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THE ROLE OF MADRASAH HEADS IN STRENGTHENING RELIGIOUS CULTURE IN MADRASAH TSANAWIYAH: A CASE STUDY-BASED CONCEPTUAL STUDY AT MTS AL-MA'ARIF RASAU JAYA

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ABSTRAK

Studi ini bertujuan menganalisis peran kepala madrasah dalam memperkuat budaya keagamaan di unit pendidikan madrasah, dengan menyoroti dimensi kepemimpinan agama, manajerial, dan motivasi serta hubungannya dengan kebiasaan ibadah, pembentukan nilai dan sikap keagamaan, serta penciptaan lingkungan simbolik keagamaan. Data diperoleh melalui tinjauan literatur naratif tentang teori kepemimpinan pendidikan Islam, dengan fokus pada kepemimpinan kepala sekolah/madrasah dan pengembangan budaya agama di institusi pendidikan Islam. Hasil studi menunjukkan bahwa kepala madrasah memiliki peran strategis dalam membangun budaya keagamaan melalui penetapan kebijakan agama, pengelolaan program kebiasaan, pemberian contoh, penguatan motivasi, dan menciptakan lingkungan madrasah yang mendukung internalisasi nilai-nilai Islam. Efektivitas penguatan budaya keagamaan tidak hanya ditentukan oleh kebijakan formal, tetapi juga oleh konsistensi teladan kepala madrasah, keterlibatan semua penduduk madrasah, dan kemampuan kepemimpinan dalam menyesuaikan program keagamaan dengan karakteristik sosial dan budaya lokal. Orisinalitas penelitian terletak pada sintesis konseptual yang mengintegrasikan tiga dimensi peran kepala madrasah yaitu kepemimpinan agama, manajerial, dan motivasi dengan tiga bentuk budaya keagamaan dalam bentuk pembiasaan ibadah, nilai-nilai dan sikap, serta lingkungan keagamaan simbolik, dan memetakan kesenjangan penelitian dalam konteks madrasah swasta regional, terutama MTs Al-Ma'arif Rasau Jaya, Kabupaten Kubu Raya, Kalimantan Barat. Kerangka ini menjadi dasar untuk penelitian lapangan lebih lanjut dengan pendekatan studi kasus kualitatif.

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Keywords:
Head of Madrasah; Religious Culture; Islamic Education Leadership; Madrasah Tsanawiyah; Transformational Leadership

ABSTRACTS
This study aims to analyze the role of madrasah heads in strengthening religious culture in madrasah education units, by focusing on the dimensions of religious, managerial, and motivational leadership and their relationship with worship habits, the formation of religious values and attitudes, and the creation of a religious symbolic environment. Data were obtained through a narrative literature review of Islamic education leadership theory, with a focus on the leadership of school/madrasah principals and the development of religious culture in Islamic educational institutions. The results of the study show that madrasah heads have a strategic role in building religious culture through the establishment of religious policies, management of habituation programs, providing examples, strengthening motivation, and creating a madrasah environment that supports the internalization of Islamic values. The effectiveness of strengthening religious culture is not only determined by formal policies, but also by the consistency of the example of the head of the madrasah, the involvement of all madrasah residents, and the ability of leadership in adapting religious programs to local social and cultural characteristics. The originality of the research lies in a conceptual synthesis that integrates the three dimensions of the role of the head of the madrasah of religious, managerial, and motivational leadership with three forms of religious culture in the form of habituation of worship, values and attitudes, as well as the symbolic religious environment, as well as mapping the research gap in the context of regional private madrasas, especially MTs Al-Ma'arif Rasau Jaya, Kubu Raya Regency, West Kalimantan. This framework is the basis for further field research with a qualitative case study approach.

A. INTRODUCTION

Religious culture is one of the important elements in the implementation of Islamic education because it is not only related to the implementation of worship activities, but also concerns the process of internalizing religious values into the attitudes, behaviors, habits, and social interactions of madrasah residents(Ahmad Qusyaeri 2024). In the context of Islamic secondary education, religious culture should ideally not stop at formal activities such as reading the Qur'an, praying before learning, performing congregational prayers, or commemorating Islamic holidays, but develops into a pattern of life that is reflected in discipline, responsibility, politeness, exemplarity, and social relations between madrasah residents(Fatimah 2021). At this point, the head of the madrasah has a strategic position because the head of the madrasah not only functions as an administrator of the institution, but also as a leader who determines the direction of policy, organizes programs, provides examples, conducts supervision, and builds motivation for teachers and students. However, the academic problem that arises is that the existence of various religious programs has not by itself proven the strength of religious culture. There is a question about the extent to which the leadership of the madrasah head is able to integrate religious programs into the daily lives of madrasah residents so that these activities change from mere routine to values that are lived and practiced(Ulfah and Suyadi 2021). This problem is becoming increasingly important for private madrassas in regions that have characteristics of resources, social environment, community support, and institutional conditions that are different from state madrasas or Islamic educational institutions that have larger resources(Latifah, Rosadi, and Agustin 2022). In the context of MTs Al-Ma'arif Rasau Jaya, this issue needs to be studied

based on field data to find out how the head of the madrasah carries out his leadership function in building a religious culture and how the policy is translated into the real practice of madrasah residents.

