

TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP OF THE PRINCIPAL AS AN EFFORT TO REALIZE THE VISION AT SMPIT NUR HIDAYAH SURAKARTA

Amara Nairani Safhira*¹, Istanto²

^{1,2} Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta

* Corresponding Author: amarasafhira@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

The principal's leadership plays a crucial role in determining the direction and success of schools in realizing their vision and mission. In the context of integrated Islamic education, transformational leadership is particularly relevant as it emphasizes role modeling, motivation, innovation, and individualized attention to mobilize all school members. This study aims to examine how transformational leadership is practically enacted by the principal in realizing the vision of SMPIT Nur Hidayah Surakarta (Nur Hidayah Surakarta Integrated Islamic Junior High School), namely "To create an Islamic generation with strong character, high achievement, and leadership qualities." This study employed a qualitative approach with a case study design. Data were collected through in-depth

interviews with the school principal and the vice principal of curriculum, observations, and documentation. The data were analyzed using Miles and Huberman's interactive model, consisting of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. The findings reveal that the principal consistently implements the four dimensions of transformational leadership. Idealized influence is reflected in exemplary behavior and a strong commitment to Islamic values; inspirational motivation is demonstrated through spiritual motivation and the consistent internalization of the school vision; intellectual stimulation is realized through educational innovations such as ICT-based classes, digitalization of school information systems, bilingual programs, and community empowerment initiatives; while individualized consideration is shown through personal attention, spiritual guidance, and systematic teacher professional development through workshops. The novelty of this study lies in its detailed analysis of how the four dimensions of transformational leadership are concretely implemented to internalize the school vision within an integrated Islamic junior high school context. This study contributes theoretically to transformational leadership studies in Islamic education and practically provides insights for school leaders in translating vision into sustained educational practices.

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INTRODUCTION

A school's success in realizing its vision and mission is largely determined by the leadership of the principal as the primary driving force. Bush (2011) defined leadership as the ability to influence others to achieve predetermined goals (Komariah & Achmad Kurniady, 2022). Leadership in educational institutions is carried out by the principal. The principal is defined as a teacher tasked with leading learning and managing educational units (Kemendikbudristek, 2021). The principal acts as both a leader and a manager, tasked with managing the organization, providing direction to teachers, and providing guidance and resolution to various emerging problems. According to Mulyasa (2009), the principal's leadership role is a crucial factor in encouraging the achievement of the school's vision, mission, and goals through the implementation of planned programs (Mahfud, 2020). The complexity of the principal's role demands a leadership style capable of motivating all elements of the school to align with the established vision.

One leadership style relevant to addressing the complexity of the principal's role is transformational leadership. This leadership style emphasizes the leader's ability to inspire, motivate, and empower all school members to move toward shared goals (Mardizal et al., 2023). According to G. Yukl (1999), transformational leadership is a process of influence that encourages changes in attitudes and values, thereby internalizing the organization's goals and vision and producing satisfactory performance (Haryoso, 2022). Bass (2006) explained in *Transformational Leadership* that transformational leadership is a development of transactional leadership, emphasizing exchange between leaders and followers. Transformational leadership, on the other hand, focuses on building commitment to the vision, fostering innovation, and developing the capacity of followers (Sigiyuwanta, 2024).

A transformational leader is required to possess excellent communication skills. Principals need to master persuasive communication to ensure the transformation process runs optimally and without obstacles (Samsudin & Azizah, 2021). To more comprehensively understand how transformational leadership works in an educational context, Bass (1985) determined that transformational leadership has four dimensions: Idealized Influence, Inspirational Motivation, Intellectual Stimulation, and Individualized Consideration (Lamirin et al., 2023). These four dimensions explain how a leader can be a good role model, foster collective motivation, encourage innovative thinking, and pay Individualized Consideration attention to the individual needs of their followers, which plays a vital role in achieving the school's vision.

