

## **Islamic Servant Leadership: Implications for Education in Madrasah**

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### **Abstract**

This study aims to explore the concept of Islamic Servant Leadership (ISL) and its implications for education in madrasahs. Using the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach, this study analyzes 22 scientific articles related to this theme. The results of the analysis show that ISL is based on exemplary behavior, service to the community, and leadership based on moral and spiritual values. There are five main aspects identified in this study, namely the leadership model of the Prophet Muhammad SAW, leadership in madrasahs, leadership in Islamic boarding schools, integration of Islamic values in leadership, and its impact on student character education. The implementation of this leadership model also plays an important role in improving teacher communication ethics, cooperation between educators, madrasah governance, and student character building. However, the results of this study also raise a number of challenges in implementing ISL such as limited resources, leadership training, and resistance to changes in organizational culture. The impact of the initiative from this study provides recommendations for madrasah principals and educators in adopting the ISL model to create a more inclusive learning environment based on Islamic values. Further studies are needed to examine the implementation of this leadership model empirically in various contexts of Islamic education.

**Keywords:** Lamic Servant Leadership, Madrasah Educational Leadership, Islamic Educational Management.

### **Abstract**

This study aims to explore the concept of Islamic Servant Leadership (ISL) and its implications for education in madrasahs. Using the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach, this study unravels 22 scientific articles related to this theme. The results of the analysis show that ISL is based on example, service to the people, and leadership based on moral and spiritual values. There are five main aspects identified in this study, namely the leadership model of the Prophet Muhammad SAW, leadership in madrasahs, leadership in pesantren, integration of Islamic values in leadership, and its impact on students' character education. The implementation of this leadership model also plays an important role in improving teacher communication ethics, cooperation between educators, madrasah governance, and student character development. However, the results of this study also raise a number of challenges in ISL implementation such as limited resources, leadership training, and resistance to organizational culture changes. The impact of the initiative from this study presents recommendations for madrasah heads and educators in adopting the ISL model to produce a more inclusive learning environment based on Islamic values. Further studies are needed to examine the empirical implementation of this leadership model in various Islamic educational contexts.

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## A. Introduction

Leadership in an organization, including educational institutions such as madrasas and pesantren, has an important role in supporting the success of education. One of them is the role of leaders in creating an environment that supports the teaching and learning process as well as the personal and spiritual development of students and students. There are many leadership models that can be used to create this atmosphere, including *servant leadership*. Servant leadership in an Islamic perspective or *Islamic Servant Leadership* (ISL) prioritizes leadership that focuses on service to others and prioritizes the needs and development of the people it leads which emphasizes on human values such as humility, devotion, (Zaim et al., 2022) and social responsibility. (Siddique, 2023)

Therefore *Islamic Servant leadership* In educational leadership in madrassas, it is an important issue to be researched. Principles *Islamic Servant Leadership* It can be the basis for madrasah leaders in creating a healthy madrasah culture, which aims to foster positive student character and develop teacher professionalism. (Purwaningtyas et al., 2023) Approach *Islamic Servant Leadership* In leadership in madrassas has relevance to support these goals. Madrasah does not only function as a place for *Transfer Knowledge* and *Knowledge Sharing*, but also as an institution that prepares students to become individuals with noble character and beneficial to society.

This study aims to identify the principles of *Islamic Servant Leadership* as well as conduct an analysis of ISL principles that can be implemented in Islamic educational institutions such as madrasas. This study was conducted using a literature review by exploring more deeply the various aspects of *Islamic Servant Leadership* and how its implementation in madrassas can have a positive impact on the quality of education and human resource development, especially teachers and students.

In previous studies on *servant leadership*, there have been many studies conducted as an effective leadership approach in various organizational contexts, including in the world of education, but its implementation in Islamic education, especially madrasas, is still relatively rarely studied in depth. Most studies on *servant leadership* focus on business institutions, companies, or the general education system, while studies in the context of madrasas as Islamic-based educational institutions still require further study.

On the other hand, *Islamic Servant Leadership* is not just a theory of *leadership* but is part of a broader moral teaching, as described in the behavior of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH who is known for his sincere service to his people. This research connects the concept of *Islamic Servant Leadership* with Islamic teachings in the context of education in madrasas, which may not be the main focus in the existing literature.

