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TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND TEACHERS' PEDAGOGICAL LEARNING IN ISLAMIC KINDERGARTEN EDUCATION: A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF TWO INSTITUTIONS

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ABSTRAK

Latar Belakang: Kepemimpinan transformasional dapat digunakan untuk memahami dukungan kepala sekolah terhadap pembelajaran profesional guru melalui keteladanan, komunikasi tujuan pendidikan, stimulasi intelektual, dan perhatian individual. **Tujuan Penelitian**: Penelitian ini mengkaji penerapan empat dimensi kepemimpinan transformasional, kondisi organisasi yang membentuk dukungan terhadap pembelajaran pedagogis guru, serta implikasinya bagi praktik pendidikan di TK Aisyiyah 1 Kebayoran Baru dan TK Bunayya Islamic Pre School Kebayoran Lama, Jakarta Selatan. **Metode**: Penelitian deskriptif kualitatif ini menggunakan wawancara mendalam, observasi, dan analisis dokumen. Kedua lembaga dipilih secara purposif karena memiliki karakteristik organisasi dan layanan pendidikan yang berbeda. Data dianalisis melalui kondensasi data, penyajian data, serta penarikan dan verifikasi kesimpulan. **Hasil**: Praktik kepemimpinan yang dibahas mencakup keteladanan profesional, komunikasi tujuan pendidikan, refleksi dan supervisi, kolaborasi, serta bimbingan individual. TK Aisyiyah 1 memiliki budaya kerja kekeluargaan dan pendekatan pembelajaran berbasis sentra, sedangkan TK Bunayya mengintegrasikan dua kurikulum dan menyediakan layanan inklusi, kelas stimulasi, serta penitipan anak. Perbedaan tersebut menunjukkan konteks organisasi yang perlu dipertimbangkan dalam memahami dukungan kepemimpinan. **Kesimpulan**: Kepemimpinan transformasional perlu dihubungkan dengan kebutuhan pedagogis guru dan karakteristik kelembagaan. Temuan memberikan pemahaman kontekstual mengenai praktik dukungan profesional, tetapi tidak membuktikan peningkatan kompetensi pedagogis secara terukur atau hubungan sebab-akibat.

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Transformational Leadership; Pedagogical Competence; Kindergarten Teachers; Early Childhood Education; School Leadership

ABSTRACT

Background: Transformational leadership offers a framework for examining how principals support teachers' professional learning through role modelling, communication of educational purposes, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. **Purpose**: This study examines the enactment of the four dimensions of transformational leadership, the organizational conditions shaping support for teachers' pedagogical learning, and the implications for practice at TK Aisyiyah 1 Kebayoran Baru and TK Bunayya Islamic Pre School Kebayoran Lama, South Jakarta. **Methods**: This qualitative descriptive study used in-depth interviews, observations, and document analysis. The two institutions were purposively selected because of their different organizational characteristics and educational services. Data were analyzed through data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. **Results**: The leadership practices discussed include professional role modelling, communication of educational purposes, reflection and supervision, collaboration, and individualized guidance. TK Aisyiyah 1 is characterized by a family-oriented work culture and centre-based learning, whereas TK Bunayya integrates two curricula and provides inclusion support, stimulation classes, and day care. These differences identify organizational contexts relevant to understanding leadership support. **Conclusion**: Transformational leadership needs to be considered in relation to teachers' pedagogical responsibilities and institutional characteristics. The findings provide contextual insight into professional support but do not establish measurable improvement in pedagogical competence or a causal relationship.

A. INTRODUCTION

Early childhood education (ECE) lays an important foundation for children's cognitive, linguistic, social-emotional, moral, physical, and creative development. The quality of this provision depends in part on teachers' capacity to translate developmental aims into meaningful learning experiences through play, exploration, classroom interaction, and assessment. These responsibilities require more than the completion of instructional tasks; they involve professional judgement about children's characteristics, developmental differences, and changing learning needs. Teachers' pedagogical learning is therefore closely connected to the institutional conditions in which they plan, teach, reflect, and evaluate children's development.

