

ISLAMIC INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP PRACTICES IN MADRASAH IBTIDAIYAH

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Abstract

This study explores Islamic instructional leadership practices implemented by Madrasah Ibtidaiyah principals and their impact on teacher performance. Employing a qualitative approach with multiple case study design, the research involved madrasah principals, teachers, and supervisors from three to five purposively selected Madrasah Ibtidaiyah. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, document analysis, and focus group discussions, then analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis. Findings identified five dimensions of Islamic instructional leadership: spiritual-moral, vision and mission of learning, supervision and mentoring, professional development, and instructional management. The spiritual-moral and supervision-mentoring dimensions proved most influential on teacher performance, creating intrinsic motivation through awareness of sacred trust and enhancing competence through a familial approach. Islamic instructional leadership impacts lesson planning, instructional delivery, and assessment through mechanisms of enhanced spiritual motivation, professional competence development, collaborative culture, and conducive organizational climate. This research enriches educational leadership literature with Islamic perspectives and offers practical models for improving madrasah leadership quality. Theoretical implications include developing leadership frameworks integrating spiritual and professional dimensions, while practical implications provide guidance for madrasah principals and policymakers in developing mentoring programs aligned with Islamic values.

Keywords: *Islamic instructional leadership, teacher performance, Madrasah Ibtidaiyah, academic supervision, spiritual leadership*



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Abstract

Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi praktik kepemimpinan instruksional Islam yang diterapkan oleh kepala Madrasah Ibtidaiyah dan dampaknya terhadap kinerja guru. Dengan pendekatan kualitatif dan desain studi kasus ganda, penelitian ini melibatkan kepala madrasah, guru, dan pengawas dari tiga hingga lima Madrasah Ibtidaiyah yang dipilih secara purposive. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi partisipan, analisis dokumen, dan diskusi kelompok fokus, kemudian dianalisis menggunakan analisis tematik reflektif. Temuan mengidentifikasi lima dimensi kepemimpinan instruksional Islam: spiritual-moral, visi dan misi pembelajaran, supervisi dan pendampingan, pengembangan profesional, dan manajemen instruksional. Dimensi spiritual-moral dan supervisi-pendampingan terbukti paling berpengaruh terhadap kinerja guru, menciptakan motivasi intrinsik melalui kesadaran akan amanah suci dan meningkatkan kompetensi melalui pendekatan kekeluargaan. Kepemimpinan instruksional Islam mempengaruhi perencanaan pelajaran, penyampaian instruksional, dan penilaian melalui mekanisme peningkatan motivasi spiritual, pengembangan kompetensi profesional, budaya kolaboratif, dan iklim organisasi yang kondusif. Penelitian ini memperkaya literatur kepemimpinan pendidikan dengan perspektif Islam dan menawarkan model praktis untuk meningkatkan kualitas kepemimpinan madrasah. Implikasi teoritis mencakup pengembangan kerangka kepemimpinan yang mengintegrasikan dimensi spiritual dan profesional, sementara implikasi praktis memberikan panduan bagi kepala madrasah dan pembuat kebijakan dalam mengembangkan program pendampingan yang sejalan dengan nilai-nilai Islam.

Kata Kunci: *Kepemimpinan Instruksional Islam; Kinerja Guru; Madrasah Ibtidaiyah; Supervisi Akademik; Kepemimpinan Spiritual.*

INTRODUCTION

Instructional leadership has a significant influence on teaching quality and teacher performance, ultimately impacting student achievement (Cox & Mullen, 2023; Engida et al., 2024; Gechere et al., 2025; Kemethofer et al., 2025; Munna, 2023; Rodrigues & Ávila de Lima, 2024). Many countries, including Indonesia, face significant challenges in improving educational quality in religious-based schools, such as Madrasah Ibtidaiyah. This study aims to explore how Islamic instructional leadership can enhance teacher performance in madrasahs and create a better learning environment. A study by Sholeh et al. (2022) indicates that the leadership impact of school principals is closely related to teacher motivation and professional development. Therefore, this research plays a critical role in providing new insights to enhance educational quality in madrasahs.