Therefore, this study is expected to fill the gap by integrating the principles of *servant leadership* in Islam and its implications in madrasas. *The novelty* of this research lies in the implementation of *servant leadership* which is not only seen from the perspective of general leadership theory, but also by referring to the principles of Islamic teachings and values that strengthen aspects of service, justice, and social responsibility in leadership in madrasas.

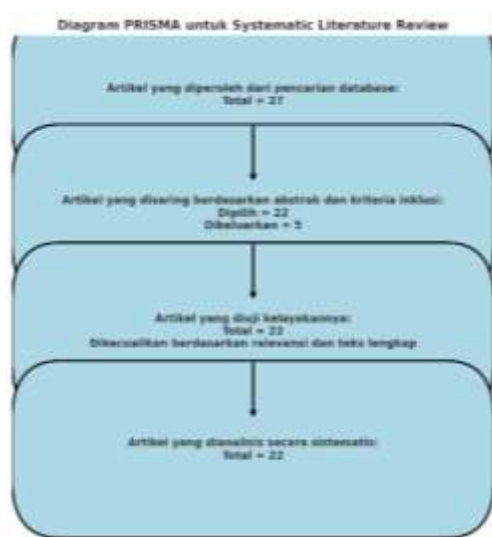
From the above explanation, this study was carried out with the aim of identifying the concept of *Islamic Servant Leadership*, analyzing the implementation of leadership in madrassas in particular, as well

as the management of Islamic education in general. Based on these goals, this study is expected to contribute to providing a broader academic insight into *Islamic Servant Leadership* which can be used as an effective approach in building a madrasah education system that is more oriented towards Islamic values.

## B. Research Methodology

The *Systematic Literature Review* (SLR) approach with the PRISMA method was used in this study with the aim of identifying, extracting, and analyzing articles relevant to the topic. As a primary source, articles are obtained from scientific journals indexed on both Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar published in the period between 2014-2024. After the articles are collected, then the inclusion criteria and exclusion criteria are carried out. The inclusion criteria in this study are (1) articles that discuss *servant leadership* in an Islamic perspective, (2) articles that highlight the implementation of Islamic value-based leadership in madrasahs or pesantren, (3) empirical studies and conceptual studies that are relevant to Islamic education, (4) articles published in indexed journals and have a clear research methodology, and (5) articles that are available in English or Indonesian.

Based on the inclusion criteria as explained above, 3 (three) exclusion criteria in this study are further determined as follows: (1) articles that only discuss servant leadership without being associated



with an Islamic perspective, (2) articles that focus on leadership in the business sector or non-educational organizations, (3) studies that are not available in full text form or cannot be downloaded. Furthermore, these stages can be described as follows:

Image: PRISMA Digram

Based on the diagram, the steps to identify articles relevant to the topic were obtained in a total of 27 articles. Furthermore, in the second stage, the article is extracted or filtered based on abstract and relevance to the inclusion criteria. This process resulted in 22 journal articles that met the inclusion criteria while the other 5 articles were eliminated because they were irrelevant, such as the implementation of *servant leadership* in the context of business, non-educational organizations, and leadership in *the non-Islamic*

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*studies* sector, so that they could not make a significant contribution to the discussion in the context of madrasas and pesantren.

### C. Results and Discussion

Based on the findings, it was obtained that the concept of *Islamic Servant Leadership* can be classified into several main categories that reflect the various dimensions of service-based leadership in Islamic education. From the in-depth synthesis of literature, it is found that there are 5 (five) main categories in the application of *Islamic Servant Leadership* in Islamic educational institutions, which include various aspects of leadership based on Islamic values as follows:

1. The Prophet Muhammad as a model of *Islamic Servant Leadership*, analyzes the teachings and leadership practices of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH as an example in servant leadership.
2. The implementation of *Islamic Servant leadership* in madrasah education is focused on the role of the head of the madrasah in implementing the values of servant leadership.
3. The implementation of *Islamic Servant leadership* in Islamic boarding schools examines how the value of servant leadership is applied in the Islamic boarding school-based education system.
4. *Islamic Servant Leadership* as an integration of the concept of *servant leadership* with Islamic values investigates how these leadership principles can be integrated with Islamic teachings to form an educational environment that is more based on spiritual values.
5. *Islamic Servant leadership* and character education that examines the impact of the application of servant leadership on the formation of student character in madrasas.