Principals influence these conditions by setting educational priorities, organizing professional collaboration, providing feedback, and making opportunities for teacher learning part of institutional practice. Research has associated school leadership with teacher learning, self-efficacy, collaboration, and school-related outcomes (Liu et al., 2021; Ma & Marion, 2021; Pan & Chen, 2021; Tan et al., 2022). These outcomes, however, should not be treated as direct evidence that teachers' pedagogical competence has improved. The relevant analytical question is how leadership support creates opportunities for teachers to examine and develop the knowledge and decisions involved in everyday teaching.

Transformational leadership offers a framework for examining this relationship through idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Bass & Riggio, 2006). The four dimensions refer respectively to professional example, communication of shared purposes, encouragement of reflection and problem-solving, and responsiveness to

individual development needs. Studies have connected transformational leadership with teachers' innovative behaviour and school learning climates (Vermeulen et al., 2022; Zainal & Matore, 2021), while Sliwka et al. (2024) discuss its relevance to deeper learning. In kindergarten education, these dimensions become meaningful when considered in relation to teachers' responsibilities for play-based learning, classroom interaction, developmental assessment, and communication with families.

Research in preschool settings has begun to address the relationship between leadership, organizational culture, and teacher development. Mlinarević et al. (2022) examine transformational leadership and organizational culture in a preschool institution, while Zhang et al. (2022) investigate preschool principals' leadership styles in relation to teacher leadership. Zhou et al. (2026) consider leadership behaviour in relation to preschool teachers' career resilience. The broader educational leadership literature addresses teacher collaboration, self-efficacy, professional learning, distributed leadership, middle leadership, and school outcomes (Lipscombe et al., 2023; Liu et al., 2021; Mifsud, 2024; Pan & Chen, 2021; Tan et al., 2022). Although these studies offer insights into different aspects of educational leadership and professional learning, they provide a less direct account of how principals' leadership support relates to the specific pedagogical responsibilities of kindergarten teachers.

The issue is particularly relevant in Islamic early childhood institutions, where educational purposes include children's cognitive and social-emotional development as well as the cultivation of moral and spiritual dispositions. Values such as akhlak, amanah, and uswah hasanah can inform professional conduct, responsibility, and the way adults guide young children. Their significance, however, lies not simply in an institution's Islamic identity but in how these values are reflected in teachers' relationships with children, professional responsibilities, and the educational priorities communicated by school leaders. This perspective makes it necessary to examine Islamic educational orientation alongside the organizational practices through which teachers are supported.

In Indonesia, professional expectations for teachers and school leaders are reflected in Law No. 14 of 2005 concerning Teachers and Lecturers (Republik Indonesia, 2005), Minister of National Education Regulation No. 16 of 2007 concerning Teachers' Academic Qualifications and Competencies (Kementerian Pendidikan Nasional Republik Indonesia, 2007b), and Minister of National Education Regulation No. 13 of 2007 concerning Standards for School/Madrasah Principals (Kementerian Pendidikan Nasional Republik Indonesia, 2007a). These provisions establish a normative basis for teacher competence and school leadership. They do not, by themselves, explain how institutional values and leadership responsibilities become sustained opportunities for professional learning in the daily work of Islamic kindergartens.

This study examines transformational leadership and teachers' pedagogical learning at two Islamic early childhood institutions in South Jakarta: TK Aisyiyah 1 Kebayoran Baru and TK Bunayya Islamic Pre School Kebayoran Lama. The institutions provide contrasting organizational contexts. TK Aisyiyah 1 is described as having an established institutional history, a family-oriented work culture, and a centre-based learning approach. TK Bunayya combines the Bunayya Islamic Curriculum with the Merdeka Curriculum and provides additional services, including inclusion support, stimulation classes, and day care. These characteristics make comparison useful for considering how leadership priorities are situated within different institutional

arrangements; they do not, in themselves, establish differences in leadership quality or teacher competence.