The main issue faced by Madrasah Ibtidaiyah is the gap between formal educational standards and the Islamic values expected to be integrated within madrasah education. Many madrasah principals struggle to balance academic teaching with the spiritual and moral needs of students. This results in low teaching quality and teacher performance in achieving a holistic educational goal, which is to develop both academic competence and character. Research by Mohd Said et al. (2023) found that although many studies address leadership in Islamic schools, few have explored how Islamic instructional leadership influences teacher performance at the elementary school level, particularly in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah.

In the field, Madrasah Ibtidaiyah principals often struggle to balance the demands of academic excellence with the spiritual and moral formation of their students. For example, some Madrasah Ibtidaiyah principals we observed in Indonesia worked hard to ensure that Islamic values were embedded in every aspect of teaching, yet they often faced managerial and administrative challenges. This phenomenon underscores the need for instructional leadership that focuses not only on the technical aspects of teaching but also on the spiritual and moral dimensions that are foundational to Islamic education. This observation highlights the necessity of further research to explore how Islamic leadership can improve educational quality in madrasahs.

Previous research has identified that instructional leadership in madrasahs is often influenced by Islamic values, which aim to foster character development in students (Sholikhah et al., 2019). However, much of the research has focused more on managerial and administrative aspects, while the spiritual and moral dimensions, integral to Islamic education, have received less attention. For instance, research by Juharyanto et al. (2021) focused on how spiritual leadership affects teacher motivation and performance, but it did not explore how Islamic instructional leadership influences teaching at the elementary level, such as in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah. This gap in the research is highly relevant and needs to be filled by a study that integrates both dimensions holistically.

A significant limitation of previous research lies in its insufficient integration of Islamic leadership principles with instructional leadership in elementary education contexts. Contemporary leadership studies on Islamic schools often emphasize transformational, spiritual, or distributed models without fully embedding core Islamic values such as tawhid, amanah, and shura into the theoretical and empirical frameworks of instructional leadership (Alazmi & Bush, 2024; Hadi et al., 2025; Rahman, 2025; Shah, 2015). This gap suggests that existing scholarship has not yet adequately addressed how Islamic leadership paradigms can

be synergistically integrated with modern instructional leadership practices that are contextually relevant for madrasah institutions.

This study introduces novelty by combining spiritual, moral, and professional dimensions in Islamic instructional leadership at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah. Previous research has often focused on the professional and technical dimensions of instructional leadership, but few have explored how Islamic values can be embedded in every aspect of leadership. This research is important because it offers a model of instructional leadership that not only enhances teacher performance but also supports character formation in students according to Islamic values.

The main problem in this research is how Islamic instructional leadership, which integrates spiritual, moral, and professional dimensions, can improve teacher performance in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah. The objective of this research is to explore and analyze the dimensions of Islamic instructional leadership and its impact on teacher performance. This research aims to contribute to the development of leadership frameworks that are more appropriate for the context of Islamic education, as well as to provide recommendations for madrasah principals and policymakers to design more comprehensive professional development programs. The central argument of this research is that the impact of Islamic instructional leadership, based on spiritual values, can create intrinsic motivation and improve the quality of teaching in madrasahs.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach, which is particularly suited to exploring the meanings, processes, and dynamics of instructional leadership within its natural organizational context (Merriam, 1998). The research was conducted in three Madrasah Ibtidaiyah in Surabaya, Indonesia, from January 2025 to June 2025. This time frame allowed the researchers to gather comprehensive data across multiple months, providing an in-depth understanding of leadership practices and their influence on teacher performance. The study was designed as a multiple case study, a method valued for its ability to examine complex phenomena within real-world settings and to facilitate comparative analysis across different cases (Baxter & Jack, 2015). By utilizing this design, the study aimed to identify consistent patterns and variations in Islamic instructional leadership practices across diverse madrasah contexts, enhancing the credibility and transferability of the findings.

Participants were selected using purposive sampling, a strategy well-recognized in qualitative research for identifying cases that are rich in information and capable of shedding light on the research phenomenon (Palinkas et al., 2015; Patton, 2002). This sampling technique ensured that the participants had specific

characteristics, experiences, and knowledge relevant to the research questions. The participants included madrasah principals, teachers from various subject areas, and supervisors overseeing the selected madrasah. Criteria for selecting the principals included a minimum of three years of leadership experience, at least a B-level accreditation for their institutions, and evidence of effective instructional leadership practices based on supervisor recommendations and school performance indicators (Campbell et al., 2020).

