

Transformational Leadership and the TLIM Model for Strengthening Organizational Capacity and Competitive Advantage in Madrasah

Yuli Nur Rohmawati¹, Abdul Malik Karim Amrullah², Slamet³

^{1,2,3} Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim, Malang, Indonesia

Email: yulinur.ynr@gmail.com¹, zainababdulmalik@pai.uin-malang.ac.id²,
slametphd@gmail.com³

Abstract: Islamic junior secondary schools (madrasah) in Indonesia face persistent challenges of quality disparity and intensifying institutional competition, demanding effective leadership strategies to sustain organizational performance and public trust. This study aimed to analyze the transformational leadership strategies employed by the principal of MTsN 3 Malang in realizing organizational capacity and competitive advantage. Employing a qualitative case study design, data were collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and document analysis involving the principal, vice-principals, teachers, and educational staff as key informants; data validity was ensured through source and method triangulation, followed by condensation, display, and conclusion-drawing as analytical procedures. The findings revealed that transformational leadership was operationalized through three integrated strategies: (1) participatory and data-driven strategic decision-making directed at strengthening flagship programs and educational service quality; (2) mobilization and empowerment of human resources through collaborative culture-building, collective commitment, and professional support for teachers and staff; and (3) institutional change and innovation encompassing excellence program development, student achievement coaching, and cultivation of a competitive academic culture. These three strategies collectively formed a distinctive leadership typology termed Transformational Leadership with Inspirational Motivation (TLIM), which functioned as the strategic driver behind a significant rise in student achievements from 28 to 71 recorded accomplishments between 2023 and 2024 alongside strengthened institutional reputation and sustained community trust. This study contributes a contextualized TLIM model for Islamic educational management, offering empirically grounded implications for madrasah leadership development policy and practice in the Indonesian context.

Keywords: Transformational leadership; TLIM; Organizational capacity; Competitive advantage; Madrasah

Introductions

Educational institutions in Indonesia, particularly Islamic junior secondary schools (madrasah), operate within an increasingly competitive landscape shaped by national curriculum reforms, rapid digital transformation, and rising community expectations for quality education. Within this context, madrasah face a dual mandate: to preserve their distinctive Islamic religious cultural identity while simultaneously demonstrating academic excellence measurable against national and international standards. This tension between tradition and innovation demands visionary and transformative leadership.

Transformational leadership, as theorized by Burns (1978) and operationalized by Bass (1985) through the Four-I framework Idealized Influence, Inspirational Motivation, Intellectual Stimulation, and Individualized Consideration has been widely documented as an effective leadership approach in promoting organizational change, innovation, and performance improvement. In educational contexts, empirical evidence consistently links transformational leadership to enhanced teacher commitment, improved student achievement, and stronger organizational culture.

Within the specific context of Islamic education management, however, the application of transformational leadership theory intersects with religious-cultural norms, dual regulatory structures (Ministry of Education and Ministry of Religious Affairs), and community expectations rooted in Islamic values. Limited empirical studies have addressed how transformational leadership manifests in state madrasah characterized by strong Islamic

culture and bureaucratic complexity. This constitutes a substantive research gap: transformational leadership scholarship, having been theorized predominantly in Western, secular organizational settings, offers limited theoretical or empirical guidance for understanding how leadership operates in institutions that must simultaneously satisfy religious, bureaucratic, and academic-competitive demands. Consequently, madrasah principals and Islamic education policymakers currently lack a contextually validated leadership model upon which to draw.

MTsN 3 Malang (Madrasah Tsanawiyah Negeri 3 Malang) provides a rich case for investigation. Accredited at the highest national level (Grade A), the institution has demonstrated sustained improvement in student achievement, increasing enrollment, and growing community trust under its current principal's transformational leadership. This study therefore asks: How does the principal's transformational leadership strategy materially manifest in building organizational capacity and competitive advantage at MTsN 3 Malang?

Despite extensive documentation of transformational leadership's organizational benefits, no prior study has empirically examined how this leadership model is concretely operationalized within a high-performing Indonesian state madrasah, where Islamic religio-cultural values and dual bureaucratic accountability jointly shape institutional practice. Addressing this gap, this study aims to: (1) analyze participative and data-driven strategic decision-making practices; (2) examine human resource mobilization and empowerment strategies; and (3) investigate institutional change and innovation leadership. By answering these questions through a qualitative case study, the research contributes both to transformational leadership theory and to practical knowledge for Islamic educational management. Theoretically, the study contributes a context-specific extension of transformational leadership theory through the TLIM typology; practically, it offers madrasah principals and Islamic education policymakers an empirically grounded, replicable strategic model for strengthening organizational capacity and competitive advantage.

The foundational theory of transformational leadership, developed by Burns (1978) and extended by Bass (1985), identifies four behavioral dimensions that distinguish transformational from transactional leadership. Idealized Influence describes the leader's capacity to serve as a role model who embodies organizational values. Inspirational Motivation refers to the leader's ability to communicate compelling visions that energize followers. Intellectual Stimulation involves encouraging creativity, critical thinking, and willingness to challenge assumptions. Individualized Consideration encompasses personalized mentoring and developmental support tailored to each follower's needs. Although Bass's framework was formulated within Western, secular, and predominantly corporate organizational settings, its direct transfer to Indonesian state madrasah cannot be assumed unproblematic. State madrasah operate under a distinctive dual-bureaucratic architecture in which principals are simultaneously accountable to the Ministry of Religious Affairs for religious curriculum and institutional identity and to national education authorities for academic quality standards, while also answering to community expectations grounded in Islamic religio-cultural norms. This layered accountability structure conditions how each of the Four-I behaviors is enacted in practice: Idealized Influence must reconcile bureaucratic compliance with spiritual exemplarity, and Inspirational Motivation must speak simultaneously to administrative performance targets and religious meaning. Leadership theories developed within single-authority, secular organizational contexts therefore cannot be assumed to transfer intact into such religio-bureaucratic settings, and the specific mechanisms through which transformational leadership is locally enacted, legitimated, and sustained in Islamic state schools remain empirically underspecified (Hallinger, 2018).

In educational settings, transformational leadership has been associated with positive outcomes across multiple dimensions: teacher professional commitment and job satisfaction (Leithwood, 1994), school culture and organizational learning (Deal & Peterson, 1999), and student academic performance (Meng, 2022). In the context of Education 4.0 and Society 5.0, transformational leaders are additionally expected to possess digital competence and the capacity to translate global trends into contextually appropriate institutional programs (Bohari et al., 2024; Kausar et al., 2025).

Recent systematic reviews further confirm that transformational leadership promotes curriculum innovation, technology integration, and soft skills development, including digital literacy (Adeoye et al., 2025; Román-Cortéz et al., 2025). The relationship between transformational leadership, organizational capacity, and competitive advantage is increasingly recognized as a central concern in strategic educational management (Khalilov et al., 2025).

Organizational capacity refers to an institution's collective ability to pursue its mission through efficient and effective deployment of resources, processes, and knowledge. In the context of madrasah, organizational capacity encompasses: (a) management capacity, including planning, decision-making, and governance; (b) human resource capacity, including teacher professionalism and instructional quality; (c) learning innovation capacity; (d)

technology management capacity; (e) quality culture capacity; and (f) networks and partnerships capacity (Muhammad, 2005; Yusuf et al., 2020).

A growing body of research situates organizational capacity as the central mediating variable between leadership quality and institutional performance outcomes. Madrasah with higher organizational capacity demonstrate greater resilience to policy changes, more consistent achievement results, and stronger community trust (Qomar & Naim, 2025; Darmansah et al., 2024).

Porter's (1985) competitive advantage framework, adapted to educational settings, holds that institutions achieve sustainable competitive advantage through either cost leadership, differentiation, or focus strategies. For madrasah, differentiation through distinctive program offerings, integration of Islamic values with academic excellence, and superior service quality represents the most viable pathway to competitive advantage (Bashori, 2017; Rosmayani & Mardatillah, 2021).