The study addresses three questions: (1) How are the four dimensions of transformational leadership represented in the leadership practices described at the two kindergartens? (2) What organizational conditions and practical constraints are associated with principals' support for teachers' pedagogical learning? and (3) What implications can be drawn for connecting leadership support with teachers' everyday pedagogical responsibilities? The analysis considers professional role modelling, communication of educational purposes, reflection, academic supervision, collaboration, and individual guidance in relation to lesson planning, play-based learning, classroom interaction, developmental assessment, and communication with families.

The study's contribution is a context-sensitive comparison of how transformational leadership is discussed in relation to teachers' pedagogical work in two Islamic kindergarten settings. Rather than proposing that the four dimensions operate identically across institutions, the analysis considers how organizational culture and the range of educational services provide different contexts for leadership support. It also distinguishes leadership practices and opportunities for professional learning from demonstrated changes in classroom practice. This distinction is important because the available account does not include quantified or longitudinal assessments that would establish improvement in teachers' pedagogical competence or a causal effect of leadership.

B. METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design to examine transformational leadership practices and their relationship to teachers' pedagogical learning in two kindergartens (Kim et al., 2017)(Sandelowski, 2000). The research was conducted at TK Aisyiyah 1 Kebayoran Baru and TK Bunayya Islamic Pre School Kebayoran Lama, South Jakarta. The institutions were purposively selected because they present different organizational characteristics relevant to the research focus. TK Aisyiyah 1 is characterized by a family-oriented work culture and centre-based learning, whereas TK Bunayya integrates the Bunayya Islamic Curriculum and the Merdeka Curriculum and provides additional services, including inclusion support, stimulation classes, and day care. The comparison is intended to illuminate contextual variation rather than to rank institutional performance.

The stated data sources comprised principals as key informants, kindergarten teachers as primary informants, and supporting staff or school committee members as additional informants where relevant. Data-collection techniques were in-depth interviews, observations, and document analysis. Interviews addressed participants' experiences and interpretations of principal leadership and teacher development. Observations were directed toward leadership practices, principal–teacher interactions, workplace atmosphere, and classroom-learning dynamics. The documents identified for analysis included work programmes, academic-supervision records, lesson-planning materials, child-development assessment records, meeting minutes, and other relevant institutional records. The analytical account follows the interactive model of Miles et al. (2014), involving data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. The four dimensions of transformational leadership served as the principal

analytical categories, while issues concerning pedagogical learning and institutional context informed the interpretation of the material.

Trustworthiness was addressed through source and method triangulation, member checking, peer or expert discussion, contextual description, and an audit trail. These strategies were intended to support credibility and contextual interpretation. Pedagogical competence was understood as a practice-oriented capacity reflected in teachers' use of knowledge about children's characteristics to inform learning objectives, activities, instructional media, classroom interaction, and assessment. The analysis therefore distinguishes three related but different matters: leadership support provided by principals, professional learning opportunities available to teachers, and changes in pedagogical practice. The findings primarily illuminate the forms of leadership support and professional learning associated with teachers' pedagogical responsibilities. Accordingly, the interpretation remains focused on the organizational and professional processes through which principals support teachers, rather than claiming measurable or sustained improvements in pedagogical competence. The qualitative evidence presented in this study provides contextual insight into these processes, while the absence of quantified and longitudinal assessments limits conclusions about the extent to which such support translates into lasting changes in classroom practice.

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Institutional Contexts of the Two Kindergartens

The two kindergartens provide different organizational settings in which principals' leadership practices and teachers' professional responsibilities are situated. TK Aisyiyah 1 Kebayoran Baru is described as having an established institutional history, a family-oriented work culture, and centre-based learning. TK Bunayya Islamic Pre School Kebayoran Lama combines the Bunayya Islamic Curriculum and the Merdeka Curriculum with inclusion support, stimulation classes, and day care. These institutional characteristics identify different organizational demands, although they do not independently demonstrate how particular leadership practices were enacted or how teachers' competence changed. Research on preschool leadership similarly emphasizes the relevance of organizational culture when interpreting leadership practices (Mlinarević et al., 2022; Rostini et al., 2022), while broader work highlights the role of context in educational leadership (Leithwood, 2021; Tan et al., 2022).