The primary data collection methods were semi-structured in-depth interviews, participant observation, document analysis, and focus group discussions. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with principals, teachers, and supervisors to explore their experiences, perspectives, and the influence of leadership practices on teacher performance. The interview protocols were designed to address key research objectives, focusing on leadership practices, their impact on teacher performance, and the mechanisms through which these influences occurred. The interviews were guided by indicators related to leadership values (such as trustworthiness, truthfulness, communication, and intelligence), leadership practices (such as mentoring, supervision, and professional development), and teacher performance (such as motivation, engagement in professional development, and improvements in teaching practices). These interviews allowed for flexibility in exploring emergent themes while ensuring that the central research questions were addressed.

Participant observation was also a critical method, providing insight into how principals' leadership practices were enacted in real-world contexts. Observations were conducted during academic supervision sessions, teacher meetings, professional development programs, and religious activities. This method allowed the researchers to capture behaviors and interactions that participants might not have articulated in interviews, offering a deeper understanding of how leadership practices were implemented (Stake, 1995). The observations focused on leadership interactions between principals and teachers, particularly in the context of feedback, mentoring, and teacher development, as well as the extent to which principals fostered a collaborative learning culture.

In addition, document analysis was employed to triangulate the data. Key documents, such as policy manuals, principal work programs, supervision reports, and teacher performance evaluations, were analyzed to provide insight into the formalized aspects of leadership practices and institutional policies. These documents helped confirm and complement the findings from the interviews and observations.

Finally, focus group discussions with teachers were conducted to validate preliminary findings and gain collective insights on the principals' leadership impact. These discussions helped ensure member checking, thereby enhancing the trustworthiness of the interpretations (Baxter & Jack, 2015). During the discussions, teachers were encouraged to reflect on the effectiveness of leadership practices, share any challenges they encountered, and discuss the ways in which their teaching had been influenced by their principals' leadership.

Data analysis followed the reflexive thematic analysis approach proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006, 2019), which emphasizes the active role of the researcher in identifying patterns of meaning across the dataset. This approach was particularly suited for exploratory research aimed at developing a conceptual understanding of complex phenomena. The analysis proceeded through several iterative phases, including familiarization with the data, coding, grouping codes into preliminary categories, and identifying overarching themes that captured patterns of shared meaning. NVivo software was used to manage and analyze the qualitative data. Triangulation across different data sources—interviews, observations, documents, and focus groups—ensured the validity of the findings and enhanced the reliability of the interpretations (Stake, 1995). Throughout the analysis, the research team maintained reflexive journals to document decisions, emerging insights, and potential biases.

Ethical considerations were also a central part of the research process. Informed consent was obtained from all participants after they were provided with detailed information regarding the study's purpose, procedures, risks, and benefits. Participants were assured of confidentiality and anonymity through the use of pseudonyms for both individuals and institutions. The research adhered to the ethical principles of voluntary participation, and all participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any time without consequences. Permissions for conducting the study were obtained from the relevant authorities, including the Ministry of Religious Affairs and the participating madrasah administrators. All research data were securely stored in accordance with institutional data management policies (Merriam, 1998).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

Islamic Instructional Leadership Practices in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah

The analysis of interview transcripts, observational data, and documentary evidence revealed that madrasah principals implement Islamic instructional leadership through five interconnected dimensions, each manifesting distinct

practices and approaches that shape the organizational culture and instructional processes. The spiritual-moral dimension emerged as a foundational element of Islamic instructional leadership, with principals demonstrating leadership through religious exemplarity and moral authority. Observational data consistently showed principals actively participating in congregational prayers, leading morning Quranic recitations, and delivering brief religious sermons during school assemblies. One principal explained his approach:

"As a madrasah leader, I must be the first to demonstrate Islamic values. If I want teachers to be disciplined in prayer, I must pray with them. If I want them to be patient and sincere, I must show those qualities in my daily interactions."

This emphasis on modeling extended beyond ritualistic practices to encompass ethical behavior in decision-making, conflict resolution, and interpersonal relationships.