For further information, the following is a table of the results of grouping the concept of *Islamic Servant leadership* in Islam based on literature analysis:

**Literature Review Group Category Table  
Serving Leadership**

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No.	Category	Number of Articles	Key Focus
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1	Prophet Muhammad as a Model Servant Leadership	4	The teachings and practices of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH in leadership that serves
2	Servant Leadership in Islamic Boarding Schools	4	Implementation of service-based leadership in Islamic boarding schools
3	Servant Leadership in Madrasah Education	5	The role of madrasah heads in building an education system based on Islamic values
4	Integration of Servant Leadership with Islamic Values	5	Combination of Islamic values with the principle of servant leadership in education
5	Servant Leadership and Character Education	4	The impact of servant leadership in shaping students' character

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Based on the articles analyzed, it is shown that *servant leadership* in Islam does not only focus on the effectiveness of leadership, but also has a wide impact on the formation of student character, teacher professionalism, and the governance of educational institutions such as madrasahs and Islamic boarding schools. This leadership model is also able to create a more harmonious relationship between leaders, kyai, teachers, students or students and increase the loyalty of educators to madrasah and pesantren institutions. The application of servant leadership values can create an educational environment that is more conducive, participatory, and based on Islamic spirituality.

### **1. Definition and Characteristics of Islamic Servant Leadership**

Concept *Islamic Servant Leadership* It has strong roots that emphasize leadership as a form of service to the people. Definition *Serving Leadership* In general, it refers to a leadership model in which a leader prioritizes the interests of his members, provides maximum service, and supports the development of individuals in the organization. From an Islamic perspective, this concept has been practiced since the time of the Prophet PBUH, who was known as a leader who served, prioritized the needs of others, fostered meaningful relationships, and fostered a sense of community in his community. (Kamaluddin & Citaningati, 2023) In addition, leadership with empowerment, humility, acceptance of others, direct giving, authenticity, and exemplary are characteristics *Islamic Servant Leadership* model of the Prophet PBUH. (Lawal et al., t.t.) Meanwhile, in another study, Effendi and Sahertian mentioned that the leadership role of the servant aims to restore and awaken that focuses on psychological well-being, emotional maturity, and moral ethics, and the religious wisdom of each individual served. (Effendi & Sahertian, t.t.)

In its implementation, *Islamic Servant Leadership* is not only related to the leadership aspect, but also has a wide impact on individual development and Islamic education governance. A review of the literature that has been conducted shows that this leadership model is widely applied in madrasahs and Islamic boarding schools and has a great influence on teacher job satisfaction and student character formation.

From the table of results of the category of *the concept of servant leadership*, it is found that the main characteristics in Islam can be grouped as follows:

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1. **Example:** A leader should set an example for his followers by applying Islamic values in every aspect of his leadership. In the context of education, the head of the madrasah and kyai in the pesantren are expected to be able to reflect moral and spiritual values that can be exemplified by educators and students. This example is the main factor in building trust and loyalty in Islamic educational organizations.
  2. **Service to the Ummah:** In Islam, the leader is not the ruler, but the servant of his people. This concept has been applied in various madrassas and pesantren where the principal plays an active role in guiding and supporting educators and students. Studies show that madrassas that implement a service-based leadership model have higher levels of teacher involvement and a more inclusive learning environment.
  3. **Value-Based Leadership:** Decisions in Islamic leadership must be based on spiritual and moral principles. A study that has been conducted by Rizal shows that Islamic boarding schools that implement ISL are able to create a more ethical learning environment, oriented towards moral formation, and increase the effectiveness of the organization as a whole.(Rizal, 2019) In addition, madrasah heads who implement value-based leadership tend to be better able to manage conflicts and maintain a balance between academic and spiritual aspects in the school environment.
  4. **Empathy and Engagement in Individual Growth:** Leaders who apply *Serving Leadership* in Islam must have empathy for the needs of its followers and support individual growth within the scope of education. In the context of madrasas and Islamic boarding schools, school principals who are empathetic to teachers and students have been proven to increase the job satisfaction of educators and accelerate the development of students' character (Bahri, 2023). Studies also show that madrasah heads who have good relationships with teaching staff and students are more effective in creating a positive and harmonious work culture. A leader will face a wide variety of individual characteristics that cannot be imposed therefore the leader must be able to be a mediator, binder or glue between different communities.(Happy, 2022)

Based on the above explanation, it can be seen that the characteristics of *Islamic Servant Leadership* are very much in line with the values of Islamic education. This leadership model not only has an impact on the effectiveness of educational organizations, but also has a big role in shaping a more humanistic and spiritual values-based learning environment.

