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THE ROLE OF TRANSFORMATIVE LEADERSHIP IN MADRASAH QUALITY DEVELOPMENT AT MIN 1 PEMALANG

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ABSTRAK

Kepemimpinan transformatif merupakan unsur kunci dalam memperkuat kualitas pendidikan madrasah yang adaptif terhadap dinamika pendidikan abad ke-21. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis secara mendalam peran kepemimpinan transformatif kepala madrasah dalam membangun madrasah unggul di MIN 1 Pemalang. Topik penelitian ini belum banyak dikaji dan dilaporkan oleh penelitian sebelumnya. Studi ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain studi kasus. Studi ini melibatkan kepala madrasah, guru, dan staf pendidikan sebagai informan. Data diperoleh melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi partisipatif, dan studi dokumentasi. Analisis data dilakukan secara interaktif melalui reduksi, presentasi, dan verifikasi data dengan triangulasi sumber dan metode untuk memastikan validitas temuan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kepala madrasah berhasil menerapkan lima dimensi kepemimpinan transformasional secara komprehensif, termasuk visi strategis partisipatif, teladan moral yang memotivasi, komunikasi terbuka yang adaptif, pengembangan profesionalisme guru melalui bimbingan reflektif, dan pemberdayaan sumber daya manusia berdasarkan potensi dan kolaborasi. Kelima dimensi ini berkontribusi pada pembentukan budaya kerja yang kolaboratif, inovatif, dan berorientasi pada kualitas. Temuan ini tentu saja dapat memperkuat profesionalisme guru dan meningkatkan daya saing madrasah sebagai lembaga pendidikan Islam yang unggul dan pembentuk karakter.

Keywords:

transformative leadership, madrasah principal, teacher professionalism, quality culture, excellent madrasah

ABSTRACT

Transformative leadership is a key element in strengthening the quality of madrasah education, making it adaptive to the dynamics of 21st-century education. This study aims to analyze in depth the transformative leadership of madrasah principals in building excellent madrasahs at MIN 1 Pemalang. This study provides an empirical mapping of the five dimensions of transformative leadership in the madrasah environment and provides contextual evidence. This research topic has not been widely studied or reported on in previous research. The study uses a qualitative case study design. This study involved madrasah principals, teachers, and educational staff as informants. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation. Data analysis was conducted interactively through data reduction, presentation, and verification, with triangulation of sources and methods to ensure the validity of the findings. The results showed that the madrasah principal successfully implemented five dimensions of transformative leadership comprehensively, including participatory strategic visioning, motivational moral exemplification, adaptive open communication, teacher professionalism development through reflective mentoring, and human resource empowerment based on potential and collaboration. These five dimensions contribute to the formation of a collaborative, innovative, and quality-oriented work culture. These findings can certainly strengthen teacher professionalism and enhance the competitiveness of madrasahs as superior, character-building Islamic educational institutions.

A. INTRODUCTION

Improving the quality of madrasah education is a strategic issue in the development of the Islamic education system in Indonesia (Wibowo et al., 2020). Madrasahs play a role not only as religious educational institutions, but also as institutions that prepare highly competitive human resources (Buchari & Saleh, 2017; Haidar et al., 2023; Rahmi et al., 2020; Rosyadi et al., 2023). The head of the madrasah is a central figure who determines the direction and success of institutional transformation (Amirudin et al., 2024; Buchari & Saleh, 2017; Umar & Munadi, 2025). Based on the Minister of Religious Affairs Regulation Number 24 of 2018 concerning Madrasah Principals, the position of madrasah principal is not limited to being an administrator but also a learning leader, institution manager, innovator, and academic supervisor. These roles require mature managerial skills in managing all madrasah resources effectively and efficiently (Asngad & Hanif, 2025; Putri et al., 2024). Madrasah principals must be able to integrate the institution's vision with the needs of the community and the times, so that madrasahs can become Islamic educational institutions that are superior, adaptive, and quality-oriented in facing the challenges of modern education (Kholid, 2024; Shobri, 2025; Wahib et al., 2023).

