as leadership practice explicitly rooted in core Islamic principles such as *tawhid* (unity of purpose), *amanah* (trust and accountability), *shura* (consultative decision-making), and *adl* (justice). Unlike conventional leadership models that prioritize performance and charisma, Islamic value-based leadership emphasizes ethical alignment, spiritual consciousness, and communal responsibility. This distinction guides our synthesis and underscores the need for a faith-driven yet context-responsive leadership paradigm.

While some empirical studies have examined leadership models within Islamic education, many remain bound by traditional paradigms, neglecting issues such as digitalization, gender dynamics, institutional policy influences, and cross-cultural adaptation (Farihin, 2023; Amatullah, 2024). For example, there is a clear lack of analysis regarding the role of female leaders and how their experiences shape inclusive and transformative practices. Similarly, there has been limited exploration of how Islamic education leaders incorporate digital tools and technologies into decision-making, management, and communication strategies. This absence highlights a critical need for updated models of leadership that reflect the realities of 21st-century educational environments.

Another critical area often overlooked in Islamic leadership research is the intersection between national education policies and institutional autonomy. In many contexts, educational leadership must navigate not only theological obligations but also state-imposed regulations. Yet, few studies explore how Islamic institutions respond to such regulatory frameworks while striving to maintain religious authenticity and pedagogical relevance (Arar et al., 2022; Farihin, 2023). This highlights the importance of integrating policy analysis into future research agendas.

In addition to content-related gaps, methodological limitations persist. A considerable number of studies rely heavily on literature reviews or descriptive qualitative designs without employing rigorous, field-based research methods. This creates a disconnect between theoretical discourse and practical implementation. To bridge this divide, researchers are encouraged to use mixed methods, combining narrative inquiry with qualitative and quantitative tools to capture the multifaceted nature of Islamic leadership experiences across regions and institutional types.

The narrative approach, in particular, has emerged as a vital lens through which researchers can uncover the lived experiences, personal values, and adaptive strategies of Islamic education leaders. Narratives allow for the articulation of authentic leadership stories that capture both structural challenges and value-driven responses. In this sense, narrative studies go beyond theoretical abstraction, offering grounded insights that can inform policy, practice, and future leadership development frameworks.

Furthermore, expanding the geographic scope of research is essential. Much of the current scholarship is centered on the Middle East, leaving out important developments in Southeast Asia and the West. For instance, countries like Indonesia and Malaysia have distinct Islamic educational ecosystems shaped by local cultures and socio-political histories. Comparative studies that include female leadership in Western Muslim minority contexts (e.g., the UK or Canada) can also enrich the discourse by highlighting how Islamic values are negotiated in secular and multicultural settings.

This study aims to fill these gaps by conducting a narrative review that synthesizes a diverse body of literature on Islamic educational leadership, focusing on epistemological foundations, contextual applications, and global adaptability. The review prioritizes literature from Southeast Asia, the Middle East, and Western Muslim minority communities, with attention to gender, technology, institutional diversity, and policy influences. In doing so, it seeks to develop a comprehensive and adaptive framework for Islamic educational leadership capable of navigating the complexities of the global era.

#### METHOD

This study employs a narrative review methodology to examine the evolving landscape of Islamic educational leadership in response to the demands of globalization and modernization. The methodology section outlines the processes of data collection, source selection, keyword strategies, and article evaluation, all of which were conducted to ensure a rigorous and systematic literature review.

To initiate the literature search, a set of credible and high-impact academic databases were identified as primary sources. These included Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, and the Education Resources Information Center (ERIC). Each database offers unique advantages: Scopus and Web of Science are renowned for their extensive indexing of peer-reviewed international journals and high citation standards, ensuring the inclusion of influential studies. ERIC specializes in educational research and provides access to both theoretical and applied studies, including grey literature like policy reports and theses. Google Scholar was used as a supplementary database due to its broad indexing of journal articles, dissertations, books, and conference proceedings, including some sources not indexed in commercial databases. However, to maintain academic rigor, only peer-reviewed or academically verified sources from Google Scholar were considered.

