


## Consultative Leadership and Ethical Governance in Non-Formal Islamic Education: A Case Study of Musyawarah Practice

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Article Info	Abstract
<p><b>Article history:</b></p> <p>Received: 04/16/2024 Revised: 07/27/2024 Accepted: 12/31/2024</p> <p><b>Keywords:</b></p> <p>Community-based schooling, Islamic educational leadership, Musyawarah</p>	<p><b>Purpose</b> – This study explores the leadership style and decision-making process at Madrasah Diniyah Al Munajah, focusing on how musyawarah (consultative deliberation) is practiced under the leadership of Principal A. It addresses the gap in empirical research on Islamic educational leadership by examining how ethical and inclusive leadership can sustain institutional resilience in a community-based madrasah. The study argues that culturally rooted leadership, grounded in collaboration and moral responsibility, is key to overcoming challenges in non-formal educational settings.</p> <p><b>Design/methods</b> – A qualitative case study design was adopted, with data collected through semi-structured interviews, document analysis, and field observations. Thematic analysis was used to identify patterns related to leadership behavior, decision-making strategies, financial management, and stakeholder engagement. The study employed manual coding, analytical memos, and member checking to ensure the validity and reliability of the results.</p> <p><b>Findings</b> – The study found that Principal A's leadership emphasized inclusive participation in institutional decision-making, empathetic financial practices, and constructive responses to organizational challenges. Collaborative governance helped sustain the madrasah through transparent tuition policies, external donor engagement, and mutual trust between staff and stakeholders. Despite institutional limitations and policy-induced challenges, ethical leadership anchored in musyawarah promoted adaptability and commitment to the madrasah's mission.</p> <p><b>Research implications/limitations</b> – The findings are limited by the single-case design focused on one leader and institution, which restricts generalizability. The context-specific nature of the case suggests that broader applicability requires caution.</p> <p><b>Practical implications</b> – The study offers a model for educational leaders in religious or community-based schools facing resource constraints and policy transitions. It underscores the importance of integrating spiritual ethics, participatory governance, and community collaboration into leadership development frameworks.</p> <p><b>Originality/value</b> – This research contributes original empirical insight into Islamic educational leadership, showing how musyawarah-based governance sustains institutional integrity and relevance. It invites further research on similar leadership models across diverse cultural and educational environments.</p>
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## Introduction

Leadership in educational institutions plays a critical role in shaping the values, policies, and success trajectories of schools, particularly in diverse cultural and socio-religious contexts. Across the globe, effective educational leadership has been linked to institutional resilience, community trust, and adaptive governance models that respond to shifting educational demands (Alazmi & Bush, 2024; Eadens & Ceballos, 2023; Marshall & Clark, 2023). In Islamic education systems, leadership is not only administrative but also moral, often serving as a model of ethical behavior and communal responsibility (De La Cruz Albizu, 2024; Primahendra et al., 2024). As societal transformations continue to affect formal and informal schooling, especially in Southeast Asia, understanding context-specific leadership models becomes increasingly important for ensuring educational equity and sustainability (Jatuporn et al., 2024; Niesche et al., 2023). Indonesia, with its vibrant Islamic educational heritage, presents a particularly compelling context for examining leadership practices rooted in religious and cultural values.

While extensive attention has been given to leadership within formal school systems, various challenges such as principal overload, shifting policy demands, and the necessity for culturally responsive approaches have emerged (Dor-Haim, 2024; Sigurðardóttir et al., 2024; Stroupe et al., 2023). Within the Indonesian context, efforts to harmonize institutional traditions with modern governance and community collaboration continue to shape educational leadership discourse (Gkoros & Sakellariou, 2024; Lowery & Romero-Johnson, 2024; Oplatka, 2023). Emerging models such as distributed and ambidextrous leadership offer frameworks that emphasize adaptability and inclusive engagement with stakeholders (Grimm et al., 2023; Peng et al., 2024). However, there remains a limited understanding of how such models operate in non-formal religious institutions like *madrasah diniyah*.

Leadership in Islamic educational institutions uniquely blends spiritual, administrative, and social dimensions, positioning school leaders as ethical and communal figures whose actions carry moral weight (Chilah Abdelkader et al., 2023; Grimm et al., 2023; Gunada et al., 2024). The Islamic-Oriented Educational Leadership (IOEL) model provides a lens to examine the integration of Islamic values in shaping institutional culture and decision-making processes (Alazmi & Bush, 2024; Ezzani et al., 2023; Leaf et al., 2024). Core principles such as *musyawarah* (consultative deliberation) and *amanah* (trust-based responsibility) highlight leadership as a collective endeavor rather than a hierarchical mandate. Inclusive governance, financial transparency, and dialogical conflict resolution are among the practices that reflect these principles in daily school life (Gunada et al., 2024; Oplatka, 2023; Primahendra et al., 2024).

