

Inspiring Excellence: How Transformational Leadership Shapes Supervision in Islamic Religious Education

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Abstract:

This study examines the implementation of transformational leadership in the supervision of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) at Madrasah. While transformational leadership has been widely discussed in general educational settings, its application specifically in PAI supervision remains underexplored. The research employs a descriptive qualitative case study, using observations, interviews, and document analysis to gather data. The study finds that supervisors at Madrasah serve as role models and inspirational figures, motivating teachers and students to strive for higher educational standards. Supervisors also foster teacher innovation and creativity by encouraging new teaching methods tailored to student needs, providing mentorship, and offering training opportunities. Support teacher professionalism by helping educators overcome challenges and facilitating continuous professional development. The findings contribute to the understanding of how transformational leadership practices can be applied within the unique context of Islamic Religious Education. This study emphasizes the need for leadership that not only manages but also inspires and empowers educators to create a positive learning environment.

Keywords: *Transformational Leadership, Supervisor, Educational Innovation, Quality of Education*

Abstrak:

Studi ini mengkaji implementasi kepemimpinan transformasional dalam supervisi Pendidikan Agama Islam (PAI) di Madrasah. Meskipun kepemimpinan transformasional telah banyak dibahas dalam lingkungan pendidikan umum, penerapannya secara khusus dalam supervisi PAI masih kurang dieksplorasi. Penelitian ini menggunakan studi kasus dengan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif, menggunakan observasi, wawancara, dan analisis dokumen untuk mengumpulkan data. Studi ini menemukan bahwa pengawas di Madrasah berperan sebagai panutan dan figur inspiratif, memotivasi guru dan siswa untuk mencapai standar pendidikan yang lebih tinggi. Pengawas juga mendorong inovasi dan kreativitas guru dengan mendorong metode pengajaran baru yang disesuaikan dengan kebutuhan siswa, memberikan bimbingan, dan menawarkan kesempatan pelatihan. Mendukung profesionalisme guru dengan membantu pendidik mengatasi tantangan dan memfasilitasi pengembangan profesional berkelanjutan. Temuan ini berkontribusi pada pemahaman tentang bagaimana praktik kepemimpinan transformasional dapat diterapkan dalam konteks unik Pendidikan Agama Islam. Studi ini menekankan perlunya kepemimpinan yang

tidak hanya mengelola tetapi juga menginspirasi dan memberdayakan pendidik untuk menciptakan lingkungan belajar yang positif.

Kata Kunci: *Kepemimpinan Transformasional, Supervisor, Inovasi Pendidikan, Mutu Pendidikan*

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INTRODUCTION

The quality of education is a critical factor in human resource development, especially within the context of Islamic Religious Education (PAI). In theory, educational supervision is intended to improve teaching quality and ensure that students are well-prepared to address global challenges (Hutasuhut et al., 2023; Morgado et al., 2024; Pratiwi, 2022). However, in practice, the supervision system for Islamic Religious Education (PAI) faces numerous issues, including insufficient resources, outdated methodologies, and inconsistent adherence to national educational policies (Irman et al., 2023). Despite extensive research on general education systems, the specific challenges in supervising PAI remain underexplored. Thus, it is crucial to identify potential solutions to bridge this gap and ensure that Islamic Religious Education meets the demands of a rapidly changing world.

Educational supervision is widely recognized as a crucial mechanism to enhance the quality of education. Transformational leadership, in particular, has emerged as an influential model that can foster motivation, innovation, and collaboration among educational leaders and stakeholders (Enita & Wening, 2023; Sliwka et al., 2024). Transformational leadership is a personal tendency rather than a mere behavioral trait, suggesting that educational leaders play a pivotal role in influencing educational outcomes (Lorensius et al., 2022; Mok & Staub, 2021). The progress of schools depends not only on their output but also on the quality of management and supervision practices (Ridwan et al., 2022; Tampubolon & Sibuea, 2023). This body of literature stresses the importance of strong leadership in shaping educational success. However, it is often generalized and does not adequately address the specificities of supervision in Islamic Religious Education. Therefore, the application of transformational leadership within PAI needs further exploration to understand its impact on educational quality.