Transformational leadership, as explained by Bass (2006), is demonstrated through a leader's ability to foster motivation and strengthen commitment to the organization's vision and mission (Palembangan & Sihotang, 2023). Vision is the school's goal designed to meet the needs of the school (Fitri et al., 2022). While developing the vision is the responsibility of the leader, the process still involves the entire school community to provide insights and input (Anisa & Rahmatullah, 2020). The vision serves as inspiration and motivation for all members of the institution in realizing shared goals, while also driving achievement and fostering an educational institution that meets the needs of the community (Hafizin & Herman, 2024). Based on the research findings, the principal of SMPIT Nur Hidayah demonstrates a transformational leadership style, as reflected in the ability to continuously motivate those being led. In carrying out the leadership role, the principal not only focuses on formulating the school's vision but also strives to internalize the vision among all members of the school community through strengthening collective commitment and participation. The school vision is developed based on Islamic values, so that it not only emphasizes academic achievement but is also directed toward shaping students who are faithful, possess noble character, and have a positive impact on society.

A transformational leader is a visionary figure with foresight, emphasizing continuous organizational improvement and development (Ismunandar & Hasan, 2022). This is reflected in the leadership of the principal of SMPIT Nur Hidayah, who focuses on strengthening school programs and strategies innovatively, thus addressing current educational needs while simultaneously preparing for future development. The four dimensions of transformational leadership serve as an important foundation for understanding the role of the principal, who can internalize transformational leadership values to realize the school's vision.

SMPIT Nur Hidayah has interesting characteristics to study because this school is known for its strong religious culture and consistency in instilling Islamic values in both teachers and students. Furthermore, this school also continues to innovate in the field of education by utilizing technological developments to support the learning process. These two aspects show that the principal's leadership role is not only oriented towards academic achievement, but also towards the formation of Islamic character and readiness to face the challenges of the times. However, how the implementation of transformational leadership with its four main dimensions can mobilize all elements of the school to realize the vision of "To create an Islamic generation with strong character, high achievement, and leadership qualities" still requires further study. The novelty of this study lies in its

detailed analysis of how the four dimensions of transformational leadership are concretely implemented to internalize the school vision within an integrated Islamic Junior High School context. Therefore, this research is important to comprehensively understand the practice of transformational leadership of principals in the context of modern Islamic schools.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a qualitative approach to obtain an in-depth understanding of the principal's transformational leadership in realizing the school's vision. The research was conducted from August to September 2025 at SMPIT Nur Hidayah Surakarta. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation. Informants were selected using purposive sampling, focusing on individuals with the most relevant knowledge of the leadership practices under study. The key informants were the school's principal and the vice principal of curriculum, both of whom had held their structural positions for approximately two years and had previously served as teachers at the school, enabling them to understand the school culture and organizational dynamics comprehensively.

Documentation included interview audio recordings and institutional documents related to the school's vision, mission, objectives, and program implementation. A literature review of relevant scholarly works was also conducted to provide a theoretical foundation and support data interpretation. SMPIT Nur Hidayah Surakarta was chosen as the research site due to the principal's application of transformational leadership aligned with the four dimensions (4I). The researcher acted as the main research instrument, supported by interview guidelines, recording devices, documentation, and field notes. Data validity was ensured through source and method triangulation. Data analysis followed the interactive model of Miles and Huberman (1994), consisting of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Conclusions were drawn continuously to ensure that the findings accurately represent the principal's transformational leadership practices.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Transformational Leadership of School Principals

Leadership is a key factor in determining the direction and quality of educational delivery in schools. Research findings show that the principal of SMPIT Nur Hidayah is a

leader capable of directing, fostering, and influencing the educational institution he leads. During his tenure, the principal stated:

"We manage education based on an educational philosophy that adopts the educational philosophy of JSIT (Integrated Islamic School Network) by integrating knowledge, charity, education, and Islamic preaching."

The statement indicates that the principal's leadership serves as the primary driver in aligning the school's vision with the Islamic values that underpin all educational programs. Through programs designed annually in accordance with the fulfillment of National Education Standards (SNP), the principal directs all school members to achieve the established vision.

As an educational leader, the principal is required not only to carry out administrative functions but also to demonstrate a leadership style that motivates and drives change. One leadership style considered effective and relevant in this regard is transformational leadership. Transformational leadership, as proposed by James McGregor Burns in 1978, emphasizes the importance of motivation and morale of members through the influence of visionary leaders (Wahyuni & Maunah, 2021). Based on the results of observations and interviews, the principal of SMPIT Nur Hidayah Surakarta demonstrated transformational leadership practices that are reflected in his active role in motivating teachers and students, providing inspiration, and making strategic decisions in various school activities. This finding indicates that the leadership carried out was not merely administrative, but rather oriented towards forming a shared vision and strengthening the commitment of the school community. This is in line with the statement of the vice principal of curriculum:

"The principal is the person in charge who always provides direction and support; he is directly involved in all activities."