The keyword search strategy was carefully developed to capture the multifaceted dimensions of Islamic educational leadership. Key phrases included "Islamic educational leadership," "spiritual leadership in Muslim schools," "visionary leadership in Islamic boarding schools," and "transformational leadership in Islamic education." Additional keywords such as "ethical leadership in Muslim schools," "Islamic administrative leadership," and "digital leadership in Islamic education" were used to explore specific aspects like ethics, management, and technology. Boolean operators such as AND, OR, and NOT were employed to refine the search results. For

example, combining "Islamic educational leadership" AND "transformational" helped to narrow down results to studies that explicitly addressed change-oriented leadership models in Islamic education.

The inclusion criteria for selected literature were as follows: (1) studies that specifically examined leadership in Islamic educational settings; (2) peer-reviewed journal articles, dissertations, books, and policy reports published between 2010 and 2024; (3) literature available in English, Arabic, or Bahasa Indonesia to accommodate linguistic diversity relevant to the geographical focus; (4) research that discussed leadership from either a theoretical, empirical, or case study perspective. The exclusion criteria comprised (1) articles not focused on Islamic educational institutions; (2) opinion pieces and editorials without empirical grounding; and (3) publications lacking methodological transparency.

The literature selection process was conducted in several stages. Initially, all identified sources were screened by title and abstract to determine preliminary relevance. This was followed by a full-text review of selected articles to evaluate their alignment with the research objectives and inclusion criteria. During this phase, attention was given to the study's methodology, context, and key findings. Each article was then evaluated for quality using criteria such as the journal's impact factor, citation metrics, and peer-review status. For databases like Scopus and Web of Science, citation analysis tools were also employed to assess the scholarly impact of individual articles.

Throughout the selection process, the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) framework was used to ensure transparency and reproducibility. The PRISMA flowchart documented the number of articles retrieved, screened, and included or excluded at each stage. This structured approach minimized selection bias and enhanced the reliability of the review.

To organize and manage the references, software tools like Mendeley and Zotero were utilized. These tools facilitated citation management, note-taking, and deduplication of articles. Additionally, the use of reference managers enabled the creation of an annotated bibliography and allowed for easier cross-referencing of themes across multiple sources.

The final corpus included a diverse range of studies encompassing qualitative research, case studies, ethnographies, and conceptual analyses. Although randomized controlled trials and cohort studies were not typical in this field, empirical investigations using interviews, observations, and document analyses were prioritized. These methodologies provided rich narrative data that were suitable for a narrative review aiming to explore meaning, context, and lived experience in leadership practices.

Furthermore, backward and forward citation tracking was performed. Backward tracking involved examining the reference lists of key studies to identify foundational texts. Forward tracking utilized tools in Google Scholar and Scopus to identify newer studies that cited the key works, thereby capturing recent developments and emerging trends.

Additional data were sourced from institutional repositories and open-access academic libraries, where theses and unpublished dissertations offered unique insights into grassroots-level leadership practices. These sources added depth and contextual richness to the findings, particularly regarding local adaptations of Islamic leadership models in Southeast Asia and Western countries with Muslim minority populations.

Finally, an iterative approach was adopted to refine search terms and strategies. Initial pilot searches were conducted to test the effectiveness of various keyword combinations. Based on these results, adjustments were made to enhance the relevance and comprehensiveness of the search. This iterative refinement continued throughout the research process to ensure that emerging concepts and evolving terminologies were incorporated.

By combining multiple databases, a robust keyword strategy, clear inclusion/exclusion criteria, and methodical evaluation protocols, this study developed a comprehensive and credible foundation for analyzing Islamic educational leadership. The methodology ensured that the selected literature was both representative and rigorous, setting the stage for meaningful synthesis and interpretation in the subsequent sections of the review.