The four dimensions of transformational leadership offer a common framework for interpreting the leadership practices discussed in the two institutions. Idealized influence concerns professional example and integrity; inspirational motivation concerns the communication of educational purposes; intellectual stimulation concerns reflection and consideration of alternative practices; and individualized consideration concerns responsiveness to teachers' different development needs. These dimensions are analytically connected, but their practical expression depends on institutional arrangements and the professional situations teachers encounter. Research has linked school leadership with teacher learning, instructional practice, and professional collaboration (Liu et al., 2021; Pan & Chen, 2021), supporting the need to consider leadership in relation to the conditions of teachers' work.

Idealized influence refers to the professional conduct, integrity, responsibility, and consistency through which a principal establishes expectations for institutional life.

In an Islamic kindergarten, professional example may also be interpreted in relation to *amanah* and *uswah hasanah*: responsibility in carrying out educational duties and conduct that can serve as an example for colleagues and children. These values provide an ethical orientation for leadership, but their presence should be understood through actual professional conduct rather than inferred from the institution's religious identity alone. The institutional context is therefore relevant to understanding the expectations that principals communicate and sustain (Leithwood, 2021; Mlinarević et al., 2022).

TK Aisyiyah 1 Kebayoran Baru has an established institutional history and a family-oriented work culture in which interpersonal relationships and shared values form important aspects of the organizational context. TK Bunayya Islamic Pre School Kebayoran Lama provides a broader range of educational services, combining the Bunayya Islamic Curriculum and the Merdeka Curriculum with inclusion support, stimulation classes, and day care. These institutional characteristics indicate different organizational demands, particularly in coordinating educational activities and responding to diverse learning and developmental needs. Research on inclusive school leadership similarly highlights the organizational challenges involved in accommodating learner diversity (DeMatthews et al., 2021; Lambrecht et al., 2022).

The family-oriented culture at TK Aisyiyah 1 places interpersonal relationships and shared values within the context of professional responsibility, whereas the range of programmes at TK Bunayya presents broader coordination demands. These differences provide a contextual basis for examining how professional example, institutional priorities, and teachers' responsibilities are situated within each institution. However, they should not be taken as evidence that one institution relies more heavily on informal mentoring or that the other implements more effective formal supervision. The comparison therefore focuses on the organizational conditions relevant to leadership practices rather than presumed differences in leadership performance.

Inspirational motivation concerns how principals communicate educational purposes and encourage collective commitment. In kindergarten settings, institutional priorities become pedagogically relevant when they are connected with teachers' preparation of learning activities, classroom interactions, and assessment of children's development. The communication of goals is therefore distinct from evidence that teachers have incorporated those goals into classroom practice. Research on principal leadership and teacher professional learning emphasizes the importance of leadership in creating conditions that support teachers' development (Karacabey et al., 2022; Pan & Chen, 2021).

The institutional profiles indicate that the communication of shared purposes takes place within different programme environments. At TK Aisyiyah 1, continuity, shared values, and centre-based learning form part of the institutional context. At TK Bunayya, the coexistence of two curricula and additional services makes programme alignment an important organizational concern. These characteristics help identify the kinds of priorities that leadership needs to address, but the available description does not establish the specific communication channels used or the extent to which teachers translated institutional goals into changed pedagogical decisions. Vermeulen et al. (2022) nevertheless show why leadership relationships and the school learning climate are relevant to teachers' innovative behaviour.

Intellectual stimulation involves encouraging teachers to examine established practices, reflect on pedagogical challenges, and consider alternative approaches. This dimension is relevant to kindergarten education because children differ in their interests, abilities, and developmental stages. Teachers must therefore exercise professional judgement when adapting activities, learning media, and interactions to children's needs. Research on instructional leadership and teacher practice provides related insight into the role of leadership in shared professional learning (Bellibaş et al., 2021, 2022).

