

Leadership Ethics in the Islamic Education System: A Theoretical and Practical Study in Educational Institutions

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Abstract. This article aims to explore and analyze the concept and implementation of ethical leadership within the Islamic education system from both theoretical and practical perspectives. The data in this study were analyzed using a qualitative descriptive method through library research. The researchers collected information from academic journals, books, and policy documents related to Islamic education and leadership ethics. They then used content analysis to review and compare the information, looking for patterns and key ideas. The analysis was guided by theories of ethical leadership and focused on how these ideas are applied in real Islamic educational institutions. The findings indicate that ethical leadership plays a central role in strengthening organizational culture, managing conflict, enhancing work motivation, and improving strategic decision-making in Islamic educational institutions. Core values such as honesty, trustworthiness, justice, deliberation, and exemplary behavior are essential foundations that must be internalized by every Islamic educational leader. The prophetic leadership model, which emphasizes moral and spiritual dimensions, is considered ideal for developing transformative and competitive educational institutions. Therefore, strengthening ethical leadership is a strategic necessity for realizing a quality and character-based Islamic education system.

Keywords: Ethical leadership, Islamic education, prophetic leadership, organizational culture, education system

Introduction

Islamic education is an important part of the national education system that is not only oriented to academic achievement but also to the formation of students' character and moral values. In this context, ethics and leadership are two inseparable components. Ethics plays a role as a moral foundation that directs individual behavior in the educational process, while leadership is a strategic instrument to realize the vision and mission of educational institutions (Kendiani & Apriani, 2020). When these two aspects are harmoniously integrated, the Islamic education system will be able to carry out its functions optimally, not only as a means of teaching but also for moral development and the formation of civilization.

Leadership in Islamic education has a distinctive dimension. It is not only seen in terms of managerial ability but also in terms of the morals and spirituality of its leaders (Asha et al., 2025). A leader in an Islamic educational institution is required to be an example in speech and action, as well as to be able to build an organizational climate that is conducive, fair, and oriented to Islamic values. In practice, many Islamic educational institutions face the challenge of implementing leadership based on ethics in real terms, especially in decision-making, conflict resolution, and building effective communication with all elements of education.

Studies on the relationship between ethics and leadership in the Islamic education system have been conducted by various researchers. Research from Husni Mubarak (2020) in *the Journal of Islamic Education Management* emphasizes the importance of moral integrity in the leadership

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of madrasah heads to create a healthy school culture. Furthermore, a study by Rohmah (2021) in *Al-Tanzim: Journal of Islamic Education Management* explains that ethical leadership has a direct impact on teachers' work motivation and collective spirit in implementing the school's vision. Research by Fadillah and Mahfud (2022) in *Tadbir: Journal of Education Management Studies* also shows that school principals who apply Islamic ethical principles are better able to maintain organizational stability and the quality of relationships between school residents. Likewise, in a study by Nuryadi (2023) in the *Islamic Management and Education Journal*, it was found that Islamic leadership practices that prioritize honesty, justice, and responsibility have a positive impact on achieving institutional goals. Finally, a study by Zainuddin (2021) in the *Journal of Islamic Leadership and Education* recommends the application of the prophetic leadership model as a practical strategy in building a transformative Islamic education system.

Despite these valuable contributions, existing research tends to focus on the general impact of ethical leadership on organizational outcomes or teacher performance, with limited attention to how ethical principles are operationalized in daily leadership practices within Islamic educational institutions. There is a gap in examining the dynamic interplay between ethical values and leadership strategies in real-world decision-making, conflict resolution, and institutional development. This study addresses that gap by offering a deeper analysis of the implementation of ethical leadership in practical educational contexts, using theoretical insights and empirical illustrations to highlight both challenges and opportunities. The novelty of this study lies in its integrative approach—bridging ethical theory with leadership practice in Islamic education—and in proposing a contextual framework that can guide leaders in Islamic schools to actualize ethical principles consistently across organizational functions.

Materials and Methods

This study employs a qualitative descriptive method with a library research approach, focusing on the analysis of academic literature and policy documents. The aim is to explore the concept of leadership ethics within the Islamic education system in Indonesia. The study adopts a normative-theoretical perspective, which involves comparing ethical leadership theories with empirical findings from various published studies to understand how leadership values are interpreted and applied in Islamic educational contexts.

Sources for this study were selected based on their relevance to the research topic, academic credibility, and contextual applicability. The primary sources included articles from SINTA 4-accredited national journals that specifically discuss leadership, ethics, and Islamic education. These journals were chosen to ensure a consistent academic standard and to reflect scholarly discourse within the Indonesian context. Additionally, recent publications (within the last five to ten years) were prioritized to maintain contemporary relevance. Scientific books, Islamic education policy documents, and related government regulations were also included to provide a comprehensive view of the policy framework and institutional background of Islamic education in Indonesia.