The positive relationship between academic supervision, transformational leadership, and teacher professionalism (Setyaningsih & Suchyadi, 2021; Sukarelawan et al., 2022; Tampubolon & Sibuea, 2023). Bergmark (2023) highlighted the importance of school principals' leadership in addressing 21st-century educational demands. The success of transformational leadership in fostering innovation and collaboration in schools (Long et al., 2022; Mulyadi & Sobri, 2024). However, studies directly addressing the supervision of Islamic Religious Education remain sparse. Transformational leadership in Islamic education emphasizes providing inspiration, intellectual stimulation, and a shared vision among school members (Alawiyah et al., 2023; ElKaleh, 2020). However, these studies focus primarily on school leadership and do not delve into the specific challenges of supervision in Islamic Religious Education.

The gap in existing research lies in the lack of focus on the implementation of transformational leadership within the supervision of Islamic Religious Education. This research seeks to fill this gap by specifically exploring how transformational leadership can be applied to improve supervision in PAI. The novelty of this study lies in its focus on a niche area of educational leadership, offering a deeper understanding of how transformational leadership strategies can address the unique challenges of supervising Islamic Religious Education.

The primary objective of this study is to analyze the implementation strategy of transformational leadership in the supervision of Islamic Religious Education at Madrasah Aliyah Khazanah Tangerang. The study will focus on identifying the challenges educational leaders face in applying transformational leadership within the PAI context and on evaluating its impact on the quality of education. By investigating these aspects, the research aims to uncover practical insights that can improve supervisory practices in Islamic education. The findings will address the central research questions regarding how transformational leadership is applied, what obstacles exist, and how it influences educational quality.

This research is expected to make contributions to both theory and practice in the field of educational leadership. By focusing on the application of transformational leadership in the supervision of Islamic Religious Education, the study will provide a new perspective on leadership practices within a specific educational context. The findings will offer valuable recommendations for policymakers and educators seeking to enhance the quality of Islamic education through more effective leadership and supervision practices. The research argues that by implementing transformational leadership in PAI supervision, educational institutions can foster a more motivated, innovative, and collaborative environment, ultimately leading to improved educational outcomes and a more robust Islamic educational system.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study focuses on the implementation of transformational leadership in the supervision of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) at Madrasah Aliyah Khazanah Tangerang. The unit of analysis in this research includes school leadership, teachers, and the school supervision process. Madrasah Aliyah Khazanah is a secondary-level Islamic educational institution in Tangerang, Indonesia, known for its emphasis on both academic and religious education. The research employs a qualitative case study design (Maxwell, 2020), as it allows for a comprehensive exploration of the contextual factors influencing the implementation of transformational leadership. This design is particularly suitable for studying the dynamic processes of leadership and supervision within a specific institution, providing in-depth insights into the challenges and strategies employed by the school.

The sources of information for this study include key informants, including the principal, PAI supervisors, teachers, and staff members. These individuals are directly involved in the supervision process and possess valuable insights into the practices and challenges related to transformational leadership

(Truman, 2023). Data collection is carried out through multiple methods: desk review of relevant documents, observation of leadership practices and classroom supervision, and semi-structured interviews (see Table 1). The desk review focuses on analyzing official documents, including school policies, supervision reports, and prior research. Observations are conducted during school activities, particularly during PAI supervision sessions, to gain firsthand insights into the leadership behavior and its impact on teachers and students. Semi-structured interviews are conducted with selected informants to explore their experiences and perceptions regarding the implementation of transformational leadership in PAI supervision. The interview guidelines are developed to ensure that all key aspects of the research questions are addressed.

Table 1. Methodological Framework Matrix

Data Collection Method	Source of Information	Purpose	Techniques Used
Desk Review	School policies, reports, research studies	To understand the formal structure of PAI supervision and previous leadership practices	Document analysis
Observation	PAI Supervisors, Teachers	To observe the actual implementation of transformational leadership in supervision	Direct observation during supervision activities
Semi-structured Interviews	Principal, PAI Supervisors, Teachers	To gather in-depth insights into the challenges and effectiveness of transformational leadership	Conducting interviews using prepared guidelines
Questionnaires	Teachers, Staff Members	To collect broad data on perceptions of leadership and supervision effectiveness	Distribution of structured questionnaires

The data collected from various sources is analyzed using a multi-step process (Taherdoost, 2022). First, data reduction is performed to filter out irrelevant or redundant information, focusing on the key themes related to transformational leadership and its impact on PAI supervision. This is followed by data display, in which the remaining data are organized into a coherent structure that aligns with the research questions. This display allows for a clearer understanding of the patterns and trends emerging from the data. Finally, data verification involves cross-checking information across multiple sources to ensure accuracy and validity. The analysis method used in this study includes content analysis, discourse analysis, and interpretative analysis. Content analysis helps identify specific themes and patterns in leadership practices, while discourse analysis examines the language participants use to describe leadership behaviors. Interpretative analysis provides a deeper understanding of the meanings behind the observed behaviors and leadership strategies, thus offering a comprehensive view of the transformational leadership process in PAI supervision.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