The leadership of madrasah principals is further emphasized in the Director General of Islamic Education Decree Number 1836 of 2021, which concerns Strengthening the Competence of Madrasah Principals. This regulation emphasizes the importance of madrasah principals playing an active role as agents of change in realizing learning that is relevant to the demands of the 21st century. Amidst rapid technological developments and social changes, madrasah principals are required to create a conducive, participatory, and innovation-encouraging learning environment (Abdussyakir, 2025; Rajnath, 2024; Zayrin et al., 2024). Administrative leadership that only focuses on bureaucratic matters is no longer considered sufficient. Instead,

transformative leadership is needed to drive changes in mindset, improve teacher professionalism, and foster a healthy and productive organizational culture (Bashori et al., 2022; Litz & Blaik-Hourani, 2020; Nuraini & Laksono, 2019). Through a transformative approach, madrasah principals act as moral role models, facilitators of innovation, and drivers of collaboration in building progressive, inclusive madrasahs that are highly competitive at the local and national levels (Amrullah et al., 2024; Fiqri et al., 2025; Juwita et al., 2025).

Although transformational leadership has been extensively researched, most of the research focuses conceptually on madrasahs in terms of quality improvement. Therefore, there is no empirical picture of successful leadership practices in high-performing madrasahs. Furthermore, studies that comprehensively analyze the five dimensions of transformational leadership within a single madrasah context are still very limited. This situation emphasizes the need for research that provides contextual evidence on how transformational leadership is effectively implemented in madrasahs that have achieved excellence.

Furthermore, in practice, principals are not always able to optimally carry out this transformative role. Many madrasahs still face obstacles such as weak managerial skills, a lack of innovation in learning, and a lack of effective communication between leaders and teachers (Haddade et al., 2024; Rumra et al., 2025; Sukmanasa & Novita, 2023). This creates a gap between the ideal concept of leadership and its practice in the field. These challenges highlight the need for in-depth research on how successful madrasah principals are able to apply transformative leadership to drive real change in the madrasah environment. A study of inspirational leadership practices is important to find a leadership model that is not only administratively effective but also capable of building teachers' intrinsic motivation, enhancing professionalism, and strengthening a quality-oriented academic culture (Slamet Riyadi, 2025).

MIN 1 Pemalang is one of the public madrasah ibtidaiyah (elementary Islamic schools) that has successfully demonstrated a strong commitment to improving the quality of education. Located in Wanarata Village, Bantarbolang District, Pemalang Regency, this madrasah has received an A accreditation based on BAN-S/M Decree Number 044/BANSM-JTG/SK/X/2018. This achievement demonstrates its success in meeting national education standards in various aspects, ranging from management, infrastructure, to the quality of teachers and the learning process. With 321 students and 21 teaching and educational staff, MIN 1 Pemalang has been able to make various achievements in academic and non-academic fields. This success cannot be separated from the visionary, inspiring, and transformative leadership of the madrasah principal. In facing a heterogeneous community environment, the principal was able to build harmonious social relationships and motivate the entire madrasah community to innovate and continuously improve the quality of education. The various achievements of MIN 1 Pemalang are concrete evidence of the effectiveness of the madrasah principal's leadership in building a productive and innovative work culture.

Therefore, this study aims to describe the role of transformative leadership of the madrasah principal in developing an excellent madrasah at MIN 1 Pemalang. This study discusses the formulation of transformative leadership mapping dimensions in madrasah environments, particularly at MIN 1 Pemalang. This study also attempts to explain empirical evidence of transformative leadership implementation in madrasah environments. The results of this study are expected to provide a practical basis for

madrasah principals to develop and implement more transformative leadership functions. These findings can also be used by policymakers and training providers in designing madrasah principal development programs relevant to the challenges of the 21st century. Furthermore, this study is expected to inspire other researchers to test and enrich the findings in various madrasah contexts for broader benefits.

B. METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive case study type of research, which aims to deeply understand the role of transformative leadership of the madrasah principal in building an excellent madrasah at MIN 1 Pemalang. Case studies were chosen because they provide an in-depth understanding of a particular case, enabling the research findings to provide an actual and factual picture through direct research in the environment where the case occurred. The qualitative approach was chosen because it is able to reveal the meaning, experiences, and views of the subjects holistically in a natural context (Sugiyono, 2022). Case studies are used to examine in depth the phenomenon of leadership in a particular educational institution, paying attention to the social interactions and organizational dynamics that occur in reality. This research was conducted at MIN 1 Pemalang, Pemalang Regency, Central Java Province, during the period from June to December 2025, covering the pre-field, data collection, analysis, and reporting stages of the research.

Informants came from four main parties within MIN 1 Pemalang. The principal, teachers, education staff, and representatives of the madrasah committee. Informants were selected purposively, taking into account their involvement and direct experience in madrasah leadership and quality management. The main informants consisted of school principals, teachers, and educational staff, while the school committee acted as supporting informants. The informants in this study included the principal, 4 teachers, 2 educational staff, and 1 school committee members. The type of data collected was qualitative data, including narratives, observations, and documentation describing the transformative leadership practices of madrasah principals. Primary data sources were obtained through in-depth interviews, direct observation, and documentation of madrasah activities, while secondary data included official documents such as RKM, RKAM, supervision reports, and meeting minutes. The main instrument in this study was the researcher himself (human instrument), assisted by interview guidelines, observation sheets, and documentation as supporting instruments.