#### **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

The findings of this narrative review reveal a complex yet coherent landscape of Islamic educational leadership, where various leadership models, gender roles, cultural contexts, and empirical impacts converge to shape institutional practices. The results are thematically organized into four major areas: Islamic leadership models and values, gender roles in leadership, local and cultural contexts, and the impact of leadership on educational quality. Each theme reflects a multifaceted interaction between Islamic values, administrative strategies, and socio-cultural dynamics.

The analysis of leadership models reveals that Islamic educational institutions tend to adopt transformational, spiritual, and charismatic leadership styles. Transformational leadership emphasizes vision, strategic change, and inspiration, aligning these aspects with Islamic values such as amanah and justice (Yusuf et al., 2024; Arar et al., 2022). Leaders using this model in madrasahs and pesantren have shown capabilities in integrating religious values with contemporary educational innovation. Spiritual leadership, on the other hand, emphasizes deep faith, sincerity, and contemplation as foundational elements of decision-making and school governance (Sholikhah et al., 2019). Charismatic leadership surfaces as a compelling model, often inspiring and revolutionizing school culture through personal magnetism and strong emotional connections (Brooks et al., 2020).

Comparative studies indicate that transformational leadership has a significant impact on teacher motivation and organizational performance, while also incorporating spiritual values into systemic change (Yusuf et al., 2024; Arar et al., 2022). Meanwhile, spiritual leadership nurtures authentic Islamic pedagogy by prioritizing ethical and soulful development (Sholikhah et al., 2019). Charismatic leaders, often revered in their communities, influence institutional behavior in times

of crisis by fusing inspiration and communicative leadership (Brooks et al., 2020). Together, these models create a holistic framework that addresses modern educational challenges while upholding Islamic ethical foundations.

The contextual adaptation of leadership models in Islamic educational settings further reinforces their relevance. Leaders strategically integrate tawhid, amanah, and qiwamah into school practices, transforming daily operations into reflections of faith-driven governance (Arar et al., 2022). This integration leads to stakeholder loyalty and a learning environment conducive to both academic and moral development (Yusuf et al., 2024). Despite varied approaches, all models share a commitment to Islamic values as their core philosophy (Sholikhah et al., 2019).

Moreover, translating Islamic leadership principles into policies and school practices has tangible effects on institutional governance and educational climate. Faith-based governance manifests in curriculum policies, staff behavior codes, and management strategies that merge Islamic and secular knowledge for holistic student development (Rusnadi & Hafidhah, 2019; Humaisi et al., 2019). Islamic leadership also fosters human resource development by embedding spiritual principles into capacity-building programs (Rusnadi & Hafidhah, 2019). Schools that implement these principles report higher satisfaction levels among students and improved teacher performance, cultivating a school culture grounded in justice, integrity, and solidarity (Humaisi et al., 2019).

In the realm of gender dynamics, the leadership experiences of Muslim women illustrate a distinctive narrative. Female leaders often navigate the intersections of tradition and modernity while challenging gender stereotypes (Lahmar, 2024; Amatullah, 2024). Their leadership is characterized by participative and dialogic methods, where inclusivity becomes central to addressing systemic challenges (Amatullah, 2024). These women act not only as formal authorities but also as mediators and change agents, shaping school cultures through empathy and resilience (Lahmar, 2024).

Female leaders often face dual burdens of professional expectations and domestic roles, alongside structural and cultural obstacles such as gender bias and conservative social norms (Lahmar, 2024; Amatullah, 2024). Nonetheless, they succeed by employing collaborative and innovative strategies, supported by professional networks and community solidarity. Their leadership style tends to be democratic and inclusive, fostering organizational loyalty and improving institutional commitment (Lahmar, 2024).