Leaders as Role Models and Inspirational Leaders

Leaders, especially school supervisors, are expected to exemplify qualities of integrity, commitment, and professionalism. They must act as sources of inspiration for teachers, principals, and students alike. This leadership role goes beyond administrative functions; it also involves motivating and inspiring others to strive for excellence in their educational practices. By demonstrating a strong work ethic, ethical conduct, and dedication to the institution's mission, leaders can establish a culture of accountability and inspiration within the school environment.

The leadership behavior at Madrasah was indeed aligned with the expectations of transformational leadership. The school supervisors consistently demonstrated professionalism, regularly participating in educational activities and taking the time to mentor teachers. Their actions spoke louder than words, as teachers expressed admiration for the supervisors' integrity and their constant drive to improve the school. Supervisors led by example, attending teacher workshops, participating in faculty meetings, and openly discussing the importance of improving educational quality. This created a positive ripple effect, motivating teachers to follow suit and aspire to emulate their supervisors' leadership traits. Table 2 summarizes the key observations regarding leaders as role models and inspirational figures in the PAI supervision process at Madrasah.

Table 2. The Role of Leaders

Observation Areas	Key Findings	Impact on Teachers and Students
Leadership Behavior	Supervisors demonstrated commitment, integrity, and professionalism.	Inspired teachers to adopt similar behaviors and set higher standards.
Participation in Educational Activities	Active involvement of supervisors in workshops and faculty meetings.	Fostered a culture of continuous learning and improvement.
Mentorship	Supervisors took time to mentor teachers and provide guidance.	Encouraged teachers to pursue professional development opportunities.

The finding that leaders serve as role models and inspirational figures within the school aligns with the principles of transformational leadership. Supervisors who exhibit personal dedication and integrity foster an environment where both teachers and students feel motivated to improve. Their role as mentors and ethical exemplars not only encourages teachers to enhance their teaching practices but also influences students' academic outcomes and behavior. This reinforces the notion that effective leadership goes beyond administration, profoundly affecting the school culture and educational success.

The leaders are role models and inspirational figures in PAI supervision, and their approach can be generalized to other educational contexts. Effective leadership, characterized by commitment and integrity, has a significant impact on fostering a positive and high-quality learning environment. By acting as role

models, leaders can inspire the entire school community to work towards educational excellence. This general principle applies not only to PAI but also to other areas of education, underscoring the importance of ethical leadership for achieving long-term success in schools.

Fostering Teacher Innovation and Creativity

The supervisors at Madrasah were found to actively encourage teachers to develop new teaching methods and materials that better respond to students' diverse needs. This focus on innovation and creativity is crucial for keeping the educational process dynamic and effective. The supervisors offered not only feedback but also guidance, training, and mentoring to help teachers embrace innovative methods aligned with modern educational standards, particularly in Islamic Religious Education (PAI). The interviews with teachers revealed a strong appreciation for the supervisors' efforts to foster creativity and innovation. One teacher mentioned, "Our supervisor encourages us to try new teaching strategies, and whenever we face challenges, they offer suggestions and resources."

Another teacher emphasized, "The workshops organized by our supervisor gave me the tools to incorporate more interactive methods into my lessons, which really helped engage the students." A Head of Administration stated, "There is a real emphasis on adapting our teaching to the needs of our students, and I feel supported in experimenting with new ideas."

These responses demonstrate that the supervisors' role is not only to oversee teachers' performance but also to provide the necessary support for continuous professional development. The second finding clearly indicates that supervisors at Madrasah play a vital role in encouraging teacher innovation and creativity. They actively support teachers in exploring new methods, offering both formal training and informal mentorship to help them develop teaching practices that are more responsive to students' evolving educational needs. This finding highlights the importance of a leadership style that prioritizes continuous improvement and creative problem-solving.

The finding suggests that adequate supervision in PAI goes beyond traditional performance monitoring. By encouraging innovation and creativity, supervisors not only enhance the teachers' professional growth but also directly impact the quality of education. Teachers, when given the freedom and support to innovate, can deliver more engaging and relevant lessons that cater to their students' diverse learning needs. This process leads to the continuous improvement of the educational environment, benefiting both educators and students in the long term.