Teachers consistently acknowledged the impact of principals' spiritual leadership on their motivation. A senior teacher with fifteen years of experience stated:

"When our principal leads us in dzikir every morning and reminds us that teaching is ibadah, it changes how I view difficult days. Even when students are challenging or the workload is heavy, I remember this is my amanah to Allah."

Another teacher added:

"The principal doesn't just supervise our teaching; he reminds us why we teach. He connects our daily struggles to the greater purpose of forming righteous Muslim generations."

Document analysis of principals' speeches and written communications revealed frequent use of religious terminology and Quranic references to frame educational objectives and professional responsibilities.

Principals demonstrated strategic leadership in articulating educational visions that integrated academic excellence with Islamic character formation. Documentary analysis of school vision statements revealed explicit commitments to producing students who are both academically competent and possess strong Islamic values. One principal described his vision:

"We don't just want students who can read, write, and calculate. We want to produce young Muslims who understand their faith, practice it sincerely, and can contribute positively to society. Every program we implement must serve this dual purpose."

The communication of this vision occurred through multiple channels and repeated reinforcement. Observational data from staff meetings showed principals consistently connecting specific instructional activities to the broader institutional vision. During one observed meeting, a principal reviewing lesson plans commented:

"This science lesson about environmental conservation is good, but let's strengthen it by connecting to our role as khalifah on earth. How can we help students see that caring for the environment is part of their Islamic responsibility?"

Teachers reported that this consistent vision alignment helped them understand how their individual contributions connected to collective goals.

The supervision and mentoring dimension revealed a distinctive approach characterized by personal relationships, developmental orientation, and integration of Islamic principles. Observational data from classroom supervision sessions showed principals employing a non-threatening, collaborative approach. Rather than positioning themselves as inspectors, principals adopted a stance of supportive colleagues seeking to help teachers improve. One principal described his supervision philosophy:

"I don't come to judge or find faults. I come as a brother who wants to help. After observing, I sit with the teacher privately, ask how they felt about the lesson, discuss what worked well, and together we think about improvements. This follows the principle of nasihah—sincere advice given with care and respect." Teachers confirmed this approach. A young teacher reflected: "At first, I was very nervous about being observed. But when the principal came, he smiled, encouraged me, and later gave feedback that was honest but kind. He pointed out specific things I could improve and even offered to demonstrate techniques. I didn't feel criticized; I felt supported."

Document analysis of supervision reports revealed structured feedback that balanced appreciation of strengths with specific, actionable suggestions for improvement. Reports typically began with acknowledgment of effective practices, followed by areas for development, and concluded with concrete recommendations and offers of support. The language employed was consistently respectful and encouraging, reflecting the familial approach described by participants.

Principals actively facilitated teacher professional development through multiple mechanisms, ranging from formal training programs to informal collaborative learning opportunities. Documentary evidence showed regular

scheduling of professional development activities including pedagogical workshops, curriculum development sessions, and sharing of best practices. One principal explained:

"Teacher quality is the key to student success. I prioritize professional development even when budgets are tight. Sometimes we bring in external trainers, but often we leverage internal expertise by having teachers share their successful practices with colleagues."

Observational data from a lesson study session revealed the collaborative learning culture fostered by principals. Teachers worked together to plan a lesson, observed one colleague teaching it, and then collectively analyzed the lesson's effectiveness in a post-observation discussion. The principal participated as a facilitator, asking probing questions and ensuring the discussion remained constructive and focused on student learning rather than teacher evaluation. Teachers expressed appreciation for these development opportunities. A mid-career teacher stated:

"The principal constantly encourages us to grow. He helped me attend district-level training and then asked me to share what I learned with other teachers. He also facilitated our lesson study group and created time in our schedule for collaborative planning. I feel my teaching has improved significantly."

Another teacher added:

"What I appreciate most is that the principal recognizes we have different strengths. He encourages peer learning, so we learn from each other. The Islamic studies teacher helps us integrate Islamic values, while the more experienced teachers mentor newer ones."

