

Collaborative Strategic Leadership in Madrasahs: Integrating Islamic Governance and Distributed Leadership for Educational Quality

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Received: 23-02-2026

Revised: 04-03-2026

Accepted: 11-04-2026

Info Artikel

Abstract

Keywords:

Strategic Leadership,
Quality of Islamic
Education, Stakeholder
Collaboration,
Distributed Leadership,
Madrasah.

The improvement of Islamic educational quality in the contemporary era demands madrasah leadership practices that are not only adaptive and strategic but also highly collaborative in facing competitive dynamics and global institutional pressures. This study aims to analyze in depth the strategic leadership practices of madrasah principals in enhancing the quality of Islamic education by strengthening stakeholder collaboration at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Negeri (MIN) 1 Bandung. Employing a qualitative case study design, this research explores leadership phenomena within a unique sociocultural madrasah context. Data were collected through comprehensive in-depth interviews as the primary instrument, supplemented by direct field observations and systematic documentation studies to ensure validity through data triangulation. Research participants were selected purposively, including the principal, the development team, teachers, the school committee, and parent representatives to provide a holistic perspective. The findings reveal that strategic leadership in this madrasah is developed through structured collaborative mechanisms, ranging from participatory vision and mission formulation to inclusive distribution of leadership authority and active stakeholder involvement in educational program implementation. These collaborative leadership practices have proven to significantly strengthen a participatory organizational culture, substantially increase public trust, and maintain sustainable educational quality and stability. This study underscores that collaboration-based strategic leadership is a highly effective approach to transforming the quality of Islamic education. Theoretically, this research enriches the literature on Islamic educational management, particularly regarding the application of distributed leadership practices and value-based governance in Indonesian madrasahs.

Kata Kunci:

Kepemimpinan
Strategik, Mutu
Pendidikan Islam,
Kolaborasi Stakeholder,
Distributed Leadership,
Madrasah.

Abstrak.

Peningkatan mutu pendidikan Islam di era kontemporer menuntut praktik kepemimpinan madrasah yang tidak hanya adaptif dan strategik, tetapi juga kolaboratif dalam menghadapi dinamika persaingan serta kompleksitas tuntutan global terhadap lembaga pendidikan. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis secara mendalam praktik kepemimpinan strategik kepala madrasah dalam upaya meningkatkan mutu pendidikan Islam melalui penguatan kolaborasi pemangku kepentingan (stakeholder) di Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Negeri (MIN) 1 Kota Bandung. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain studi kasus, penelitian ini mengeksplorasi fenomena kepemimpinan dalam konteks sosiokultural madrasah yang unik. Data dikumpulkan melalui teknik wawancara mendalam yang komprehensif sebagai instrumen utama, yang kemudian diperkuat dengan observasi lapangan secara langsung dan studi dokumentasi sistematis untuk menjamin validitas melalui triangulasi data. Partisipan penelitian dipilih secara purposive, mencakup kepala madrasah, tim pengembang, guru, komite madrasah, serta perwakilan orang tua siswa, guna

mendapatkan perspektif yang holistik. Hasil penelitian mengungkapkan bahwa kepemimpinan strategik di madrasah ini dikembangkan melalui mekanisme kolaborasi yang terstruktur, mulai dari perumusan visi dan misi secara partisipatif, distribusi kewenangan kepemimpinan yang inklusif, hingga pelibatan aktif pemangku kepentingan dalam setiap implementasi program pendidikan. Praktik kepemimpinan kolaboratif tersebut terbukti berkontribusi secara signifikan pada penguatan budaya organisasi yang partisipatif, peningkatan kepercayaan masyarakat secara masif, serta terjaganya stabilitas mutu pendidikan yang berkelanjutan. Penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa kepemimpinan strategik berbasis kolaborasi merupakan pendekatan yang sangat efektif untuk transformasi mutu pendidikan Islam. Secara teoretis, studi ini memperkaya literatur manajemen pendidikan Islam, khususnya mengenai penerapan praktik distributed leadership dan tata kelola berbasis nilai-nilai Islam dalam konteks madrasah di Indonesia.