The practice of fostering teacher innovation and creativity can be generalized to educational institutions beyond Madrasah Aliyah Khazanah Tangerang. When supervisors actively support and encourage teachers to innovate, the result is a more dynamic and responsive educational environment. This practice is essential in today's rapidly changing educational landscape, where teaching methods must continuously evolve to meet the demands of students and society. Supervisors, therefore, play a crucial role in helping

teachers adapt and thrive in an increasingly complex educational world.

Supporting Teacher Professionalism

Supervisors were found to place significant emphasis on teachers' professional development. They actively assist teachers in identifying challenges in their teaching practices and guide addressing them. Moreover, supervisors help foster a professional, innovative, and quality-driven educational environment. This finding underscores the essential role of leadership in enhancing teacher competence, ensuring that educators not only improve their skills but also align their practices with the educational institution's standards.

During observations, it was evident that supervisors at Madrasah regularly interacted with teachers to discuss their professional development. Supervisors held monthly meetings where teachers could openly discuss classroom challenges. In these meetings, supervisors provided constructive feedback, discussed new pedagogical approaches, and recommended professional development resources. The supervisors also took the initiative to arrange external training sessions and encouraged teachers to pursue further education. This constant attention to professional growth helped create an environment where teachers felt valued and supported in their efforts to improve.

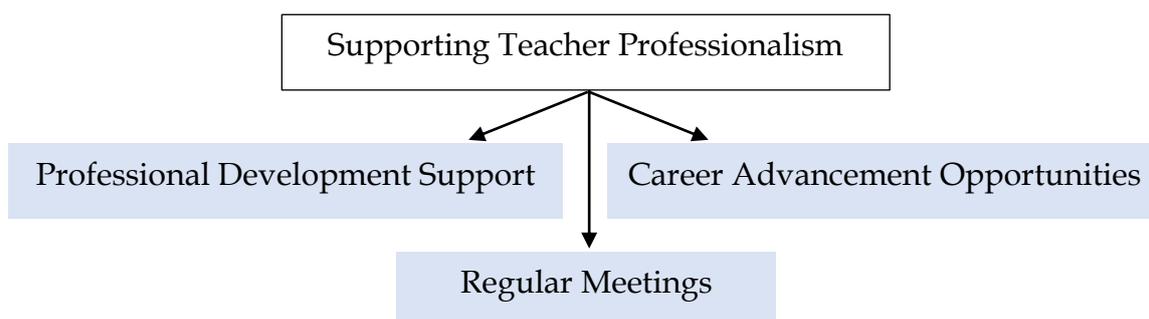


Figure 1. Impact on Teachers and Educational Environment

Figure 1 illustrates the impact of the supervisory approach on teacher professional development and the educational environment. Regular supervision through feedback, training, and external resources, as well as monthly meetings that facilitate open discussion and mentoring, play a crucial role in improving educational quality. Furthermore, support for teachers' professional development, through opportunities for continuing education and training, positively impacts their career advancement. This approach creates an environment that fosters individual and collective development, strengthening teachers' engagement in efforts to improve overall educational quality.

This finding confirms that supervisors at Madrasah play a central role in supporting teacher professionalism. By providing ongoing professional development, feedback, and opportunities for further education, supervisors ensure that teachers remain motivated and continuously improve. This support not only enhances teachers' skills but also contributes to the overall quality of education at the institution.

The importance of supporting teacher professionalism can be generalized to other educational settings. Supervisors who actively engage with teachers, provide constructive feedback, and encourage continuous professional growth foster a positive, dynamic learning environment. This approach leads to better teaching practices and improved educational outcomes, demonstrating the critical role that leadership plays in fostering teacher development and overall institutional success.

Discussion

The positive impact of activities is evident, as they enhance teaching practices and student learning outcomes. The findings suggest that continuous teacher development, supported by regular supervision, is a key mechanism for fostering an enriched educational environment. Transformational leadership, which emphasizes mentorship and regular feedback, leads to higher levels of motivation and performance among followers (Mok & Staub, 2021; Tampubolon & Sibuea, 2023). Regular interaction with supervisors through these mechanisms provides teachers with ongoing learning opportunities, reinforcing their skills and knowledge (Rashid et al., 2022; Wilson Heenan et al., 2023). This function of continuous professional development, therefore, directly impacts the overall quality of education within the institution. The evidence strongly supports the argument that sustained professional development opportunities for teachers are vital for driving both individual and institutional educational improvements.