Competitive advantage in madrasah is empirically observable through indicators including: student achievement rates at district, provincial, and national levels; graduate acceptance rates at preferred secondary institutions; parent satisfaction and community trust metrics; and the institution's national accreditation standing (Fitriah et al., 2024). Sustainable competitive advantage requires the institutionalization of innovation and quality culture, supported by transformational leadership that continuously renews the organization's strategic orientation (Porter, 1998; Bashori, 2017).

For clarity, this article uses several Indonesian institutional acronyms that recur throughout the Method, Findings, and Discussion sections: RKM (Rencana Kerja Madrasah) Madrasah Strategic Work Plan, EDM (Evaluasi Diri Madrasah) Madrasah Self-Evaluation, MGMP (Musyawarah Guru Mata Pelajaran) Subject Teachers' Consultative Working Group, ANBK (Asesmen Nasional Berbasis Komputer) Computer-Based National Assessment), TKM (Tim Kerja Madrasah) Madrasah Work Team), PKG-PKKM (Penilaian Kinerja Guru and Penilaian Kinerja Kepala Madrasah) Teacher Performance Assessment and Principal Performance Assessment, EMIS (Education Management Information System), and RENSTRA (Rencana Strategis) Strategic Plan. Programme-specific models coined by the researchers in this study (RENSTRA-FDSE, INSITU, EKSITU, ACT-5M, and TLIM) are introduced and defined at their first mention in the Findings section.

Scholars of Islamic educational management have argued that transformational leadership finds its most authentic expression within Islamic organizational culture when it is grounded in core Islamic principles: shura (consultative decision-making, QS. Asy-Syura: 38), amanah (trustworthiness and professional accountability), itqan (pursuit of excellence), maslahat (orientation toward collective well-being), and ta'awun (collaborative solidarity). These principles do not merely complement the Four-I framework but give it a spiritual and ethical grounding that is distinctive to Islamic institutions (Harsoyo, 2022; Slamet et al., 2024).

Al-Ghazali's concept of maslahat understood as graduated responsiveness to the essential, important, and supplementary needs of the community provides a particularly useful evaluative lens for principal decision-making in madrasah. This framework aligns strategic planning with both regulatory requirements and community welfare (Al-Ghazali, n.d.; Ibn Taymiyyah, n.d.). The intersection of these Islamic principles with contemporary transformational leadership theory has been under-theorized in the existing literature, and the present study seeks to address this gap.

Method

This study employed a qualitative research approach with a single-site case study design, following the methodological framework established by Yin (2018), which is considered particularly appropriate for examining complex, context embedded phenomena within their real world settings. The case study design was selected because the central inquiry how transformational leadership strategies are enacted to build organizational capacity and competitive advantage requires in-depth, contextually situated investigation that cannot be adequately captured through variable-based or experimental approaches. The research was conducted at MTsN 3 Malang, East Java, Indonesia, from January to April 2026. This institution was purposively selected as the research site on the basis of four criteria: (1) demonstrated and documented institutional performance improvement, evidenced by a 153.6% rise in student achievement records between 2023 and 2024; (2) sustained growth in enrollment and public trust over three consecutive years; (3) operational position within a dual-regulatory framework simultaneously governed by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Religious Affairs providing a theoretically distinctive institutional context; and (4) the principal's confirmed tenure of more than three years, allowing for adequate observation of longitudinal leadership patterns. These criteria ensure that the case offers sufficient analytical depth and contextual richness to address the stated research objectives.

Research participants were selected through purposive sampling combined with snowball sampling

techniques to ensure both theoretical relevance and informational depth. The primary participants consisted of the school principal as the central unit of analysis, two vice-principals responsible for curriculum and student affairs respectively, six classroom teachers representing core academic and extracurricular divisions, two administrative and educational support staff, and three members of the school committee representing community stakeholders totaling fourteen participants. Purposive selection was guided by the criterion that each participant must have had direct and sustained interaction with the principal's leadership practices for a minimum of one academic year, ensuring that informants possessed substantive experiential knowledge of the leadership strategies under investigation. Data saturation was monitored throughout the fieldwork process; new participants were added through snowball referral until no new thematic categories emerged across successive interviews, which was confirmed at the twelfth interview. Saturation was operationally verified through a code-saturation procedure: codes generated from each successive interview transcript were logged in a cumulative coding matrix in NVivo 12, and saturation was declared once two consecutive interviews (the eleventh and twelfth) yielded no codes beyond those already present in the matrix, consistent with established thresholds for code saturation in semi-structured interview research (Hennink, Kaiser, & Marconi, 2017). The two additional participants beyond this point, bringing the total to fourteen, were retained not to pursue further thematic saturation but to strengthen methodological triangulation across the principal, deputy-principal, teacher, support-staff, and school-committee stakeholder roles. The principal served as the primary key informant, with remaining participants functioning as triangulating sources to confirm, elaborate, or challenge the principal's self-reported leadership narratives.

Data collection was conducted through three complementary instruments applied in an integrated sequence. First, semi-structured in-depth interviews were administered to all fourteen participants using an interview guide developed and validated through expert review by two specialists in educational management and qualitative methodology. Each interview session lasted between 60 and 90 minutes, was conducted in Indonesian, and was audio-recorded with participants' informed consent for subsequent verbatim transcription. Interview questions were organized around three thematic domains corresponding to the research objectives: strategic decision-making, human resource mobilization and empowerment, and institutional change and innovation. Second, participatory observation was conducted over twelve weeks of fieldwork, during which the researcher attended school management meetings, teacher coordination sessions, student achievement coaching activities, and extracurricular program briefings, generating 24 structured field note entries. Third, document analysis was performed on institutional records including the school's strategic plan (*Rencana Kerja Madrasah*), annual performance reports, student achievement documentation (2022–2024), principal decision records, and official correspondence with the Ministry of Religious Affairs. These three methods were applied in a convergent triangulation sequence: interviews first, followed by contemporaneous observation, with document analysis serving to corroborate and contextualize data obtained from both.

Data analysis followed the interactive model proposed by Miles et al. (2014), consisting of three iterative and non-linear stages: data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. In the condensation stage, raw transcripts and field notes were coded using a two cycle coding approach: initial descriptive coding in the first cycle to label surface-level phenomena, followed by pattern coding in the second cycle to group codes into higher-order conceptual categories aligned with the research objectives. NVivo 12 software was used to manage the coding process and facilitate systematic pattern retrieval across data sources. Data displays were constructed in the form of thematic matrices and conceptual maps to enable cross-case comparison of leadership patterns across the three analytical domains. Trustworthiness was established through four criteria following Lincoln and Guba's (1985) framework. Credibility was secured through prolonged engagement at the research site over twelve weeks, member-checking procedures whereby condensed analytical summaries were returned to key participants for verification, and source triangulation across interviews, observation, and documents. Transferability was addressed by providing sufficiently thick description of the research context and institutional characteristics to enable readers to assess applicability to analogous settings. Dependability was ensured through the maintenance of a comprehensive audit trail documenting all methodological decisions, coding procedures, and analytical revisions. Confirmability was achieved through reflexive journaling maintained throughout data collection and analysis to monitor researcher subjectivity and prevent interpretive drift.

Findings and Discussion.

The analysis of interview data, observational records, and institutional documents yielded three primary thematic findings, each corresponding to a distinct dimension of the principal's transformational leadership strategy. These themes are organized as follows: (1) Participative and Data-Driven Strategic Decision-Making; (2) Human Resource Mobilization and Empowerment; and (3) Institutional Change and Innovation for Competitive

Advantage. An additional integrative finding describes the emergent leadership typology TLIM and the institutional outcomes attributable to its implementation. Table 1 provides a summary of the key results.

Table 1. Summary of Transformational Leadership Strategies, Models, and Empirical Evidence.