The instructional management dimension encompassed principals' active involvement in curriculum planning, resource provision, and systematic monitoring of instructional quality. Documentary analysis of curriculum documents revealed principals' engagement in reviewing and approving curriculum adaptations that integrated national standards with Islamic content. Observational data showed principals participating in grade-level planning meetings, asking questions about instructional strategies, and ensuring alignment between written curricula and classroom implementation. One principal described his management approach:

"I need to know what's happening in every classroom. Not to control, but to support. I regularly walk through classes, review lesson plans, check student work, and discuss progress with teachers. When I see good practices, I recognize them. When I see challenges, I work with teachers to address them."

This active monitoring was evident in observational data showing principals making brief classroom visits, examining student portfolios, and reviewing assessment data. Resource provision emerged as a critical component of instructional management. Principals worked to ensure adequate learning materials, including religious texts, general textbooks, and teaching aids. A principal explained:

"Quality teaching requires quality resources. I advocate for budget allocations for learning materials and seek partnerships with community members and alumni who can donate books or fund learning resources. Teachers shouldn't have to struggle with inadequate materials."

Dimensions Most Influencing Teacher Performance

Analysis of interview data and observational patterns revealed that the spiritual-moral and supervision-mentoring dimensions exerted the strongest influence on teacher performance. Teachers consistently attributed their motivation and commitment to the spiritual leadership of principals. One teacher articulated this connection:

"When I see my principal's sincerity and dedication, when he reminds us that our work has value beyond this world, it touches something deep inside. It's not about salary or career advancement; it's about fulfilling my purpose as a Muslim educator."

The supervision-mentoring dimension's influence operated through different mechanisms. Teachers reported that the supportive, developmental approach reduced anxiety and increased openness to feedback. A teacher who initially struggled with classroom management explained:

"The principal observed my class when students were quite disruptive. Instead of criticizing me, he acknowledged how challenging it was and shared specific strategies. He even came back to observe again after I implemented his suggestions and gave positive feedback. That support made all the difference. I actually improved rather than just feeling bad about my weaknesses."

Supervisors corroborating these findings noted observable improvements in teacher performance in schools where principals demonstrated strong spiritual-moral leadership and effective supervision-mentoring practices. One supervisor stated:

"In madrasah where principals lead with genuine Islamic values and support teachers through compassionate supervision, I consistently see more motivated teachers, better lesson quality, and stronger"

instructional outcomes. The principals who combine spiritual inspiration with practical support achieve the best results."

Mechanisms of Leadership Impact on Teacher Performance

The research identified specific mechanisms through which principals' leadership improved teachers' lesson planning capabilities. Through regular review of lesson plans and constructive feedback, principals helped teachers develop more comprehensive and coherent plans. A teacher described this process:

"The principal reviews our lesson plans every two weeks. He looks at whether our objectives are clear, methods are appropriate, and how we integrate Islamic values. His feedback has made me more thoughtful and systematic in planning. I now anticipate potential challenges and plan solutions in advance."

Documentary analysis of lesson plans from teachers in the study showed progressive improvement over the academic year, with increasingly detailed instructional strategies, clearer learning objectives, and more explicit integration of Islamic values. Teachers credited principals' guidance for these improvements, noting that the review process served as ongoing professional learning rather than bureaucratic compliance.

Principals influenced instructional delivery through classroom supervision, demonstration teaching, and facilitation of peer learning. Observational data from post-supervision conferences revealed principals providing specific feedback on instructional techniques, classroom management, and student engagement strategies. Teachers reported implementing these suggestions and experiencing improved classroom dynamics. One teacher explained:

"After the principal observed my lesson, he suggested I use more questioning techniques to engage students actively rather than just lecturing. He even demonstrated how to use wait time and follow-up questions. When I tried it, I was amazed at how much more engaged students became. The principal later visited again and acknowledged the improvement, which motivated me to keep refining my practice."

The lesson study program facilitated by principals created opportunities for teachers to observe colleagues, analyze instructional decisions, and collectively improve teaching practices. Teachers valued these collaborative learning experiences, with one stating:

"Watching another teacher teach the same content I'm going to teach, and then discussing what worked and what didn't, has been

incredibly valuable. The principal guides these discussions to keep them productive and learning-focused."

