Building Trust and Collaboration: The Impact of Hybrid Leadership on Stakeholder Relations in Islamic Education

Agung Harliyadi Imam Dhuhuri[1*], Moch Andi Permana[2], Ismatu Zahroh[3], Lailatul Mahfiroh[4]

Islamic Educational Management Department, Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, Indonesia
Email: agungharliyadi.imamdhuhuri@gmail.com[1], andipermana1215@gmail.com[2], ismatuzahroh94@gmail.com[3], lailatulmahfiroh77@gmail.com[4]

Abstract:

This study examines how a principal's leadership style manages stakeholder dynamics in an Islamic elementary school. A qualitative case-study design was used with key informants (principals, teachers, foundation managers, administrative staff, and parents). Data were gathered through interviews, direct observation, and literature review, and analysed descriptively-narratively using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña. Findings indicate that the principal employs a hybrid style that blends transformational, servant, and situational leadership; that spiritual values guide decision-making; that two-way communication and team empowerment are core strategies; and that flexibility is exercised to fit the context. The study identifies perceptual gaps—particularly regarding decision-making transparency, role clarity in school–foundation–parent relations, the extent of stakeholder involvement in planning, and alignment on long-term direction. Foundation backing, structured parent collaboration, and strengthened interpersonal capacities emerge as critical enablers. These findings explain why value-driven, reflective, and participatory leadership can foster a healthy, collaborative school culture: the combination of spiritually anchored decisions, open communication, participative forums, and adaptive role negotiation reduces misunderstandings, builds trust, and coordinates action. Realising holistic and sustainable Islamic education nevertheless requires tighter stakeholder synergy and continuous capacity building.

Keywords: *Servant Leadership, Transformational Leadership, Situational Leadership*

Abstrak:

Penelitian ini menelaah bagaimana gaya kepemimpinan kepala sekolah mengelola dinamika stakeholder di sebuah sekolah dasar Islam. Penelitian menggunakan desain studi kasus kualitatif dengan informan kunci (kepala sekolah, guru, pengelola yayasan, staf administrasi, dan orang tua). Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara daring, observasi langsung, dan studi literatur, kemudian dianalisis secara deskriptif-naratif menggunakan model interaktif Miles, Huberman, dan Saldaña. Hasil menunjukkan Kepala sekolah menerapkan gaya hibrida yang memadukan kepemimpinan transformasional, pelayan (servant), dan situasional; nilai-nilai spiritual memandu pengambilan keputusan, komunikasi dua arah serta pemberdayaan tim menjadi strategi inti, dan fleksibilitas diterapkan sesuai konteks. Studi ini mengidentifikasi kesenjangan persepsi khususnya terkait transparansi pengambilan keputusan, kejelasan peran dalam

relasi sekolah–yayasan–orang tua, tingkat keterlibatan pemangku kepentingan dalam perencanaan, dan keselarasan arah jangka panjang. Dukungan yayasan, kolaborasi orang tua yang terstruktur, serta penguatan kapasitas interpersonal muncul sebagai pengungkit penting. Temuan-temuan ini menjelaskan mengapa kepemimpinan berbasis nilai, reflektif, dan partisipatif dapat menumbuhkan budaya sekolah yang sehat dan kolaboratif: kombinasi keputusan yang berlandaskan spiritual, komunikasi terbuka, forum partisipatif, dan negosiasi peran yang adaptif mampu mengurangi kesalahpahaman, membangun kepercayaan, dan menyelaraskan tindakan. Kendati demikian, perwujudan pendidikan Islam yang holistik dan berkelanjutan tetap memerlukan sinergi pemangku kepentingan yang lebih erat serta pengembangan kapasitas yang berkelanjutan.

Kata Kunci: *Servant Leadership, Transformational Leadership, Kepemimpinan Situasional*

INTRODUCTION

The role of leadership in educational institutions is crucial in shaping the quality of education and the overall school environment. As schools face increasingly complex challenges, the principal's leadership style becomes even more important. Effective leadership is not just about managing resources and administrative duties; it also involves creating a positive school culture, ensuring academic success, and fostering collaboration among stakeholders (Adeoye, 2025; Albustomi, 2025). Research has shown that the leadership approach significantly affects teacher performance, student engagement, and school development (Ayyildiz & Yilmaz, 2023). This research is essential because it explores how principals in Islamic elementary schools can balance traditional leadership models with values-driven leadership approaches. This issue is crucial for stakeholders who seek a better understanding and improvement of the school's governance and performance.