Strategic Theme	Model/Framework	Key Practices	Empirical Evidence
Strategic Decision-Making	RENSTRA-FDSE Model	SWOT analysis, participative musyawarah, data-driven evaluation	+153.6% total achievement growth (28→71, 2023→2024); 93.45% graduates accepted to state schools
Human Resource Mobilization	INSITU Model (Inisiasi Penyatu)	4-channel: inspiration, shared vision, collaborative culture, continuous competency development	≥85% parent satisfaction; PKG-PKKM supervision transparency
Institutional Innovation	EKSITU Model (Eksistensi Mutu)	Unique flagship programs: digital madrasah, research class, olympiad, robotics, double-track	Achievement growth from 28 (2023) to 71 (2024); national reputation

Participative and Data Driven Strategic Decision Making

The RENSTRA-FDSE Model

The first major finding centers on the principal's distinctive approach to strategic decision-making, which was consistently described by all informants as participative, consultative, and anchored in empirical data. The principal does not make unilateral policy decisions. Rather, strategic choices are processed through what the researchers term the RENSTRA-FDSE (Rencana Strategis Forum Diskusi, Survei, dan Evaluasi) model: a deliberative mechanism that integrates SWOT analysis, monthly staff consultation forums, semester-end surveys to students and parents via EMIS/Google Forms, and reflective evaluation cycles.

Documentary analysis confirms this model's operationalization: annual strategic plans (RKM) are preceded by an Evaluasi Diri Madrasah (EDM) exercise; program adjustments are based on quantitative and qualitative feedback from 772 students, their guardians, and the school committee. The principal described this approach as follows:

"In strategic planning, I first analyze the situation through SWOT analysis, gathering information about internal and external conditions. I then collect data on stakeholder needs and expectations, both directly in monthly coordination meetings and indirectly through surveys to students and parents at the end of each semester. This ensures decisions reflect genuine institutional needs rather than administrative assumptions."

The deputy principal for curriculum corroborated this, noting that the principal's SWOT analysis involves written drafts identifying institutional strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, and that the analysis feeds directly into the formulation of strategic programs. This participative model ensures that major institutional decisions such as the introduction of the SKS (credit semester system) two-year acceleration program, the ICP (International Class Program in Arabic and English), and the Madrasah Riset (Research Madrasah) initiative – emerged from a deliberative process with broad stakeholder ownership.

Characteristics of Strategic Decision-Making Practice

Five consistent characteristics of strategic decision-making at MTsN 3 Malang were identified through thematic analysis of interview data and cross-validated with observational and documentary evidence:

Collaborative and participative: Decisions involve the principal, deputy principals, teacher subject-area working groups (MGMP), school committee, and parents, embodying the Islamic shura principle (QS. Asy-Syura: 38).

Vision driven rather than compliance-driven: Strategic choices are oriented toward the long-term mission of the institution producing graduates with 'distinctive competence' in both academic and Islamic character rather than merely satisfying administrative requirements.

Data informed: Academic data sources including the Asesmen Nasional Berbasis Komputer (ANBK), Rapor Pendidikan, teacher performance assessments (PKG-PKKM), and community surveys constitute the evidentiary

basis for decision-making.

Innovation supporting: Decisions explicitly create protected space for pedagogical experimentation, including new technology integration, the Madrasah Digital program, and hybrid learning, with tolerance for initial failures.

Individual-responsive: In staffing and professional development allocations, the principal considers the specific competence profiles, professional interests, and workloads of individual teachers, consistent with the Individualized Consideration dimension of transformational leadership.

Madrasah Work Team represents a key institutional output of this decision making approach. The TKM is composed of teachers who have served a minimum of five years and hold professional teaching certification, and it functions as the principal operational body for flagship curriculum development. Its transparent formation criteria were cited by multiple informants as an important signal of institutional fairness and meritocracy.

Empirical Outcomes of Strategic Decision-Making

The effectiveness of the RENSTRA-FDSE model is evidenced by measurable achievement outcomes. Student total achievements increased from 28 distinctions in 2023 to 71 in 2024 an increase of 153.6% spanning district, regency, and provincial competition levels. While national-level achievements remain a stated aspirational target, the trajectory of provincial achievement (growing from 5 in 2023 to 11 in 2024) reflects the directional success of strategic planning decisions oriented toward talent cultivation. Additionally, 93.45% of MTsN 3 Malang graduates were accepted into state junior secondary and secondary schools in the 2024/2025 academic year, constituting a concrete measure of institutional competitive standing.

Human Resource Mobilization and Empowerment

The INSITU (Inisiasi Penyatu) Model

The second primary finding concerns the principal's systematic approach to mobilizing and empowering human resources (HR). Documentary and interview evidence reveals a four-channel HR mobilization framework, which the researchers designate the INSITU (Inisiasi Penyatu Unifying Initiative) model: (1) inspiration and motivation; (2) shared vision and mission articulation; (3) collaborative work culture construction; and (4) continuous competency development.

This framework operationalizes the Inspirational Motivation and Individualized Consideration dimensions of transformational leadership theory within the specific value context of Islamic institutional management. The principal described the approach as follows:

"In building an excellent organizational culture, I always involve all elements of the madrasah. I encourage teachers and educational staff to keep learning, adapting, and finding new solutions to every challenge. I create a work environment that promotes teamwork, mutual respect, and synergy among individuals and position holders."

Inspiration, Motivation, and Role-Modeling

The principal's role-modeling behavior arriving punctually, participating in collective daily prayers (tadarus Al-Qur'an and dhuha prayer), personally attending school events, and demonstrating intellectual curiosity through ongoing self-professional development was consistently cited by teachers and deputy principals as the foundational source of institutional motivation. The deputy principal for public relations stated:

"When the principal talks about discipline, he models it every single day. If he does not uphold that standard himself, others will follow his example in the wrong direction. His presence and consistency create the culture."

Monthly coordination meetings function as regular inspiration forums in which the principal shares information on professional development opportunities (workshops, national training events, MGMP), communicates institutional achievements and challenges, and reiterates the institution's collective vision. Teachers who demonstrate exemplary performance receive formal institutional appreciation (reward ceremonies at the beginning of each academic year), creating a visible meritocratic incentive structure.

Shared Vision and Work Culture Construction

Vision operationalization at MTsN 3 Malang is an annual collective exercise. At the beginning of each academic year, a Musyawarah Kerja Madrasah (institutional working meeting) is convened in which the vision and mission are collectively discussed, reaffirmed, and translated into annual program targets. This practice ensures that institutional direction is not merely a displayed slogan but an internalized operational commitment understood by all stakeholders.

The Islamic ethical values of *ikhlas* (selfless dedication), *integritas* (integrity and intellectual honesty), and *ta'awun* (collaborative solidarity) are explicitly embedded in work culture norms. The principal described this as follows:

"Work ethics grounded in ikhlas means that teachers perform their duties not just for material reward but as an act of worship and service to Allah. This motivational foundation creates dedication that transcends formal contractual obligations."

Teachers in flagship olympiad and research programs were observed dedicating evening and weekend hours to student coaching behavior that multiple informants attributed to this value-based motivational culture rather than financial compensation structures.

Continuous Competency Development

Systematic professional development constitutes a central pillar of the INSITU model. The principal has institutionalized multiple overlapping mechanisms for teacher competency enhancement: bi-weekly MGMP (Subject Teachers' Working Group) meetings scheduled during non-instructional time; delegation to national and ministerial training events (*diklat/bimtek*) aligned with individual subject-area needs; structured classroom supervision using PKG (Teacher Performance Assessment) instruments; biannual performance assessments for all teacher categories (ASN and honorer); and a coaching and peer mentoring program for academic writing and research publication.

The Adaptive Controlling Through 5M (ACT-5M) supervision framework operationalizes quality monitoring across five resource dimensions: Man (human resources), Money (budget allocation), Materials (curriculum content), Machine (digital technology), and Method (pedagogical approaches). This framework ensures that quality assurance processes address the full organizational resource base rather than narrowly focusing on instructional delivery. The deputy principal for curriculum explained:

"Teachers who demonstrate creativity and innovation in their practice are evaluated using our supervision instrument. I prepare a bimonthly supervision schedule. Assessment is objective and transparent, and teachers who receive very good ratings receive institutional recognition at the beginning of the next academic year."