INTRODUCTION

Improving educational quality has become a central concern in contemporary educational leadership research, particularly in contexts characterized by institutional competition, increasing accountability, and changing societal expectations (Toma, 2010). In response to these challenges, strategic leadership has been widely recognized as a critical factor in shaping school effectiveness, organizational learning, and sustainable institutional development (Bush, 2011; Hallinger, 2011). Strategic leadership emphasizes the capacity of school leaders to align institutional vision, mobilize organizational resources, and coordinate collaborative actions that support long-term educational improvement (Dimmock & Walker, 2004).

Recent studies in educational leadership increasingly highlight the importance of collaborative and distributed leadership approaches in improving school performance. Distributed leadership enables professional collaboration among teachers and administrators, fostering shared responsibility for instructional improvement and institutional decision-making (Harris, 2013; Spillane, 2006). Similarly, collaborative leadership encourages participatory governance and stakeholder engagement, which have been shown to strengthen organizational commitment and institutional trust (Leithwood et al., 2020; Liu et al., 2023). These approaches are often associated with the development of supportive organizational cultures that facilitate continuous improvement and professional learning within schools.

In the context of Islamic educational institutions, several studies have also emphasized the role of leadership in enhancing the quality of madrasah education. Research has explored various leadership approaches, including transformational, servant, and collaborative leadership, to strengthen teacher professionalism, organizational culture, and educational performance (Hosna et al., 2025; Norman et al., 2025; Soetrisno & Moh. Ali, 2025). These studies indicate that effective leadership practices are essential for improving institutional quality in madrasahs, particularly in environments where educational institutions must maintain both academic competitiveness and religious identity (J. S. Taylor et al., 2008).

Despite this growing body of research, important gaps remain in understanding how strategic leadership operates within madrasah contexts. *First*, much of the existing literature examines leadership styles or managerial practices in isolation, without exploring how multiple leadership dimensions, such as collaborative planning, distributed leadership, stakeholder engagement, and organizational learning, interact within an integrated leadership system. (Alblooshi et al., 2020). *Second*, most theoretical frameworks of educational leadership have been developed within secular school contexts, with limited attention to how leadership practices are shaped by the socio-religious governance structures of Islamic educational institutions (Oshagbemi & Ocholi, 2006). As a result, the mechanisms through which strategic leadership contributes to sustainable quality improvement in madrasahs remain underexplored (Anderson & Sun, 2017).

Furthermore, leadership practices in madrasahs are not only influenced by managerial considerations but also by normative Islamic governance principles such as *musyawarah* (consultative decision-making), *amanah* (trustworthiness), and collective responsibility. (Brooks & Mutohar, 2018). These values may shape leadership processes in ways that differ from conventional distributed leadership models commonly discussed in mainstream educational leadership literature (Mu'alimin et al., 2026). However, empirical studies examining how such Islamic governance principles interact with strategic leadership practices in madrasahs remain limited (Warisno et al., 2025).

Addressing these gaps, this study investigates the practice of collaborative strategic leadership in a public madrasah ibtidaiyah in Indonesia. Specifically, the study explores how collaborative strategic planning, distributed leadership, stakeholder engagement, and continuous improvement processes interact within the leadership practices of a madrasah principal (Muslim et al., 2026). This study contributes to the literature in two ways. *First*, it provides empirical insight into how strategic leadership operates as an integrated system of collaborative governance within a madrasah context. *Second*, it proposes a conceptual framework, the Collaborative Strategic Madrasah Leadership Model, that explains how collaborative planning, distributed leadership, stakeholder engagement, and organizational learning interact to sustain improvements in educational quality within Islamic educational institutions.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative, instrumental single-case study design to examine the dynamics of collaborative strategic leadership in a madrasah context. Case study methodology allows researchers to explore complex leadership practices within their real-life institutional setting while capturing perspectives from multiple stakeholders (Creswell, 2018; Merriam, 2016). The case focused on Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Negeri 1 Bandung City, a public Islamic elementary school recognized for its relatively stable institutional performance and collaborative governance practices. The madrasah was purposively selected because it demonstrates leadership practices that integrate collaborative planning, distributed leadership, and stakeholder engagement, making it a relevant case for examining strategic leadership dynamics in Islamic educational settings. (Creswell, 2018).