Based on MTs Al-Ma'arif Rasau Jaya field data obtained through field data obtained through participatory observation from January 13 to March 5, 2026, in-depth interviews with madrasah heads, 3 teachers, 1 education staff, and 5 students, as well as documentation of madrasah religious programs. Observations show that religious culture is manifested through prayer before and after learning, the reading of the Qur'an, the habit of greetings and manners, congregational prayer activities, and routine religious activities. The head of the madrasah is involved in directing, supervising, and setting an example, while the teacher plays a role in maintaining these habits in daily learning activities and interactions.

The results of the interviews show that the head of the madrasah carries out three main roles, namely religious leader through example, manager through program arrangement and division of tasks, and motivator through coaching and strengthening teachers and students. The teacher stated that the policy of the madrasah head gave a clear direction to the implementation of religious activities, while the students showed that religious habits had become part of the madrasah routine. Documentation in the form of schedules of religious activities, madrasah rules, habituation agendas, photos of activities, and records of religious programs strengthen the findings of observations and interviews that the strengthening of religious culture is carried out in a planned and sustainable manner.

The field findings show that the role of the head of the madrasah at MTs Al-Ma'arif Rasau Jaya is not limited to policy making, but functions as a driver of internalizing religious values through habituation, example, supervision, and motivation. Thus, religious culture in madrassas appears in three main forms, namely the habit of worship, the formation of religious attitudes and values, and the creation of a religious environment in madrassas. The implementation of the role of madrasah heads in strengthening religious culture can be seen through several forms of leadership that are direct and indirect. The head of the madrasah plays a role in determining and directing the implementation of religious activities, providing examples of religious behavior, coordinating teachers in the implementation of habituation, and strengthening the discipline of students. Observation data shows that the observation results show that religious activities at MTs Al-Ma'arif Rasau Jaya include the recitation of the Qur'an before learning, joint prayer, congregational prayers, Friday religious activities, and cults. The head of the madrasah actively provides direction, participates in religious activities, monitors the discipline of teachers and students, and builds polite and religious interactions. This example is strengthened through routine coaching, reminders of the implementation of worship, and motivation, so that religious activities are not only ceremonial, but also part of the habituation of the religious culture of the madrasah.

Meanwhile, the results of the interview with the research informant consisted of 1 madrasah head, 3 teachers, 1 education staff, and 5 students of MTs Al-Ma'arif Rasau Jaya. The head of the madrasah is chosen as the main informant because he has authority in the policy and management of religious culture, while teachers, education staff, and students become supporting informants to obtain data on the implementation and experience of religious culture in the madrasah. The results of the interviews show

that the head of the madrasah conducts guidance through routine briefings to teachers and students, supervision of the implementation of religious activities and discipline, and provides motivation through example, advice, and appreciation. This step is taken to ensure that the habit of worship and religious behavior takes place consistently in the life of the madrasah.

The findings show that the implementation of the role of madrasah heads has a managerial dimension as well as an example. However, the academic problem lies in the consistency and depth of implementation. Administratively established programs need to be further examined whether they are actually implemented consistently, whether teachers are actively involved, and whether students show behavioral changes as a result of these habituation. Thus, this study not only questions whether MTs Al-Ma'arif Rasau Jaya has a religious program, but further questions about how the leadership of the madrasah head constructs, strengthens, and maintains religious culture in the daily life of the madrasah.

The extent to which the role of the head of the madrasah is in accordance with the principles of religious culture can be analyzed by looking at the suitability between policies, habituation practices, examples, and the madrasah environment. Religious culture can be said to be stronger if religious values are not only present in the form of ceremonial symbols and activities, but have become habits that affect the way madrasah residents think, behave, and act. Based on the results of observations and interviews, it shows that the head of the madrasah consistently directs, supervises, and sets an example in the implementation of religious activities. Teachers and students follow habits such as joint prayer, Qur'an reading, congregational prayers, religious Friday activities, and cults. The findings show that the leadership of madrasah heads has contributed to building worship habits, religious attitudes, discipline, and a religious environment of madrasas. This conformity can be traced through at least three indicators, namely the habituation of worship, the internalization of values and attitudes, and the creation of a religious symbolic environment. In the dimension of worship habits, field data needs to show. The results of the observation showed that worship activities were carried out through prayer and recitation of the Qur'an every day before learning, regular congregational prayers, and weekly religious activities in the form of religious Fridays and cults. In the dimensions of values and attitudes, it can be seen that discipline follows activities, habituation of greetings and manners, responsibility, concern for others, and respect for students' respect for teachers. Meanwhile, the symbolic religious environment is seen through the habit of greetings, posters and religious advice, rules of order with religious nuances, and the availability of a worship room used in madrasah religious activities. The findings show that the religious culture at MTs Al-Ma'arif Rasau Jaya is realized through the integration of worship practices, daily behaviors, and madrasah environments that support Islamic values.

If these three aspects are found consistently, then it can be said that the role of the head of the madrasah has moved from just managing the program to the process of strengthening religious culture. On the other hand, if religious activities still depend on the instructions of the head of the madrasah, only take place at a certain time, or have not been reflected in the daily behavior of students, then there is a gap between the planned religious culture and the religious culture that is truly internalized. This gap is an important academic problem in the research because it shows that the success of

religious culture is not measured by the number of programs implemented, but by the level of consistency, involvement of madrasah residents, and the internalization of values in daily behavior.