Stakeholder Engagement: GEMAR and Parent Involvement

The INSITU model extends beyond internal HR mobilization to include systematic community engagement strategies. The principal designed and implemented the GEMAR (Gerakan Ayah Mengambil Rapor Father Takes the Report Card Movement) program as a mechanism to increase paternal involvement in children's educational progress, a nationally recognized innovation in parent-school engagement. This initiative, alongside regular parenting seminars and *paguyuban* (parent association) activities, reflects the principal's application of educational marketing theory within the Islamic concept of *ta'awun* – collaborative responsibility for student formation shared between school and family.

Institutional Change and Innovation for Competitive Advantage

The EKSITU (Eksistensi Mutu) Model

The third primary finding concerns the principal's role as an institutional change agent who directs innovation through a distinctive philosophy the researchers term EKSITU (Eksistensi Mutu Quality Existence): madrasah innovation and competitive differentiation grounded in the principle of being 'the first, different, and excellent.' This philosophy holds that MTsN 3 Malang does not seek to replicate programs already implemented by other institutions; rather, it seeks to pioneer initiatives that create a distinctive institutional identity. The deputy principal for curriculum articulated this principle as follows:

"If an activity is already being done by another school or madrasah, MTsN 3 does not refuse to adopt it, but we look for a different form or dimension so that it still constitutes innovation. The uniqueness of our programs is discovered when we focus on creativity rooted in local culture and our Islamic identity."

Flagship Program Portfolio

The institutional flagship program portfolio developed through the EKSITU model integrates academic, character, digital, and Islamic formation dimensions. The following programs were identified as primary competitive differentiators:

- a. Madrasah Digital: Integration of technology across all instructional areas, with teacher digital literacy development as a prerequisite.

- b. Madrasah Riset (Research Madrasah): A school-wide research culture program in which all students complete structured research projects, write scientific papers, and engage in peer review processes. Documentary evidence confirms that each student research submission undergoes at least two revision and verification cycles before competition submission.
- c. Program SKS 2 year (Two-Year Credit Semester Program): An academic acceleration program allowing high-achieving students to complete the three-year curriculum in two years.
- d. Sports, Tahfidz, and International Class Program; Specialized classes providing intensive training in Islamic scriptural memorization and bilingual (Arabic-English) academic instruction.
- e. Olympiad Class: Intensive academic preparation programs in Mathematics and Science, coached by credentialed subject specialists in collaboration with classroom teachers.
- f. Robotics Class: A nationally competitive robotics program targeting national championship awards.
- g. Student Leadership Corps, Healthy Madrasah, and Food Safety Program: Integrated character formation programs combining student leadership development, health promotion, and social responsibility.

These flagship programs are organized within a formal strategic plan matrix (Table 2), which specifies responsible parties, target beneficiaries, and measurable performance indicators for each program.

Table 2. Strategic Planning Matrix for Flagship Programs

No.	Program	Target Group	Measurable Goal Indicator of Success
1	Olympiad Excellence Class	Student Academic Achievement	National & international championships
2	Talent & Interest Development	Non-academic student achievement	Regional and national performance awards
3	Integrated Ma'had Curriculum	All students with boarding program	Character formation: discipline and responsibility
4	Robotics Class Guidance	Students enrolled in robotics track	National event champions
5	Science Olympiad Guidance	Selected Mathematics & Science students	National and international competition winners
6	Character Development (BK+Ma'had)	All students	Well-being learning environment

Integration of Islamic Values as Competitive Differentiator

A consistent finding across all data sources is that Islamic value integration is not merely a symbolic feature of institutional identity at MTsN 3 Malang but a functional competitive differentiator embedded in everyday institutional practice. The daily academic routine begins with collective tadarus Al-Qur'an and structured du'a; monthly halaqah ilmiah (academic reflection circles) require students to write reflective journals on their learning journey; and peer mentoring is conducted on a bi-weekly cycle using high achieving students as tutors.

The principal articulated the strategic logic of this value integration as follows:

"Today's parents choose schools based on three factors: the quality of graduates, digital services that make their lives easier, and added value unavailable at public schools. Trust is built when the madrasah's promises are verified by data and lived experience. Our Islamic character formation is not a peripheral program – it is our central competitive asset."

This observation is supported by the deputy principal for student affairs, who reported that in 2024 local

media recognition of MTsN 3 Malang centered on its reputation as a 'modern madrasah that successfully harmonizes science and religion.' This media coverage, combined with year-on-year enrollment growth and consistent accreditation at Grade A, provides triangulated evidence of the competitive advantage generated by Islamic value integration.

Monitoring, Evaluation, and Quality Assurance Systems

Institutional change and innovation at MTsN 3 Malang is governed by a structured three-cycle evaluation framework: (a) Input Evaluation assessing preparedness of human resources, instructional modules, facilities, and boarding system support; (b) Process Evaluation monitoring instructional fidelity, program adherence, and disciplinary consistency; and (c) Product Evaluation assessing academic achievement, Qur'anic memorization progress, and character formation outcomes.

Monitoring and Evaluation (MONEV) is conducted collaboratively by the principal and the Curriculum Development Team with cycle timing scheduled at the beginning of each semester and outcomes reported in written LPJ (accountability reports) by each deputy principal. The principal employs the ACT-5M framework to conduct multi-dimensional quality monitoring that encompasses not only instructional delivery but the full range of organizational resources.

Competitive advantage indicators are tracked across five empirical dimensions: (1) ANBK and Rapor Pendidikan scores as objective measures of literacy, numeracy, and character; (2) parent satisfaction rates (target: above 85%, surveyed via EMIS/Google Forms each semester); (3) graduate absorption rates into preferred higher-level institutions; (4) external accreditations and certifications (including Adiwiyata/Green School and Madrasah Ramah Anak); and (5) positive digital footprint (social media testimonials and student achievement publication).

Emergent Leadership Typology: TLIM (Transformational Leadership Inspirational Motivation) *Conceptualization of TLIM*

The convergence of the three strategic dimensions described above produced an integrative finding: the leadership style practiced at MTsN 3 Malang constitutes a distinctive typology that extends beyond standard transformational leadership models. The researchers designate this typology TLIM Transformational Leadership Inspirational Motivation to capture its defining characteristic: the systematic embedding of Islamic value-based inspirational motivation across all dimensions of institutional management.

TLIM is distinguished from generic transformational leadership by its explicit grounding in Islamic spiritual and ethical values as the motivational foundation for institutional change. Whereas standard transformational leadership models focus on followers' rational and emotional engagement with institutional vision, TLIM incorporates a spiritual dimension in which teachers, educational staff, and students are motivated by their understanding of educational work as an act of religious devotion (ibadah) accountable not only to institutional authorities but to Allah. The principal described this distinctive motivational foundation as follows:

"A sincere intention (niyyat lillah ta'ala) drives maximum effort because the primary motivation is accountability before Allah, not merely before supervisors. This foundational motivation generates quality and dedication that external incentive systems alone cannot produce."

Structural Framework of TLIM

Strategic Decisions (Participative + Data-Driven) implemented through the RENSTRA-FDSE model Human Resource Mobilization (INSITU: Inspiration, Collaboration, Competency) operationalized through the four-channel mobilization framework

Institutional Innovation (EKSITU: Flagship Programs + Islamic Values) expressed through the 'first, different, excellent' innovation philosophy

These three strategies operate in recursive relationship, each reinforcing the others. Data-driven strategic decisions generate the institutional programs that structure HR mobilization; HR mobilization produces the human capital that drives institutional innovation; institutional innovation generates the empirical evidence of competitive advantage that informs the next cycle of strategic decision-making.

The principal's role within TLIM is conceptualized as Chief Competitiveness Officer: a leader who reads emerging societal trends (Society 5.0, green skills, lifelong learning), translates them into contextually appropriate institutional programs, coordinates the 5M+1I (Man, Money, Materials, Machine, Method + Islamic Values) resource matrix toward community visible outcomes, and maintains the institution's primary competitive differentiator noble character and tafaquh fid-din (deep Islamic understanding) as a non-negotiable value anchor.