Participants were selected using purposive sampling, targeting individuals directly involved in institutional leadership and governance. The participants included the madrasah principal, members of the school development team, a representative of the school committee, and parents. In total, 11 participants were involved in the study, generating 15 interview sessions, as the principal was interviewed five times during the research period. Multiple interviews with the principal were conducted to capture leadership practices across different stages of strategic planning, implementation, and evaluation (Merriam, 2016; Yin, 2018).

Data analysis followed the interactive model of qualitative analysis proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, consisting of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Saldana, 2011). Data condensation involved transcribing interviews, coding leadership practices, and categorizing themes related to collaborative planning, leadership distribution, stakeholder engagement, and program evaluation. Data were displayed using thematic matrices, enabling comparison across interviews, observations, and institutional documents. Finally, drawing conclusions involved identifying patterns in the data

and linking them to relevant leadership theories. Triangulation across multiple data sources was employed to enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings. (Patton, 2014).

Table 1. Participant Profiles and Interview Sessions

Code	Position/Role	Number of Interview Sessions	Duration (approx. minutes)	Notes
KM	Madrasah Principal	5 sessions	60–90	Key informant
TP1	Head of Development Team	1 session	60	Vision and program formulation
TP2	Development Team Member (Content/Process Standards)	1 session	60	Curriculum implementation
TP3	Development Team Member (Management/Staffing Standards)	1 session	45–60	Operational management
TP4	Development Team Member (Facilities and Infrastructure)	1 session	45–60	Facilities support
TP5	Development Team Member (Assessment)	1 session	45–60	Learning evaluation
TP6	Development Team Member (Finance)	1 session	45–60	Financial management
KMt	School Committee Member	1 session	60	Stakeholder support
OS1	Parent	1 session	30–45	Informal interview
OS2	Parent	1 session	30–45	Informal interview
OS3	Parent	1 session	30–45	Informal interview

Source: Author's research data (2025)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

Collaborative Strategic Planning in Vision and Program Formulation

The findings indicate that strategic planning at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Negeri 1 Bandung City is conducted through a structured collaborative process rather than a hierarchical decision-making model. Observations at the beginning of the academic year revealed that the principal regularly convenes annual evaluation and planning meetings involving the school development team, teachers, administrative staff, and representatives of the school committee. These meetings serve as deliberative forums for discussing institutional performance, operational challenges, and future strategic priorities.

The process typically begins with the presentation of institutional evaluation data, including students' academic performance, extracurricular participation, and parental feedback. These data are drawn from semester academic reports, internal evaluation documents, and the madrasah strategic work plan. Participants are subsequently invited to reflect on program implementation, identify constraints, and propose improvements. Discussions frequently involve negotiation of priorities, particularly when financial or resource limitations are considered. The principal highlighted the collaborative nature of this process, and Interviews with development team members confirmed that teachers actively contribute program proposals based on classroom realities and instructional needs:

“We gather madrasah stakeholders to formulate the vision and mission together. These are not developed individually but collectively by all stakeholders.” (Principal, personal communication, May 6, 2025)

“Usually, we are asked to share input based on classroom conditions. If there are learning challenges or specific needs, they are discussed together.” (Development Team Member, personal communication, May 2025)

Document analysis of the madrasah strategic plan and annual program reports further demonstrates alignment between the institutional vision, strategic programs, performance indicators, and evaluation mechanisms, suggesting that planning decisions are grounded in systematic data analysis. Observations also indicate that decision-making rarely occurs through unilateral directives; instead, the principal typically acts as a facilitator, maintaining strategic direction while enabling participatory deliberation. This facilitative leadership approach appears to strengthen stakeholders’ sense of ownership of institutional policies.

Although strategic planning in the madrasah was generally conducted through collaborative deliberation, the process was not entirely free from challenges. Several participants noted that differences in perspectives occasionally emerged during planning discussions, particularly when determining program priorities under limited institutional resources. Teachers sometimes expressed concerns regarding the feasibility of certain initiatives due to workload considerations. These discussions required negotiation among participants before consensus could be reached. Nevertheless, such deliberative interactions were perceived as part of the collaborative decision-making culture within the madrasah.