Based on observations, the principal demonstrated transformational leadership, reflected in strengthening religious culture, developing teacher professionalism, developing learning innovations, and designing a vision that suits current needs. In accordance with the vision, principal of SMPIT Nur Hidayah mobilizes all school stakeholders through various school programs and learning activities to ensure the vision is implemented in real terms.

From the perspective of transformational leadership theory, these findings indicate that the principal has demonstrated leadership characteristics that emphasize motivation, inspiration, and vision. Leadership, as the ability to influence individuals and groups to

achieve common goals (Restu Rahayu & Sofyan Iskandar, 2023), is reflected in the behavior of the principal who actively provides direction, guides teachers, and is directly involved in various school activities. In the context of educational institutions, the principal plays a role as a learning leader and manager of educational units (Kemendikbudristek, 2021). Related to research findings, the behavior of the principal of SMPIT Nur Hidayah reflects the definition of transformational leadership.

The root word of transformational is *to transform*, which means transforming or changing something. Transformational means the ability or characteristic that can bring change (Noor & Dartim, 2021). In the context of this research, the meaning of change is reflected in the leadership practices of the principal of SMPIT Nur Hidayah, who actively encourages renewal through the development of visionary and participatory school programs. Interview results indicate that the principal of SMPIT Nur Hidayah encourages change through the development of visionary school programs and involves teachers and staff in every implementation process. This finding can be interpreted as a form of transformational leadership, as proposed by Bass (2006), who positions the leader as the center of organizational change and determines the direction of activities. In line with this, (Katman & Akadira, 2023) emphasized that transformational leaders strive to help their followers develop through attention and appropriate responses to needs. This condition is reflected in the principal, as conveyed by a teacher, who stated that the principal has effective communication skills and meets stakeholder needs by providing teacher training and coaching to optimize the teaching process

Transformational leadership style is characterized by a focus on developing a vision by leading the organization towards certain changes. Thus, transformational leadership is a leadership style that focuses on positive change, increasing motivation in achieving the organization's vision, and developing the potential of followers through coaching and training. According to Korejan & Shahbazi (2016), the transformational leadership style implemented by school principals has several characteristics: the ability to influence all members, commitment to organizational values, being a role model, directing changes in the goals and beliefs of followers to align with organizational goals, and providing personal attention to staff (Armiyanti et al., 2023)

These characteristics were evident during his tenure as principal of SMPIT Nur Hidayah, who consistently provided motivation and instilled confidence in students and teachers, fostering enthusiasm for the learning process. Observations revealed that he endeavored to be directly involved in various school activities. For example, before each

activity began, the principal provided direction as a form of motivation and an effort to build strong relationships with the school community. The principal supported positive change to achieve the school's vision and goals by encouraging learning innovations.

This is in line with Griffin and Ebert (1999), who stated that leadership is an effort to motivate others (Komariah & Achmad Kurniady, 2022). Motivation is the drive that moves someone to act (Wiguna et al., 2025). The results of interviews with the vice principal of curriculum showed that at every start of an activity, including in routine meetings, the principal of SMPIT Nur Hidayah provides motivation and advice that serves to maintain positive energy while balancing the mental and spiritual aspects of all staff and teachers. Beyond simply providing motivation, the principal also provides guidance both individually and in groups using a spiritual approach. This effort aims to build strong relationships with teachers and students, while also embodying the principal's role as a leader who understands the needs of his followers to optimize organizational resources.

In addition to motivation and spiritual development, transformational leadership is also closely associated with change that leads to improvement. This is reflected in the leadership of the principal through various innovations implemented at the school. Educational innovation is understood as the application of new ideas, methods, or technologies to improve the quality, effectiveness, and relevance of the learning process and student learning outcomes (Rahmawati & Nurachadija, 2023). One concrete manifestation of this innovation is the school's ICT (Information and Communication Technology) program, which is a class program oriented towards equipping students with technological skills needed in the modern era. This ICT (Information and Communication Technology) program aims to support academics while also fostering students' soft skills, enabling them to adapt to the challenges of technology-based 21st century education.