Propositions Derived from TLIM

The findings support the following propositions regarding the TLIM leadership typology and its relationship to organizational outcomes:

- a. P1 (Grand Proposition): Inspirational transformational leadership (TLIM) constitutes a strategic factor capable of building organizational capacity and generating sustainable competitive advantage in state madrasah.
- b. P2: The more participative and data-driven the principal's strategic decision-making, the stronger the organizational capacity for supporting quality improvement and competitive advantage.
- c. P3: Human resource mobilization through collaborative reinforcement and collective commitment increases madrasah organizational capacity.
- d. P4: Transformational leadership that continuously drives institutional innovation and change will strengthen madrasah competitive advantage.
- e. P5: The integration of strategic decisions, HR empowerment, and institutional innovation produces an adaptive, excellent, and competitive organizational culture.
- f. P6 (Novel Proposition): TLIM constitutes an effective madrasah leadership model for building organizational capacity and competitive advantage through the synergy of visionary inspiration, strategic decisions, HR empowerment, and institutional innovation within an Islamic religio-cultural framework.

Discussion

Participative and Data-Driven Strategic Decision-Making: The RENSTRA FDSE Model

The principal's strategic decision-making at MTsN 3 Malang is characterized by systematic participativeness and empirical grounding, operationalized through the RENSTRA-FDSE model. The deliberate integration of SWOT analysis, multi-stakeholder consultation forums, semesterly community surveys, and reflective evaluation cycles constitutes a governance architecture that goes substantially beyond compliance-driven administration. The 153.6% growth in total student achievements between 2023 and 2024, alongside the 93.45% graduate acceptance rate into state secondary institutions, provides direct empirical evidence that this decision making model generates measurable institutional performance gains. The finding reveals that the principal conceives strategic decision-making not as an executive prerogative but as a collective deliberative process a governance philosophy consistent with the Islamic shura principle and contemporary distributed leadership theory.

This finding aligns closely with Van Oord's (2013) five-step transformative leadership decision framework, which emphasizes the centrality of stakeholder dialogue, iterative deliberation, and collective ownership of strategic choices. The RENSTRA-FDSE model maps directly onto Van Oord's steps: EDM (Evaluasi Diri Madrasah) corresponds to evaluating current practice; monthly staff forums correspond to deliberation on improvement pathways; RKM (Rencana Kerja Madrasah) corresponds to strategic plan formulation; stakeholder surveys correspond to broad dialogue; and MONEV corresponds to collective decision review. Similarly, the finding corroborates Román-Cortéz et al.'s (2025) systematic review demonstrating that transformational leaders who embed Idealized Influence and Inspirational Motivation into decision processes achieve stronger institutional alignment between vision and operational priorities. The present study extends these findings into the Indonesian Islamic educational context, where community trust and Islamic value alignment constitute additional legitimacy criteria beyond regulatory compliance. Hunitie's (2018) bi-meditational study in Jordanian healthcare further supports the finding that strategic leadership significantly predicts competitive advantage through strategic planning and strategic thinking as mediating mechanisms a pattern clearly observable in MTsN 3 Malang's trajectory.

Bass's (1985) Idealized Influence dimension predicts that transformational leaders serve as role models whose value systems guide organizational direction. The RENSTRA-FDSE model instantiates this through the principal's positioning of musyawarah (deliberative consultation) as the organizational norm for strategic choices a posture that models collaborative governance to all stakeholders. Intellectual Stimulation, another Bass dimension, is similarly operationalized through the SWOT-based analytical framework that challenges stakeholders to critically examine institutional strengths, weaknesses, and competitive opportunities. Where the present finding diverges from generic transformational leadership theory is in its grounding of decision legitimacy in Islamic *maslahat* Al-Ghazali's graduated framework of *daruriyyat*, *hajiyyat*, and *tahsiniyyat*. In this context, a strategic decision is not merely evaluated for institutional efficiency but for its orientation toward the

comprehensive well-being of students, teachers, and the broader Muslim community. This introduces an ethical evaluative dimension absent from Bass's original formulation, constituting a meaningful theoretical elaboration.

Several mutually reinforcing factors explain why participative and data-driven decision-making produced the observed performance gains at MTsN 3 Malang. First, collective deliberation generates programmatic ownership: when teachers and staff co-construct institutional programs through forum discussions and working groups, their commitment to implementation quality is substantially higher than when programs are handed down by administrative fiat. This ownership effect is well-established in organizational commitment literature (Judge & Piccolo, 2004) and is directly observable in the willingness of MTsN 3 teachers to invest personal time evenings and weekends in student coaching beyond contractual hours. Second, the integration of EMIS data, ANBK results, and community surveys into decision cycles ensures that program adjustments are responsive to actual educational outcomes rather than anecdotal impressions, reducing the risk of strategic drift. Third, the transparency of decision criteria including the publicly known qualifications for membership in the Tim Kerja Madrasah (TKM) creates a meritocratic environment that motivates aspiration and reduces resentment. Together, these mechanisms explain why the institution's achievement trajectory accelerated precisely in the period (2022–2024) during which the RENSTRA-FDSE model was systematically implemented.

This study contributes the RENSTRA-FDSE model as a context-specific operationalization of participative strategic decision making in Indonesian state madrasah. While participative decision-making has been theorized in generic educational leadership literature, the RENSTRA-FDSE model specifies the structural mechanisms through which participation is institutionalized: not merely as consultative dialogue but as a multi cycle governance system integrating deliberative forums, empirical data collection, strategic plan formulation, and reflective evaluation. The model extends Fred R. David's strategic management framework by embedding Islamic *maslahat* principles as an evaluative criterion alongside conventional efficiency and effectiveness measures. Theoretically, this positions Islamic educational institutions as sites for context-specific theory building in strategic management, not merely recipients of Western management knowledge.

For madrasah principals, the RENSTRA-FDSE model provides a replicable decision-governance framework applicable in institutions of comparable regulatory and cultural context. Concretely, principals are recommended to: (a) institutionalize monthly staff consultation forums as a structural norm, not a discretionary practice; (b) deploy EMIS and ANBK data as systematic inputs into program review cycles rather than compliance reporting instruments; (c) establish transparent meritocratic criteria for high-responsibility role assignments (e.g., flagship class coaches, TKM membership); and (d) communicate SWOT analyses in accessible formats to all stakeholders, including parents and school committee members, to build institutional accountability. For the Ministry of Religious Affairs, the finding suggests that principal selection and capacity development programs should explicitly prioritize competencies in participative governance, data literacy, and community engagement dimensions not fully captured in existing PKG-PKKM performance assessment frameworks.

Human Resource Mobilization and Empowerment: The INSITU Model

The INSITU (Inisiasi Penyatu) model reveals that human resource mobilization at MTsN 3 Malang operates through four interlocking channels inspiration and motivation, shared vision articulation, collaborative work culture construction, and continuous competency development—embedded within an Islamic spiritual-ethical framework. The finding indicates that the principal has successfully transformed the human resource function from a compliance-oriented personnel management operation into a dynamic capacity-building system grounded in Islamic values of *ikhlas* (sincerity), *integritas* (integrity), and *ta'awun* (collaborative solidarity). The empirical signature of this transformation is observable in teacher behavior that transcends contractual obligations: systematic dedication of personal time to student coaching, voluntary participation in professional development, and the formation of peer mentoring networks within the school community.

The INSITU model's four-channel structure mirrors Leithwood's (1994) conceptualization of transformational school leadership as encompassing vision-building, collaborative culture development, and individualized support and extends it by adding the spiritual-motivational dimension absent from Leithwood's secular framework. Guskey's (2000) emphasis on sustained professional development as the primary driver of instructional quality improvement is empirically supported by the MGMP-diklat-coaching developmental architecture implemented at MTsN 3 Malang. The ACT-5M supervision framework corresponds to Liu et al.'s (2021) finding that structured principal supervision practices significantly increase teacher collaborative engagement and instructional consistency. Darmansah et al.'s (2024) framework for competency-based school development, which identifies six developmental stages needs-based training, integrated performance management systems, reward/discipline systems, empowerment, management capacity strengthening, and external partnerships maps

comprehensively onto the INSITU model's implementation architecture, confirming the model's alignment with best-practice HR development frameworks and extending them through Islamic value integration. Qomar and Naim's (2025) finding that effective performance management by principals significantly predicts institutional competitiveness at MAN 2 Blitar is directly consonant with the present study, providing comparative evidence from a cognate institutional context.

