



How Transformational Leadership Builds Sustainable Competitive Advantage in Islamic Educational Institutions: An Integrated Four-Dimensional Leadership Framework

M. Azzam Bachtiar^{1*}; Purnomo²

^{1,2}Department of Islamic Education, Universitas Islam Negeri Salatiga, Indonesia

^{1*}Corresponding Email: m.azzambachtiar22@gmail.com

Article History:

Received: Jul 17, 2026

Revised: Aug 15, 2026

Accepted: Sep 04, 2026

Online First: Sep 28, 2026

Keywords:

Case Study,
Competitive Advantage,
Islamic Educational
Management,
Madrasah Leadership,
Transformational
Leadership.

Kata Kunci:

Kepemimpinan Madrasah,
Kepemimpinan
Transformasional,
Keunggulan Kompetitif,
Manajemen Pendidikan
Islam,
Studi Kasus.

How to cite:

Bachtiar, M. A., & Purnomo, P. (2026). How Transformational Leadership Builds Sustainable Competitive Advantage in Islamic Educational Institutions: An Integrated Four-Dimensional Leadership Framework. *Edunesia : Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan*, 7(3), 2065-2082.

This is an open-access article under the CC-BY-NC-ND license



Abstract: This study examines how a madrasah head implements transformational leadership to build sustainable competitive advantage at MTs Modern Bani Adam, Boyolali. Using a qualitative case study design, data were collected from three purposively selected informants, namely the madrasah head and two teachers directly involved in flagship programs, through interviews, observation, and documentation. Data were analyzed using the Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña model with source and technique triangulation. Unlike prior studies that treat the four leadership dimensions as independent, additive predictors, this study shows that they operate as a sequential, culturally embedded process shaped by the madrasah's Javanese context: exemplary conduct builds trust, vision alignment transforms trust into shared direction, intellectual stimulation channels this direction into innovation, and individualized consideration distributes the resulting capacity across teachers. Theoretically, the study extends Bass and Riggio's framework beyond its Western corporate origins. Practically, it provides a concrete framework for madrasah leadership training, succession planning, and leadership development.

Abstrak: Penelitian ini mengkaji bagaimana kepala madrasah mengimplementasikan kepemimpinan transformasional untuk membangun keunggulan kompetitif berkelanjutan di MTs Modern Bani Adam, Boyolali. Menggunakan desain studi kasus kualitatif, data dikumpulkan dari tiga informan yang dipilih secara purposive, yaitu kepala madrasah dan dua guru yang terlibat langsung dalam program unggulan, melalui wawancara, observasi, dan dokumentasi. Data dianalisis menggunakan model Miles, Huberman, dan Saldaña dengan triangulasi sumber dan teknik. Berbeda dari penelitian terdahulu yang memperlakukan keempat dimensi kepemimpinan sebagai prediktor independen dan aditif, penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa keempat dimensi tersebut beroperasi sebagai proses berurutan yang dibentuk oleh konteks sosial budaya Jawa madrasah: keteladanan membangun kepercayaan, penyamaan visi mengubah kepercayaan menjadi arah bersama, stimulasi intelektual menyalurkan arah tersebut menjadi inovasi, dan perhatian individual mendistribusikan kapasitas yang dihasilkan kepada para guru. Secara teoretis, penelitian ini memperluas kerangka Bass dan Riggio melampaui akar korporat Baratnya. Secara praktis, penelitian ini menawarkan kerangka konkret untuk pelatihan kepemimpinan madrasah, perencanaan suksesi, dan pengembangan kepemimpinan.

A. Introduction

Competition among educational institutions in the digital era has placed madrasahs under increasing pressure to achieve more than merely meeting academic standards (Mahsusi et al., 2024). As digital transformation reshapes parental and societal expectations toward measurable innovation, transparency, and responsiveness rather than traditional forms of legitimacy (Rofiqi et al., 2026), institutional survival increasingly depends on the capacity to build and sustain competitive advantage rather than merely comply with minimum standards. As Islamic educational institutions operating within Indonesia's national education system, madrasahs are expected to fulfill a dual mandate: preserving Islamic values while responding to growing societal demands for educational quality, relevance, and innovation. Ideally, this mandate is fulfilled through innovative learning experiences, an adaptive organizational culture, competitive student achievement, and responsive educational services. These conditions position madrasahs as institutions that must simultaneously safeguard their religious identity and compete credibly within an increasingly competitive educational market.

In reality, however, a number of madrasahs continue to face fundamental challenges, including shortages of competent educators, limited stakeholder involvement in institutional development, and suboptimal implementation of quality improvement programs due to budgetary constraints and heavy workloads. These challenges are further compounded by organizational cultures that are not yet conducive to fostering change and systemic instructional innovation (Suhid et al., 2021). These conditions indicate that the gap between the ideal and actual states of madrasah management is not incidental but structural. This situation demonstrates that madrasah excellence does not stem solely from resource availability but is closely linked to leadership capacity to direct the organization comprehensively and purposefully toward sustainable competitive advantage (Zakariyah, 2024). MTs Modern Bani Adam illustrates this dynamic concretely. The institution has undertaken various efforts to strengthen its competitiveness through flagship programs, curricular innovation, and the reinforcement of organizational culture. However, the leadership mechanisms underlying these efforts have not been systematically documented or analyzed.