Data collection techniques were carried out through observation, interviews, and documentation, which were analyzed using an interactive analysis model (Miles et al., 2014), including data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing and verification. Data reduction is carried out by selecting, coding, and grouping important information according to the focus and theme of the research. Data presentation is done by compiling a short narrative based on the code that has been created to facilitate understanding of the pattern of findings. Drawing conclusions is done by identifying patterns that emerge from the data and verifying them through data triangulation. Triangulation of sources, methods, and time was used to ensure data validity, while the analysis process was carried out simultaneously from data collection to the final interpretation stage. The research results are presented in a thematic descriptive narrative form with categories of findings that include: strategic planning towards

excellent madrasahs, implementation of transformative leadership, supervision and motivation of a culture of quality, collaboration with stakeholders, obstacles and challenges, and the impact of leadership on madrasah quality.

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Findings

The Head of the Madrasah as the Strategic Vision Developer

Interviews revealed that the principal of MIN 1 Pemalang plays a central role in formulating the institution's strategic vision. In formulating the school's development direction, the principal emphasized the importance of involving all members of the school community so that the resulting vision becomes a shared commitment. The principal stated, "A vision shouldn't just be written on the wall; it must be lived out in every step and decision we make." This statement reflects the school's awareness that the school's vision must be translated into concrete actions.



Figure 1. Meeting between teachers and the principal

Teachers confirmed this by stating that they were involved in the vision formulation and dissemination process. One class teacher stated, "The principal always invites us to meetings and discussions when developing or reviewing the vision, so we feel a sense of ownership." The formulated vision, "Pious, superior in achievement, and environmentally conscious," is implemented through various flagship programs, one of which is the Adiwiyata Program. The principal emphasized that this program is not merely a ceremonial activity, but rather part of the internalization of environmental values. He stated, "We want environmental stewardship to become a culture, not a project."

Teachers link the implementation of the vision to concrete activities, such as clean classroom competitions, educational garden development, and the integration of environmental themes into learning. The principal also conducts regular evaluations to ensure the vision remains relevant to current developments. A PAI teacher stated, "Every semester, there's always a reflection meeting to review whether our activities align with the madrasah's vision." Based on this data, the principal has successfully developed a vision that is not only ideal but also operational, with the support and involvement of the entire madrasah community.

The Madrasah Principal as Motivator

As a motivator, the madrasah principal demonstrates the ability to inspire and foster work enthusiasm through role modelling, positive communication, and

appreciation. In an interview, the madrasah principal stated, "I always try to arrive early and work with the teachers, so they see that I am also striving for the progress of the madrasah." Teachers cited this example as a source of motivation. One teacher said, "We're embarrassed to arrive late, because the principal is always at school before the school hours."



Figure 2. The principal giving a motivational speech

In addition to leading by example, the madrasah principal also uses a persuasive approach and rewards teacher performance. This is emphasized by the statement, "When a teacher achieves, no matter how small, I express my appreciation in front of my classmates so that the enthusiasm is contagious." A second-grade teacher emphasized that simple forms of appreciation, such as a thank you or the opportunity to participate in training, are very meaningful. "The principal often mentions us by name in meetings as a form of appreciation. It makes us proud and makes us want to continue doing better."

The principal's motivational approach is also evident in her ability to build a family atmosphere and calm communication. A physical education teacher reported that the principal always avoids harsh reprimands, instead offering advice in a way that fosters self-confidence. "If there is a mistake, she doesn't get angry, but advises gently." This leadership style fosters a sense of psychological security and strengthens teacher loyalty to the institution. Thus, the principal successfully acts as a motivator, motivating and maintaining ongoing work commitment.

The Principal as a Communicator

The principal's role as a communicator is reflected in her ability to establish open and constructive two-way communication. The principal stated, "I always provide space for teachers to express ideas or criticism, because that's where the best solutions emerge." Teachers acknowledged that communication at the madrasah is fluid and participatory. One fifth-grade teacher stated, "If we have an activity idea, we can share it immediately without having to wait for a formal meeting". The madrasah principal also utilizes modern communication media to strengthen coordination. This is done through the teachers' WhatsApp group, which is used to disseminate information and resolve issues quickly. "Through the group, I can monitor activities and respond directly, so nothing is delayed," she said. Teachers consider this strategy effective and efficient, especially when announcing sudden agendas or new policies.

