

Women's Transformational Leadership and Teacher Loyalty at SDIT Cita Mulia Ajibarang

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Abstract: This study examines how transformational leadership practiced by female leaders can enhance teacher performance and loyalty at the Integrated Islamic Elementary School (SDIT) Cita Mulia Ajibarang. This issue is important to explore because the increasing presence of women in strategic positions within Islamic educational institutions is not always accompanied by a comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of their leadership styles. Teacher performance and loyalty in many schools are often hindered by weak communication, limited appreciation, and the lack of teacher involvement in decision-making. Therefore, a leadership style that is participatory, inspirational, and grounded in Islamic values is needed to create a harmonious work culture. Using a qualitative case study approach, data were collected through interviews, observations, and documentation. The study revealed three major findings: (1) the moral and spiritual exemplary behavior of female leaders fosters a collaborative culture and strengthens teacher trust; (2) empowerment through consultation and active participation enhances professional commitment; and (3) the integration of Islamic values such as amanah (trustworthiness), musyawarah (consultation), and rahmah (compassion) serves as an ethical foundation that nurtures teachers' emotional loyalty toward the institution. Transformational leadership practiced by women not only improves the quality of teacher performance but also cultivates a humanistic and sustainable Islamic organizational culture. These findings contribute theoretically by expanding transformational leadership theory within the context of Islamic education and offer practical recommendations for madrasahs to adopt leadership models rooted in spirituality, exemplary conduct, and empowerment.

Keywords: transformational leadership, women, teacher performance

Women's leadership in Islamic educational institutions is becoming increasingly prominent as more women take on strategic positions. However, this development is still faced with gender bias and stereotypes that judge women as less assertive and less effective in leadership roles. In practice, women's leadership styles tend to be more collaborative, communicative, and empathetic, thereby creating a harmonious work environment and being more open in decision-making (Nabilla & Hanif, 2024; Northouse, 2019). The urgency of this research arises from the need to understand in depth how women's leadership can influence work culture and the quality of education in Islamic institutions, especially at the elementary level, where the influence of the principal is very significant in shaping students' character and competence. The uniqueness of the research location, namely at the Cita Mulia Ajibarang Integrated Islamic

Elementary School (SDIT), lies in the fact that the female principal has succeeded in building a collaborative work culture through exemplary leadership, motivation, and continuous two-way communication, as demonstrated in research on the role of female leadership in madrasahs based on spiritual values (Nurhayati & Hanif, 2025; Kunaepi, Isnani, Nasikhin, & Panaemalae, 2024). This phenomenon proves that women are not only capable of breaking through gender barriers, but also contribute significantly to improving the quality of Islamic education through a humanistic, progressive, and participatory leadership approach (Hanif & Junaidi, 2025; Khamid & Hanif, 2025).

Various studies show that transformational leadership has an impact on improving teacher performance and commitment. Bass and Riggio (2019) emphasize the importance of role modeling, motivation, and individual attention, while Rahayu and Faraz (2019) highlight the elements of spirituality and humanistic approaches of female leaders. In Indonesia, Hanif's (2025) research reinforces these findings by showing that school principals' leadership strategies based on moral values and collective vision can systematically improve the quality of education. In addition, research by Anggraeni and Hanif (2025) proves that transformational leadership styles play a major role in shaping a productive work culture and increasing teacher professionalism in madrasahs. However, studies on the integration of Islamic values such as amanah, musyawarah, and rahmah in transformational leadership of women in madrasahs are still limited. The research by Gani and Hanif (2025) emphasizes the need for an in-depth analysis of values in preventing internal conflicts and building organizational harmony. This research gap reinforces the importance of empirical studies to understand how women's transformational leadership affects teacher performance and loyalty in the context of Islamic education.

This study is based on the argument that women's transformational leadership based on Islamic values has significant and sustainable transformative power. The values of trustworthiness, deliberation, and compassion are believed to be able to foster collaboration, strengthen emotional loyalty, and increase teachers' professionalism in carrying out their daily tasks. These findings are reinforced by research by Suparyo and Hanif (2025), which shows that visionary leadership that emphasizes exemplary behavior, discipline, and moral values can strengthen a collaborative organizational culture in madrasahs. At SDIT Cita Mulia Ajibarang, teachers responded positively to female leadership styles through increased participation, motivation, active involvement, and a sense of belonging to the institution. Based on these preliminary findings, this study aims to explore how Islamic value-based transformational female leadership contributes to improving teacher performance and loyalty in primary education. This leadership model is considered relevant as a strategic approach in building Islamic educational institutions that are adaptive, humanistic, civilized, responsive to the times, and capable of providing a productive and worshipful academic environment.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study method to understand the transformational leadership practices of female madrasah principals at SDIT Cita Mulia Ajibarang. The unit of analysis is

the madrasah principal and her leadership practices in improving teacher performance and loyalty through collaborative, spiritual, communicative, and participatory approaches. Data were obtained from semi-structured interviews with the principal, teachers, and relevant staff, participatory observation of management and teacher training activities, and analysis of official madrasah documentation such as work programs, supervision reports, and professional development activity archives. Data analysis was conducted thematically and interactively (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014) through data reduction, presentation, and verification, with triangulation of sources and techniques to ensure the validity of the findings. This approach allows the study to comprehensively explore how Islamic values are integrated into women's transformational leadership and contribute to teachers' motivation, discipline, and loyalty in a sustainable manner.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