## **2. Implications in Education in Madrasah**

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In the application of *servant leadership*, it emphasizes the importance of service, openness, and empathy in the interaction between kyai, madrasah heads, teachers, education staff, students or students, and other members of the educational community. The application of this concept in madrasahs not only has an impact on leadership effectiveness, but also has implications for various aspects, such as teacher communication ethics, job satisfaction, character building, and madrasah governance.

#### **a. Teacher communication ethics**

In the Islamic education environment, especially in madrasahs, leadership is a crucial aspect that determines the effectiveness of interaction between teachers, students, and the school community. Therefore, *Islamic Servant Leadership* (ISL) offers a service-based leadership approach that is based on Islamic values, such as humility, transparency, and accountability. This approach directly influences teachers' communication patterns by encouraging more honest, empathetic, and open communication practices.

In this context, teacher communication ethics can be understood through three main aspects: (1) strengthening Islamic-based communication values, (2) increasing interpersonal relationships between teachers and students, and (3) the impact of leadership on teachers' motivation and professionalism in communicating. *Islamic Servant Leadership* emphasizing that communication in the world of education must reflect Islamic values which include honesty (*sidq*), amanah (responsibility), adab (politeness), and transparency in the delivery of information. This principle is in line with the findings of Ahmad & Ogunsola who show that the application of Islamic leadership in the world of education is able to build communication based on ethical values. (Ahmad & Ogunsola, 2011)

One of the main impacts of the application of ISL in the context of teacher communication ethics is the creation of closer and more harmonious interpersonal relationships between teachers and students. ISL emphasizes the importance of the leader (in this case, the teacher) to understand and meet the needs of his followers (students), as emphasized by Noland & Richards (Noland & Richards, 2015). Teachers who adopt ISL are more empathetic, patient, and respect students' perspectives in the learning process, creating more open and comfortable communication.

The implementation of ISL not only has an impact on interpersonal relationships, but also forms a more professional work culture for teachers in communicating. Shula found that servant leadership increases teachers' motivation to develop their communication skills, both in interactions with students, peers, and parents (Shula, 2023). Thus, communication that occurs is not only academic instruction, but also a means of character and moral formation for students.

#### **b. Teacher Job Satisfaction**

Teacher job satisfaction is one of the main factors that determine the effectiveness of education in madrasahs. A high level of satisfaction not only has an impact on the welfare of teachers but also affects the quality of teaching and the stability of the educational organization. Islamic Servant Leadership (ISL), as a leadership model oriented towards service and follower welfare, has a significant role in increasing teacher job satisfaction.

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Various studies show that the application of servant leadership in the educational environment creates a more equitable, supportive, and individual development-oriented work atmosphere. This leadership approach emphasizes empathy, openness in listening, and commitment to teacher development, all of which are positively correlated with increased teacher job satisfaction.(Quinteros-Durand et al., 2023)

A number of studies have confirmed that servant leadership plays a predictive role in increasing teacher job satisfaction. Cansoy in his study found that servant leadership, along with ethical and distributive leadership styles, contributes greatly to teacher job satisfaction through the creation of a fair, supportive, and collaboration-based work environment.(Cansoy, 2018) In the context of madrasas, madrasah heads who implement ISL tend to support teacher professional development and provide space for active participation in decision-making. With this support, teachers feel more valued and have more control over their work, which ultimately increases their job satisfaction.

In another study, Barmanpek (2022) emphasized that servant leadership is able to create a fair and harmonious work environment, which is an important factor in increasing overall job satisfaction and even has an impact on higher organizational commitment.(Miao et al., 2014)

The above explanation illustrates that leadership that serves as a form of ISLM has an impact on increasing teacher job satisfaction. Through an approach that emphasizes empathy, openness in listening, and a commitment to individual development, servant leadership creates a more supportive and harmonious work environment. Even more than individual job satisfaction, the impact of ISL also extends to the organizational level, where service-based leadership can increase organizational commitment, reduce educator *turnover*, and create a stable work environment. Therefore, the adoption of ISL in madrasah leadership is an effective strategy to improve the welfare of teachers and support the sustainability of an Islamic education system that is more inclusive and oriented towards Islamic ethical values.