Distributed Leadership and Delegation of Authority

Beyond collaborative planning processes, the findings also reveal how strategic leadership is operationalized through the distribution of authority among organizational members. Leadership practices at the madrasah are further characterized by the deliberate distribution of authority across organizational members. This distribution is operationalized by establishing a structured school development team composed mainly of senior teachers, each responsible for specific management domains, including curriculum implementation, facilities development, financial administration, and educational quality assurance. This organizational arrangement enables broader participation in institutional decision-making while maintaining coherence with the madrasah’s strategic vision.

Institutional documents, including organizational charts, task distribution letters, and program planning reports, reveal clearly defined roles, performance indicators, and accountability mechanisms for each team coordinator. These documents indicate that delegation of authority is embedded within formal management procedures rather than functioning symbolically. The principal explained the rationale for distributing leadership responsibilities, and Interviews with development team members indicate that delegation evolved gradually as trust developed within the organization:

“When I first arrived, I analyzed the institutional environment and tried to engage teachers so that we could work collaboratively.” (Principal, personal communication, May 6, 2025)

“At first, we were only assisting certain programs, but later we were given broader responsibilities according to our expertise.” (Development Team Member, personal communication, May 2025)

Observations of coordination meetings show that the principal frequently adopts a facilitative role, encouraging team members to report progress, identify challenges, and propose solutions. This interactional pattern fosters professional autonomy among teachers while preserving strategic alignment. Documentation from periodic evaluation meetings also

demonstrates a collective monitoring mechanism, indicating a balance between delegated operational authority and centralized strategic oversight.

Teachers reported that involvement in leadership roles enhanced their professional commitment:

“Because we are involved in decision-making, we feel responsible for the program rather than simply carrying out instructions.” (Teacher, personal communication, June 2025)

Leadership distribution also extends to external stakeholders, particularly the school committee, in decisions related to infrastructure development and program support, indicating that collaborative leadership operates across both internal and external institutional boundaries.

The implementation of distributed leadership also required a period of adjustment. Some teachers initially perceived the delegation of leadership responsibilities as an additional workload beyond their teaching duties. As one participant indicated, the shift toward shared leadership required gradual adaptation as teachers became more familiar with their expanded roles in institutional management. Over time, however, increased involvement in decision-making processes appeared to strengthen teachers’ sense of ownership of institutional programs.

Stakeholder Engagement as Social Capital for Quality Improvement

In addition to internal leadership distribution, the study also highlights the importance of external stakeholder involvement in supporting institutional development. Stakeholder engagement, particularly involving parents and the school committee, constitutes an important form of institutional social capital supporting the improvement of educational quality. Observations during parent meetings and school events also indicated active communication between the madrasah leadership and the community. Observations indicate that interaction between the madrasah and external stakeholders is structured, routine, and dialogical rather than incidental. Regular coordination meetings and parent forums serve as platforms for discussing institutional priorities, reporting program progress, and obtaining stakeholder feedback.

Institutional reports show that several flagship programs, including Qur’anic literacy initiatives, religious extracurricular activities, and infrastructure development, have benefited from both financial and non-financial contributions from stakeholders. These contributions include program monitoring, provision of expertise, and promotion of the madrasah within the community. The principal emphasized the strategic importance of stakeholder engagement, and a committee representative similarly noted:

“Parental support is very strong. They not only support our programs but also help maintain the madrasah’s reputation in the community.” (Principal, personal communication, June 2025)

“We are involved from the planning stage. When a new program is introduced, we try to contribute so that it can run effectively.” (School Committee Member, personal communication, June 2025)

“We are given clear information about school programs, so we trust the madrasah and are willing to support its activities.” (Parent, personal communication, June 2025)

Effective communication within the institution is facilitated through a diverse array of strategic channels, ensuring that information flows seamlessly to all parties. This includes formal structured meetings, the use of rapid-response digital messaging platforms, and more organic, informal interactions during various school events. By systematically incorporating stakeholder feedback into ongoing program evaluations, the school demonstrates that engagement is not merely a tool for resource mobilization. Instead, it serves as a vital engine for institutional learning and the strengthening of organizational legitimacy within the broader community.

Despite the generally positive nature of these stakeholder relationships, maintaining consistent and meaningful engagement with parents and community members remains a task requiring sustained effort from school leadership. It is recognized that active participation does not occur in a vacuum; it must be nurtured through proactive outreach and transparent leadership. Consequently, school administrators must continually refine their engagement strategies to ensure that the community's initial enthusiasm evolves into a long-term, sustainable partnership that supports the school's core mission.