In Indonesia, school principals face multiple structural and operational challenges in fulfilling their roles, particularly in Islamic schools that emphasise values-based education (Karim et al., 2025; Holid & Rozi, 2025). These challenges include limited resources, insufficient leadership and management training, and weak communication systems. Moreover, principals in Islamic schools must not only handle administrative responsibilities but also maintain spiritual and doctrinal integrity in their leadership. This dual responsibility makes their leadership style even more significant in influencing both educational outcomes and stakeholder relationships. In Islamic schools such as SD Manaaratul Iman in Bandung, there is a need to adapt leadership practices that integrate educational leadership theories and Islamic values to address these specific challenges effectively (Hoesny & Darmayanti, 2021).

Several studies have explored the impact of leadership on school performance, particularly focusing on the principal's role in managing day-to-day operations and stakeholder relationships. Transformational leadership has been widely recognised for its ability to inspire motivation and foster innovation (Ibrahim et al., 2023; Wilson Heenan et al., 2023), while servant leadership is praised for its emphasis on service and collaboration (Kainde & Mandagi, 2023;

Waruwu et al., 2021). Furthermore, situational leadership enables leaders to tailor their approach to contextual demands (Nabila et al., 2022). These models are crucial in understanding how principals influence school dynamics. However, most studies on leadership in educational settings have been general and theoretical, often failing to address the specific context of Islamic schools.

While valuable, existing studies often overlook the integration of multiple leadership styles in practice, particularly in the context of Islamic education. Most research has focused on isolated leadership styles without examining how principals blend transformational, servant, and situational leadership in real-world scenarios (Ibrahim et al., 2023; Wilson Heenan et al., 2023). Additionally, there is a gap in exploring how principals' leadership styles are perceived by stakeholders such as teachers, parents, and foundation managers, which hinders a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics at play (Menon, 2024). This gap is critical because understanding these relationships can provide deeper insights into how leadership practices affect school climate and performance in Islamic schools.

This study introduces a novel approach by examining the hybrid leadership style of principals in Islamic elementary schools through a multi-stakeholder perspective. By integrating transformational, servant, and situational leadership into a single framework, this research aims to fill a gap in the leadership literature, especially in Islamic school contexts. It focuses on how these leadership styles influence decision-making, stakeholder involvement, and school governance. This research is essential because it provides a comprehensive, contextually grounded view of leadership in Islamic schools, where religious values and educational goals are intricately intertwined. This approach will offer practical insights for school leaders to foster collaboration and trust among stakeholders, ultimately contributing to the success of educational institutions.

The central research question of this study is how the principal's hybrid leadership style at SD Manaaratul Iman Bandung affects stakeholder relationships and school performance. Specifically, this study aims to explore how the principal integrates transformational, servant, and situational leadership into everyday practice and how this integration impacts teacher performance, stakeholder engagement, and the school climate. The study hypothesises that a participatory and values-driven leadership approach enhances governance effectiveness and fosters a more collaborative school environment. This hypothesis is grounded in the assumption that leadership practices rooted in Islamic values, transparency, and stakeholder participation lead to better outcomes in terms of school governance, teacher performance, and community trust.

The findings of this study are expected to provide empirical insights into the relationship between hybrid leadership and stakeholder engagement in Islamic elementary schools. By employing a multi-stakeholder perspective, this research will contribute to the development of educational leadership theory, particularly in the context of value-driven, spiritually anchored schools. Additionally, the study will offer practical recommendations for principals and

educational managers on how to enhance stakeholder participation and foster a collaborative and inclusive school culture. These contributions will enrich the current body of knowledge in educational leadership and serve as a valuable reference for policymakers and practitioners in both local and national education systems.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative case study design, chosen to explore the nuanced meanings, perceptions, and social dynamics within school leadership practices in a real-world context (Creswell & Clark, 2017). A case study approach was selected because it allows for an in-depth examination of a specific phenomenon within its natural setting, where the boundaries between the phenomenon and its context are not easily distinguishable (Khan, 2022). This design facilitated a holistic understanding of leadership practices in a value-based Islamic school environment, specifically focusing on the principal's leadership style and its impact on stakeholder relationships.