Externally, the madrasah principal maintains good relationships with the committee and parents. Regular meetings and online communication serve as a means of building synergy. A PAI teacher stated, "Parents are aware of their children's

progress and support school programs because of open communication." This humanistic and adaptive communication style creates a harmonious madrasah environment and strengthens mutual respect.

The Madrasah Principal as Mentor

As a mentor, the madrasah principal provides systematic and ongoing professional mentoring. In an interview, the madrasah principal explained the different approaches used for new and senior teachers. "I mentor new teachers directly, while I use senior teachers as resource persons to share good practices," she said. A first-grade teacher confirmed this by stating that mentoring from the madrasah principal helped them understand curriculum implementation. "When I first started teaching, the principal often came to class, set examples, and patiently guided them," she said.



Figure 3. The principal as a mentor

In addition to formal supervision, the madrasah principal also encouraged collective reflection through a learning community forum. This was conveyed by the statement, "At the end of every month, we hold a reflective meeting, where teachers share their teaching experiences, challenges, and innovations." Teachers stated that these activities boosted their self-confidence and broadened their pedagogical horizons. A physical education teacher said, "From that forum, I learned a lot from my colleagues about how to manage a classroom." The mentoring approach emphasized positive feedback and competency reinforcement rather than administrative assessment.

The results of mentoring were assessed based on improvements in teacher performance, student learning outcomes, and teacher involvement in self-development activities. The principal stated, "When teachers start to dare to innovate on their own, I consider that a success of mentoring." Based on these findings, it can be concluded that the principal is able to build a professional development system oriented towards developing teacher capacity and independence.

The Principal as a Human Resource Empowerment

In terms of human resource empowerment, the principal demonstrated the ability to map potential and assign teachers according to their competencies. "I always try to understand the character and potential of each teacher, so that assignments align with their interests and abilities." A second-grade teacher confirmed this, saying, "We are given assignments based on our expertise, so we are more enthusiastic about

carrying them out." This principle makes each teacher feel valued and has the space to contribute optimally.

The principal also upholds the principle of fair and transparent delegation. In interviews, this was conveyed by saying, "Decisions at the madrasa must be made through deliberation, not one-way orders." Teachers considered this to create a democratic work environment. A fifth-grade teacher stated, "We are often involved in program planning, so we are more accountable for the results." Furthermore, the principal provides equal opportunities for all teachers to participate in training and self-development activities without discrimination. The Islamic Religious Education teacher stated, "The principal doesn't show favoritism; anyone can participate in the training as long as they are willing to learn."

The principal also encourages the formation of an active teacher learning community through specific discussion groups. "We have a teacher discussion forum every Friday, where they share their experiences." The teacher believes this forum is effective in strengthening collaboration and exchanging good practices. Work discipline and professional ethics are also fostered through a dialogical approach. The teacher stated that the principal prefers personal counseling rather than direct punishment, thus avoiding tension. The resulting work atmosphere at the madrasah is more harmonious and productive. The principal has successfully created an environment that supports innovation, collaboration, and empowering the potential of each individual, leading to a superior and character-based madrasah.

Analysis/Discussion

This study shows that the principal of MIN 1 Pematang Besar has fully implemented transformative leadership through his roles as a strategic visionary, motivator, communicator, mentor, and human resource enabler. These five dimensions indicate that the principal not only functions as an administrator but also as an inspirational figure who motivates the entire madrasah community to improve themselves. This is in line with transformative leadership theory, which emphasizes the role of leaders in fostering motivation, values, and collective awareness among subordinates to achieve common goals (Jerab & Mabrouk, 2023; Muh Ibnu Sholeh, 2023).

As the architect of the strategic vision, the principal successfully integrated spiritual, academic, and environmental values into the vision of "Being God-fearing, excelling in achievement, and caring for the environment." The vision was developed participatively through deliberative forums and implemented through concrete programs such as Adiwiyata and environment-based learning. This collaborative process strengthened the madrasah community's sense of ownership of the institution's direction, in line with the view that visionary principals are moral role models who inspire their followers (Al-Hasib et al., 2025; Annisa Anggraini et al., 2025). These results are also in line with the statement that visionary leadership is important in fostering collective awareness and quality orientation in madrasahs (Andry arifianto & Wafa, 2025; Hidayah, 2025).