Thus, the role of the head of the madrasah in strengthening religious culture at MTs Al-Ma'arif Rasau Jaya can be understood as a leadership process that connects the policy of the madrasah with the practice of religious life of the madrasah residents. The head of the madrasah acts not only as a decision-maker, but also as a religious leader, program manager, role model, communicator, supervisor, and motivator. Field data The results of interviews with 10 informants, consisting of 1 madrasah head, 3 teachers, 1 education staff, and 5 students, show that madrasah heads play a role as policy directors, role models, supervisors, and motivators in strengthening religious culture. Meanwhile, the results of observations on five forms of religious activities, namely the reading of the Qur'an and prayer before learning, congregational prayers, religious Fridays, cults, and the habit of greetings and manners, show that religious values have been applied through the habit of worship, discipline, respect for teachers, and polite social interaction.

The findings are important because they show that strengthening religious culture is a multidimensional process: madrasah heads set direction, teachers translate policies in learning and habituation, students practice these values, while the madrasah environment provides social space for its sustainability. On the other hand, the characteristics of MTs Al-Ma'arif Rasau Jaya as a private madrasah in Kubu Raya Regency provide its own context that cannot necessarily be explained through research conducted on madrasas with different institutional characteristics. Therefore, the academic problem of this research is not simply to identify the forms of religious activities carried out in madrasas, but to analyze how the leadership of the head of the madrasah works in shaping religious culture, the extent to which the practice is in accordance with the principles of religious culture, and what contextual factors support or hinder the process of strengthening it(Putri Paradiva Arifin, Ramdanil Mubarok 2024). On the basis of this issue, the study of the role of madrasah heads in strengthening religious culture at MTs Al-Ma'arif Rasau Jaya is important to produce a more contextual understanding of the relationship between Islamic education leadership and the formation of religious culture in private madrassas in the region.

B. METHOD

This type of research is qualitative research with a case study approach. This study was used to examine in depth the role of madrasah heads in strengthening religious culture in Madrasah Tsanawiyah, focusing on the context of MTs Al-Ma'arif Rasau Jaya, Kubu Raya Regency, West Kalimantan. The researcher explained how the head of the madrasah carries out the functions of religious, managerial, exemplary, supervision, and motivational leadership in building a religious culture in the madrasah environment. The case study approach is used because the research focuses on one institution in a contextual and in-depth manner, to allow researchers to understand the relationship between the policies of madrasah heads, the implementation of religious programs, student habituation, and the involvement of teachers and madrasah residents.

The research data is in the form of primary data and secondary data on the role of madrasah heads in strengthening religious culture at MTs Al-Ma'arif Rasau Jaya.

Primary data was obtained from 1 madrasah head, 3 teachers, 1 education staff, and 5 students as research informants. Primary data includes information about the policies of madrasah heads, forms of coaching and supervision, examples, motivation, implementation of religious activities, and religious behavior of students. Secondary data is in the form of religious program documents, madrasah activity schedules, rules, documentation of activities, and archives related to the formation of religious culture.
Data collection techniques were carried out by participatory observation, semi-structured in-depth interviews, and documentation (Grave et al. 2022). Observations are carried out in learning activities and religious activities of the madrasah, such as prayer and recitation of the Qur'an before learning, congregational prayers, religious Fridays, cults, and the habit of greetings and manners. Interviews were conducted with madrasah heads, teachers, education staff, and students to obtain information about their implementation and experience of madrasah religious policies and culture (March 2024). Documentation is used to supplement observation and interview data through program reviews, schedules, rules, photos of activities, and other supporting documents (Ratnaningtyas et al. 2023).

Then, data analysis was carried out using the interactive model Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, which included data condensation, data presentation, and conclusion drawing and verification (Matthew B. Miles Π A. Michael Huberman Johnny Saldaña 2014). The researcher first selects and groups data based on the focus of the research, namely the role of the head of the madrasah, the implementation of religious culture, the form of religious habituation, example, supervision, motivation, as well as supporting and inhibiting factors. The data were then presented descriptively to find the pattern of the relationship between the leadership of the head of the madrasah and the strengthening of religious culture. The validity of the data was checked through triangulation of sources and techniques, namely comparing the results of observations, interviews, and documentation (Stuart 2013).

Data analysis was carried out critically and interpretively by linking field findings with relevant theories and discourses regarding Islamic educational leadership, religious culture, transformational leadership, and the formation of educational organizational culture. The researcher then juxtaposed the research findings with the results of several previous studies to identify similarities, differences, strengthening, and gaps in the research. In this way, the analysis does not stop at the description of religious activities but explains how the role of the head of the madrasah contributes to the formation of religious culture in the context of MTs Al-Ma'arif Rasau Jaya.

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Findings (can be in form of subheading) (1500 – 2500 words)

The results of the research on the Role of Madrasah Heads in Strengthening Religious Culture at MTs Al-Ma'arif Rasau Jaya show that madrasah religious culture is formed through the relationship between madrasah head's policies, the implementation of religious activities, religious behavior habituation, and the madrasah environment. The findings of the research are grouped into three main units, namely the role of madrasah heads, forms of religious culture, and strengthening religious values in madrasah life.