Since this is a library-based study, no empirical instruments such as interviews or surveys were used. Instead, the researcher developed a content analysis rubric to guide the systematic review of selected sources. This rubric included categories such as definitions of leadership ethics, Islamic principles related to leadership, the implementation of ethical leadership in Islamic schools, challenges in policy execution, and observed outcomes. The rubric helped ensure consistency in data extraction and allowed for thematic comparison across different studies.

The data analysis was conducted using a content analysis approach. Each article was thoroughly examined and coded according to the rubric. Themes such as accountability, justice ('adl), trustworthiness, and prophetic leadership emerged from this process. These themes were then compared with established theories of ethical leadership, such as transformational leadership, servant leadership, and Islamic leadership models. This theoretical comparison enabled the researcher to identify points of convergence and divergence between theory and practice. The findings were synthesized to build a more nuanced understanding of leadership

ethics in Islamic educational institutions, while also challenging theoretical assumptions that may not fully align with the practical realities in Indonesia.

To ensure the validity of the theoretical framework used in this study, the relevance of the leadership theories was evaluated against both Islamic teachings and the practical implementation observed in the literature. Theories were considered valid if they aligned with Islamic values, were reflected in the leadership practices of Islamic educational institutions, and addressed the specific socio-cultural and institutional challenges within Indonesia's Islamic education system. This approach ensures that the study goes beyond summarizing existing literature by offering a critical and contextually grounded interpretation of leadership ethics in Islamic education.

Results and Discussion

Results

The results of the literature review show that leadership ethics in the Islamic education system have a fundamental role in forming a healthy institutional structure, building a religious organizational culture, and creating harmonious working relationships between school residents. From the analysis of various scientific sources, both Sinta 4 accredited national journals and the latest reference books, it was found that leadership practices based on Islamic ethical values have a direct impact on improving managerial quality, increasing teachers' work motivation, and improving the image of educational institutions in the eyes of the public. In general, five key findings emerged from the content analysis:

First, leaders who internalize ethical values such as honesty, trust, and fairness can build trust among staff and students. This trust is an important foundation in encouraging the active participation of all school residents in every policy and program of the institution.

Second, leadership ethics contribute to increasing collective morale. Research by Rohmah (2021) shows that school principals who are fair and wise can foster a collaborative spirit among teachers and staff, thereby supporting the achievement of a sustainable educational vision.

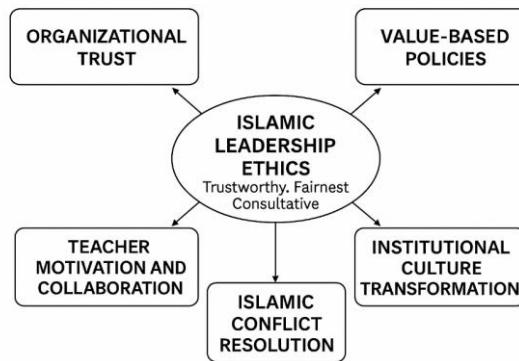
Third, the application of ethical principles has an impact on conflict management. School principals or leaders of institutions who use Islamic values as a guide for leadership ethics tend to be better able to reduce internal conflicts with a deliberative and policy approach, as shown in the study of Fadillah and Mahfud (2022).

Fourth, the practice of leadership ethics has a positive effect on strategic decision-making. Leaders who make *maqasid sharia* (the main goals in Islam) as the basis of thinking can produce policies that are not only solutionary but also reflect high moral and social responsibility to students and society.

Fifth, ethics-based leadership strengthens the integration between spiritual and managerial values in the Islamic education system. Zainuddin's study (2021) even emphasizes the importance of the prophetic leadership model as an ideal formulation that not only shapes individual behavior but also reconstructs the structure of educational institutions as a whole to be more inclusive, equitable, and transformative.

Overall, this study found that the success of Islamic educational institutions in realizing their vision and mission is largely determined by the extent to which ethical values are applied in daily leadership. Ethics is no longer only interpreted as a personal moral dimension but as an institutional framework that directs the entire decision-making process, human resource management, and the achievement of holistic educational quality.

The relationship between the values of leadership ethics and the five key aspects of the Islamic education system, based on the results of the literature review, can be seen in the following diagram:

**Figure 1.**

A Model of the Relationship of Leadership Ethics with Aspects of the Islamic Education System

The picture shows how the basic values in Islamic leadership ethics, such as trust, honesty, justice, deliberation, and example, form the main foundation in leadership practices that have a far-reaching impact on the Islamic education system. These values are not only personal but also have a structural influence on directing institutional dynamics.

Leadership ethics that are consistently applied give birth to strong organizational trust, where all school residents feel involved, valued, and have a sense of collective responsibility. This trust is an important element in creating a healthy and productive work climate. In addition, leaders who uphold ethical values tend to be able to foster a spirit of collaboration among teachers and education staff to create a harmonious work atmosphere and support each other in achieving educational goals.