The second aspect of the study's findings suggests that the structure of supervisory practices, such as regular meetings and mentoring, directly correlates with teachers' professional growth and motivation. The research reveals a clear cause-and-effect relationship: supervisors who engage in monthly meetings and provide consistent mentoring create a supportive environment where teachers feel encouraged to improve. Transformational leadership, which prioritizes regular communication and a shared vision, can stimulate greater engagement and commitment among teachers (Jun & Lee, 2023; Shobakh & Mursyidah, 2024). Furthermore, the underlying structure of these regular meetings functions as a foundational support system that helps teachers overcome difficulties and adapt to evolving teaching needs.

The critical role supervisors play in encouraging teachers to pursue further education and training directly influences their career advancement. The finding underlines that the function of encouraging professional growth extends beyond classroom teaching, offering long-term career benefits for teachers. When supervisors motivate their staff to advance their qualifications, it not only enriches teachers' capabilities but also enhances the school's overall teaching quality. This positive outcome echoes the work of Basaffar (2022), who argue that inspirational motivation, a hallmark of transformational leadership, drives followers to strive for greater achievement and self-improvement. Supervisors not only enhance teachers' career prospects but also positively impact student outcomes by ensuring that teaching staff remain knowledgeable and skilled, encouraging them to invest in professional development (Shobakh & Mursyidah, 2024; Widyastuti et al., 2024). Thus, mentorship and career advancement

opportunities are essential for creating an empowered teaching workforce committed to continuous improvement.

Supervisors who actively encourage further education and professional training foster a culture of growth within the school. This encouragement is linked with increased teacher motivation and performance, as teachers feel more valued and supported in their career paths. Meng (2022) support this causal link, showing that when educational leaders provide opportunities for professional growth, teachers are more likely to remain engaged and invested in their work. It functions as a feedback loop in which increased teacher development leads to improved teaching performance Zamroni et al. (2022), which, in turn, raises overall educational standards. The strategic provision of career advancement opportunities by supervisors not only benefits teachers individually but also supports the long-term development of the school community as a whole.

The influence of supervisors in promoting a dynamic and innovative learning environment by fostering teacher creativity and addressing instructional challenges. The study suggests that supervisors who actively support the exploration of new teaching strategies help to raise the overall quality of education. The transformational leaders empower their followers by encouraging creative thinking and problem-solving (Nurjanah et al., 2020; Yulianti et al., 2021). Supervisors' active involvement in addressing instructional challenges helps teachers feel supported in overcoming obstacles, thereby contributing to higher engagement and improved learning outcomes.

Supervisors who promote innovation set high expectations and foster an environment that encourages risk-taking in teaching practices. This structure, where supervisors challenge teachers to think outside the box and experiment with new methodologies, results in more engaging and compelling learning experiences. Transformational leadership, by fostering intellectual stimulation, enhances creativity and drives innovation among teachers (Sliwka et al., 2024). The underlying structure is that when supervisors foster a culture of innovation, they provide teachers with the tools and confidence to experiment with new ideas and methods.

The study expands the understanding of transformational leadership by illustrating its specific application within Islamic Religious Education. It reinforces the idea that leadership is not just about administrative duties but about inspiring and motivating teachers to reach their full potential. Future research could explore the relationship between supervisor support and teacher retention, or examine the long-term impacts of these practices on student achievement. The study, therefore, offers valuable insights that can help shape more effective educational leadership practices, particularly in the context of Islamic Religious Education.

CONCLUSION

This study explores the vital role of leadership in fostering a culture of excellence in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) through transformational leadership practices. Supervisors, by acting as role models, encouraging teacher innovation, and supporting professional development, can have a profound impact on educational quality. The research emphasizes the importance of

leadership behaviors that go beyond administrative functions, highlighting their potential to inspire teachers and create an environment conducive to continuous improvement. However, this research has limitations, as it focused primarily on teachers' and supervisors' perspectives, without considering other variables such as gender, age, and students' perspectives. Further research incorporating a more diverse sample, including variations in gender and age, and using survey methods could provide a more comprehensive understanding of transformational leadership in PAI supervision. Such studies would offer valuable insights to inform policymaking and improve leadership strategies across diverse educational environments.

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