Principals' guidance in assessment development and use of evaluation data enhanced teachers' assessment capabilities. Through professional development sessions and individual mentoring, principals helped teachers develop valid assessment instruments and analyze student performance data for instructional improvement. A teacher reflected:

"I used to just give tests without thinking much about what they measured. The principal trained us on developing assessments aligned with learning objectives and using results diagnostically. Now I use assessment data to identify which concepts students struggle with and provide targeted remediation."

Documentary analysis of assessment materials showed increasing sophistication in assessment design, with more varied formats, clearer rubrics, and better alignment with learning objectives. Teachers reported greater confidence in their assessment practices and more systematic use of data to inform instruction. Throughout these mechanisms, the mediating role of spiritual motivation, professional competence development, collaborative culture, and supportive organizational climate was evident. Teachers consistently connected improved performance to both their enhanced technical skills and their deepened sense of purpose and commitment fostered by Islamic instructional leadership.

Table1. Summary of Research Findings - Dimensions of Islamic Instructional Leadership and Their Impact on Teacher Performance

Dimension of Instructional Leadership	Description of Practice	Impact on Teacher Performance
Spiritual-Moral	Leadership emphasizing Islamic spiritual values, such as worship, trustworthiness, and patience. The principal actively demonstrates these values in daily practices.	Enhances intrinsic motivation and professional commitment among teachers, viewing their work as both worship and a trust.
Vision and Mission of Learning	The principal develops an educational vision that integrates academic excellence with the formation of Islamic character.	Helps teachers understand their contributions to broader educational goals, leading to improved teaching quality.
Supervision and Mentoring	A supportive, collaborative, and non-judgmental supervision approach. Involves constructive and development-based feedback.	Increases teacher openness to feedback and reduces anxiety, thus improving teaching skills.

Professional Development	The principal provides professional development opportunities, including training and collaborative learning groups.	Enhances professional competence of teachers, strengthening knowledge and skills through collective learning.
Instructional Management	The principal is involved in curriculum planning, resource provision, and monitoring teaching quality.	Improves lesson planning and classroom management, with full support from the principal.

Discussion

The Distinctive Character of Islamic Instructional Leadership

The findings of this study reveal that Islamic instructional leadership possesses distinctive characteristics that differentiate it from conventional instructional leadership models. The integration of spiritual and moral dimensions as foundational elements of leadership practice reflects principles derived from prophetic leadership, particularly the emphasis on modeling exemplary behavior, trustworthiness, and the pursuit of both worldly excellence and spiritual reward. This finding aligns with research by Mohd Said, Sulaiman, Mohamad, and Yahaya (2023), who identified spirituality as an intrinsic factor shaping leadership in Islamic schools alongside attitude and ability. However, the present study extends this understanding by demonstrating that spiritual dimensions are not merely symbolic or ancillary, but rather constitute the motivational foundation that drives professional commitment among teachers.

The concept of work as worship and sacred trust creates intrinsic motivation that transcends external rewards and administrative mandates (S. Arifin et al., 2024; Khofi & Furqon, 2024; Mashuri et al., 2023). This spiritual framing of professional responsibility has profound implications for teacher motivation and commitment. Unlike transactional approaches to motivation that rely primarily on extrinsic incentives, Islamic instructional leadership cultivates what might be termed transcendent motivation, wherein teachers perceive their work as simultaneously serving educational objectives and fulfilling religious obligations. This finding resonates with research on spiritual leadership in Islamic educational contexts, which has demonstrated positive relationships between spiritual leadership practices and organizational citizenship behavior, teacher well-being, and institutional quality (Göçen & Şen, 2021; Juharyanto et al., 2021). The present study contributes empirical evidence regarding how these spiritual dimensions are enacted in the specific context of madrasah principals' instructional leadership practices.

Supervision as Relational and Developmental Process

A particularly significant finding concerns the approach to academic supervision employed by successful madrasah principals. The supervision practices observed in this study diverge substantially from clinical supervision models that emphasize structured observation protocols and technical feedback. Instead, these practices reflect what might be characterized as familial or kinship-based supervision, grounded in Islamic principles of mutual care, collective responsibility, and developmental mentoring (I. Arifin et al., 2018). This approach creates supervisory relationships characterized by psychological safety, where teachers feel supported rather than evaluated, and where feedback is framed within a context of shared commitment to educational and spiritual excellence.