### **c. Student Character Formation**

The formation of students' character is one of the main goals of Islamic education, which aims not only to develop intellectual aspects but also moral and spiritual aspects. ISL plays a crucial role in shaping the character of students through example, service, and fostering Islamic values in daily life.

By applying the principles of humility, service, and supportive community building, ISL creates an educational environment conducive to the development of students' ethical and moral values. This leadership model is in line with Islamic teachings that emphasize the importance of leadership based on example and compassion, as exemplified by the Prophet Muhammad SAW.

The prophetic leadership approach applied in Islamic education has an important role in shaping the character of students. A study at SD IT Assalaam Bantul shows that school principals who apply prophetic leadership principles can be effective role models for students in building their moral and spiritual character(Tommy Thompson et al., 2024). In addition, research at Maulana Malik Ibrahim State Islamic University found that the application of servant leadership in higher education is able to create an academic

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culture that balances intellectual, spiritual, and moral aspects. This contributes to strengthening ethical values in learning and improving academic achievement and student character.(Narendra Jumadil Haikal Ramadhan et al., 2024)

One of the effective strategies in shaping the character of students through ISL is through habituation of Islamic values in daily life at school or madrasah. A study at SD Muhammadiyah 1 Sidoarjo shows that Islamic habituation practices, such as congregational prayers, dhikr, and gratitude exercises, contribute to the improvement of students' moral behavior and their involvement in religious activities(Ainawa Kholilatul Nurizah & Muhlasin Amrullah, 2024). In addition, at SMP Muhammadiyah 3 Bandung, the integration of Islamic values in daily activities, such as memorization of the Qur'an and congregational prayers, has been proven effective in forming the character of students who are more disciplined, responsible, and respectful of others.(Muchtaron Muchtarom, 2024)

In addition to an Islamic-based approach, local values can also strengthen the formation of students' character in the context of Islamic education. In South Sulawesi, the concepts of sipakatau and siri' na pacce have been integrated in Islamic education, which has a positive impact on students' leadership and commitment to moral values as well as the development of their leadership skills.(Astuti Astuti, 2024) Thus, the application of ISL in madrasah education can enrich the formation of students' character by adopting an approach based on local culture that is in line with Islamic values.

In practical implementation, the application of ISL in madrasah education can be realized through various strategies, such as the use of the Book *Ta'limul Muta'allim* which has been proven to shape the character of students in terms of piety, patience, and honesty at the Darul Hijroh Sukoharjo Islamic Boarding School. In addition, students' involvement in Islamic organizations at Sunan Gunung Djati State Islamic University also contributes to their character development through emotional management, leadership, and community service.(Yanti Amalia Afifah & Nopri Dwi Siswanto, 2023)

By prioritizing example, service, and the integration of Islamic values in education, this leadership model can create an environment conducive to moral and spiritual learning. Therefore, the adoption of ISL in madrasahs must be carried out taking into account the balance between Islamic values and the challenges of modern education, thus producing a generation with strong character and oriented towards Islamic values.

#### **d. Madrasah Governance**

Good madrasah governance is one of the key factors in improving the quality of education and supporting the achievement of the overall goals of Islamic education. The application of ISL in madrasah governance has broad implications in creating an inclusive, participatory, and Islamic values-based learning environment. In addition, it also has implications for several key aspects, including improving the welfare and performance of teachers(Agus Arifandi et al., 2024), optimization of madrasah management(Andriansyah, 2024), as well as increased student motivation and achievement.(Ulfatun Nikmah, 2024) However, the implementation of this leadership model also faces challenges, such as limited resources and training needs for madrasah leaders.(Musrifah & Safdar Ali Shah, 2024) Therefore, the right strategy is needed to ensure the successful adoption of ISL in madrasahs.

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Teachers have a central role in the success of madrasah education. Service-based leadership supports the creation of a more inclusive work environment and pays attention to the well-being of teachers. Madrasah heads who implement servant leadership encourage open communication, empathy, and support for teachers' professional development.(Agus Arifandi et al., 2024) With this support, teachers are more motivated to improve their professionalism and teaching quality.