Despite growing conceptual clarity, significant gaps persist in understanding how these ideals are actualized on the ground, especially in smaller Islamic institutions like *madrasah diniyah* (Ezzani et al., 2023; Niesche et al., 2023; Sigurðardóttir et al., 2024). Furthermore, while normative values are widely referenced, empirical accounts of their enactment in governance remain scarce (Dor-Haim, 2024; Grimm et al., 2023; Jatuporn et al., 2024). Indonesia's pluralistic society, coupled with policy shifts such as full-day schooling, adds layers of complexity to educational leadership, yet remains underexplored (Chilah Abdelkader et al., 2023; Ezzani et al., 2023; Stroupe et al., 2023). Moreover, how school leaders navigate ethical tensions, meet diverse stakeholder expectations, and address socio-economic disparities among students has yet to be adequately addressed (De La Cruz Albizu, 2024; Gunada et al., 2024; Oplatka, 2023).

To bridge these gaps, the leadership dynamics of Principal A at *Madrasah Diniyah Al-Munajah* offer a relevant case for exploring the operationalization of *musyawarah* within institutional governance. Observations point to a leadership approach that emphasizes transparency, trust-building, and collective responsibility in a non-formal Islamic educational environment. Consultative decision-making is shown to influence various aspects of institutional management, including policy formulation, financial stewardship, and staff

participation. These insights contribute to broader understandings of leadership that are ethically grounded, culturally contextualized, and resilient in the face of educational and societal challenges. By centering on locally rooted leadership practices, this analysis provides a meaningful alternative to dominant paradigms that often overlook the spiritual and communal dimensions of educational governance.

## Methods

This research employed a qualitative approach using a single case study design to examine the leadership model and decision-making practices at Madrasah Diniyah Al Munajah. The case study method was chosen for its ability to explore complex phenomena in real-life contexts, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and the context are blurred. The study focused on capturing the subjective experiences, leadership behaviors, and institutional dynamics influenced by Principal A's leadership style. Data were collected primarily through semi-structured interviews with Principal A, addressing core dimensions of leadership such as vision formulation, policy development, collaborative decision-making, conflict resolution, financial management, and institutional response strategies. Each interview lasted between 60 and 90 minutes, conducted in a private setting to ensure comfort and openness. Additional data were obtained through informal observations and document reviews, including internal policy documents, accreditation records, and staff meeting summaries.

The research tools included a digital audio recorder, a semi-structured interview guide aligned with the study objectives, and field note sheets for contextual observations. Data analysis was conducted manually using an inductive thematic approach, involving transcription, initial coding, thematic categorization, and interpretation based on leadership literature. Emerging themes revealed a leadership pattern characterized by *musyawarah* (consultation) and inclusive decision-making. Analytical memos and matrices were developed to track the relationship between leadership practices and institutional outcomes, allowing for systematic comparisons between reported successes and challenges. To ensure the study's trustworthiness, triangulation was achieved by comparing interview data with documentary evidence and observational notes. Member checking was conducted by presenting key findings to Principal A for validation. The credibility of the analysis was further enhanced through prolonged engagement and iterative code refinement, ensuring that the findings accurately reflected the realities of leadership practice within the institution.

## Results

The findings of this study reveal that leadership in Madrasah Diniyah Al Munajah is conducted through a collaborative process grounded in a strong commitment to guiding cooperative efforts toward achieving shared goals. Leadership is not merely defined by formal authority, but by the capacity to influence and mobilize others meaningfully. The leadership model applied by Principal A prioritizes consultative decision-making (*musyawarah*) as a core principle in all institutional matters.

Strategic decisions, such as the determination of school fees, are not made unilaterally but through deliberation with teachers, administrative staff, and parents. This practice fosters transparency and reinforces mutual trust and shared responsibility. Principal A's leadership emphasizes inclusive participation, and the consultative approach serves as the basis for setting internal policies and financial obligations.