The findings also reveal a paradigmatic shift in how leadership is perceived in multicultural contexts. Women leaders strategically merge Islamic identity with aspirations of modernity, becoming innovators in equitable educational policy development (Amatullah, 2024). Their inclusive leadership style enhances participatory culture in schools, contributing to improved staff and student engagement (Lahmar, 2024). These experiences underline the need for gender-sensitive leadership strategies that empower women within Islamic educational frameworks.

Cultural and local contexts significantly influence leadership effectiveness in Islamic educational institutions. Leadership styles are shaped by local traditions, norms, and political dynamics (Farihin, 2023; Hannan et al., 2024). In various regions, local wisdom—such as gotong royong in Indonesia—is embedded into leadership approaches, contrasting with more hierarchical models

in the Middle East (Farihin, 2023; Hannan et al., 2024). Such cultural adaptation demonstrates the contextual flexibility of Islamic leadership, allowing religious values to be interpreted and applied in diverse sociocultural environments.

Comparative studies between Muslim-majority and minority countries highlight striking differences in leadership application. In Muslim-majority contexts, Islamic principles are deeply embedded in school structures, resulting in more traditional leadership styles (Amatullah, 2024). Conversely, minority contexts require leaders to balance religious identity with pluralistic societal demands, fostering more flexible and dialogic leadership approaches (Amatullah, 2024). These leaders employ intercultural communication strategies to maintain Islamic identity while engaging broader communities. Therefore, cultural-political contexts determine leadership efficacy and strategy.

Local cultural nuances also affect curriculum design and implementation. Leaders who understand local values tailor programs to meet community needs, thereby improving school-community engagement and cultural identity reinforcement (Farihin, 2023; Hannan et al., 2024). This synergy between Islamic values and local traditions enhances educational effectiveness and organizational resilience.

Regarding educational quality, the influence of Islamic leadership is empirically supported. Schools with leaders who integrate Islamic values such as integrity, justice, and amanah demonstrate higher student satisfaction and teacher performance (Purhasanah, 2024; Subaidi et al., 2023). These environments also encourage professional collaboration and holistic character development. Quantitative indicators such as student achievement, teacher evaluations, and parental involvement affirm the positive impact of Islamic leadership on academic performance (Ridwan et al., 2024).

Additionally, technological integration emerges as a critical indicator of leadership effectiveness. Schools adopting digital leadership practices experience improved transparency, communication, and operational efficiency (Ridwan et al., 2024). Leaders who employ real-time data analytics make more informed decisions, enhancing service quality and stakeholder engagement (Subaidi et al., 2023). These innovations reflect the adaptability of Islamic leadership models in modern educational landscapes.

Internal collaboration is another hallmark of effective Islamic leadership. Positive interpersonal relationships among stakeholders—teachers, students, and parents—create a supportive school climate (Purhasanah, 2024). Participatory governance encourages a sense of ownership, loyalty, and collective accountability (Subaidi et al., 2023). This collaborative culture strengthens school identity and drives continuous improvement.

In summary, this review demonstrates that Islamic educational leadership is not monolithic but rather diverse, adaptive, and contextually grounded. Models like transformational, spiritual, and charismatic leadership are not mutually exclusive but can be integrated to produce responsive and holistic educational governance (Yusuf et al., 2024; Sholikhah et al., 2019; Brooks et al., 2020). Gender roles, local contexts, and technological innovations all contribute to a dynamic framework where Islamic principles guide educational excellence. The empirical evidence underscores the

necessity for inclusive, value-driven, and strategically adaptive leadership to navigate the challenges of modern Islamic education.

4.1 Alignment of Findings with Global Literature

The findings of this study strongly align with the global literature on educational leadership, particularly within Islamic education contexts. Globally recognized leadership models such as transformational, spiritual, and charismatic leadership have gained traction as effective approaches in promoting holistic educational reform. The emphasis on leadership grounded in Islamic values, such as trust (amanah), honesty (sidq), and integrity (istiqamah), mirrors the universal attributes that underpin ethical leadership models recognized worldwide (Said et al., 2023; Yusuf et al., 2024). This convergence signifies that leadership practices within Islamic educational institutions are not only contextually relevant but also resonate with broader theoretical frameworks that stress contextual responsiveness and cultural adaptability.