Table 1. The Role of Madrasah Heads in Strengthening Religious Culture

No.	The Role of the Head of the Madrasah	Field Data Findings
1	Religious leaders	Directing the implementation of religious activities and setting an example in religious behavior.
2	Manager	Organize religious programs, division of tasks, activity schedules, and teachers' involvement in religious habits.
3	Supervisor	Monitoring the discipline of the implementation of worship activities and the involvement of madrasah residents in religious activities.
4	Motivator	Provide strengthening, advice, and encouragement to teachers and students to consistently carry out religious habits.
5	Examples	Demonstrate discipline, politeness, involvement in religious activities, and interactions that reflect religious values.

Source: Data from the author's research (2026).

Based on field findings, it shows that the role of the head of the madrasah is not only related to administrative management, but also includes direction, supervision, example, and motivation in religious activities. This role can be seen in the regulation of religious activities, monitoring the implementation of habituation, and the involvement of the head of the madrasah in creating a madrasah atmosphere that supports religious practices.

Table 2. Forms of Religious Culture at MTs Al-Ma'arif Rasau Jaya

No.	Religious Cultural Dimension	Form of Findings
1	Worship habits	Prayers before and after learning, Qur'an reading, congregational prayers, religious Friday activities, and cults.
2	Religious values and attitudes	Discipline, greetings and manners, responsibility, care, and respect for teachers.
3	Religious environment	Habituation of greetings, posters or religious advice, rules of conduct with religious nuances, and the use of worship spaces.

4	Religious activities	Implementation of routine religious activities involving madrasah heads, teachers, and students.

Source: Data from the author's research (2026).

Based on the religious culture at MTs Al-Ma'arif Rasau Jaya is found in the form of worship activities, daily behavior, and the madrasah environment. Religious activities are carried out as part of madrasah activities, while religious values are seen in the pattern of discipline, politeness, responsibility, and respect for teachers. The madrasah environment also provides supporting elements that strengthen the existence of religious culture.

Table 3. Implementation of Religious Cultural Strengthening

No.	Reinforcement Aspects	Field Data Findings
1	Planning	Religious activities are included in the program and agenda of madrasah activities.
2	Implementation	Religious activities are carried out regularly involving teachers and students.
3	Habituation	The practice of prayer, reading the Qur'an, congregational worship, greetings, and manners are applied in madrasah activities.
4	Supervision	The implementation of student activities and discipline is monitored by the head of the madrasah and teachers.
5	Reinforcement	Religious values are strengthened through direction, for example coaching, and motivation.

Source: Data from the author's research (2026).

Based on the strengthening of religious culture, it takes place through a series of activities that include planning, implementation, habituation, supervision, and strengthening. Religious activities do not stand as separate activities but are placed in the madrasah routine. The implementation of activities also involves the head of the madrasah, teachers, and students so that religious habituation takes place in the educational environment.

Overall, the findings of the study show three main characteristics of religious culture in MTs Al-Ma'arif Rasau Jaya, namely (1) the habituation of religious activities, (2) the strengthening of religious behavior and values in the interaction of madrasah residents, and (3) the involvement of the head of the madrasah in directing and supervising the implementation of religious culture. These findings are the basis for entering the

discussion section, which will then be analyzed using relevant theories and previous research.

This section presents research findings regarding the role of madrasah heads in strengthening religious culture at MTs Al-Ma'arif Rasau Jaya. The presentation of results is focused on data obtained through observation, interviews, and documentation during field research. The findings were compiled systematically based on the focus of the research, namely the implementation of the role of the head of the madrasah, the form of religious culture that developed, and the process of strengthening religious values in the life of the madrasah. The research data was first grouped based on the unit of findings to show the pattern of the implementation of religious culture factually.

The presentation of data in this section is descriptive, so it does not contain interpretations based on theory or comparison with previous research results. Each table describes the field findings which are then explained narratively to clarify the form, implementation, and relationship between the findings. With this systematic, the results section provides an empirical picture of the condition of religious culture at MTs Al-Ma'arif Rasau Jaya before the findings are further analyzed in the discussion section.

Based on the results of data collection and grouping, it was found that the strengthening of religious culture at MTs Al-Ma'arif Rasau Jaya is related to the role of the head of the madrasah as a director, manager, supervisor, role model, and motivator, which is realized through various religious activities and habituation of religious behavior. The findings are then presented in several data units so that the implementation of the role of madrasah heads and religious cultural forms in madrasas can be seen more systematically.

The results of the research on the role of madrasah heads in strengthening religious culture at MTs Al-Ma'arif Rasau Jaya are presented based on four units of findings, namely the preparation of religious policies, policy implementation, habituation and internalization of religious values, and religious behavior of madrasah residents. The four units are used to describe the process of strengthening religious culture starting from the direction of the madrasah head policy to its application in daily life in the madrasah environment.