Academic supervision, professional discussion, and reflection on learning experiences can create opportunities for teachers to review lesson planning, classroom implementation, and assessment. Their developmental value depends on whether professional dialogue engages with pedagogical questions rather than merely checking the completeness of administrative documents. In settings that provide inclusion services, reflection may also involve considering how learning activities respond to children with differing developmental needs. Research on teacher collaboration and professional learning similarly identifies professional interaction as a relevant condition for improving practice (Karacabey et al., 2022; Liu et al., 2021).

Individualized consideration concerns responsiveness to teachers' different experiences, capabilities, and professional learning needs. In kindergarten settings, these needs may relate to planning developmentally appropriate activities, facilitating classroom interactions, selecting learning media, or assessing children's development. The relevance of individualized support is also apparent in preschool leadership research examining the relationship between principals' leadership styles, teacher leadership, and psychological capital (Zhang et al., 2022).

Constructive feedback, professional learning opportunities, and individual guidance are possible forms of support through which principals can respond to teachers' development needs. In an Islamic educational setting, this support can be informed by *akhlak* and *amanah*: respectful professional relationships and responsible attention to children's educational needs. However, the existence of guidance should not be equated with demonstrated improvement. Establishing such improvement would require evidence of what teachers learned, how they applied it, and whether changes in planning, interaction, or assessment were sustained. The comparison between the two kindergartens is therefore interpreted as a comparison of institutional contexts and stated support priorities, not as a measured comparison of teacher competence.

Improvement of Teachers' Pedagogical Competence

Teachers' pedagogical competence concerns the knowledge and professional judgement involved in understanding children's characteristics, establishing appropriate learning objectives, selecting strategies and media, facilitating interactions, and assessing developmental progress. These responsibilities are central to kindergarten education because learning is shaped through children's participation, play, exploration, and relationships with adults. Recent work has considered pedagogical competence and learning quality in relation to educational contexts (Astini et al., 2026; Lynch et al., 2023; Warta & Syam, 2023).

Transformational leadership may support teachers' pedagogical learning by establishing conditions for reflection, collaboration, feedback, and professional growth. Supervision can become a developmental process when principals and teachers use it

to identify instructional questions, consider possible responses, and revisit pedagogical decisions. This interpretation is consistent with research connecting leadership arrangements, professional collaboration, and collective teacher innovativeness (Buyukgoze et al., 2024; Kılınç et al., 2024). It does not mean that the presence of leadership support alone demonstrates a change in teaching competence.

Academic supervision can provide a structured opportunity to discuss lesson plans, classroom implementation, and assessment practices. Its pedagogical significance lies in the quality of the dialogue: whether teachers are supported in explaining their instructional choices, considering children's responses, and identifying adjustments that may be appropriate. The distinction matters because the availability of lesson plans or supervision records is evidence of an administrative process, not necessarily evidence that classroom practice has changed. Research on teaching improvement likewise emphasizes the connection between professional learning and the work of teaching (Lynch et al., 2023).

Professional collaboration can provide opportunities for teachers to exchange experiences, share instructional resources, and discuss classroom challenges. In institutions with diverse educational services, collaboration may help teachers consider different ways of responding to children's learning and developmental needs. Inclusive leadership research highlights the organizational work required to address barriers and support teachers in developing inclusive practices (DeMatthews et al., 2021). Collaboration becomes part of sustained professional learning when it has a clear pedagogical focus, sufficient time for discussion, and continuity beyond informal exchanges.

The four dimensions of transformational leadership can be read as complementary conditions for teachers' professional learning. Idealized influence establishes ethical and professional expectations; inspirational motivation connects individual work with shared educational purposes; intellectual stimulation creates space for reflection; and individualized consideration recognizes differences in teachers' development needs. Their combined relevance lies in the way they may organize professional support around the practical demands of teaching. Studies have associated leadership with teacher commitment and innovative practice (Cansoy et al., 2022; Kılınç et al., 2024), although these outcomes should not be treated as direct measures of pedagogical competence.

The qualitative design supports a contextual interpretation of leadership practices and their possible connection with teachers' professional learning; it does not establish a statistically measurable or causal relationship between transformational leadership and improved pedagogical competence. The distinction is consequential: leadership support describes what principals make available, professional learning concerns what teachers develop through those opportunities, and pedagogical change concerns what is subsequently enacted in classroom practice. The present account provides a basis for discussing the first two levels but does not include quantified or longitudinal evidence sufficient to establish the third.

