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## Islamic Leadership Innovation At MI AL Kamil: Between Spirituality And Professionalism

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### *Abstract*

*This research aims to analyze Islamic leadership innovations in MI Al Kamil in integrating spirituality and professionalism in education management practices. The background of this research departs from the challenge of school principals in balancing administrative demands, digitization of education, and national quality standards with the strengthening of spiritual values and Islamic examples. Using a qualitative approach with a case study design, data was collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observations, and analysis of school policy documentation, then analyzed thematically using Miles and Huberman's interactive model. The results show that school principals play the role of transformational leaders who combine spiritual and professional dimensions in every aspect of leadership, including shur-based decision-making, strengthening religious work culture, and the application of innovative managerial technology. This leadership innovation not only increases the effectiveness of the school organization, but also strengthens the religious character of all school residents. Conceptually, this research offers a model of "innovative Islamic leadership" that places spirituality as the moral foundation and professionalism as a strategic instrument in the management of Islamic educational institutions. These findings contribute to the development of contemporary Islamic leadership theories as well as become a practical reference for school principals in building a balance between the values of faith and professionalism in the modern era of education.*

*Keywords: educational innovation, Islamic leadership, professionalism, spirituality, transformational leadership*

### Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis inovasi kepemimpinan Islami di MI Al kamil dalam mengintegrasikan spiritualitas dan profesionalisme dalam praktik manajemen pendidikan. Latar belakang penelitian ini berangkat dari tantangan kepala sekolah dalam menyeimbangkan tuntutan administratif, digitalisasi pendidikan, dan standar mutu nasional dengan penguatan nilai-nilai ruhiyah dan keteladanan Islami. Menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain studi kasus, data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi partisipatif, dan analisis dokumentasi kebijakan sekolah, kemudian dianalisis secara tematik menggunakan model interaktif Miles dan Huberman. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kepala sekolah berperan sebagai pemimpin transformasional yang memadukan dimensi spiritual dan profesional dalam setiap aspek kepemimpinan, termasuk pengambilan keputusan berbasis syura, penguatan budaya kerja religius, serta penerapan teknologi manajerial yang inovatif. Inovasi kepemimpinan ini tidak hanya meningkatkan efektivitas organisasi sekolah, tetapi juga memperkuat karakter religius seluruh warga sekolah. Secara konseptual, penelitian ini menawarkan model “kepemimpinan Islami inovatif” yang menempatkan spiritualitas sebagai fondasi moral dan profesionalisme sebagai instrumen strategis dalam pengelolaan lembaga pendidikan Islam. Temuan ini memberikan kontribusi bagi pengembangan teori kepemimpinan Islami kontemporer sekaligus menjadi rujukan praktis bagi kepala sekolah dalam membangun keseimbangan antara nilai keimanan dan profesionalitas di era pendidikan modern.

**Kata Kunci:** inovasi Pendidikan, Kepemimpinan Islam, Kepemimpinan transformasional, Spiritualitas, Profesionalisme

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Leadership in Indonesian Islamic educational institutions faces complex challenges in balancing administrative demands, digitalization, and national quality standards with the strengthening of spiritual values and Islamic exemplary behavior. Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI) and Integrated Islamic

Elementary Schools (SDIT) are expected to produce not only academically excellent students but also those with strong spiritual character and noble morals. However, in practice, many Islamic school principals focus more on administrative achievement and accreditation, while the spiritual and character development dimensions tend to be marginalized (Pangestu et al., 2025). Yet, the integration of both dimensions is an essential foundation for creating holistic and sustainable school governance.

Islamic leadership has a solid conceptual foundation in the theory of Al-Imamah, which emphasizes trust (*amanah*), justice, and exemplary behavior (*uswah hasanah*) as fundamental principles in managing educational organizations. On the other hand, modern-era school principal professionalism demands adaptability to technology, learning innovation, and leadership competencies responsive to socio-cultural changes (Suprayitno et al., 2025). The gap between the idealism of Islamic leadership values and their ground implementation shows that many Islamic schools experience a dilemma in managing modern management without sacrificing the spiritual dimension that constitutes the identity of Islamic education itself. Therefore, a leadership model capable of synergizing spirituality as a moral foundation with professionalism as a strategic instrument in managing Islamic educational institutions is needed.