Table 4. Research Findings on the Role of Madrasah Heads in Strengthening Religious Culture

Units of Discovery	Forms of Found Data	The Role of the Head of the Madrasah	Religious Culture
Religious Policy Formulation	The religious habituation program is included in the agenda of madrasah activities and rules	Set direction, coordinate programs, and share responsibilities with teachers	Religious activities are part of the madrasah routine
Policy Implementation	Prayer and recitation of the Qur'an before learning, congregational prayers, religious Fridays, and cults	Direct, monitor, and ensure that activities run	Forming regular worship habits
Value Formation and Internalization	Habituation of greeting, manners, discipline, responsibility, and respect for teachers	Provide advice, coaching, motivation, and role models	Religious values are applied in everyday behavior
Religious Environment and Behavior	The use of greetings, religious posters/advice, religious etiquette, and the use of worship spaces	Creating and maintaining an environment that supports religious activities	A madrasah atmosphere with religious nuances is formed

Source: Data from the author's research (2026).

1. Preparation of Religious Policy

Research data shows that strengthening religious culture begins with the involvement of madrasah heads in determining the direction and religious programs of madrasas. The policy is realized through the regulation of worship habituation activities, provisions for student behavior, and the involvement of teachers in the implementation of religious activities. Thus, religious culture is placed as part of the madrasah program, not just as an additional activity.

2. Policy Implementation

At the implementation stage, religious policies are realized through prayer and recitation of the Qur'an before learning, congregational prayers, religious Friday activities, and cults. The head of the madrasah carries out the supervisory function by

monitoring the implementation of activities and the discipline of madrasah residents. Teachers also play a role in accompanying students so that religious activities can take place in the madrasah routine.

3. Fostering and Internalizing Religious Values

The findings of the study show that the strengthening of religious culture is not only directed at the implementation of worship, but also at the formation of behavior. The habit of greetings, manners, discipline, responsibility, care, and respect for teachers are part of daily life in the madrasah. The head of the madrasah strengthens the process through direction, coaching, motivation, and example in interacting with teachers and students.

4. Religious Environment and Behavior

Religious culture is also seen in the physical and social environment of the madrasah. The research data showed the use of greetings in interactions, posters or religious advice, religious nuanced rules, and the use of worship spaces for religious activities. The environment is part of the habituation of religious values in Madrasah life. These findings show that the role of madrasah heads does not stop at the preparation of programs but continues to create conditions that allow religious values to be practiced consistently.

Table 5. Religious Culture Strengthening Flow

Stages	Reinforcement Process	Form of Activity/Implementation	Expected Results
1	Madrasah Head Policy	Establishment of policies, visions, rules, and commitments to strengthen religious culture	Institutional direction and commitment
2	Religious Activities Programs and Arrangements	Preparation of worship programs, religious activities, schedules, and division of teacher duties	Planned and organized religious activities
3	Implementation and Supervision	Program implementation, teacher example, mentoring, monitoring, and evaluation	Activities run consistently and controlled.
4	Worship Habits and Religious Behavior	Habit of prayer, congregational prayer, reading the Qur'an, maintaining manners, and commendable behavior	Religious habits are formed in daily life
5	Internalization of Religious Values	Appreciation of values through example, habituation, social interaction, and religious reflection	Religious values are part of the attitude and character of madrasah residents

6	The Formation of Madrasah Religious Culture	Religious values and practices have become a common habit and are inherent in the life of the madrasah	Formation of a sustainable religious culture

Source: Data from the author's research (2026).

Overall, the research data shows that the role of madrasah heads takes place in a series of interrelated events, ranging from policy formulation, implementation, coaching, supervision, to the creation of a religious environment. The findings became empirical data which was further analyzed in the Discussion section using the leadership theory of Islamic education, religious culture, and relevant previous research.

DISCUSSION

The Role of Madrasah Heads in Constructing the Strengthening of Religious Culture

The findings of the research at MTs Al-Ma'arif Rasau Jaya show that the strengthening of religious culture does not take place spontaneously but develops through a leadership process that starts from the policy of the head of the madrasah, is translated into the program and regulation of religious activities, is carried out and supervised on an ongoing basis, then is directed to the habit of worship and religious behavior. This process further encourages the internalization of religious values to the stage of forming the religious culture of the madrasah(Anis Nahdiyah, Muhammad Hanief 2021). Thus, the role of the head of the madrasah in this study cannot be understood only as an administrator who ensures the program runs, but as an actor who connects the dimensions of policy, behavior, values, and culture in one continuous process of change(Nafilah, Ghofur, and Khoirunnisa 2025).

The findings are important because they show that religious culture at the institutional level is the result of a gradual process. The head of the madrasah is in a strategic position to determine what values are prioritized, how these values are translated into institutional activities, and how these activities are maintained so that they become repetitive practices. In this context, the policy of the head of the madrasah is the starting point because the policy provides normative direction to all madrasah residents. However, policy alone is not enough to shape culture. Policies must take concrete forms through programs, routines, examples, supervision, and social strengthening.

Edgar H. Schein's perspective on the relationship between leadership and organizational culture helps explain the findings. Schein places culture on three levels: artifacts, declared values, and basic assumptions that become common beliefs(Edgar H. Schein 1983). He also emphasized that leadership has a close relationship with the process of forming and changing organizational culture. In the context of MTs Al-Ma'arif Rasau Jaya, the policy of the head of the madrasah can be read as an articulation

of the values to be built, while religious activities that are carried out regularly are a form of cultural artifacts that can be observed. When such activities are no longer seen as an additional program, but become something that is considered natural, important, and should be done by the madrasah residents, the process has moved towards a deeper cultural level(Ramadan and Astutik 2023).