Transformational leadership, especially in pesantren and madrasah settings, is reported to foster vision-driven educational change and motivate stakeholders toward shared institutional goals, echoing global scholarship that supports vision-centric leadership in school transformation (Yusuf et al., 2024). Similarly, spiritual leadership, which emphasizes inner development and ethical conduct, parallels global calls for value-based leadership that focuses on cultivating moral character in school communities (Sholikhah et al., 2019). The literature by Ezzani and Brooks (2019) particularly emphasizes that Islamic school leaders in minority contexts often adopt inclusive leadership styles that integrate Islamic identity with local cultural expectations. This is congruent with our findings which reveal that Islamic educational leaders frequently adjust their strategies to foster cultural inclusivity and interfaith respect.

Furthermore, the strategic use of charisma by school leaders to inspire stakeholders and drive reform through personal magnetism and relational trust reflects a global pattern seen in effective leadership contexts (Brooks et al., 2020). As such, the triangulation of these three models in our findings not only confirms their practical relevance but also showcases their theoretical validity within international leadership literature. In sum, the similarities between our findings and the global literature confirm the growing prominence of hybrid leadership approaches that merge Islamic values with innovative educational strategies.

#### 4.2 Systemic Factors Affecting Islamic Educational Leadership

Systemic factors continue to shape the landscape of Islamic educational leadership both positively and negatively. National education policies serve as one of the strongest structural mechanisms for enabling or constraining the implementation of leadership models grounded in Islamic ethics (Parker & Raihani, 2011). Where policies support faith-based education through curriculum integration, resource allocation, and leadership development, leaders are more empowered to translate Islamic values into school governance. However, when policy frameworks are ambiguous or contradictory to Islamic principles, school leaders face limitations in policy execution and institutional autonomy.

Cultural norms and social structures further complicate this dynamic. The deeply embedded hierarchies and traditional power relations within Muslim-majority societies may simultaneously act as a support and barrier to reform. For instance, values such as community collaboration

(gotong royong) can encourage collective leadership and participatory decision-making (Said et al., 2023). Yet, conservative gender norms and hierarchical authority structures often marginalize women and younger educators, creating barriers to inclusive leadership (Lahmar, 2024). The systemic patriarchy present in many contexts delays the advancement of women into strategic leadership roles and limits diversity in decision-making bodies.

Organizational culture within Islamic schools also plays a dual role. When schools adopt inclusive and adaptable cultures, they often facilitate leadership innovation and progressive thinking. On the contrary, rigid adherence to traditional norms may lead to resistance against necessary reforms, thereby stalling institutional development (Said et al., 2023). These dynamics underscore the necessity for educational leaders to possess not only technical management skills but also cultural intelligence and emotional sensitivity. Addressing these systemic constraints requires a multifaceted approach that aligns national policy, cultural reform, and organizational learning.

The findings also demonstrate that systemic transformation in Islamic education leadership depends heavily on institutional flexibility. The degree to which schools can reconcile Islamic teachings with evolving societal demands determines their capacity to innovate and remain relevant. Leaders must thus act as mediators between tradition and progress, particularly when navigating generational divides and class-based disparities within their institutions (Parker & Raihani, 2011). Therefore, understanding systemic influences is vital for designing interventions that support inclusive and contextually grounded leadership.

4.3 Effective Policy and Programmatic Approaches

Several policy and programmatic approaches have emerged as effective in supporting inclusive and context-responsive leadership in Islamic educational settings. Leadership training that explicitly integrates Islamic ethics with modern managerial competencies has shown considerable promise. For example, programs inspired by KH. Yusuf Hasyim's transformative leadership at pesantren illustrate how Islamic principles can be synergized with organizational development to produce leaders who are visionary yet grounded in faith (Yusuf et al., 2024).