However, within this collaborative dynamic, differences in expectations occasionally arise, particularly concerning the prioritization of specific programs or the nature of financial contributions. These situations demand high-level communication skills and sophisticated negotiation techniques between school leaders and stakeholders to resolve underlying tensions. By addressing these friction points with transparency and empathy, the leadership can navigate complex disagreements while successfully maintaining mutual trust and cooperation, ensuring the school's stability and growth.

Organizational Culture and Continuous Improvement

The interaction between collaborative planning, distributed leadership, and stakeholder engagement ultimately contributes to the development of a participatory organizational culture within the madrasah. The findings further suggest that collaborative leadership, distributed authority, and stakeholder engagement collectively contribute to the development of a participatory organizational culture characterized by continuous improvement. Observations indicate that communication among school leaders, teachers, and staff tends to be open and dialogical, particularly when addressing instructional challenges and institutional development initiatives.

Regular evaluation meetings serve as collaborative problem-solving forums rather than mere reporting sessions. Institutional documents confirm the existence of a systematic improvement cycle in which programs are evaluated based on academic performance indicators, extracurricular participation, and stakeholder feedback. The results of these evaluations inform subsequent planning, demonstrating an iterative process of planning, implementation, evaluation, and refinement. The principal emphasized the importance of collective evaluation, and Teachers also reported increased professional engagement as a result of participation in evaluation processes:

“We regularly evaluate programs. If something is not effective, we revise it together.” (Principal, personal communication, July 2025)

“We do not just implement programs; we also evaluate and improve them, so we feel responsible for the outcomes.” (Teacher, personal communication, July 2025)

Observations further indicate that this culture of continuous improvement fosters instructional innovation, including project-based learning initiatives, strengthened religious character programs, and expanded use of digital administrative tools. Stakeholder feedback also informs program adjustments, suggesting that institutional learning emerges from both internal reflection and external interaction. Overall, the findings demonstrate that organizational culture at the madrasah evolves through the interaction of collaborative leadership practices, distributed authority, stakeholder engagement, and systematic evaluation processes. These practices indicate the emergence of a participatory organizational culture that supports ongoing program evaluation and institutional learning within the madrasah.

Ultimately, the development of a continuous improvement culture within the institution was not an overnight transformation, but rather a journey of gradual organizational learning. While some teachers initially expressed uncertainty regarding the increased emphasis on rigorous program evaluation and collaborative reflection, these hesitations were met with consistent support. Through regular coordination meetings and proactive facilitation by leadership, the initial resistance evolved into a shared commitment. This evolution underscores the importance of patient leadership in navigating the human element of institutional change, ensuring that new standards are not just imposed but truly understood and embraced by the academic staff.

In conclusion, these evaluative practices have now successfully moved beyond mere experimental phases to become deeply integrated into the madrasah's institutional routines. The shift from individual hesitation to a collective culture of reflection has strengthened the school's internal foundations, creating a more resilient and adaptive educational environment. As these routines continue to mature, they provide a sustainable framework for long-term excellence and innovation. By fostering an atmosphere where continuous growth is the norm, the madrasah is well-positioned to meet future challenges while maintaining its core mission of providing high-quality, reflective education for all its students.

DISCUSSION

Collaborative Strategic Planning and Distributed Leadership as Strategically Coordinated Authority

The findings demonstrate that strategic planning in the madrasah is carried out through collaborative deliberation among teachers, development teams, and external stakeholders. While collaborative planning has been widely discussed in educational leadership literature as a mechanism for strengthening organizational commitment and shared vision (Bush, 2011; Hallinger, 2011) The present study suggests that in madrasah contexts, collaborative planning is also shaped by normative Islamic governance principles. (Ma`arif et al., 2026). In mainstream educational leadership theory, collaborative planning is often framed primarily as a managerial strategy to improve coordination and organizational effectiveness. However, the findings of this study indicate that collaborative decision-making in madrasahs is not solely managerial but also culturally embedded (Sirojuddin & Pramitha, 2025).