The principal of SMPIT Nur Hidayah has also developed and established a vision that is aligned with the community's needs and current educational developments. This, as stated by Lethwood (2009) in *Educational Leadership*, reflects the characteristics of a transformational leader who possesses a clear vision and strong conviction in guiding followers toward the achievement of organizational goals (Fauziyah, 2022). The vision established by the principal is "To create an Islamic generation with strong character, high achievement, and leadership qualities." The principal consistently communicates this vision to all school members on various occasions and strives to achieve it through the

implementation of school programs. Thus, the vision of SMPIT Nur Hidayah is not just a slogan, but a direction that guides all school activities. The principal plays a role in internalizing Islamic values in accordance with the philosophy of Islamic education, improving the quality of learning, and encouraging the development of innovative learning practices. These findings indicate that transformational leadership does not stop at the formulation of a vision, but is also manifested in concrete strategies that motivate teachers and students to jointly achieve goals.

Efforts to Realize the Vision Through the 4I Dimension

The principal's transformational leadership at SMPIT Nur Hidayah provides a strategic foundation for school management and the realization of the school vision, "To create an Islamic generation with strong character, high achievement, and leadership qualities." All programs are aligned with this vision. Interview findings indicate that vision is built upon four core pillars: Islamic generation embedded in students' attitudes and manners; high achievement encompassing academic and personal excellence; and leadership qualities through organizational roles and structured leadership experiences.

However, to understand more deeply how this leadership concretely contributes to achieving the vision, it is necessary to analyze it through the framework of the four dimensions of transformational leadership. Bass (1985) divided transformational leadership into four main dimensions, namely: *Idealized Influence*, *Inspirational Motivation*, *Intellectual Stimulation*, and *Individualized Consideration* (Nur et al., 2021). Through these four dimensions, the principal of SMPIT Nur Hidayah makes various efforts to realize the school's vision.

First dimension, *Idealized Influence*, shows a leader's ability to be a respected role model, reliable to followers, and demonstrate ethical behavior. The *idealized influence* dimension can be illustrated by the principal giving trust to teachers as a form of appreciation and an effort to foster a sense of responsibility (Komala, 2023). The principal of SMPIT Nur Hidayah adheres to the educational philosophy of JSIT (Integrated Islamic School Network) in providing an example to all school members. He said, "I show commitment value owned by the school. So that it is not only personality, but also keeping values. Being an example is a form of commitment. Commitment is what we can give, what contribution we make to the school."

The principal upholds Islamic values in education. He explained that teachers are messengers, and therefore, in teaching and leading education, they must emulate the

footsteps of previous scholars and *ustad* (Islamic teacher). Thus, the principal demonstrates his influence on his followers by upholding the school's values, which are manifested in their daily behavior. This behavior reflects Islamic values and serves as an example for the entire school community.

Second dimension, *Inspirational Motivation*, is related to a leader's ability to inspire, motivate, and clearly communicate the vision and goals. In the book *Transformational Management and Leadership in School Principalship*, as quoted by Suyanto (2001), one of the main characteristics of transformational leadership is the leader's ability to have a vision for the future. SMPIT Nur Hidayah has set a vision of "To create an Islamic generation with strong character, high achievement, and leadership qualities." Based on interviews with the principal, this vision reflects the school's future-oriented development direction and positions education as a means of Islamic da'wah. This vision is realized through the internalization of Islamic values, the formation of noble character, and the preparation of a generation capable of leadership and meaningful contribution to society.

To realize this vision, the principal consistently provides motivation and support to the teachers. According to the vice principal of curriculum, one form of this motivation is evident in the routine leadership meetings held every Monday, where the principal always begins the activities with guidance and motivational reinforcement. He also emphasizes spiritual strengthening in motivating teachers by instilling the concept of barakah (blessings), encouraging teachers to remain sincere, honest, and confident that every difficulty encountered will be replaced by goodness from Allah. In addition, the school's vision is continuously communicated to students, teachers, and staff on various occasions as a form of consistent inspirational leadership.