In terms of financial management, the institution demonstrates a high degree of flexibility and empathy. When issues related to tuition payment arise, class teachers report them to Principal A for further discussion. In verified cases of financial hardship, the madrasah seeks support from external donors. This approach reflects a socially responsive and adaptable educational leadership model that is sensitive to students' economic conditions.

The organizational structure of the madrasah includes a principal, vice principal, treasurer, teachers, administrative personnel, and janitorial staff, with approximately 20 staff members in total. Task distribution is aligned with individual competencies. Communication within the organization is maintained through regular staff meetings and direct phone calls, due to Principal A's limited use of digital communication tools.

Furthermore, Principal A demonstrates openness to constructive criticism. He underscores the importance of accountable and evidence-based feedback, while discouraging unfounded critiques. For instance, when discrepancies arose regarding fund allocation, issues were addressed through transparent clarification. In addressing staff errors, Principal A adopts an educative and dialogical approach, favoring verbal warnings over dismissal. Termination is only considered in cases of serious misconduct, reflecting a leadership style that is both humanistic and prudent.

In cases involving inappropriate conduct by teaching staff, Principal A adheres to a verification process before taking corrective action. Ensuring the involvement of multiple parties remains a priority, indicating a leadership orientation that emphasizes inclusivity and transparency.

Principal A was appointed directly by the head of the foundation, viewing his leadership position as a trust and form of service that must be carried out with full responsibility. His dedication is evident in his continued efforts to sustain the madrasah despite numerous challenges, such as declining student enrollment following the implementation of a full-day school policy. Parents expressed concern about student fatigue due to prolonged hours in formal schooling, limiting students' ability to participate in additional religious education programs.

During his tenure, the madrasah achieved an "A" accreditation in 2011 and won a provincial-level competition in Yogyakarta. However, the introduction of the five-day school week presented significant challenges, particularly in reducing student participation in madrasah activities due to physical and mental exhaustion after formal schooling. Despite this, Principal A remains committed to maintaining the institution. Successes in the madrasah were facilitated by collaboration with teachers, parents, and external institutions such as the Ministry of Religious Affairs. Conversely, institutional setbacks were largely attributed to shifts in national education policy and a decline in instructional quality.

Principal A perceives failure as a temporary condition rather than a permanent state. He continues to advocate for the madrasah's sustainability by fostering collaboration with parents and the surrounding community. This collaborative effort plays a vital role in ensuring the continuity of the madrasah's educational programs amidst evolving policy and societal landscapes.

## Discussion

Understanding how leadership and decision-making processes sustain educational institutions, particularly through mechanisms such as *musyawarah*, reveals much about the nature of culturally grounded governance in Islamic settings. This exploration into Madrasah Diniyah Al Munajah provides significant insight into the practice of inclusive and dialogical leadership, echoing global scholarly calls for models that prioritize community engagement and moral responsibility (Alazmi & Bush, 2024; Gunada et al., 2024; Jatuporn et al., 2024). While most mainstream leadership discourses emphasize structural autonomy and managerial expertise, the findings here demonstrate how Islamic principles such as *amanah* (trust) and *musyawarah* offer alternative frameworks that foreground relational trust and collaborative governance (Grimm et al., 2023; Lowery & Romero-Johnson, 2024; Peng et al., 2024). These outcomes further support the development of leadership identities rooted in cultural, spiritual, and moral epistemologies (De La Cruz Albizu, 2024; Ezzani et al., 2023; Marshall & Clark, 2023), contributing to the decolonization of leadership theory through empirical engagement with localized practices.

Central to this narrative is Principal A's consistent use of consultative decision-making in both academic and administrative matters. By involving teachers, parents, and staff in deliberations such as tuition policy, the principal fostered a sense of shared responsibility and institutional ownership. This participatory approach promoted transparency and reinforced stakeholder trust—key elements in effective school governance (Gkoros & Sakellariou, 2024; Leaf et al., 2024; Sigurðardóttir et al., 2024). Inclusivity in leadership reduced hierarchical rigidity and enhanced the moral legitimacy of decisions (Dor-Haim, 2024; Niesche et al., 2023), underscoring the relevance of distributed and values-based practices in smaller religious institutions.

Building upon this foundation, the empathetic and adaptive nature of financial management emerged as a key strength under Principal A's leadership. The madrasah's openness to adjusting tuition policies in response to families' financial constraints and its proactive approach to seeking donor support exemplify a socially responsive leadership model. This aligns with broader perspectives on Islamic leadership as ethically responsive to community needs, especially under economic pressures (Chilah Abdelkader et al., 2023; Gunada et al., 2024; Stroupe et al., 2023). The balance between institutional sustainability and compassion illustrates ambidextrous leadership—strategically sound yet relationally grounded (Ezzani et al., 2023; Lowery & Romero-Johnson, 2024; Primahendra et al., 2024), positioning the madrasah as both a moral and social anchor.