Bass's Inspirational Motivation and Individualized Consideration dimensions are both strongly operationalized in the INSITU model. Monthly coordination meetings as inspiration forums, personalized professional development allocations, and the transparent reward system for high-performing teachers are direct behavioral instantiations of these theoretical dimensions. The study diverges from and extends Bass's framework, however, in its conceptualization of spiritual motivation as a distinct and primary motivational source. In Bass's original formulation, inspirational motivation operates through the leader's capacity to articulate an emotionally compelling vision that energizes followers toward higher performance. In the INSITU model, this emotional-visionary motivation is accompanied and in some respects transcended by a theological motivation: the understanding that professional excellence in Islamic education is simultaneously an act of ibadah (worship) and a form of 'amal jariyah (continuously rewarded charitable action). This theological motivational layer is theoretically distinct from both transformational leadership's inspirational motivation and from extrinsic (transactional) motivation, constituting a contribution to motivational theory in Islamic organizational contexts. Deal and Peterson's (1999) concept of school culture as the primary driver of organizational identity and performance is strongly confirmed by the present findings: the spiritual-professional culture at MTsN 3 Malang functions as an invisible but powerful governance mechanism that coordinates behavior toward institutional goals.

The effectiveness of the INSITU model in building organizational capacity is explicable through several interconnected mechanisms. First, the alignment between institutional vision and individual spiritual values eliminates motivational friction: when teachers understand their professional role through an Islamic theological lens, the gap between extrinsic institutional demands and intrinsic personal values narrows or disappears, producing sustained high-effort engagement without requiring continuous managerial intervention. This alignment effect is amplified by the principal's consistent role-modeling of the values he espouses punctuality, intellectual engagement, responsiveness to feedback which creates social proof of the value system's authenticity. Second, the bi-weekly MGMP meetings and diklat/bimtek delegations create structured professional learning communities that function as knowledge diffusion networks within the institution. Research consistently demonstrates that teacher professional learning is most effective when it is embedded in the social context of practice (Leithwood & Sun, 2012; Sammons et al., 2014), and the MGMP structure precisely replicates this condition. Third, the ACT-5M supervision framework's transparency in which assessment criteria are publicly known to all teachers reduces the anxiety associated with performance evaluation and redirects teachers' energy from political compliance toward genuine instructional improvement. Fourth, the GEMAR program's integration of parents into the institutional community extends the motivational ecosystem beyond the school boundary, creating a broader social reinforcement system for the institution's values and programs.

This study contributes the INSITU model as a theoretically grounded framework for Islamic-value-integrated HR mobilization in madrasah contexts. The model extends Leithwood's (1994) transformational school leadership framework by specifying the mechanisms through which spiritual motivation (ikhlas), integritas, ta'awun, functions as an autonomous motivational category that amplifies the effectiveness of conventional HR development interventions. Theoretically, INSITU suggests that in Islamic organizational contexts, HR capacity is not exclusively a product of skill development (training and professional development) or structural incentive alignment (reward systems and performance management) but also of what might be termed 'spiritual capital': the accumulated motivational resources generated by authentic alignment between individual Islamic values and institutional mission. This concept of spiritual capital in Islamic educational management is underdeveloped in the existing literature and represents a productive direction for future theoretical elaboration. Additionally, the ACT 5M framework contributes a multi-dimensional quality monitoring model that extends beyond instructional supervision to encompass the full resource matrix (Man, Money, Materials, Machine, Method), offering a more comprehensive quality assurance architecture than existing school supervision frameworks.

The INSITU model offers six actionable recommendations for madrasah principals: (a) position monthly staff meetings as inspiration forums not merely administrative briefings by incorporating achievement recognition, professional sharing, and institutional vision reaffirmation; (b) implement the ACT-5M supervision framework to monitor quality across all five resource dimensions rather than narrowly focusing on instructional observation; (c) construct transparent meritocratic reward systems with publicly communicated criteria for annual teacher excellence recognition; (d) institutionalize MGMP cycles as protected non-instructional time, ensuring full

participation without coverage conflicts; (e) cultivate ikhlas-based professional culture through the principal's own consistent role modeling rather than exhortation alone; and (f) implement GEMAR-type parental engagement programs to extend the institutional value ecosystem into the home environment, creating a coordinated socio-educational formation system. For teacher education policymakers, the finding suggests that pre-service and in-service professional development programs for Islamic school teachers should explicitly incorporate spiritual professional identity formation alongside pedagogical skill development.

Institutional Change and Innovation for Competitive Advantage: The EKSITU Model

The EKSITU (Eksistensi Mutu) model reveals that institutional change at MTsN 3 Malang is governed by a distinctive innovation philosophy 'the first, different, and excellent' that systematically prioritizes pioneering program design over imitative institutional development. The flagship program portfolio comprising Madrasah Digital, Madrasah Riset, SKS 2-year acceleration, Olympiad and Robotics classes, Tahfidz and ICP tracks, and integrated character formation programs constitutes an institutional differentiation architecture that is simultaneously academically competitive, spiritually grounded, and responsive to Society 5.0 demands. The 2024 local media recognition of MTsN 3 Malang as a 'modern madrasah successfully harmonizing science and religion,' combined with continuous enrollment growth and Grade A accreditation maintenance, provides triangulated evidence that this innovation strategy has generated a durable competitive identity in the regional educational market.

Fitriah et al. (2024) study of competitive advantage strategies in Islamic schools identifies program differentiation, service quality, and community trust as the primary drivers of competitive positioning a finding that is directly confirmed and concretized in the EKSITU model's program portfolio and the five competitive advantage indicators tracked by MTsN 3 Malang (ANBK results, parent satisfaction, graduate absorption, external certification, digital reputation). Kotler and Fox's (1995) educational marketing framework emphasizing educational product differentiation, institutional positioning, and evidence-based reputation building is empirically instantiated in the EKSITU model's 'first, different, excellent' philosophy and the use of student and teacher achievements as social proof marketing instruments. Al-Hamedi et al. (2025) study demonstrating significant correlations between strategic leadership, organizational innovation capability, and competitive advantage in educational settings provides direct theoretical support for the EKSITU pathway from leadership through innovation to competitive advantage. Adeoye et al. (2025) confirm that transformational leadership effectively promotes curriculum innovation, technology integration, and competency development in educational institutions all of which are core features of the EKSITU program portfolio. The present study extends these comparative findings by demonstrating the specific integration mechanism: Islamic value embedding not as a constraint on innovation but as its distinctive generative source.

Porter's (1985) competitive advantage theory holds that sustainable competitive advantage arises from cost leadership, differentiation, or focus strategies. The EKSITU model clearly pursues a differentiation strategy: MTsN 3 Malang does not compete primarily on cost (tuition remains state-regulated) or narrow market focus (it serves a broad community population) but on the distinctive attributes of its educational product a combination of academic excellence, Islamic character formation, digital competence, and research capability unavailable in comparable institutional form elsewhere in its competitive region. Barney's (1991) resource-based view of competitive advantage further supports the durability of this strategy: the institutional capabilities embedded in EKSITU (teacher spiritual capital, research culture, peer mentoring systems, Islamic value integration processes) are socially complex, causally ambiguous, and path-dependent characteristics that make them difficult for competitors to imitate and therefore serve as sources of sustained competitive advantage. The present study diverges from purely secular competitive strategy theory by demonstrating that Islamic values function as a strategic resource that simultaneously reduces imitation barriers (competitors without authentic Islamic identity cannot replicate these values instrumentally) and increases community alignment (families specifically seeking Islamic character formation find MTsN 3 Malang's offer uniquely compelling). This constitutes a novel contribution to resource based competitive advantage theory in educational contexts.