Research on Islamic leadership in madrasahs and Islamic boarding schools has been extensive, yet in-depth studies on MI/SDIT that integrate modern education systems with Islamic values remain limited. Several studies indicate that spiritual leadership is effective in shaping student character and constructive organizational culture (Susantinah et al., 2023), but have not systematically examined how school principals' leadership innovation integrates spiritual values with professionalism in the context of Islamic elementary

education. This is the research gap that this study aims to fill through a case study at MI Al Kamil.

This research aims to: (1) describe the Islamic leadership innovations implemented by the principal at MI Al Kamil; (2) analyze the balance between spiritual and professional dimensions in such leadership practices; and (3) identify supporting and inhibiting factors in its implementation. Theoretically, this article offers a new contribution in the form of an "innovative Islamic leadership" model that positions spirituality as a moral foundation and professionalism as a strategic instrument in MI/SDIT management. Practically, this research serves as a reference for Islamic school principals in developing leadership innovations based on Qur'anic values relevant to contemporary educational challenges.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### a. Theoretical Framework: Islamic Leadership and Innovation Diffusion

Islamic leadership is rooted in the principles of Al-Imamah, emphasizing spirituality, morality, and professionalism as exemplified by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). The core values include honesty (*ṣidq*), trustworthiness (*amanah*), intelligence (*faṭānah*), and effective communication (*tablīgh*) in guiding educational organizations toward blessings and success. In the context of modern Islamic education, this theory asserts that value-based leadership aims not only at administrative regulation but also at fostering the character and morality of school community members. Meanwhile, innovation diffusion theory provides a framework for understanding how new ideas such as innovative Islamic leadership models spread and are accepted in educational organizations through stages of awareness, persuasion, decision, implementation, and confirmation. These two theories interact synergistically in this research to explain how spirituality and professionalism can be integrated in Islamic school leadership (Trimulyo et al., 2025).

## **b. Previous Research: Thematic Synthesis**

Existing literature on Islamic leadership can be grouped into three major themes. First, spiritual leadership in organizational transformation: research shows that spiritual leadership in Islamic educational institutions successfully transforms organizational culture into more constructive and collaborative forms, where the spiritual dimension becomes the moral force underpinning innovation. Second, integration of spirituality and professionalism: studies demonstrate that prophetic leadership and work spirituality significantly affect educators' innovative work behavior in Islamic boarding schools (Tarbiyatuna & Panduwiyasa, 2022), and that the integration of spiritual and democratic leadership styles plays an important role in modernizing Islamic educational institutions. Third, digital adaptation in Islamic leadership: recent research emphasizes the importance of combining spiritual leadership with digital leadership (e-leadership) in improving the quality of madrasah education in the digital era.

However, most studies focus on pesantren or madrasah contexts, while in-depth research on Integrated Islamic Elementary Schools (SDIT/MI) that combine modern education systems with Islamic values remains scarce. Existing research highlights spiritual leadership effectiveness in shaping student character but has not systematically examined school principals' leadership innovation in integrating spiritual and professional values (Mawardi et al., 2025). Furthermore, studies often conceptualize Islamic spiritual leadership without explaining implementation mechanisms in school management.

## **c. Research Gap and Positioning**

This study fills the empirical void by analyzing how MI Al Kamil principals synergize spiritual values (faith, ihsan, morality) with professionalism (managerial, pedagogical, and social competencies) through concrete leadership

innovations. Recent theoretical trends show a shift from normative to integrative-empirical approaches, examining entrepreneurial innovation as a mediator between spiritual leadership and organizational resilience (Hidayat, 2023). These approaches demonstrate that spirituality is not separate from professionalism but rather a component strengthening Islamic educational organizations' effectiveness in facing globalization and digitalization.