The effectiveness of this supervision approach can be understood through multiple theoretical lenses. From the perspective of professional development research, the emphasis on reflective dialogue and evidence-based feedback aligns with established principles of effective clinical supervision (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). However, the Islamic instructional leadership model adds distinctive elements, particularly the integration of moral and spiritual dimensions into supervisory conversations and the explicit framing of professional improvement as a form of personal and collective growth. Research on transformational leadership in education has consistently demonstrated that leaders who provide individualized consideration and intellectual stimulation enhance teacher motivation and commitment (Berkovich & Eyal, 2017; Sianipar, 2024). The familial supervision approach observed in this study operationalizes these transformational leadership behaviors while embedding them within Islamic values of compassion, patience, and collective responsibility.

The reduction of teacher resistance and defensive reactions represents a particularly important outcome of this supervision approach. Traditional supervision models, particularly those emphasizing compliance and evaluation, often generate anxiety and resistance that undermine professional learning (Sullivan & Glanz, 2005). The familial approach mitigates these barriers by establishing trust-based relationships and framing supervision as mutual support rather than hierarchical judgment. This finding has significant implications for educational leadership beyond Islamic contexts, suggesting that culturally grounded approaches to supervision may be more effective than standardized protocols in fostering genuine professional development.

The Synergy of Spiritual and Professional Development

Perhaps the most theoretically significant finding of this study concerns the synergistic relationship between spiritual and professional dimensions of teacher development. Rather than representing competing or contradictory emphases, these dimensions function complementarily to create what might be termed holistic professionalism. Teachers who possess strong spiritual motivation actively pursue professional excellence as a means of fulfilling their sacred responsibilities, while professional competence enhances teachers' capacity to enact their spiritual commitments effectively. This bidirectional relationship challenges implicit assumptions in much educational leadership literature that positions spiritual or religious concerns as distinct from or even opposed to technical professionalism.

This synergy can be understood through the lens of transformational leadership theory, which posits that effective leaders inspire followers to transcend self-interest in pursuit of collective goals (Bass & Avolio, 1994). Research on transformational leadership in educational settings has demonstrated its positive effects on teacher motivation, organizational commitment, and professional engagement (Eyal & Roth, 2011; Liu et al., 2024). The Islamic instructional leadership model incorporates transformational elements while adding distinctive spiritual dimensions that frame collective goals in transcendent terms. Teachers are motivated not only by professional pride or organizational loyalty but also by the prospect of divine reward and the fulfillment of religious obligations.

The concept of meaningful professionalism that emerges from this synergy addresses a fundamental challenge in contemporary education: maintaining teacher motivation and commitment in contexts characterized by increasing demands, limited resources, and public scrutiny. Research has consistently shown that teacher motivation and job satisfaction are critical predictors of retention, effectiveness, and student outcomes (Anwar et al., 2025; Hartinah et al., 2020; Patterson, 2024). Islamic instructional leadership offers a model for cultivating deep professional commitment by connecting teachers' daily work to transcendent purposes and community values. This finding suggests that educational leadership approaches that honor teachers' values and provide spiritual or philosophical meaning may be more sustainable than those relying primarily on external accountability or material incentives.

Implications for Leadership Theory and Practice

These findings contribute to educational leadership theory in several important ways. First, they demonstrate the viability and effectiveness of culturally grounded leadership models that integrate indigenous values with contemporary

educational practices. The dominance of Western, secular frameworks in educational leadership literature has marginalized alternative approaches rooted in religious or non-Western traditions (Shah, 2015). This study provides empirical evidence that Islamic leadership principles can be operationalized effectively in instructional leadership practice, producing outcomes valued in mainstream educational discourse such as enhanced teacher performance and instructional quality.

Second, the findings illuminate the role of values and meaning-making in educational organizations. While much leadership research focuses on structural, technical, or behavioral dimensions, this study highlights the significance of existential and spiritual dimensions in shaping organizational culture and individual motivation. The success of madrasah principals in cultivating teacher commitment through spiritual motivation suggests that educational leaders more broadly might benefit from attending to the meaning and purpose that teachers derive from their work. This does not necessarily require religious framing, but it does suggest the importance of connecting professional practice to values and commitments that teachers find personally significant.