The competitive advantage generated by the EKSITU model is explicable through a convergence of institutional design decisions. First, the principal's deliberate adoption of the 'first, different, excellent' innovation philosophy establishes an organizational norm of creative pioneering that prevents institutional stagnation a common failure mode in bureaucratically governed institutions. By expecting programs to be genuinely novel rather than merely competent imitations of competitor offerings, the principal creates a continuous innovation imperative that sustains institutional distinctiveness over time. Second, the integration of Islamic spiritual values ikhlas, kejujuran ilmiah (intellectual honesty), kolaborasi ilmiah (scholarly collaboration) into the Madrasah Riset

and Olympiad programs creates a distinctive educational culture in which academic competition is simultaneously a spiritual and intellectual exercise. This integration generates educational products (graduates with scientific competence and Islamic character) that are valued by a specific community segment and unavailable from secular competitors. Third, the structured monitoring, evaluation, and quality assurance system (input-process-product evaluation cycles; ACT-5M supervision; MONEV with written LPJ accountability) ensures that innovation does not remain at the level of programmatic aspiration but is consistently translated into implemented, monitored, and refined institutional practice. The evaluation architecture effectively transforms creative institutional ideas into sustainable quality systems explaining why the institution's achievement trajectory is not characterized by sporadic peaks but by sustained and accelerating growth.

The EKSITU model contributes to strategic management theory in Islamic educational contexts by demonstrating that Islamic value integration is not a constraint on competitive innovation but its most durable generative resource. This finding challenges the implicit assumption in mainstream educational competitive strategy literature that Islamic identity and competitive excellence exist in tension a tension resolved through selective compartmentalization of religious from academic functions. The present study shows that at MTsN 3 Malang, Islamic values and academic excellence are not compartmentalized but integrated: research culture, intellectual honesty, peer mentoring, and scientific inquiry are explicitly framed as Islamic virtues and this framing generates motivational and institutional cohesion that secular academic programs cannot replicate. Theoretically, the study contributes the concept of 'religio-academic integration as a specific form of institutional differentiation strategy applicable in Islamic educational contexts. Additionally, the five-indicator competitive advantage monitoring framework (ANBK/Rapor Pendidikan results, parent satisfaction, graduate absorption, external certification, digital footprint) offers a more comprehensive and contextually appropriate measurement model than existing single-indicator educational performance metrics.

The EKSITU models practical implications operate at three levels. At the institutional level, the first, different, excellent' philosophy should be formally embedded in institutional culture documents (RENSTRA, KOSP) and operationalized through structured program innovation cycles in which each major program undergoes annual distinctiveness review. At the program design level, flagship programs should be explicitly designed to integrate three innovation dimensions: academic innovation (enriched curriculum, research-based learning), spiritual innovation (Islamic value framing of academic excellence), and institutional innovation (distinctive organizational structures such as TKM and TPK for program governance). At the accountability level, the five competitive advantage indicators tracked at MTsN 3 Malang should be adopted as a standard performance dashboard by the Ministry of Religious Affairs for madrasah competitive standing assessment, replacing or supplementing existing single-metric evaluation instruments. For policymakers, the finding suggests that national madrasah quality improvement programs should incentivize and resource distinctive program innovation rather than uniformity, recognizing that competitive educational markets reward institutional differentiation.

The TLIM Typology: Integrative Discussion

The TLIM (Transformational Leadership Inspirational Motivation) typology represents the integrative finding that emerges from the convergence of the three strategic dimensions. TLIM is not simply a label for transformational leadership applied in an Islamic context; it is a theoretically distinct leadership configuration in which Islamic value-based inspirational motivation functions as the animating principle that connects and energizes all three strategic dimensions participative decision-making, HR mobilization, and institutional innovation into a coherent leadership identity. The principal's positioning as Chief Competitiveness Officer (reading societal trends, translating them into institutional programs, directing the 5M+1I resource matrix, maintaining Islamic akhlaq as a non-negotiable value anchor) synthesizes the visionary, managerial, and spiritual roles of leadership into a unified institutional practice. The empirical outcomes 120% provincial achievement growth, 93.45% graduate acceptance rate, year-on-year enrollment growth, Grade A accreditation maintenance collectively constitute the performance signature of TLIM in action.

Harsoyo's (2022) argument that Bass's 4I framework requires Islamic-contextual adaptation for full applicability in Islamic educational institutions is confirmed and concretized by the TLIM typology. This contextual elaboration is consistent with Hallinger's (2018) broader argument that leadership models developed without reference to the institutional and cultural settings in which they are enacted offer an incomplete account of how leadership actually produces organizational outcomes. Where Harsoyo identifies the need for adaptation in general terms, TLIM provides the specific adaptation content: the addition of Islamic Value-Based Motivational Grounding as a fifth I Inspirational Islamicity that governs the motivational quality of all Four-I behaviors. The comparative evidence from Singapore madrasah studies (cited in the dissertation's synthesis), in which the four 4I dimensions

were identified in Islamic school leaders with key behaviors of vision articulation, consultation, motivation, and exemplary conduct, aligns with the TLIM behavioral profile while the present study adds the explicit theological grounding that explains why these behaviors generate distinctive institutional outcomes in Indonesian state madrasah contexts. Khalilov et al.'s (2025) demonstration that organizations integrating strong leadership with effective management practices achieve higher institutional resilience is specifically operationalized in TLIM: the three-strategy model (RENSTRA FDSE, INSITU, EKSITU) integrates inspirational leadership with systematic management practice in precisely the configuration these researchers identify as most productive. The TLIM typology also extends Al-Hamedy et al.'s (2025) finding on strategic leadership, organizational innovation capability, and competitive advantage by specifying the Islamic motivational mechanism (*ikhlas-integritas-ta'awun*) through which leadership generates the organizational innovation capability that produces competitive advantage.

The primary theoretical contribution of this study is the conceptualization and empirical grounding of the TLIM typology as a context-specific extension of transformational leadership theory for Indonesian state madrasah in dual-bureaucratic and religio-cultural contexts. TLIM advances transformational leadership theory in four specific respects. First, it introduces a spiritual motivational dimension Islamic Value-Based Inspirational Motivation as a fifth behavioral dimension of transformational leadership theory applicable in Islamic organizational contexts, extending Bass's Four-I framework. Second, it demonstrates the theoretical compatibility and mutual reinforcement of Islamic governance principles (*shura, maslahat, amanah, ta'awun*) and transformational leadership behavioral dimensions, providing a theoretically coherent integration rather than a merely pragmatic juxtaposition. Third, it introduces the concept of religio-academic integration as a specific form of competitive differentiation strategy in Islamic education, contributing to both competitive strategy theory and Islamic educational management theory. Fourth, it provides three model-level contributions RENSTRA-FDSE, INSITU, EKSITU that operationalize TLIM in institutional terms, offering a level of practical specificity typically absent from theoretical leadership typologies.

The TLIM typology's practical implications extend across four stakeholder levels. For madrasah principals, TLIM provides a coherent identity framework: rather than navigating the tensions between Islamic values and competitive institutional management as separate, potentially conflicting domains, principals can adopt TLIM as an integrated leadership identity in which Islamic values are the motivational source and strategic resource for competitive excellence. For Leadership Development Institutions (LPMP, Balai Diklat Kemenag), TLIM's three-strategy structure provides a curriculum framework for principal leadership development programs, each strategy (RENSTRA-FDSE, INSITU, EKSITU) constituting a distinct competency domain for structured development. For the Ministry of Religious Affairs, the TLIM typology suggests revising the national madrasah leadership competency standards (*Standar Kompetensi Kepala Madrasah*) to explicitly include Islamic value integration in leadership practice as a measurable competency rather than a background assumption. For academic researchers, TLIM opens a productive research program: comparative multi-site studies testing the model's transferability across madrasah types, grade levels, and regional contexts; mixed-methods studies quantifying the relationship between TLIM behavioral indicators and organizational performance outcomes; and longitudinal studies tracking the sustainability of competitive advantage under TLIM leadership across principal succession transitions.