Thus, the findings of the study show that the head of the madrasah carries out *the function of culture building*, not just *the management program*. The difference lies in orientation. *The management program* focuses on the implementation of activities, while *culture building* focuses on changing the behavior patterns and perspectives of madrasah residents. It is not enough for the head of the madrasah to ensure that religious activities are included in the madrasah agenda, but it is necessary to ensure that these activities produce habits and values that are inherent in the lives of madrasah residents.

These findings are in line with research (Alfiyanto 2020) which shows that the leadership of the head of the madrasah has an important position in developing religious culture through program management and the involvement of madrasah residents. The research confirms that the success of religious culture development is related to the ability of madrasah heads to encourage organizational members to carry out their duties and responsibilities together. Research (Akhmad Fauzi 2021) It also shows that the management of school principals in building a school culture based on Islamic values includes planning, implementation, and evaluation of religious cultural activities.

However, the findings of the research at MTs Al-Ma'arif Rasau Jaya provide a more specific emphasis. The strengthening of religious culture does not stop at the success of madrasah heads in managing programs, but moves through a chain of processes: policies → programs → implementation and supervision → habituation → internalization of cultural →. The chain shows that the success of religious leadership is determined by the ability of the madrasah head to maintain continuity between strategic decisions and the daily experiences of students(Faridatun Amiyah 2020). In other words, the power of leadership does not only lie in the ability to set *what should be done*, but also on the ability to ensure *how it becomes habitual* and finally *why it becomes meaningful*.

At this point, the author is of the view that religious culture should not be measured only based on the number of religious activities held by madrasas. The number of activities has not automatically shown the strength of religious culture. A more substantive measure is the extent to which these activities result in changes in habits, ways of interacting, discipline, responsibility, and value orientation of madrasah residents. This antithesis to an overly programmatic approach is important because madrasas may have many religious activities administratively, but not necessarily have a religious culture if these activities are only carried out due to the obligations or instructions of the leadership(Muliastrini, Gotama, and Handayani 2022).

Madrasah Head Policy as a Foundation for Strengthening Religious Culture

The findings of the study show that the policy of madrasah heads is the initial foundation in strengthening religious culture. This policy provides institutional legitimacy to religious activities so that religious values are not placed as activities that are outside the education system, but become part of madrasah life. The position of the head of the madrasah in this context is important because the policies issued by the leadership determine priorities, allocation of attention, implementation mechanisms, and coordination patterns between madrasah residents.

Theoretically, this finding can be understood through Schein's thought that leaders have an important role in articulating values and paying attention to certain aspects of the organization(Edgar H. Schein 1983). What is consistently noticed, supported, and reinforced by leaders will acquire greater meaning in the life of the organization. Therefore, when the head of the madrasah pays systematic attention to religious activities, this attention not only produces administrative decisions, but also gives a symbolic message to the madrasah residents about what values are considered important.

In Bass's transformational leadership perspective, leaders not only direct subordinates to fulfill formal tasks, but also build awareness of higher goals and values(Fajri, Ardianto, and Sholihah 2025). The concept places ideal influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual mindfulness as elements of transformational leadership. If this perspective is applied to the research findings, the religious policy of the madrasah head will have a stronger influence if it does not stop at the instructions, but is able to explain the moral and educational reasons behind the policy(Saidah and Falah 2023).

Thus, the policy of madrasah heads has two dimensions. The first dimension is the structural dimension, which provides rules and directions for the implementation of activities. The second dimension is the symbolic dimension, which is conveying a message about the identity of the madrasah and the values that are to be used as a common orientation(Jesica Dwi Rahmayanti and Muhamad Arif 2021). This second dimension is often underpaid in discussions about religious culture. In fact, culture is basically not only built through rules, but also through the meaning given to those rules(Sumiyati Elis 2020).

This finding is in accordance with Rodiansyah's research regarding the strategy of madrasah heads in fostering religious culture which places the policy of madrasah heads as one of the important aspects in fostering religious culture. Research (Wildan Maulana Malik, Sulistyorini 2021)It shows that the leadership of the head of the madrasah is related to the process of building the religious culture of students through habituation and management of activities that are integrated in the life of the madrasah.

However, this study shows that policy should not be positioned as a variable that works directly on the formation of religious culture. The policy works through a

mediation mechanism in the form of programs, implementation, supervision, habituation, and internalization(Arif 2020). This means that there is a distance between *Stuart T* and *Culture*. This distance can only be bridged if the head of the madrasah is able to translate the policy into consistent practice.

Religious Programs as a Mechanism for Institutionalizing Values

The next stage in the research findings is the program and regulation of religious activities. These findings show that religious values acquire an operational form through programs that are structured and regulated in madrasah life. The program functions as an institutionalization instrument because values that were previously normative are translated into activities that can be carried out by madrasah residents.

In Schein's framework, repetitive and observable activities are part of an organization's artifact(Edgar H. Schein 1983). However, artifacts do not automatically indicate that culture has been internalized. Therefore, religious programs in the research findings need to be understood as an initial instrument of cultural formation, not as final evidence of the success of religious culture. The program becomes meaningful when the activity begins to form a pattern of behavior and is then accepted as a common habit(Tajudin and Aprilianto 2020).