The research was conducted at SD Manaaratul Iman Holistic and Integrated Islamic School, located in Antapani Tengah District, Bandung City. This school was purposively selected because it represents an Islamic educational institution that emphasises values-based education and operates within a multi-stakeholder environment, making it a suitable site for exploring leadership dynamics. The study's focus on a value-driven school with diverse stakeholder interests aligns with the need for understanding leadership in this unique educational setting. The fieldwork spanned one week, during which data were collected through interviews, observations, and literature review.

Data were gathered using method triangulation, including semi-structured interviews, direct observations, and literature reviews. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with key informants, including the principal, teachers, administrative staff, foundation managers, and parents, to obtain in-depth insights into their perceptions of the principal's leadership style. Observations within the school environment helped capture actual stakeholder interactions and verified the alignment between reported views and observed practices (Opara et al., 2023). Thematic analysis was employed using an interactive analysis model comprising three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing (Adrias & Ruswandi, 2025). This approach facilitated adaptive data collection and analysis, ensuring a comprehensive portrayal of leadership practices and stakeholder relationships in the context of Islamic education.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION
Result
Principal's Leadership Style

Based on findings from SD Manaaratul Iman Holistic and Integrated Islamic School, the principal outlined a set of leadership principles she applies as a foundation for shaping the school's organisational culture and performance direction. These principles reflect a leadership approach grounded in spiritual values and collaboration.

The principal stated "The first principle emphasized in leadership is the importance of having pure intention for the sake of Allah when carrying out the responsibility of leadership as an act of worship. Second, encouraging oneself and all stakeholders to adopt a growth mindset—always being learners, courageous in trying new things, facing challenges, and seeing problems as opportunities for growth. The orientation is toward shared benefit by using the 'helicopter view' principle to analyze issues and prioritize. The third principle is to encourage all stakeholders to actively participate in achieving the school's vision and mission, with a collaborative spirit toward shared goals." (A1, interview, March 17, 2025)

This statement indicates that the principal's leadership is not only outcome-driven but also focused on fostering a growth mentality and collective spirit. She also emphasised that leadership style cannot be singular, but must be adaptive to context "Leadership style is how a principal manages the team to achieve school goals, including the vision, mission, and student profile. One cannot rely on a single style of leadership; instead, it must vary based on the situation and field conditions. In emergency situations, decisiveness and centralized leadership are required, whereas in other contexts, a more democratic, inclusive, and participatory style is needed." (A1, interview, March 17, 2025)

The leadership style of the principal of SD Manaaratul Iman integrates Islamic spiritual values with an adaptive, participatory approach. Her emphasis on sincere intention toward Allah and on fostering a growth mindset aligns with spiritual leadership, which prioritises intrinsic motivation, meaningful work, and service to others as acts of worship. Meanwhile, her flexibility in adjusting her leadership style to contextual needs aligns with the principles of situational leadership, which hold that effective leaders adapt their style to the readiness level of their team. The balance between assertiveness during crises and inclusivity in normal conditions also illustrates traits of transformational leadership, which inspires change through shared vision and collaboration. Thus, the principal's leadership style is not monolithic but dynamic, value-driven, and context-sensitive, forming a vital foundation for building a healthy organisational culture focused on collective advancement.

Communication, Empowerment, and Leadership in School

The principal emphasised the importance of interpersonal relationships within the work team, prioritising open communication and a respectful, person-centred approach. She explicitly stated: "I prioritize respecting and valuing every individual. I train myself to listen actively and to read the team's conditions and situations in order to make the best decisions. I strive to engage formally and informally, encourage two-way communication so the team can contribute ideas, suggestions, and constructive criticism. I also empower the team by delegating roles based on trust." (A1, interview, March 17, 2025).