The consultative process reflects the Islamic principle of *musyawarah*, which emphasizes collective deliberation and shared responsibility in decision-making. This suggests that collaborative strategic planning in Islamic educational institutions operates at the intersection of managerial governance and religiously informed leadership norms (Rahmat & Sirojuddin, 2025). This observation contributes to educational leadership literature by highlighting that collaborative leadership in Islamic schools may function not only as a professional management practice but also as a culturally legitimate leadership mechanism. (Andersen, 2004). While existing leadership theories emphasize participatory governance as an organizational strategy, the findings suggest that in madrasahs, collaborative leadership may derive additional legitimacy from religious and cultural values. Consequently, strategic leadership in madrasahs may require integrating professional leadership frameworks with Islamic governance principles (Liang & Sandmann, 2015).

The study also reveals that leadership responsibilities within the madrasah are distributed among the development team, enabling teachers to participate actively in institutional management (Liu & Watson, 2023). This finding aligns with distributed leadership theory, which conceptualizes leadership as a collective practice emerging from interactions among organizational members

(Harris, 2013; Spillane, 2006). Distributed leadership has been widely recognized as a mechanism for enhancing professional collaboration and organizational learning within schools (Johansson & Bäck, 2017).

However, the present findings indicate that leadership distribution in madrasah contexts does not necessarily imply complete decentralization of authority. (Andersen, 2004). Instead, the principal maintains strategic oversight while delegating operational responsibilities to teachers and coordinators. (Liang & Sandmann, 2015; Liu & Watson, 2023). This pattern suggests a form of strategically coordinated distributed leadership, in which a clearly articulated institutional vision guides the distribution of authority (Johansson & Bäck, 2017).

This configuration differs from some interpretations of distributed leadership that emphasize horizontal authority structures. In the madrasah context, leadership authority remains hierarchically recognized while simultaneously enabling collaborative professional participation (J. Taylor & Machado, 2006). Such a pattern may reflect the cultural expectations surrounding leadership authority in Islamic educational institutions, where leadership legitimacy is often associated with moral authority and institutional responsibility. Therefore, distributed leadership in madrasahs appears to operate as a hybrid model combining hierarchical legitimacy with collaborative governance.

Stakeholder Engagement as Institutional Social Capital, Organizational Culture, and Continuous Improvement

Another important finding concerns the role of stakeholder engagement in supporting institutional development. The study shows that parents and school committees actively participate in program implementation, resource mobilization, and institutional communication. This pattern indicates that stakeholder relationships function as a form of institutional social capital. Social capital theory emphasizes that networks of trust and cooperation contribute significantly to organizational performance and sustainability (Putnam, 2000). In educational settings, strong relationships between schools and communities are associated with higher levels of institutional legitimacy and stakeholder support. The present findings confirm that community engagement plays a crucial role in strengthening the organizational capacity of madrasahs (Maak, 2007).

At the same time, the study demonstrates that stakeholder engagement in madrasahs extends beyond instrumental collaboration. Parental participation is closely connected to shared religious and moral commitments to Islamic education. Consequently, stakeholder engagement operates not only as a governance mechanism but also as a culturally embedded relationship of trust and shared responsibility (Daryono et al., 2025). This insight suggests that stakeholder engagement in Islamic educational institutions may be better understood through the concept of religiously embedded social capital, where shared values and collective moral commitments reinforce collaborative relationships. Such a perspective enriches existing educational leadership literature by highlighting the cultural dimensions of community engagement in Islamic educational contexts (Rupčić & Babšek, 2024).

The findings further indicate that collaborative leadership practices contribute to the development of a participatory organizational culture characterized by continuous evaluation and improvement. Teachers are involved not only in program implementation but also in institutional reflection and evaluation processes. This aligns with research suggesting that sustainable school improvement depends on a supportive organizational culture and collective professional learning (Fullan, 2014; Hallinger, 2011). However, the present study suggests that continuous improvement

in madrasahs is closely linked to the integration of collaborative leadership practices and stakeholder engagement. Rather than relying solely on formal evaluation systems, institutional learning emerges through ongoing dialogue among teachers, school leaders, and community members. This dialogical process enables the madrasah to adapt its programs while maintaining alignment with institutional values (Alves, 2023).