In the context of conflict management, leaders who adhere to the principles of deliberation and wisdom are better able to reduce tensions and resolve differences constructively and Islamically. This shows that leadership ethics function not only as a moral guideline but also as a managerial strategy in creating institutional stability.

Further, strategic decision-making based on Islamic values will result in policies that are not only technically relevant but also in line with the principles of social justice and spiritual responsibility. Ethical leadership is able to bring the cultural transformation of the institution towards a more religious, inclusive, and oriented towards the formation of noble morals. Thus, this model emphasizes that the success of the Islamic education system is greatly influenced by the depth of ethical values in leadership that is carried out in a real and sustainable manner.

Discussion

Leadership ethics in the Islamic education system are not only a determining factor in the management of the institution but also the heart of character development in education itself. Leaders who rely on ethical principles have a greater capacity to realize institutional visions in a meaningful and sustainable manner. In this context, the role of ethics is not only limited to interpersonal relationships but extends to how policies are formulated and implemented in a fair, transparent, and public-benefit-oriented manner.

Leadership in Islamic education is unique in that it emphasizes integration between spiritual, social, and managerial dimensions. In contrast to secular leadership, which tends to be rationalistic and instrumental, leadership in Islam rests on transcendental moral values. This is reflected in the prophetic leadership approach that not only places the leader as the director of the vision but also as a moral example (uswatan hasanah). This model, as stated by Zainuddin (2021), can reconstruct the direction of educational institutions to become agents of social transformation based on the values of monotheism and justice.

From the results of the literature review, it can be seen that ethical values such as honesty, trust, and fairness are components that cannot be negotiated in the context of leadership. When these values are consistently implemented, they have a significant impact on various aspects of

the institution, including program effectiveness, teacher loyalty, and public trust in educational institutions. This is reinforced by Fadillah and Mahfud (2022), who emphasize that school principals who have high integrity are better able to maintain organizational stability and resolve internal conflicts constructively.

Furthermore, the formation of a religious and ethical organizational culture is one of the important contributions of ethical leadership. A healthy organizational culture cannot grow in space but must be driven by the example of leaders in attitudes and decisions. Leaders become key actors in shaping common norms, internalizing Islamic values in work interactions, and fostering spirituality-based loyalty. This is in line with Nuryadi's (2023) study, which highlights the importance of spiritual capital in strengthening Islamic educational institutions.

On the other hand, in facing contemporary challenges such as technological disruption, changes in national policies, and the pressures of globalization, Islamic educational institutions need leaders who are adaptive and ethical. Leadership that is not only able to innovate but also has a moral compass in every policy taken. The adaptivity and responsiveness of leaders must remain within the framework of Islamic values so that institutional transformation does not obscure the spiritual identity of the institution. This confirms the importance of the principle of wisdom in Islamic leadership as taught by the Qur'an.

The discussion also needs to touch on the aspect of strengthening leadership capacity through education and training. Not a few Islamic educational institutions have stagnated due to the lack of strengthening ethical and professional capacity for their leaders. Therefore, continuous leadership development efforts that emphasize the integration between Sharia values and modern management are very urgent to be developed. Leadership training programs that focus on the values of integrity, justice, and deliberation need to be part of the system to improve the quality of Islamic education human resources.

Finally, this discussion emphasizes that leadership ethics are at the heart of the quality of the Islamic education system. Without ethics, leadership will lose direction and credibility. Therefore, the development of a superior Islamic education system must start from a strong commitment to ethical values in all lines of leadership and institutional management. With this approach, Islamic education is not only able to compete academically but also becomes a fortress of superior and dignified moral civilization.

Conclusion

Leadership ethics are a fundamental element in the Islamic education system that not only shapes the character of leaders but also influences the direction of policy and institutional culture. From the results of the literature review that has been conducted, it is clear that ethical values such as trust, honesty, justice, deliberation, and exemplary are not only normative principles but also strategic instruments in creating credible and competitive Islamic educational institutions. Leadership based on ethics has been proven to contribute to strengthening institutional management, increasing the collective spirit of school residents, and building a healthy, religious, and productive organizational climate. Prophetic leadership models that emphasize moral and spiritual dimensions are relevant alternatives in answering the challenges of Islamic education in the modern era. In this context, leaders not only serve as policy directors but also as moral role models who shape the values and culture of the organization. This study also emphasizes that the success of Islamic educational institutions in realizing their vision and mission is highly dependent on the extent to which ethical values are internalized in leadership that is carried out consistently. Therefore, strengthening the capacity of ethics-based leadership needs to be the main focus in the development of Islamic education human resources through training, coaching, and policy reconstruction. Superior Islamic education and character can only be achieved through leadership that is not only managerially competent but also ethically and spiritually strong.

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