RESULTS

This study found that the female principal at SDIT Cita Mulia Ajibarang successfully built a collaborative work culture through moral and professional exemplary behavior and open communication. The principal was directly involved in various activities, provided motivation, and created a harmonious and supportive work environment. Teachers assessed that this participatory leadership style allowed them to be involved in decision-making, program planning, and collective problem-solving. Daily interactions showed natural role modeling, so that teachers felt emotional stability and a psychologically safe work environment. The findings of this study can be categorized into three main aspects, namely moral exemplary behavior as seen in the integrity, discipline, and consistency of the madrasah principal; professional exemplary behavior as seen in direct involvement in teacher development, classroom supervision, and deliberative decision-making; and inclusive communication as demonstrated through open dialogue, respect for differences of opinion, and empathy. These three aspects support the formation of a collaborative culture that enhances work enthusiasm, teacher confidence, and social harmony in the school environment.

Figure 1 shows teacher training conducted by the foundation and school principal on Saturday, November 8, 2025. This routine activity aims to improve teachers' competence, teaching behavior, motivation, and sustainable learning culture. The principal is seen to be directly involved in providing personal guidance and motivation, strengthening supportive professional relationships. Figures 2 and 3 show parenting classes held at the end of October 2025. These activities aim to strengthen the synergy between the school and parents, improve parenting skills, and support the optimal development of children. The principal and teachers mobilize, inspire, and empower parents as key partners in education. Figure 4 shows an in-depth interview with the principal, which shows how the madrasah principal actively empowers teachers through involvement in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of madrasah activities. Teachers feel they are given space to express ideas, design learning innovations, and develop professionalism, which strengthens teachers' trust, loyalty, and motivation towards the institution.

Overall, the findings indicate that the leadership of the female principal at SDIT Cita Mulia Ajibarang

emphasizes exemplary behavior, open communication, and teacher empowerment, which shapes a collaborative work culture and a supportive and productive school environment.



Figure 1. Teacher Training
Source: Researcher, 2025



Figure 2. Parenting Class
Source: Researcher, 2025



Figure 3. Parenting Class
Source: Researcher, 2025



Figure 4. In-depth interview with the principal
Source: Researcher, 2025

DISCUSSION

The findings of Addina & Hanif's (2025) research show that the exemplary behavior of female leaders has a significant impact on the creation of a collaborative work culture in madrasas. Moral exemplary behavior, consistency in behavior, concern for staff, and empathetic communication have an inspirational effect on teachers, making them feel motivated and appreciated. This strengthens the idealized influence dimension in transformational leadership, where teachers see leaders as role models who are worthy of being emulated and followed consistently. Meanwhile, Soelistya (2023) emphasizes that transformational leadership significantly affects teacher performance through increased organizational

commitment, work ethic, and a sense of professional responsibility. As a result, teachers show higher commitment, trust, active involvement in planning and implementing activities, and a willingness to innovate. The collaborative culture that is created also increases psychological comfort, solidarity, social harmony, and collective work ethic. These findings show that role modeling is a key element in shaping the character of Islamic educational institutions that are harmonious, productive, and competitive (Widiastuti & Hanif, 2024; Hanif, Ausat, & Suherlan, 2025).

Role modeling has a significant influence because teachers tend to learn through observation and imitation of their leaders' positive behavior. When leaders demonstrate integrity, discipline, empathy, and consistency in their daily actions, it sends a strong message that these values are organizational behavior standards that should be used as guidelines. Research by Kareem et al. (2023) confirms that leaders who set a moral example not only build trust, but also create collective work enthusiasm, increase teacher engagement, strengthen commitment to the school's vision, and improve overall organizational effectiveness. At SDIT Cita Mulia Ajibarang, the exemplary behavior of the female principal serves as a means of moral preaching that influences the work ethic of teachers, shapes a collaborative culture, strengthens a sense of responsibility, and increases motivation and emotional loyalty. Thus, these findings are theoretically important for enriching the literature on transformational leadership and practically serve as guidelines for the development of female leadership that integrates professionalism, spirituality, and Islamic values in Islamic educational institutions (Hanif & Barokah, 2025; Rahmania & Hanif, 2025).

Teacher empowerment contributes directly to increased ownership, intrinsic motivation, and work loyalty, which in turn has a positive impact on the quality of learning in madrasahs (Mahmudah, & Hanif, 2025). When teachers are actively involved in decision-making, learning planning, determining teaching strategies, and evaluating madrasah programs, they feel professionally and emotionally valued. This process builds democratic, participatory, collaborative, and mutually respectful working relationships, encouraging teachers to contribute to teaching innovation, improvement of educational practices, and achievement of institutional goals. Empowerment also strengthens teachers' ability to solve problems, think critically, enhance creativity, and come up with new solutions in learning. These findings are in line with the theory of individualized consideration, which emphasizes the importance of leaders paying attention to the needs, potential, and development of each individual. Thus, teacher empowerment is not only an administrative strategy, but a holistic approach that improves the quality of education, strengthens an inclusive work culture, and builds teacher loyalty to the madrasah in a consistent and sustainable manner (Hidayati & Hanif, 2025; Qodir & Hanif, 2025).