Furthermore, she elaborated on the principle of transparency and clarity in responsibilities as a means of boosting team motivation "Clear communication of goals, expectations, and duties leads to better performance. Granting trust and responsibility within a defined framework greatly influences team motivation

and performance." (A1, interview, March 17, 2025).

The two-way communication and empowerment strategies implemented by the principal of SD Manaaratul Iman reflect core attributes of servant leadership, a leadership model rooted in service, strong interpersonal connections, and the promotion of others' growth. Her emphasis on listening, respecting individuals, and delegating authority based on trust illustrates an effort to foster a sense of ownership and intrinsic motivation within the team. This approach aligns with Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) theory, which highlights the significance of the quality of relationships between leaders and team members in determining performance and job satisfaction.

The principal's attention to clarity in communicating goals and expectations also aligns with the principles of effective communication in transformational leadership, where communication serves as a tool for mobilising support and clarifying the organisation's direction. Thus, the principal's leadership approach, emphasising dialogue, trust, and active team involvement, demonstrates an interpersonal strategy that aligns with modern leadership paradigms based on collaboration and participation.

Addressing Challenges and Institutional Support for School Leadership

Taken together, the interviews depict a principal who is reflective and adaptive, operationalizing leadership through structured communication routines (dashboards, coordination meetings, and ongoing parent contact) and interpersonal skill-building (empathy, listening, conflict resolution, problem-solving), while acknowledging the need for firm boundaries and the reality that not all decisions will satisfy everyone (A1, March 17 2025). From the foundation's perspective, support is active and formative—mentoring, feedback, reflective guidance, and encouragement to build a coordinator team and standardise school processes to keep operations smooth (B1, March 18 2025).

However, the relationship carries governance tensions: although the MoU delineates roles (foundation: waqf assets and infrastructure; school: curriculum and operations via mutual discussion), decision-making is sometimes hampered by the principal's hesitance to voice aspirations and to engage in conflict, which can blur accountability and slow alignment (B1, March 18 2025). Overall, the pattern suggests that leadership capacity is growing through supportive scaffolds and deliberate routines. However, fuller impact will depend on clearer role enactment and greater assertiveness in principled decision-making to translate support into coherent, timely action.

The strategies employed by the principal in facing these challenges reflect a leadership approach that is both reflective and self-development oriented. Her emphasis on effective communication, team monitoring, and the development of interpersonal skills such as empathy and conflict resolution aligns with the principles of adaptive leadership, which focuses on learning, listening, and adjusting actions in response to complex situations. The principal's acknowledgement that not all decisions can satisfy every stakeholder also indicates her ability to manage conflict constructively, a core component of emotional intelligence.

Support from the foundation, through mentoring and process guidance, demonstrates the value of shared leadership, where authority and responsibilities are distributed to enhance organisational effectiveness. However, the noted challenges in communication and aspiration-sharing between the foundation and the principal highlight the ongoing need to strengthen strategic dialogue and balance stakeholder roles. If left unresolved, such imbalances may hinder leadership effectiveness, underscoring the importance of assertive communication and participatory decision-making systems. Therefore, the principal's strategies, which combine personal reflection, collaboration, and the development of interpersonal competencies, form a critical foundation for building resilient and inclusive educational governance.

Teachers' and Parents' Perceptions of the School Principal's Leadership

Across stakeholders, the interviews suggest a mixed yet converging pattern: experienced teachers (≥4 years) perceive social distance from leadership and limited support for the school vision, with one noting that the leadership style "doesn't significantly impact… motivation or performance"; a returning teacher characterizes the prior leadership as "indecisive" and susceptible to external influence, with formal, limited communication; and a novice teacher highlights workload pressure and gaps in professional development despite generally good relations.

Parents, meanwhile, affirm the school's care for students and value POM-based communication and parenting programs, yet call for clearer annual socialisation of the vision, more efficient communication, regular reviews of the learning system, and more vigorous enforcement of discipline. Taken together, these accounts indicate that while the principal's approach is viewed as open and consultative in places, its effects on motivation, classroom practice, and coherence around the vision remain uneven, pointing to a need for institutionalized routines, regular vision socialization, transparent decision and discipline protocols, targeted professional development, workload balancing, and tighter feedback loops to embed a more inclusive and collaborative leadership culture.