Further reflection reveals the principal's preference for educative and dialogical responses to staff missteps and internal conflicts. Emphasizing correction rather than punishment contributed to a supportive institutional culture. This practice aligns with shifts toward humanistic leadership that prioritize emotional intelligence and developmental dialogue over bureaucratic control (De La Cruz Albizu, 2024; Eadens & Ceballos, 2023; Oplatka, 2023). His openness to critique and transparent communication illustrate a humble and accountable leadership stance—deeply reflective of Islamic ethical values (Ezzani et al., 2023; Gkoros & Sakellariou, 2024; Grimm et al., 2023), thereby demonstrating the dual instrumental and moral capacities of such leadership within religious schooling.

Viewed alongside existing literature, these patterns of leadership highlight both convergence and distinction. Western discourse often focuses on principals' restricted autonomy and administrative burden (Dor-Haim, 2024; Niesche et al., 2023; Sigurðardóttir et al., 2024), whereas this context reveals how embedded decision-making and communal support mitigate such constraints. Rather than highlighting individual capacity, Principal A's method emphasizes collective agency, resonating with the communal orientation of IOEL frameworks (Alazmi & Bush, 2024; Ezzani et al., 2023; Gunada et al., 2024). Furthermore, in contrast to accounts of administrative overload detracting from pedagogical focus (Chilah Abdelkader et al., 2023; Leaf et al., 2024; Oplatka, 2023), this case shows how relational trust and strategic delegation preserved educational quality and student well-being.

In parallel with global calls for leadership that centers equity and shared responsibility, the madrasah's practices offer compelling evidence of ethically responsive governance. Comparable to culturally responsive leadership initiatives in Thailand and among Latina/o/x leaders (Grimm et al., 2023; Jatuporn et al., 2024; Lowery & Romero-Johnson, 2024), the principal's commitment to verifying misconduct cases and addressing enrollment declines underscores a justice-oriented and adaptive approach to leadership in dynamic policy landscapes (Marshall & Clark, 2023; Primahendra et al., 2024; Stroupe et al., 2023). These dimensions illustrate how effective leadership transcends managerial function to embody ethical guardianship amid evolving social challenges.

Taken together, the documented leadership practices reflect a successful implementation of ethically anchored, consultative governance within a resource-constrained institution. Nonetheless, caution is warranted in applying these insights universally across Islamic schools, given the particular sociocultural context and individualized leadership dynamics (Ezzani et al., 2023; Marshall & Clark, 2023; Peng et al., 2024). The absence of digital



tools may represent deliberate cultural alignment rather than operational deficiency. Broader inquiries across diverse settings would enrich understanding of scalability and contextual variability.

Beyond the case of Madrasah Al Munajah, these reflections offer strategic insights for leaders in similar religious or community-rooted educational environments. Emphasizing inclusive deliberation, ethical adaptability, and collective engagement, the approach outlined here underscores a viable framework for institutional resilience amid regulatory and economic uncertainty. Leadership informed by Islamic ethics demonstrates coherence, resilience, and cultural relevance. As such, leadership development programs—particularly in religious or minority-serving contexts—should integrate principles of *musyawarah* and values-driven practice (Alazmi & Bush, 2024; Ezzani et al., 2023; Gunada et al., 2024), advancing both theoretical discourse and practical application in educational governance.

## Conclusion

The leadership model at Madrasah Diniyah Al Munajah, centered on the principle of *musyawarah*, reflects a collaborative, inclusive, and ethically grounded approach led by Principal A. Emphasizing consultative decision-making, empathetic financial management, and community engagement, this model fosters institutional resilience, transparency, and mutual trust amid limited formal resources. It presents a culturally rooted and ethically sustainable alternative to bureaucratic leadership paradigms, particularly relevant for religious and community-based education. However, as a single-case study focused on one institution and leader, its generalizability remains limited. Future research should conduct comparative case studies across diverse Islamic educational settings to assess the transferability of *musyawarah*-based leadership, especially under varying organizational pressures like digital transformation and curriculum reform. Including perspectives from staff, parents, and students would further enrich understanding of how collaborative leadership is experienced and enacted within such institutions.

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