This is reinforced by research (Abubakar, Hudaya, and Adiasa 2023) which shows that the strategy of the head of the madrasah in developing religious culture is carried out through organized programs and religious activities that take place regularly. Programs such as Qur'an reading, congregational dhikr, dhuha prayer, and congregational zuhur prayer are placed as part of the strategy of religious culture formation. Research (Anas Anas 2023) It was also found that the development of religious culture was carried out through the habituation of religious activities in school life, including the reading of the Qur'an, Friday alms, congregational zuhur prayers, and the commemoration of Islamic holidays.

The findings of this study also provide a correction to the understanding that equates religious programs with religious culture. Programs are *means*, while culture is an *outcome* that is formed through a longer process. Programs can be discontinued or replaced, whereas culture tends to persist because it has become part of the way the organization's citizens live their daily lives. Therefore, the effectiveness of madrasah heads is not only seen from the ability to produce many programs, but from their ability to integrate programs into the madrasah life system.

Implementation and Supervision as a Link between Policy and Practice

The next findings show the importance of implementation and monitoring. This stage has a strategic position because it is a link between the decision of the head of the madrasah and the real practice of the madrasah residents. Without consistent

implementation, policies can potentially stop as documents; Without supervision, the program has the potential to lose continuity.

In the perspective of educational change,(Huda 2021) emphasizes that institutional change is not enough to be done through formal decisions, but requires a process that links leadership, practice change, and capacity building within the organization. In the context of this study, the implementation and supervision showed that the head of the madrasah did not release the program after the policy was set. Supervision serves as a mechanism to ensure that the values that have been set are actually translated into action(Putra Tama 2022).

Research (Erwinsyah, Shaleh, and Ibrahim 2024) support these findings by showing the importance of planning, implementation, and evaluation in the management of Islamic values-based school culture. Meanwhile, research (Ali Mubarrok and Bisri 2024) It shows that spiritual leadership in madrassas is not only demonstrated through religious vision, but also through commitment reflected in the leaders' thoughts, words, and actions as well as efforts to maintain religious practices and local wisdom.

Thus, supervision in this study should not be understood solely as a control of compliance. Supervision can have a pedagogical and cultural function, namely helping madrasah residents understand the expected standards of behavior while maintaining consistency of practice(Widyasari and Kustiarini 2021). In religious culture, supervision that is only administrative in nature risks making religious activities formalistic. Instead, oversight accompanied by example and value communication can help shift external compliance toward internal awareness.

Habituation of Worship and Religious Behavior as a Stage of Formation of Madrasah Habitus

The findings of the study then show that policies, programs, implementation, and supervision are directed at religious habituation and behavior. The habituation stage is an important part because religious values begin to be realized through repetitive actions. At this stage there is a shift from *Knowing* To *Doing*: religious values are not only known or conveyed, but practiced consistently(Sauri, Sopyan and Salma Atusya'diah 2023).

Research(Muzfirah 2025) shows that religious culture can be realized through the habit of reading the Qur'an, praying together, and social activities that are oriented towards caring for others. The culture is then related to the individual and social piety of students. Research (Suraijiah 2023)It also shows that religious activities that are carried out regularly are part of the madrasah head's strategy in instilling value in students.

In this context, habituation has a different mechanism than instruction. Instruction relies on obedience to commands, while habituation works through repetition so that

behavior slowly becomes familiar. Therefore, strengthening religious culture requires continuity. If religious practices are only carried out at a certain momentum, then these activities tend to remain at the program level. On the other hand, when practice is carried out consistently and accepted as a normal part of madrasah life, the chances of internalization become greater(Susanto 2022).

These findings reinforce the research(Saragih and Kalsum 2025) which shows that the principal's innovation in building religious culture is carried out through the development of activities that allow religious values to be practiced repeatedly, including the recitation of Yasin, memorization of the Qur'an, and qiraah assistance. However, this study adds to the argument that habituation should not be understood as the ultimate goal. Habituation is a transition mechanism towards the internalization of values.

Internalization of Religious Values as an Indicator of the Depth of Religious Culture

The internalization stage is the most important part in understanding the depth of religious culture at MTs Al-Ma'arif Rasau Jaya. If habituation explains the repetition of behavior, internalization explains the change in the position of values in madrasah residents. Religious values are no longer carried out solely because there are rules or supervision but begin to become an orientation in action.

Perspective (Sholikah and Aziz 2024) It is very relevant to explain this stage. A strong culture does not stop at explicitly stated artifacts and values, but reaches a level of basic assumptions that are accepted together. With this framework, the practice of worship that appears outwardly can be called a cultural artifact, while the religious values communicated by the madrasah are *espoused values*(Hidayah and Fauzi 2025). Religious culture becomes stronger when these values develop into beliefs that influence daily behavior even when there is no direct supervision.

This is where the research findings have important theoretical consequences. The head of the madrasah does not directly "insert" grades into students. The head of the madrasah creates the institutional conditions that allow the internalization process to take place through example, repetition, social interaction, habituation, and religious experience. Thus, internalization is a social and pedagogical process, not just the result of instructions from the head of the madrasah(R and Hidayattullah 2023).