Empowering teachers has a powerful impact because direct involvement in decision-making and planning processes creates a deep sense of ownership that cannot be built solely through formal instruction or top-down directives. When teachers are actively involved in lesson planning, teaching strategy development, and evaluation of academic programs and activities, they feel like an important part of the institution and have a collective responsibility for the success of the madrasah. Research by Syahrizal & Mesra (2023) proves that participatory leadership significantly increases teacher loyalty through active

involvement, open communication, and appreciation for individual contributions. At SDIT Cita Mulia Ajibarang, teacher empowerment is also rooted in the values of deliberation, trust, and compassion, which are the main principles of Islamic leadership. Thus, it is necessary to pay attention to effective empowerment because it combines professional and spiritual dimensions, builds intrinsic motivation, emotional loyalty, creativity, and collective responsibility, as well as teachers' long-term commitment to the overall success and quality of the institution (Nisa & Hanif, 2025; Hanif, 2018a; Kubro & Hanif, 2025).

The integration of the values of trustworthiness, deliberation, and compassion in transformational leadership gives deep spiritual meaning to leadership practices in madrasahs. Trustworthiness is reflected in the leader's responsibility for all aspects of management, deliberation is seen in the involvement of teachers in decision-making, and compassion emerges through personal attention to the needs of teachers and students. These values not only shape the morality and character of leaders, but also have a significant impact on the emotional well-being, motivation, and job satisfaction of teachers. When teachers feel fairness, appreciation, compassion, and trust from leaders, their loyalty, commitment, and participation in the institution increase consistently. This Islamic value-based leadership model makes teachers' work a form of sincere, meaningful service oriented toward educational quality, rather than merely an administrative obligation. These findings reinforce the understanding that integrating spirituality into leadership can enhance teacher professionalism and create a harmonious and productive work culture in Islamic educational institutions, as demonstrated by Hanif & Astuti (2017) and Nurhayati & Hanif (2025).

Islamic values provide transformative power in leadership because they connect the work of teachers with the dimensions of worship, moral responsibility, and meaningful service. Lahmar's (2024) research states that spirituality strengthens inclusive, communicative, and empathetic working relationships, thereby creating a harmonious and supportive organizational climate. At SDIT Cita Mulia Ajibarang, the value of trust strengthens the integrity, discipline, and consistency of leaders in carrying out their duties, deliberation increases transparency, teacher involvement in decision-making, and active participation in program planning, and compassion builds empathy, personal attention, and affection for teachers and students. The implementation of these values not only increases teacher motivation and loyalty but also fosters a sense of belonging to the institution in a sustainable manner and builds professionalism. Thus, Islamic value-based leadership has proven to be effective in building long-term commitment, a collaborative work culture, and a humanistic learning atmosphere. These findings provide a theoretical and practical basis for the development of a dignified and rahmatan lil 'alamin-oriented leadership model (Rahmania & Hanif, 2025; Hanif, 2025).

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

CONCLUSION

This study found that the transformational leadership of female principals at SDIT Cita Mulia Ajibarang played a significant role in improving teacher performance and loyalty through three main findings, namely exemplary behavior, empowerment, and integration of Islamic values. The moral

exemplary behavior demonstrated by leaders fosters a sense of trust, security, and higher work commitment, thereby motivating teachers to work professionally and consistently. Empowerment is carried out through deliberation mechanisms, teacher involvement in decision-making, providing space for innovation, and appreciation for creative work, which ultimately increases active participation and a sense of belonging to the institution. In addition, the affirmation of the values of trust, deliberation, and compassion creates a pattern of leadership relationships that are empathetic, harmonious, and oriented towards character building. Without this research, the relationship between spirituality, gender leadership, and teacher loyalty in the context of Islamic education may not be empirically and measurably apparent. Thus, these findings provide theoretical and practical contributions regarding how women's transformational leadership works in the reality of modern education based on Islamic values.

SUGGESTION

This study has limitations because it focuses only on one madrasah, so the generalization of the findings is still limited and cannot be described broadly in the context of different Islamic educational institutions. In addition, this study has not compared the leadership experiences of male and female madrasah principals, so the aspect of gender as an important variable has not been comprehensively examined in relation to the dynamics of transformational leadership. Therefore, further research is recommended to apply a comparative study design to madrasahs with different geographical characteristics, organizational cultures, and leadership types, in order to enrich the understanding of the influence of social constructs on leadership styles and teacher performance. Subsequent research can explore the relationship between transformational leadership and teachers' psychological well-being, job satisfaction, and the quality of pedagogical interactions in the classroom, including its impact on the quality of the learning process and outcomes. By expanding the variables, participants, and context of the study, it is hoped that a more adaptive, humanistic, sustainable, and relevant model of Islamic educational leadership will emerge, one that addresses the challenges of modernization and the needs of today's schools.

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