From the perspective of Islamic educational leadership, the emphasis on collective evaluation and improvement also reflects the moral responsibility of educational leaders to enhance the quality of learning continuously (Daryono et al., 2025). The concept of *amanah*, which emphasizes trustworthiness and responsibility, appears to reinforce teachers' and leaders' commitment to institutional improvement. Therefore, continuous improvement in madrasahs may be understood not only as an organizational learning process but also as a form of moral accountability in educational leadership (Alves, 2023; Rupčić & Babšek, 2024).

Critical Positioning and Conceptual Contribution

Despite the growing body of research on educational leadership in Islamic educational institutions, existing studies tend to focus on specific leadership styles or managerial practices rather than examining leadership as an integrated strategic process. For example, several studies have explored transformational and servant leadership in madrasahs, highlighting their influence on teacher motivation and institutional performance (Hosna et al., 2025; Norman et al., 2025). Other studies have examined collaborative leadership practices in improving school governance and community engagement (Soetrisno & Moh. Ali, 2025). While these studies provide important insights into leadership practices in Islamic schools, they generally examine leadership dimensions in isolation.

Consequently, limited attention has been paid to how different leadership dimensions, such as collaborative planning, distributed leadership, stakeholder engagement, and organizational learning, interact within an integrated strategic leadership system in madrasah contexts. (J. Taylor & Machado, 2006). Furthermore, much of the broader educational leadership literature has been developed primarily within secular school settings, with limited discussion on how Islamic governance values such as *musyawarah*, *amanah*, and collective responsibility shape leadership practices in madrasahs. This gap indicates the need for research examining strategic leadership in Islamic educational institutions as an integrated, culturally embedded leadership process (J. S. Taylor et al., 2008).

By examining how these leadership dimensions interact within a madrasah's governance structure, this study provides a more integrated understanding of strategic leadership in Islamic educational contexts. Building on the empirical findings and theoretical analysis, this study proposes a Collaborative Strategic Madrasah Leadership Model that conceptualizes strategic leadership in Islamic educational institutions as an integrative process involving four interrelated dimensions (Liang & Sandmann, 2015; Liu & Watson, 2023). Collaborative strategic planning, strategic distributed leadership, stakeholder engagement as institutional social capital, and continuous improvement as organizational culture. These dimensions operate not independently but interact dynamically to sustain improvements in educational quality (Bayne-Jardine et al., 2005).



Figure 1. Collaborative Strategic Madrasah Leadership Model

The proposed model highlights that leadership effectiveness in madrasahs depends not only on individual leadership competence but also on the capacity to cultivate participatory governance, professional collaboration, stakeholder trust, and organizational learning (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1990). This integrative perspective extends existing leadership theories by demonstrating how strategic leadership practices can simultaneously address managerial effectiveness, cultural legitimacy, and (Brooks & Mutohar, 2018; Mundzir, 2025). Consequently, this study contributes theoretically by offering a contextualized framework for understanding strategic leadership in madrasahs while providing practical insights for educational leaders seeking to enhance institutional quality through collaborative and culturally grounded leadership practices.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that strategic leadership in madrasahs achieves its peak effectiveness through a collaborative governance model that synergizes strategic planning, distributed leadership, and proactive stakeholder engagement. The findings demonstrate that institutional success is no longer rooted in centralized managerial authority, but rather emerges from participatory processes that actively involve teachers, school committees, and parents in critical decision-making. Conceptually, this research introduces the Collaborative Strategic Madrasah Leadership Model, which illustrates how leadership effectiveness in Islamic educational institutions is driven by the interaction between modern management practices and core Islamic values such as *musyawarah* (consultation) and *amanah* (trustworthiness). Practically, these results underscore the necessity for educational leaders to empower staff and strengthen community partnerships to ensure sustainable institutional development and long-term excellence.

Despite these insights, this study is subject to certain limitations, primarily its focus on a single-case context within a public madrasah, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings to diverse institutional settings. The specific organizational culture and local dynamics in this case may not reflect the complexities of private or rural Islamic schools. Therefore, future research should adopt comparative or multi-site case study designs to further validate and refine the proposed leadership model across different educational landscapes. Additionally, subsequent studies could explore longitudinal approaches to examine how these collaborative structures evolve, providing a deeper understanding of strategic leadership's long-term impact on the quality and resilience of Islamic education.

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