The third dimension, *Intellectual Stimulation*, highlights the principal's role in fostering critical thinking, creativity, and innovation to enhance organizational quality. At SMPIT Nur Hidayah, this dimension is reflected in programs that support students' intellectual and leadership development. One example is the community empowerment program for ninth-grade students, which aims to strengthen social awareness, discipline, leadership, and problem-solving skills. Interview findings indicate that parents perceive this program as having a positive impact on students' character development and readiness to face social challenges.

In addition, the principal promotes innovation in learning and school management through ICT-based classes, the digitalization of the school information system (e-raport),

and a bilingual program implemented in collaboration with Pearson. These initiatives demonstrate the principal's commitment to preparing students with digital literacy, language competence, and adaptive skills required in the 21st century.

The fourth dimension, *Individualized Consideration*, emphasizes personal attention, human resource development, member empowerment, and the provision of continuous support to individuals (Wilson et al., 2023). At SMPIT Nur Hidayah, the principal applies an individualized approach through formal communication and personal mentoring that addresses not only professional development but also spiritual values, mental health, and teachers' physical well-being. Interview and observation findings indicate that the principal emphasizes sincerity at work, the realignment of intentions, and maintaining a balanced work rhythm to foster a harmonious and productive environment grounded in Islamic values.

This attention and approach were also acknowledged by the vice principal of curriculum at SMPIT Nur Hidayah. She stated that:

"The principal is known as a kind person, supportive of all activities and innovations, and open to communication. Even when challenges arise in the learning process or school management, the principal is easy to engage in discussion and provides solutions."

These findings suggest that the transformational leadership approach prioritizes communication, empathy, and continuous support as key strategies for empowering teachers and staff.

In addition, the principal consistently organizes teacher development programs coordinated by the vice principal of curriculum through regular workshops tailored to teachers' needs, including instructional planning, service quality improvement, and the use of educational technology. These programs are complemented by micro-teaching practices, enabling teachers to apply acquired competencies directly in the learning process.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

The results of the study indicate that the leadership of the principal of SMPIT Nur Hidayah Surakarta clearly represents the characteristics of transformational leadership. The principal not only carries out administrative functions, but also acts as a visionary leader who is able to mobilize all school members through exemplary behavior, motivation, strengthening Islamic values, and improving teacher potential through training programs. This leadership is reflected in the strengthening of

religious culture, direct involvement in school activities, and the principal's commitment to building harmonious relationships with teachers, students, and staff. The presence of the principal as a role model ensures that the vision does not remain a slogan, but is truly internalized in daily educational activities.

Efforts to realize the vision "To create an Islamic generation with strong character, high achievement, and leadership qualities" are implemented through the application of four dimensions of transformational leadership. Idealized influence reflected in the exemplary behavior of the principal who adheres to Islamic values; inspirational motivation through strengthening the spiritual vision and motivation that is consistently conveyed; intellectual stimulation reflected in various innovation programs; while individualized consideration is demonstrated through personal attention, spiritual guidance, and teacher competency development through workshops.

The novelty of this research lies in revealing how the transformational leadership of the principal in an integrated Islamic school not only functions as a managerial approach, but also as an integrative strategy that unites Islamic values, strengthens religious culture, and technology-based educational innovation in one complete leadership framework. In contrast to previous research, which tends to place transformational leadership solely on the motivation or performance aspects, this research shows that transformational leadership plays a role as a mechanism for systematically internalizing the school's vision through concrete programs that simultaneously touch on spiritual, academic, and social aspects.

Limitation

This research has limitations in terms of subject matter and context. It was conducted at a single school using a qualitative case study approach, so the findings cannot be broadly generalized. Furthermore, the research informants were limited to the principal and vice principal in charge of curriculum, so the perspectives of teachers, students, and parents were not comprehensively explored.

Suggestions

It is recommended that further research involve a wider range of informants, such as teachers, students, and parents, to obtain a more comprehensive picture of the implementation of transformational leadership in Islamic schools. Furthermore, the use of

a quantitative or qualitative approach (mixed methods) research can be conducted to examine the impact of transformational leadership on learning quality, teacher performance, and student achievement. Comparative studies between integrated Islamic schools are also needed to enrich research findings.

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