Some of the main benefits of servant leadership in improving teacher welfare and performance include creating a supportive work environment(Ulfatun Nikmah, 2024), increased productivity(M. Yunus & Qomaruzzaman, 2019), increase teacher motivation and professionalism(Lina Marliani et al., 2024), and adapting to the characteristics of millennial teachers.(Imaduddin et al., 2022)

By implementing servant leadership, madrasahs can ensure that the welfare of teachers is not only considered in financial aspects, but also in the form of appreciation and moral support.

In addition to improving teacher welfare, ISL also plays a role in improving madrasah performance and student learning outcomes. Madrasah heads who implement servant leadership encourage an organizational culture based on collaboration, shared responsibility, and innovation in learning.(Andriansyah, 2024)

The positive impact of ISL on madrasah performance and student learning outcomes includes increasing the effectiveness of school management through more transparent decision-making, increasing student involvement in learning through a constructive classroom culture,(Narendra Jumadil Haikal Ramadhan et al., 2024) and increase student motivation and satisfaction in learning which has an impact on student retention. With a supportive learning environment, students are more motivated to reach their maximum academic and moral potential.

Islamic Servant Leadership also contributes to increasing student loyalty and achievement. Service-based leadership provides a real example for students of Islamic values in their daily lives. Some of the impacts of ISL on student loyalty and achievement are improving student discipline and learning ethic, increasing student involvement in academic and non-academic activities, increasing loyalty to madrasahs through the formation of an educational culture based on Islamic values.(Ulfatun Nikmah, 2024)

### **3. Challenges in the Implementation of Servant Leadership**

Although ISL offers many benefits, there are several challenges in its implementation, including limited resources such as funding and limited facilities as reported by Musrifah and Shah.(Musrifah & Safdar Ali Shah, 2024) In addition, other challenges were also reported by Andriansyah, the lack of training for madrasah leaders to understand and apply the principles of servant leadership and the resistance to organizational culture changes that hinder the implementation of this leadership model.(Andriansyah, 2024) To overcome these challenges, a systematic leadership development strategy is needed, including continuous training for madrasah heads and optimization of available resources.

### **C. Conclusion**

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The results of the study show that *servant leadership* in Islam has a strong foundation in moral and spiritual teachings, as exemplified in the leadership of the Prophet Muhammad SAW. In the context of madrasah education, this leadership model has a positive impact in several key aspects. First, the application of *servant leadership* in madrasah education plays a role in building an education system based on Islamic values. Madrasah heads who adopt this leadership model are able to create an environment that is more conducive to learning, by emphasizing fairness, transparency, and empathy in decision-making. This contributes to improving the quality of teaching and management of Islamic educational institutions. Second, in the context of pesantren, *servant leadership* functions as a service-based leadership guideline that places leaders as guides and protectors for students and educators. The implementation of this leadership in Islamic boarding schools helps to strengthen the learning ethos of students and build harmonious relationships between leaders, teachers, and students. Third, the leadership model of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH as an ideal form of *servant leadership* in Islam is the main example for madrasah heads and educators. The example of the leadership of the Prophet PBUH who prioritizes service to the ummah is an inspiration in creating a more humane learning environment based on Islamic values. Fourth, the integration of *servant leadership* with Islamic values shows that this leadership principle is not only oriented to organizational effectiveness but also to strengthening spiritual and moral values in Islamic education. This has an impact on improving madrasah governance that is more transparent, participatory, and based on Islamic ethics.

Fifth, the application of *servant leadership* in madrasah education has a significant impact on the formation of student character. With service-based leadership, students not only gain an academic education but are also guided to become more religious, disciplined, and socially conscious individuals. In addition to the benefits that have been identified, this study also found several challenges in the implementation of *servant leadership* in madrasahs. Some of the main obstacles include limited resources, lack of leadership training for madrasah heads, and resistance to changes in organizational culture that is more participatory and service-based. Therefore, a more systematic leadership development strategy is needed to overcome these constraints, including continuous training programs for madrasah heads and educators as well as strengthening Islamic values-based education policies. This research makes an academic contribution in enriching the literature on *servant leadership* in the context of Islamic education, especially madrasahs. Further studies with a case-study-based empirical approach are needed to examine more deeply the impact of the implementation of *servant leadership* in various madrasahs with different social and cultural backgrounds. Thus, this research can be the foundation for the development of Islamic educational leadership that is more effective, sustainable, and based on Islamic spiritual values.

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