The range of perceptions from teachers and parents at SD Manaaratul Iman underscores the importance of relational quality and communication in educational leadership. Senior teachers highlighted limited social interaction and weak support for the school's vision, indicating a shortfall in relational leadership—leadership that fosters emotional connection, shared ownership, and clear direction. When teachers feel disconnected or see no relevance between the leadership style and their motivation, leadership's capacity to inspire and mobilise is constrained. The returning teacher's comment pointed to a lack of decisional leadership, revealing difficulties in consistent, principle-based decision-making. Meanwhile, the new teacher's remarks reflect stress and inadequate professional support, highlighting the need to strengthen instructional leadership, particularly in training, mentoring, and teacher capacity building.

On the other hand, many parents perceived the school's leadership as responsive and supportive of child development, primarily through initiatives like parenting school and parent communication forums. This reflects success in fostering effective school-family partnerships. Nonetheless, feedback on the need for vision socialisation and consistent discipline underscores the importance of strategic communication and of setting shared expectations between school and home. Parents' belief that the principal's leadership influences both student learning environments and teacher creativity aligns with findings that effective leadership indirectly shapes productive learning conditions by influencing teachers. Therefore, aligning vision, strengthening communication, and increasing parental involvement are critical to ensuring that the principal's leadership resonates not only structurally but also relationally and culturally within the school ecosystem.

Overall, the findings indicate that the principal's leadership style at SD Manaaratul Iman is rooted in spiritual values, collaboration, and adaptability. The principal demonstrates a strong awareness of the importance of building open and reciprocal relationships with all stakeholders. Two-way communication, team empowerment, and flexibility in leadership style emerge as key strengths. Nonetheless, challenges remain, particularly regarding the consistency of internal communication, teacher engagement with the school's long-term vision, and clarity about the structural roles in the foundation–school relationship. Foundation support and feedback from teachers and parents serve as critical input for future leadership development. Strengthening interpersonal skills, cultivating the courage to voice aspirations, and maintaining consistent communication are strategic steps to optimise the principal's role as a values-based and collaborative educational leader.

Discussion

The analysis of the principal's leadership style at SD Manaaratul Iman reveals that the leadership approach draws on several well-established leadership theories: Servant Leadership, Transformational Leadership, and Situational Leadership.

In the context of Servant Leadership, the principal emphasises the importance of pure intentions in fulfilling leadership responsibilities, including building strong relationships with teachers and staff. This aligns with Greenleaf's (2013) concept which posits that servant leaders prioritize the growth and needs of others above all else. This leadership is also demonstrated through the principal's support for teachers' professional development and provision of opportunities for participatory decision-making. Recent studies confirm the effectiveness of servant leadership in educational settings. For instance, Kainde & Mandagi (2023) found in their systematic review that servant leadership enhances teacher morale, job satisfaction, and engagement, and strengthens organizational communication and a collaborative culture. Similarly, Sinjaya et al. (2024) highlight the role of servant leadership in fostering a favourable school climate and improving teacher performance.

From a Transformational Leadership perspective, the principal encourages the entire school community to adopt a growth mindset and nurtures a collective spirit to pursue the common good. Zhu & Tabajen (2024) emphasize the relationship between transformational leadership and teacher innovation, finding that this leadership style fosters interdisciplinary teaching capabilities highly relevant to the principal's efforts to promote a growth mindset. In line with Bass & Riggio's (2005) theory, transformational leaders engage followers not only rationally but also emotionally and morally, through shared values. This is reflected in the principal's efforts to build an inspiring school vision and a collaborative culture (Karomi, 2025). Sliwka et al. (2024) further suggest that transformational leadership focused on deep learning promotes innovation and collaboration within schools. Additionally, Menon (2024) notes that transformational leadership is positively associated with teacher motivation and job satisfaction, especially during early career stages.