Supporting and Inhibiting Factors in Transformational Leadership

The implementation of transformational leadership takes place within organizational cultures, programme structures, communication practices, and available professional-development opportunities. These conditions influence the practical demands placed on principals and teachers. Educational leadership research emphasizes that leadership practices need to be interpreted in relation to the contexts in which professional learning and school improvement occur (Brauckmann et al., 2023; Nadeem, 2024).

A cooperative organizational culture can create conditions for communication between principals and teachers and make it easier to discuss instructional concerns. The family-oriented culture identified at TK Aisyiyah 1 is relevant as a feature of its institutional setting, while the broader programme structure at TK Bunayya identifies coordination as an important organizational concern. These contextual descriptions do not, on their own, establish the frequency or effectiveness of mentoring and collaboration. Research on school leadership and teacher learning nevertheless indicates that organizational culture shapes the conditions in which teachers engage in professional learning (Shengnan & Hallinger, 2021).

Institutional programmes and supervisory arrangements can provide continuity for professional development. Work programmes, academic-supervision records, lesson-planning materials, and meeting documentation may help organize professional responsibilities and make areas for discussion visible. Their contribution to teacher learning depends on how they are used: documentation can support reflection when connected with classroom practice, but it can also remain a compliance exercise when attention is limited to completed forms. This distinction is consistent with research on leadership and teacher performance in school settings (Nurabadi et al., 2021).

Organizational complexity is a relevant consideration for institutions that combine multiple curricula, inclusion services, stimulation classes, and day care. Such arrangements involve coordination across educational and care activities and may require differentiated supervision, clear communication, and careful allocation of time. At TK Bunayya, the identified range of services makes programme coordination a salient contextual feature. This does not establish that the institution's leadership is more or less effective; it indicates that leadership support is situated within a wider set of operational responsibilities. Research on school leadership and teacher well-being also draws attention to the organizational and emotional demands associated with educational work (Cann et al., 2021; McKay et al., 2025).

Teachers' professional experience and pedagogical responsibilities may also differ, creating a need for support that responds to particular development priorities. Some teachers may need to discuss lesson planning, while others may seek guidance on classroom interaction, instructional innovation, or developmental assessment. Individualized consideration provides a conceptual basis for recognizing such differences. Emotional and interpersonal capabilities may help leaders respond to staff needs, but they do not replace pedagogical knowledge or structured professional support (Gómez-Leal et al., 2022; Ratnawulan et al., 2026).

Taken together, these conditions indicate that transformational leadership is better understood as a contextually situated organizational process than as a uniform set of behaviours. Its potential contribution to teachers' pedagogical learning depends

on the relevance of professional support, the continuity of opportunities for reflection, and the connection between institutional purposes and classroom responsibilities. The available institutional descriptions identify conditions that matter for this process, but do not permit a definitive assessment of which conditions were most influential for individual teachers.

Comparison of Transformational Leadership Practices between the Two Kindergartens

TK Bunayya Islamic Pre School Kebayoran Lama has a programme structure that includes the Bunayya Islamic Curriculum, the Merdeka Curriculum, inclusion services, stimulation classes, and day care. These arrangements place programme alignment and coordination among the institution's contextual demands. Leadership in this setting must be considered in relation to the coordination of learning and care services as well as support for classroom teaching. Research on inclusive school leadership similarly identifies organizational challenges involved in developing practices that respond to learner diversity (DeMatthews et al., 2021).

TK Aisyiyah 1 Kebayoran Baru and TK Bunayya Islamic Pre School Kebayoran Lama offer contrasting institutional contexts for examining transformational leadership in kindergarten education. TK Aisyiyah 1 is characterized by an established organizational history, a family-oriented work culture, and centre-based learning. TK Bunayya has a broader service profile, combining two curricula with inclusion support, stimulation classes, and day care. These differences provide a basis for contextual comparison, while neither institutional profile should be treated as evidence of superior leadership or stronger teacher competence. Research on preschool institutions reinforces the relevance of organizational culture when interpreting leadership practices (Mlinarević et al., 2022).