Programs that combine spiritual development with moral education provide a firm ethical foundation for school leadership and have been shown to enhance leaders' awareness and responsiveness to stakeholder needs (Sholikhah et al., 2019). When these programs are accompanied by peer mentoring and professional networks, they offer ongoing support systems that sustain leadership development (Ezzani & Brooks, 2019). These models highlight the importance of relational trust and collective professional growth, especially in settings where resources are scarce and support is minimal.

Digital transformation represents another effective policy avenue. The integration of information technology in school management enables efficient communication, real-time performance monitoring, and data-driven decision-making. This shift supports greater transparency and stakeholder participation, fostering an environment conducive to innovation and accountability (Yusuf et al., 2024). Institutions that have adopted smart school platforms combining Islamic values with modern digital tools report increased institutional efficiency and improved pedagogical outcomes. Thus, supporting digital literacy and infrastructural readiness is essential for strengthening leadership in Islamic schools.

Cross-sector collaboration also emerges as a vital component. Partnerships between educational institutions, government bodies, and community organizations allow for the exchange of best practices and joint capacity-building efforts (Parker & Raihani, 2011). These partnerships can bridge policy gaps, align national reforms with local needs, and mobilize resources for underserved institutions. Workshops, inter-school forums, and collaborative leadership platforms have been particularly effective in promoting shared vision and mutual accountability.

Finally, affirmative policies targeting gender equity are essential to dismantling systemic barriers facing female leaders. Scholarships, leadership fellowships, and targeted mentorship for women provide pathways for greater representation in leadership roles (Lahmar, 2024). These initiatives empower women not only through access to leadership education but also by cultivating professional networks that validate and sustain their roles. The increased presence of women in leadership positions correlates with improved school culture, participatory governance, and diversified leadership perspectives.

Taken together, these policy approaches underscore the importance of integrating ethical, technological, and sociocultural dimensions in leadership development. By adopting a holistic and inclusive strategy, policymakers and practitioners can enhance the transformative potential of Islamic educational leadership to address both internal institutional challenges and broader societal expectations.

#### CONCLUSION

This study underscores the critical role of Islamic educational leadership in shaping quality education through value-based, contextual, and transformative approaches. The findings demonstrate that transformational, spiritual, and charismatic leadership models effectively integrate Islamic values such as amanah, tawhid, and justice into the operational and strategic functions of Islamic educational institutions. These leadership styles are not only aligned with global discourses but are also contextually adapted to local socio-cultural dynamics. Importantly, this research affirms the need for leadership that is both visionary and ethically grounded to foster holistic educational environments.

However, systemic factors such as policy misalignment, organizational rigidity, and social-cultural stratifications—particularly gender bias—continue to obstruct leadership effectiveness. In response, this study highlights the importance of inclusive policy reforms, organizational culture transformation, and cross-sector collaboration to dismantle these barriers. Technological integration and digital leadership also emerge as vital in enhancing institutional efficiency and stakeholder participation.

This review contributes to the field of Islamic educational leadership by proposing an integrative leadership paradigm that blends Islamic value systems with contemporary educational leadership models. By centering spiritual ethics, gender inclusion, and digital adaptation, it offers a narrative-based synthesis that highlights the contextual nuances of Islamic leadership in diverse educational environments. To our knowledge, this is one of the first narrative reviews to systematically explore

Islamic leadership by linking theological principles with empirical leadership outcomes across Southeast Asia, the Middle East, and Western Muslim minority contexts.

Given these insights, future research should explore longitudinal impacts of leadership training programs, the effectiveness of affirmative action policies for female leaders, and cross-national comparisons of Islamic educational leadership. In conclusion, promoting leadership that combines Islamic ethical foundations with strategic adaptability is essential in navigating global challenges and elevating the quality of Islamic education systems.

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