In their role as motivators, school principals demonstrate moral exemplarity, empathetic communication, and appreciation for teachers' achievements. This approach fosters work ethic and loyalty, reflecting the inspirational motivation dimension. Teachers feel valued and motivated not because of structural pressure, but because of the moral support and trust given to them. These results are in line with

previous research that transformative leadership improves teacher performance through intrinsic motivation and a positive work culture (Bashori et al., 2022; Shofiyyah et al., 2023; Sukmanasa & Novita, 2023).

The principal's communication skills are also a key factor in maintaining organizational harmony. An open two-way communication pattern encourages teachers to actively convey ideas and solutions. In addition, the use of digital media such as WhatsApp groups accelerates the flow of information and strengthens internal collaboration. This communication style demonstrates individualized consideration, which is attention to individual needs within the organization (Khan et al., 2022; Muthusi et al., 2024). These findings reinforce the view that open communication is a key characteristic of visionary leadership in the Society 5.0 era (Dadi, 2024; Mohammed & Rashid Attabi, 2022).

As mentors, madrasah principals guide teachers through reflective academic supervision and continuous professional development. Madrasah principals also encourage the formation of teacher learning communities that serve as spaces for sharing good practices and joint reflection. This pattern reflects intellectual stimulation in transformative leadership, where leaders foster teachers' creativity and critical thinking skills (Abe & Birabil, 2022; Afzal et al., 2023; Supit et al., 2023). This approach certainly confirms that reflection-based coaching can shape a positive and quality-oriented culture.

Human resource empowerment is an aspect that strengthens the effectiveness of transformative leadership at MIN 1 Pemalang. The principal maps the potential of teachers according to their competencies and provides equal opportunities for development. The principal also encourages participation in decision-making and forms learning communities as a forum for collaboration. This strategy illustrates the dimension of empowerment leadership, namely giving trust and autonomy to members of the organization. These findings certainly provide information that teacher empowerment can strengthen a culture of collaboration and active participation in making changes. Therefore, this study has provided information that the application of the five dimensions of transformative leadership shapes a participatory, communicative, and innovative madrasah work culture.

The findings of this study make a significant contribution by clearly and purposefully describing the five dimensions of transformative leadership. These findings can be effectively integrated to strengthen teacher professionalism and build a quality-oriented culture at the elementary madrasah level. Furthermore, this research can provide information and practical insights for leadership development within the education system.

Research Limitations

While this study provides important information and meets its objectives, it has several limitations that are important to note. The study used only one school as a sample, so the results cannot be generalized to all madrasahs with different characteristics and contexts. While the qualitative approach was able to explore meaning and experiences in depth, it is highly susceptible to researcher subjectivity in interpreting the data. Furthermore, the limited timeframe meant that long-term leadership dynamics and policy changes were not fully observed.

Future Research

Future research is recommended to expand the scope of study by conducting comparative studies across several madrasahs or using a mixed approach to more objectively measure the influence of transformative leadership. Long-term research is also important to assess the consistency of transformative leadership implementation in improving institutional quality over time. Furthermore, it is necessary to examine the role of contextual factors such as organizational culture, community support, and the digital competence of madrasah principals in strengthening the effectiveness of transformative leadership in Islamic educational settings especially at MIN 1 Pemalang.

D. CONCLUSION

This study shows that the transformative leadership of the principal at MIN 1 Pemalang plays an important role in developing an excellent madrasah through five main dimensions, namely strategic vision setting, motivation, communication, mentoring, and human resource empowerment. The principal has successfully formulated a participatory vision that fosters a sense of ownership and instills spiritual, academic, and environmental values into the madrasah's practices. As a motivator and communicator, the principal fosters a spirit of work and collaboration through exemplary behavior, open communication, and appreciation for teachers' performance. In their role as mentors and enablers, madrasah principals encourage professional reflection, the formation of teacher learning communities, and the provision of autonomy for learning innovation. Therefore, the transformative leadership that has been implemented has created a participatory, communicative, and quality-oriented work culture and has increased teacher professionalism in facing the challenges of 21st-century education.

Theoretically, these findings confirm the relevance of Bass and Avolio's transformative leadership theory in the context of Islamic education, particularly that organizational change occurs through inspiration, moral example, individual attention, and intellectual stimulation. Practically, these results provide a model for implementing transformative leadership that can be applied by other madrasah principals, ranging from developing a participatory vision, reflection-based teacher training, utilizing digital communication, to empowering teacher competencies. For further research, it is recommended to conduct comparative studies across various madrasahs or use a mixed approach so that the influence of transformative leadership on educational quality can be measured more objectively, while also exploring contextual factors such as organizational culture, community support, and the competency of madrasah digital leaders.

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