The Situational Leadership dimension is evident in the principal's flexible approach, adjusting leadership styles based on context and conditions (Khaleel et al., 2024; Su, 2024). Hersey & Blanchard's (1982) theory asserts that effective leaders adapt their style to the readiness level of their followers (Mamahit, 2023; Su, 2024). The principal demonstrated this by being decisive in urgent situations and democratic in regular ones, stressing that educational leaders must tailor their approach to multicultural contexts and organizational complexities. (Lozano et al., 2023).

While the principal's leadership style aligns with ideal models in theory, in practice, it reveals gaps between the leadership vision and stakeholder perceptions. For example, teachers acknowledge the principal's guidance and support but feel insufficiently involved in decision-making, suggesting a lack of shared leadership, which is vital in participative leadership settings.

Meanwhile, the foundation's administrators assess the principal more from a managerial standpoint, focusing on program outcomes and resource efficiency. This indicates a dual expectation, viewing the principal as both an academic leader and an institutional manager.

Parents evaluate leadership through direct experience with communication and educational services, emphasising emotional connection, openness, and support for student development. This highlights that leadership effectiveness is shaped not only by internal organizational processes but also by how the broader school community perceives it.

The social context and individual experiences of stakeholders often influence such perception gaps. Benoliel & Schechter (2023) and Brown et al. (2024) argue that successful school leadership is built on trust and professional capital, which emerge through sustained interaction and authentic collaboration.

Mismatches between expectations and reality in leadership practices can undermine teacher motivation and trust. Kausar (2024) found that trust in school leadership is a key predictor of teacher commitment to the school's vision. Therefore, systematic efforts are needed to enhance transparency in communication, participatory decision-making, and the clear delineation of roles and responsibilities within the team.

In practice, several enabling and inhibiting factors affect leadership effectiveness. Support from the foundation, a collaborative school culture, and strong interpersonal communication skills are critical enablers that underscore the role of emotional intelligence — empathy, social awareness, and influence — in building trust and loyalty within a team (Lourenço et al., 2025; Saxena, 2025).

On the other hand, lack of inclusive communication, biased decision-making, and unequal power relations can act as barriers. In the Indonesian context, these often surface as top-down directives from foundations or principals with limited space for Komite Sekolah/parent–school forums (POM) to deliberate, opaque use of BOS funds that weakens trust, or weak coordination across KKG/MGMP teacher working groups that constrains shared problem-solving. Similar patterns appear across Southeast Asia, where school-based management is adopted unevenly and where hierarchical norms can mute teacher and parent voice. These challenges are best countered through culturally resonant routines, such as *musyawarah–mufakat-style* dialogue, transparent budgeting and decision logs, and lesson-study/peer-coaching cycles, so that adaptive and participative leadership styles become part of daily practice.

In conclusion, leadership effectiveness is shaped less by labels (transformational, servant, situational) than by the principal's capacity to build social and professional connectivity across teachers, parents, foundations, and regulators. At SD Manaaratul Iman, this capacity can mature into a more inclusive and collaborative model if the school institutionalises transparent decision-making processes, structured participation (regular POMs and teacher forums with feedback loops), and values-anchored reflection that aligns aspirations with day-to-day realities.

CONCLUSION

The leadership style implemented by the principal at SD Manaaratul Iman integrates Servant, Transformational, and Situational Leadership approaches, which have proven effective in promoting staff empowerment and fostering a shared vision. However, the implementation of these leadership strategies has not yet been entirely consistent or equally understood by all stakeholders, particularly regarding decision-making involvement and communication clarity. This gap highlights a need for stronger shared leadership practices and more inclusive engagement across the school community. This study is limited in scope, focusing on a single school with a relatively small number of respondents. As such, its findings may not be generalizable to other educational contexts with different structural and cultural characteristics.

Furthermore, while a qualitative approach is valuable for deep insights into leadership practices, it lacks quantitative validation to reinforce the reliability of the results. Future research is recommended to conduct comparative case studies across multiple Islamic or value-based schools, using a mixed-methods approach. Future studies should explore the direct impact of leadership styles on teacher motivation and student learning outcomes, enabling a more objective assessment of how leadership contributes to educational quality and school performance.

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