#### **d. Conceptual Synthesis**

Based on the reviewed literature, innovative Islamic leadership at MI Al Kamil can be understood as transformational-spiritual leadership oriented toward *ta'dīb* (civilized education), balancing divine values with professional demands, and applying innovation diffusion principles in school management. This synthesis affirms that Islamic leadership innovation is not merely structural transformation but also value transformation rooted in *maqāsid al-sharī'ah* and *akhlakul karimah* orientation (Susmiyati, 2025). Thus, this literature review provides a solid theoretical framework for analyzing how MI Al Kamil principals implement adaptive, innovative, and sustainable Islamic leadership in the context of contemporary Islamic elementary education.

### **3. RESEARCH METHODS**

This study employs a qualitative approach with a case study strategy to explore in-depth the phenomenon of Islamic leadership innovation at MI Al Kamil. The qualitative approach enables the exploration of meanings, values, and social practices that cannot be explained numerically, while the case study strategy allows holistic examination of leadership dynamics within a specific educational institution, generating contextual understanding of the synergy between spirituality and professionalism in integrated Islamic elementary school management.

Primary data were obtained through in-depth interviews with seven key informants: the school principal, two vice principals, three senior teachers with minimum three years of experience, and one school committee representative. Participants were selected purposively based on their strategic roles in school management and direct involvement in policy implementation. Secondary data included internal school documents such as vision-mission statements, annual work plans, activity reports, and policy documentation. The combination of primary and secondary data strengthens research validity through triangulation.

Data collection was conducted through three techniques: in-depth interviews to gain understanding of the principal's Islamic leadership experience and strategies in balancing spiritual values and professionalism; participatory observation to directly observe managerial practices, teacher interactions, and religious activities reflecting Islamic leadership values; and documentation analysis to trace written evidence related to policy innovations, work programs, and implementation of Islamic values in school management. This combination provides the depth and breadth of information required in educational case studies.

Data analysis employed the Miles and Huberman interactive model consisting of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction filtered important information from interviews, observations, and documents to obtain relevant key themes. Data presentation was conducted through narrative matrices and direct quotes to demonstrate linkages between spirituality and professionalism in Islamic leadership practices. Conclusion drawing was performed inductively by interpreting meanings behind thematic patterns found. The analysis process was assisted by NVivo 12 Plus for systematic data coding and theme mapping. This methodological structure ensures in-depth and comprehensive understanding of Islamic leadership

innovation practices at MI Al Kamil, with validity guaranteed through triangulation of sources, techniques, and interpretations.

#### **4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

The thematic analysis of interview data, participatory observation, and documentation at MI Al Kamil produced three main themes representing Islamic leadership innovation that integrates spirituality and professionalism.

##### **a. Spiritual-Based Managerial Transformation**

Field data shows that the principal of MI Al Kamil implements Islamic spiritual values in daily managerial activities by placing the concepts of amanah (trust) and ihsan (excellence) as core values in decision-making, supervision, and teacher development processes. This spiritual approach is manifested through routine halaqah tarbawiyah (educational circles), collective morning dhikr, and muraqabah (spiritual reflection) before learning activities. Observational data indicates that this spiritual approach functions not only as religious ritual but also as an instrument of character building and work motivation. The principal practices shura (deliberation) principles in organizational decision-making, ensuring that every policy reflects collective wisdom grounded in Islamic values (Arifin et al., 2024).

##### **b. Professional Governance with Qur'anic Values**

The principal implements performance-based management systems with measurable evaluation instruments including teacher performance appraisal, scheduled academic supervision, and peer-to-peer review. However, the entire process is framed within a Qur'anic ethos emphasizing justice, honesty, and sincerity. Digital system applications in learning administration such as e-reporting and learning management systems (LMS) demonstrate adaptive efforts to the digital era without losing spiritual values. Documentation data shows the principal initiated the "Islamic Inspirational Teacher" program, a

pedagogical competency development training integrated with akhlaq al-karimah values. This strategy represents tangible Islamic leadership innovation combining professional and spiritual aspects in balance (Abidin, 2025).

#### c. **Supporting and Inhibiting Factors**

Field data analysis identified key supporting factors: organizational culture based on Islamic values, full foundation support for management spiritualization programs, and high teacher commitment to participate in ruhiyah activities. Meanwhile, primary inhibiting factors include limited digital competence among some senior teachers, resistance to new system implementation, and administrative pressures that occasionally shift focus from strengthening spiritual values. These findings confirm that leadership innovation success depends on organizational readiness and cultural support (Jurnal et al., 2023).