Third, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of how school leadership influences teacher performance through multiple mediating mechanisms. By identifying spiritual motivation, professional competence development, collaborative culture, and conducive organizational climate as intermediary variables, the present research provides a nuanced account of leadership effects beyond direct instructional actions. This multilevel, multi-pathway model resonates with recent educational leadership research that emphasizes indirect effects of leadership through organizational conditions and individual psychological processes. For example, evidence from contemporary studies suggests that school leadership shapes teacher engagement and performance by fostering supportive environments and influencing teachers' psychological experiences, including sense of purpose and professional growth (Alzoraiki et al., 2024; Habibi et al., 2025; Hidayat & Patras, 2024; Roesminingsih & Windasari, 2025). Research in Islamic educational contexts also highlights the role of spiritual and moral dimensions in shaping teachers' motivation and well-being, showing that leadership grounded in religious values can positively influence commitment and instructional practice (Fadlillah et al., 2025). The distinctive contribution of this study is demonstrating how spiritual and moral dimensions function alongside cognitive and social dimensions in these mediating processes, offering empirical grounding for a more holistic model of leadership influence in Islamic schooling.

For practitioners, these findings offer guidance regarding effective leadership practices in Islamic educational institutions and potentially in other faith-based contexts. The emphasis on spiritual modeling, relational supervision, and integration of values with technical practice suggests that effective leadership in these settings requires both religious authenticity and professional competence. Leaders must be credible representatives of religious values while also demonstrating expertise in instructional leadership. This dual requirement challenges simplistic notions of leadership as primarily technical or primarily inspirational, highlighting the need for multidimensional leadership development.

Limitations and Future Directions

Several limitations of this study warrant consideration. As a qualitative investigation in selected madrasah with particular characteristics, the findings cannot be generalized statistically to all Islamic educational institutions. The focus on successful cases provides insight into effective practices but does not illuminate the challenges faced by less successful institutions or the conditions that constrain implementation of Islamic instructional leadership. Additionally, this study did not directly examine student outcomes, leaving open questions about how improvements in teacher performance mediated by Islamic instructional leadership ultimately affect student learning and development.

Future research should employ mixed methods approaches that combine qualitative depth with quantitative measurement to assess the prevalence and effects of Islamic instructional leadership practices across diverse institutional contexts. Longitudinal designs would illuminate how leadership effects unfold over time and whether they prove sustainable. Comparative studies examining Islamic instructional leadership across different national and cultural contexts would reveal which elements are universal and which are context-specific. Finally, research directly examining the connections between leadership practices, teacher performance, and student outcomes would provide crucial evidence regarding the ultimate educational value of these leadership approaches.

CONCLUSION

This study has explored the multifaceted nature of Islamic instructional leadership in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah and its impact on teacher performance, revealing significant findings that contribute to both theoretical understanding and practical application. The research demonstrates that Islamic instructional leadership encompasses five core dimensions: spiritual-moral leadership, vision and mission development, supervision and mentoring, professional development facilitation,

and instructional management. These dimensions reflect a unique integration of prophetic leadership principles with contemporary instructional leadership practices, creating a distinctive leadership model grounded in Islamic values while addressing modern educational challenges.

The findings reveal that spiritual-moral and supervision-mentoring dimensions exert the most substantial influence on teacher performance. The spiritual-moral dimension cultivates intrinsic motivation and deep professional commitment by framing teaching as sacred trust and worship, while the supervision-mentoring dimension employs a familial, developmental approach that reduces resistance and enhances receptiveness to professional growth. The synergy between these dimensions creates what can be termed holistic professionalism, where spiritual motivation and professional competence mutually reinforce each other.

Furthermore, this research elucidates the mechanisms through which Islamic instructional leadership impacts teacher performance across planning, implementation, and evaluation of instruction. Through guidance in lesson planning, constructive classroom supervision, facilitation of collaborative learning, and support for assessment practices, principals create organizational conditions that enable continuous professional improvement. These effects are mediated by enhanced spiritual motivation, increased professional competence, collaborative culture, and supportive organizational climate. The study underscores the viability of culturally grounded leadership models that honor religious values while achieving educational excellence, offering insights relevant not only to Islamic schools but to all faith-based educational institutions seeking to integrate values with professional practice.

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