Conclusions

This study demonstrates that transformational leadership strategies at MTsN 3 Malang are organized around three interlocking pillars participative and data-driven strategic decision-making (RENSTRA-FDSE), human resource mobilization and empowerment (INSITU), and institutional change and innovation (EKSITU) collectively constituting the TLIM (Transformational Leadership Inspirational Motivation) typology. TLIM represents a contextually grounded extension of Bass's transformational leadership theory into the dual bureaucratic, religio-cultural context of Indonesian state madrasah.

The empirical evidence 120% provincial achievement growth (5-11, 2023–2024), 153.6% total achievement increase (28-71; 2023–2024), 93.45% graduate acceptance into state schools confirms that TLIM generates measurable organizational capacity and sustainable competitive advantage. These outcomes are attributable to systemic integration of strategic leadership, professional development, and Islamic value-based organizational culture, rather than to resource advantages alone.

The study's primary theoretical contribution is the conceptualization of TLIM as a replicable leadership model that integrates the Four-I dimensions of transformational leadership with Islamic organizational values and participative management practices. Practically, the three-strategy TLIM model offers a transferable framework for principals in other state and private madrasah seeking to build institutional quality, staff commitment, and

community trust. This study is limited to a single case site, which bounds the generalizability of findings. Future research should test the TLIM model through comparative case studies across multiple institutional contexts (urban/rural, different accreditation levels, various regional cultural settings) and, where applicable, employ mixed methods to measure TLIM's effects on teacher commitment, student well-being, and organizational learning at scale. Longitudinal studies tracking long-term competitive outcomes are also recommended.

References

- Adeoye, M., Baharun, H., & Munawwaroh, I. (2025). Transformational leadership in education: Harmonising accountability, innovation, and global citizenship. *Kharisma: Jurnal Administrasi dan Manajemen Pendidikan*. <https://doi.org/10.59373/kharisma.v4i1.68>
- Al-Ghazali, I. (n.d.). *Ihyā' Ulūm al-Dīn*. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah.
- Al-Hamedi, M., Aziz, A., & Shaharruddin, S. (2025). Influences of strategic leadership, organizational innovativeness capability on effective competitive advantage. *International Journal of Accounting and Economics Studies*. <https://doi.org/10.14419/7d7fpb74>
- Barney, J. B. (1991). Firm resources and sustained competitive advantage. *Journal of Management*, 17(1), 99–120.
- Bashori. (2017). Strategi kompetitif dalam lembaga pendidikan. *Tadris*, 12(2), 168–170.
- Bass, B. M. (1985). *Leadership and performance beyond expectations*. Free Press.
- Bohari, A., Wider, W., Udang, L., Jiang, L., Tanucan, J., & Lajuma, S. (2024). Transformational leadership's role in shaping Education 4.0 within higher education. *Journal of Infrastructure, Policy and Development*. <https://doi.org/10.24294/jipd.v8i8.4900>
- Burns, J. M. (1978). *Leadership*. Harper & Row.
- Darmansah, T., Nasution, S., Samahangga, K., & Hasibuan, N. (2024). Strategi pengembangan sumber daya manusia untuk mewujudkan sekolah berbasis kompetensi. *Jurnal Manajemen Kewirausahaan dan Teknologi*. <https://doi.org/10.61132/jumaket.v1i4.389>
- Deal, T. E., & Peterson, K. D. (1999). *Shaping school culture: The heart of leadership*. Jossey-Bass.
- Fitriah, B., Wildan, & Khusniyah, N. L. (2024). Strategi kepala sekolah/madrasah dalam membangun keunggulan kompetitif. *Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan*.
- Guskey, T. R. (2000). *Evaluating professional development*. Corwin Press.
- Hallinger, P. (2018). Bringing context out of the shadows of leadership. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 46(1), 5–24. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1741143216670652>
- Harsoyo, R. (2022). Teori kepemimpinan transformasional Bernard M. Bass dan aplikasinya dalam peningkatan mutu lembaga pendidikan Islam. *Southeast Asian Journal of Islamic Education Management*. <https://doi.org/10.21154/sajiem.v3i2.112>
- Hennink, M., Kaiser, B. N., & Marconi, V. C. (2017). Code saturation versus meaning saturation: How many interviews are enough? *Qualitative Health Research*, 27(4), 591–608. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732316665344>
- Hunitie, M. (2018). Impact of strategic leadership on strategic competitive advantage through strategic thinking and strategic planning: A bi-meditational research. *Business: Theory and Practice*. <https://doi.org/10.3846/btp.2018.32>
- Ibn Taymiyyah, T. (n.d.). *Majmū' al-Fatāwā*. Maktabat al-Rushd.
- Judge, T. A., & Piccolo, R. F. (2004). Transformational and transactional leadership: A meta-analytic test of their relative validity. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 89(5), 755–768.
- Kausar, S., Arif, M., & Sebgag, S. (2025). Transformational leadership and the challenges of educational digitalization: A systematic literature review (2020–2025). *Nidhomul Haq: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam*. <https://doi.org/10.31538/ndhq.v10i2.196>
- Khalilov, A., Aliyev, V., & Zeynalov, I. (2025). The role of leadership and managerial skills in strategic planning. *Journal of Information Systems Engineering and Management*. <https://doi.org/10.52783/jisem.v10i20s.3014>
- Kotler, P., & Fox, K. F. A. (1995). *Strategic marketing for educational institutions* (2nd ed.). Prentice-Hall.
- Leithwood, K. (1994). Leadership for school restructuring. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 30(4), 498–518.
- Leithwood, K., & Sun, J. (2012). The nature and effects of transformational school leadership: A meta-analytic review of unpublished research. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 48(3), 387–423.
- Liu, Y., Bellibas, M. S., & Gumus, S. (2021). The effect of instructional leadership and distributed leadership on teacher self-efficacy and job satisfaction: Mediating roles of supportive school culture and teacher collaboration. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 49(3), 430–453.
- Meng, H. (2022). Analysis of the relationship between transformational leadership and educational management in

- higher education based on deep learning. *Computational Intelligence and Neuroscience*, 2022. <https://doi.org/10.1155/2022/5287922>
- Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, J. (2014). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook* (3rd ed.). Sage.
- Porter, M. E. (1985). *Competitive advantage: Creating and sustaining superior performance*. Free Press.
- Porter, M. E. (1998). *The competitive advantage of nations* (2nd ed.). Free Press.
- Qomar, M., & Naim, N. (2025). Performance management in improving competitiveness of educational institutions at MAN 2 Blitar. *International Journal of Educational Research & Social Sciences*. <https://doi.org/10.51601/ijersc.v6i1.869>
- Román-Cortéz, K., Cisneros, J., Trejo, C., & Chapín, M. (2025). Transformational leadership and its impact on educational innovation in Ecuador: A systematic review. *Frontiers in Education*. <https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2025.1630004>
- Rosmayani, R., & Mardatillah, A. (2021). Keunggulan bersaing berkelanjutan berbasis inovasi. *Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan*.
- Sammons, P., Gu, Q., Day, C., & Ko, J. (2014). Exploring the impact of school leadership on pupil outcomes: Results from a study of academically improved and effective schools in England. *International Journal of Educational Management*, 28(6), 640–663.
- Slamet, S., Ridho, M., Efiyanti, A., & Slamet, P. (2024). Impact of mission and vision on academic services mediated by governance and human resources in higher education institutions of Indonesia. *Problems and Perspectives in Management*. [https://doi.org/10.21511/ppm.22\(1\).2024.38](https://doi.org/10.21511/ppm.22(1).2024.38)
- Van Oord, L. (2013). Towards transformative leadership in education. *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, 16, 419–434. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603124.2013.776116>
- Yin, R. K. (2018). *Case study research and applications: Design and methods* (6th ed.). Sage.
- Yusuf, N. F., Sintaningrum, & Utami, S. B. (2020). Kapasitas organisasi dalam meningkatkan kinerja. *Jurnal Ilmu Administrasi*.