#### d. **Discussion**

The research findings demonstrate that Islamic leadership innovation at MI Al Kamil reflects a strong synergy between spiritual and professional dimensions in Islamic education management. The principal performs dual roles: as a murabbi instilling monotheism values, sincerity, and trust responsibility in leadership practices, and as a professional manager oriented toward educational quality and school innovation. This aligns with the view that Islamic leadership demands balance between spiritual values (faith and ihsan) and educational organizational effectiveness (Supriatna, 2025).

Interpreting these results within Al-Imamah's theoretical framework shows that Islamic leadership focuses not on structural authority but on cultivating moral and spiritual awareness among all school community members. The principal practices *uswah hasanah* (exemplary behavior), *shura* (deliberation), and *amanah* (trust) principles in managerial policies. This approach is consistent with research confirming that Islamic leadership emphasizes morality and

spirituality dimensions in educational decision-making (Trishananto, 2022). The process of adopting Islamic values in school governance follows innovation stages knowledge, persuasion, decision, implementation, and confirmation as reflected in the principal's strategy encouraging teacher participation and collective reflection.

Comparison with previous studies shows consistency with research on spiritual leadership in Islamic schools, which found that principal spirituality significantly contributes to teachers' work motivation and professional ethos. However, this study advances further by asserting that Islamic leadership innovation not only influences work ethics but also creates an integrated value-based management system. These results reinforce findings that integration of Islamic values in leadership practices can improve educational organizational effectiveness through strong collegial and spiritual culture (Moely & Utara, 2025). Unlike research focusing on normative dimensions of Islamic leadership, this article highlights innovative aspects of adapting to digitalization and school management professionalization without losing spiritual foundations.

Theoretically, this article contributes by integrating Islamic leadership theory with innovation diffusion frameworks to explain how spiritual values can be primary drivers of educational organizational innovation. This provides new perspective that Islamic leadership is not a static, traditional model but can be dynamic and adaptive to contemporary demands. Thus, this research enriches educational leadership literature by offering a conceptual model of "innovative Islamic leadership" positioning spirituality as foundation and professionalism as implementative instrument (Novitasari et al., 2020).

From practical perspectives, study implications emphasize the importance of developing principal competencies based on spiritual leadership adaptive to technological changes and national education policies. Islamic educational institutions need to formulate leadership capacity building programs

emphasizing integration of faith and professional skills in school management. This perspective is supported by research highlighting spiritual leadership roles in creating resilient, value-oriented learning organizations and innovative approaches to building spirituality-based quality culture in Islamic educational institutions (Wardhana, 2023).

This discussion affirms that Islamic leadership innovation at MI Al Kamil is not merely a response to modern professionalism demands but also a spiritual expression affirming contemporary Islamic education identity.

## **5. KESIMPULAN**

This study concludes that Islamic leadership innovation at MI Al Kamil represents a balanced integration of spirituality and professionalism in Islamic education management. The principal functions as a transformational figure combining monotheism values, amanah, and uswah hasanah with modern managerial competencies based on quality and accountability. Leadership innovation is realized through shura-based decision-making, technology optimization in school governance, and formation of a religious yet professionally adaptive organizational culture.

Theoretically, this research proposes an "innovative Islamic leadership" model positioning spirituality as an ethical foundation and professionalism as an implementative instrument. This model expands understanding of how Islamic values can be actualized in modern organizations demanding effectiveness, accountability, and continuous innovation. Practically, this study emphasizes the importance of developing spiritual leadership-based principal competencies through capacity building programs that systematically combine Qur'anic values with modern managerial skills including digital literacy and performance-based evaluation.

This study has limitations related to its single case study context, thus findings cannot be widely generalized. Future research should expand to various Islamic educational institutions across different levels and regions to obtain comprehensive understanding of leadership innovation variations. Developing quantitative measurement instruments and conducting longitudinal studies tracking long-term impacts would provide deeper insights into the sustainability and effectiveness of this innovative Islamic leadership model.

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