Research (Ayunnisa 2024)Reinforcing the argument by showing that spiritual leadership and religious culture have implications for the affective dimension and growth of students' behavior. Recent research on adaptive leadership also highlights the problem that religious culture in some madrassas is at risk of stopping at symbols and has not been fully internalized in daily organizational behavior. These findings reinforce the importance of distinguishing between the existence of religious activities and the success of internalizing values(Hartono, Ilyasin, and Suratman 2025).

Thus, the author emphasizes that the most important indicator of strengthening religious culture is not the intensity of activities, but the depth of internalization of values. Madrassas that have few programs but manage to form consistent religious behaviors can have a stronger culture than madrassas that have many programs but rely entirely on instruction and supervision.

The Formation of Madrasah Religious Culture as a Result of Sustainable Leadership

The final stage of the research findings shows the formation of the religious culture of the madrasah. This stage is a consequence of the accumulation of policies, programs, implementation, supervision, habituation, and internalization. Thus, religious culture does not emerge through one specific policy or program but is the result of an ongoing process.

Conceptually, these findings are in line with Schein, who views culture as a pattern of basic assumptions that develops in the group through a process of shared learning and then becomes a way to understand and act in an organization(Edgar H. Schein 1983). When associated with MTs Al-Ma'arif Rasau Jaya, religious culture is formed when religious practices are no longer perceived as stand-alone programs but become part of the identity and normal life of the madrasah.

These findings are consistent with the research (Nunung Dwi Setyawati, Idrus Sere 2022) which places the leadership of the head of the madrasah as an important factor in the development of religious culture. Similarly, research (Arista et al. 2023) It shows that the leadership of the head of the madrasah has a relationship with the development of the religious culture of students through habituation and management of madrasah life. Research (Budiman 2023) shows that the management of school principals through planning, implementation, and evaluation is an important part of the development of a school culture based on Islamic values.

However, this study offers a slightly different synthesis. Religious culture should not be understood as a direct product of the leadership of the head of the madrasah. The head of the madrasah is indeed a strategic actor, but culture is formed through the interaction between leadership, teachers, students, education staff, institutional routines, and the social environment of the madrasah. Therefore, the more appropriate term is not "the head of the madrasah forms the religious culture", but the head of the madrasah initiates, directs, institutionalizes, supervises, and maintains the process of forming a religious culture(Listiyani, Bambang Sumardjoko, and Laili Etika Rahmawati 2025).

This antithesis is important so that the position of the head of the madrasah is not placed too deterministically. If culture only depends on the figure of the head of the madrasah, then culture has the potential to weaken when there is a change of leadership(Uspari and Fadli 2024). On the other hand, when values have been internalized and become a collective habit, culture will have a stronger durability. In

other words, the success of madrasah heads can be seen from the extent to which religious culture is able to survive beyond the existence of its leader figure.

Discussion Synthesis: Madrasah Heads as Drivers of Value Transformation into Culture

Based on the overall findings and theoretical dialogue, this study shows that the role of madrasah heads in strengthening religious culture works through the mechanism of value transformation. The process can be formulated as: the policy of the head of the madrasah → the institutionalization of religious programs → the implementation and supervision → habituation of religious behavior → the internalization of the religious values → culture of the madrasah.

The series shows that there is a causal relationship, not a simple cause-and-effect relationship. Policy is a starting point, but it's not enough. The program is an operational form, but it is not yet a culture. Implementation and supervision maintain consistency, but do not guarantee internalization. Habituation turns activities into routines, while internalization turns routines into values that are believed. Ultimately, when these values are accepted and reproduced collectively, a religious culture is formed(Tuesday 2025).

In the context of MTs Al-Ma'arif Rasau Jaya, religious culture is therefore not enough to be understood as the existence of religious activities in the madrasah calendar. Religious culture must be seen as a condition when religious values have gained a place in the institutional structure, daily practices, social interactions, and behavioral orientation of madrasah residents. This perspective emphasizes that the strength of religious culture is not primarily in the number of activities carried out, but in the consistency, meaningfulness, collective involvement, and sustainability of internalized values(Yoandi Putra Harahap, Sri Nurabdiah Pratiwi, and Mhd. Isman 2024).

Thus, the findings of the study show that the head of the madrasah has a strategic role in strengthening religious culture, but this role is possible and directing, not single-handedly determinant. The head of the madrasah provides direction, structure, example, supervision, and room for habituation; Meanwhile, madrasah residents collectively reproduce these values in their daily lives. It is at this point that religious culture gains sustainability when the values that initially came from the policies of the leadership have changed into awareness and habits with madrasah residents.

CONCLUSION

This study aims to analyze the role of madrasah heads in strengthening religious culture at MTs Al-Ma'arif Rasau Jaya. The results of the study show that the head of the madrasah plays a strategic role in initiating, directing, implementing, and maintaining religious culture through policies that are translated into programs and arrangements of religious activities, followed by the implementation, supervision, habituation of worship and religious behavior, as well as the internalization of religious values in the lives of madrasah residents. The process shows that the strengthening of religious culture is not formed through incidental religious activities, but through consistent leadership, example, supervision, and habituation that takes place continuously until religious values become part of the behavior and collective life of the madrasah. Thus, the head of the madrasah not only carries out administrative functions but also acts as a driver of the transformation of religious values into an integrated culture in madrasah life.

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