In the context of TK Aisyiyah 1, organizational continuity, shared values, and a family-oriented work culture form part of the setting in which professional expectations are maintained. At TK Bunayya, the diversity of educational services makes coordination across programmes a prominent institutional concern. The comparison suggests that leadership priorities need to be understood in relation to the organizational work each institution undertakes. It does not establish that the first institution relies exclusively on informal relationships or that the second has more formalized or more effective leadership. Context-sensitive interpretations of educational leadership similarly caution against separating leadership practices from institutional circumstances (Brauckmann et al., 2023; Nadeem, 2024).

The four dimensions of transformational leadership provide a shared analytical vocabulary for comparing the two settings. Idealized influence concerns professional example and integrity; inspirational motivation concerns shared goals; intellectual stimulation concerns reflection and instructional innovation; and individualized consideration concerns responsive professional support. The dimensions may operate together, but the institutional context shapes the priorities through which they are expressed. This interpretation is consistent with research connecting leadership practices with teachers' professional commitment and innovative behaviour while recognizing the importance of organizational conditions (Cansoy et al., 2022; Kılınç et al., 2024).

The pedagogical relevance of leadership support ultimately depends on its connection with teachers' work: understanding children, planning appropriate learning experiences, facilitating interactions, selecting instructional media, and assessing developmental progress. Professional development is meaningful when teachers can relate reflection and guidance to these responsibilities. Research on teaching improvement provides a conceptual basis for maintaining this connection between professional learning and educational practice (Lynch et al., 2023). In the present comparison, the institutional profiles clarify the different contexts in which such support is situated, but do not provide a basis for claiming that teachers in either institution achieved greater improvement.

The comparison is not a ranking of institutional effectiveness. The study does not provide quantified measures of teachers' pedagogical competence, longitudinal assessments, or sufficiently detailed examples of individual changes in classroom practice. Its comparative value lies in showing why organizational culture and service arrangements matter when interpreting leadership support in two distinct kindergarten settings. Claims about actual improvement or causal effects would require additional evidence beyond the contextual account presented here.

The two cases therefore point to the importance of context-sensitive leadership in Islamic early childhood education. Principals need to connect institutional direction and ethical example with professional support that addresses teachers' pedagogical responsibilities. In this setting, Islamic values such as akhlak, amanah, and uswah hasanah are relevant when they inform responsible leadership, respectful professional relationships, and the treatment of children. Their educational significance is realized through practice rather than institutional designation alone.

CONCLUSION

The comparison of TK Aisyiyah 1 Kebayoran Baru and TK Bunayya Islamic Pre School Kebayoran Lama illustrates how transformational leadership can be understood in relation to different organizational contexts in Islamic kindergarten education. The four dimensions—idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration—provide an analytical framework for examining professional example, the communication of educational purposes, reflective practice, and responsive support for teachers. TK Aisyiyah 1 is characterized by organizational continuity, shared values, and a family-oriented work culture, whereas TK Bunayya's combination of curricula and additional educational services presents broader programme coordination demands. These contextual differences highlight the importance of interpreting leadership support in relation to institutional priorities and teachers' professional responsibilities, rather than treating the two institutions as indicators of comparative leadership effectiveness or teacher competence.

The study contributes to educational leadership research by relating transformational leadership to the organizational conditions that shape teachers' opportunities for pedagogical learning in Islamic kindergarten settings. Within this context, Islamic values, particularly *akhlak*, *amanah*, and *uswah hasanah*, offer an ethical orientation for leadership through professional responsibility, role modelling, and respectful relationships with children and colleagues. The findings provide

contextual qualitative insights into leadership practices and professional support, but do not establish measurable improvements in teachers' pedagogical competence or the durability of such changes. Further research involving more varied kindergarten settings, longitudinal or mixed-method designs, and systematic documentation of classroom practices could examine how leadership support relates to the development of pedagogical competence and children's learning experiences.

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