Transformational leadership offers a relevant theoretical lens for addressing this problem because of its orientation toward organizational change, empowerment, and long-term vision (Burns, 1978). Later elaborations identify idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration as its core dimensions (Bass & Riggio, 2006). These dimensions conceptually correspond to exemplary conduct, vision alignment, innovation development, and teacher empowerment observed in madrasah settings. A growing body of research substantiates the relevance of this framework in educational contexts. Several studies report its contribution to improvements in educational quality, work culture, teacher motivation, and organizational effectiveness (Nurlatifah et al., 2025; Saifudin et al., 2024). Other studies document its role in shaping the organizational culture of madrasahs (Safi'i, 2023) and driving character-based

transformation in Islamic schools (Nifasri, 2025). A systematic review by Yoserizal et al (2024) further confirms that transformational leadership is consistently associated with improved school performance across diverse educational settings.

Despite this substantial body of evidence, a critical comparison of previous studies reveals a persistent gap in understanding how transformational leadership contributes specifically to the development of sustainable competitive advantage in madrasahs. Studies such as Nurlatifah et al (2025) and Saifudin et al (2024) primarily examine transformational leadership as a predictor of internal organizational outcomes, including quality, culture, and motivation, without extending the analysis to external, market-facing outcomes such as institutional competitiveness. Similarly, Wahananto et al (2023) and Safi'i (2023) examine leadership behavior in relation to instructional practices and organizational culture, but do not explicitly connect these behaviors to the strategic positioning of madrasahs relative to competing institutions. Meanwhile, Zakariyah (2024) addresses competitive advantage in madrasahs from a strategic management perspective, positioning leadership as a background condition rather than as the central explanatory mechanism. Thus, the reviewed literature has not yet systematically explained how the specific dimensions of transformational leadership are translated into concrete strategies for building sustainable competitive advantage at the madrasah level. This unresolved issue constitutes an important gap in the educational management literature.

The novelty of this study lies in its conceptual contribution through an integrated four-dimensional leadership framework that explains how transformational leadership is translated into strategies for building sustainable competitive advantage. Rather than treating transformational leadership and competitive advantage as separate variables to be correlated, this study examines how each dimension of transformational leadership, namely exemplary conduct, vision alignment, innovation development, and teacher empowerment, is operationalized into distinct but interconnected competitive-advantage-building strategies. The framework further emphasizes the sequential relationship among these dimensions, in which exemplary conduct builds trust, vision alignment transforms trust into shared direction, intellectual stimulation channels that direction into innovation, and individualized consideration distributes the resulting capacity across teachers. Theoretically, this approach extends transformational leadership theory into the specific institutional context of madrasahs, where religious values, organizational culture, leadership practices, and institutional competitiveness intersect. Practically, the resulting framework provides madrasah heads and educational policymakers with a concrete reference for designing leadership interventions that are directly connected to sustainable institutional competitiveness.

Based on the identified research gap and the proposed novelty, this study is guided by the following research question: How does the madrasah head implement the dimensions of transformational leadership to build sustainable competitive advantage at MTs Modern Bani Adam? This question directs the study to examine the leadership processes through which the four dimensions of transformational leadership are

implemented and translated into practices that strengthen institutional competitiveness. By answering this question, the study is expected to contribute theoretically by extending transformational leadership theory to the context of Islamic educational management and practically by providing madrasah leaders with an evidence-based framework for translating transformational leadership practices into sustainable institutional competitiveness.

B. Method

This study employed a qualitative approach with a case study design to gain an in-depth understanding of how the madrasah principal implements transformational leadership to build sustainable competitive advantage. A case study design was considered appropriate because the study focused on leadership practices within a specific institutional context and sought to explain the processes, strategies, and practices underlying institutional competitiveness rather than produce statistical generalizations (Gammelgaard, 2017). MTs Modern Bani Adam, Boyolali, was selected as the research setting because the institution has undertaken efforts to strengthen its competitiveness through flagship programs, curricular innovation, and organizational culture development. These characteristics provided a relevant context for examining how transformational leadership practices are translated into strategies for building sustainable competitive advantage.

The research was conducted from June 15 to July 16, 2026. Informants were selected purposively based on their direct involvement, experience, and knowledge of transformational leadership practices and madrasah development programs. Three informants participated in the study: the madrasah principal as the primary informant and two teachers who were directly involved in the implementation of flagship programs. The principal was selected because of his authority and direct involvement in determining the madrasah's vision, strategic decisions, program development, and teacher guidance. The two teachers were selected because they had firsthand experience of implementing flagship programs and interacting directly with the principal in the process. The selection of these informants was consistent with the principle of *information power*, which emphasizes the value of participants who possess rich and relevant information about the phenomenon under investigation (Pahwa et al., 2023). Data collection continued until sufficient and repetitive information was obtained.

Three complementary instruments were used to collect the data. First, a semi-structured interview guide was developed from the four dimensions of transformational leadership and operationalized in this study as exemplary conduct, vision alignment, innovation development, and teacher empowerment. Interview questions focused on leadership practices, strategic decision-making, organizational vision, innovation, teacher empowerment, and efforts to strengthen the madrasah's competitive advantage. Second, an observation guide was used to examine leadership behaviors, interactions between the principal and teachers, organizational culture, and the implementation of flagship programs. Third, a documentation checklist was used to collect relevant information from

the madrasah profile, vision and mission, work plans, flagship programs, student achievement records, and other institutional documents. The instruments were developed based on the theoretical framework and reviewed before data collection to ensure their alignment with the research question.

Data collection was conducted through three complementary stages: preliminary observation and document review, in-depth interviews, and follow-up observation. The preliminary stage was used to understand the institutional context and identify relevant programs and leadership practices. In-depth interviews were subsequently conducted face-to-face and recorded with the participants' consent, followed by verbatim transcription. Follow-up observations and document reviews were then conducted to clarify and verify information obtained through interviews. The research instruments were used complementarily to examine the same phenomenon from different sources and techniques. The overall research process is presented in Figure 1.

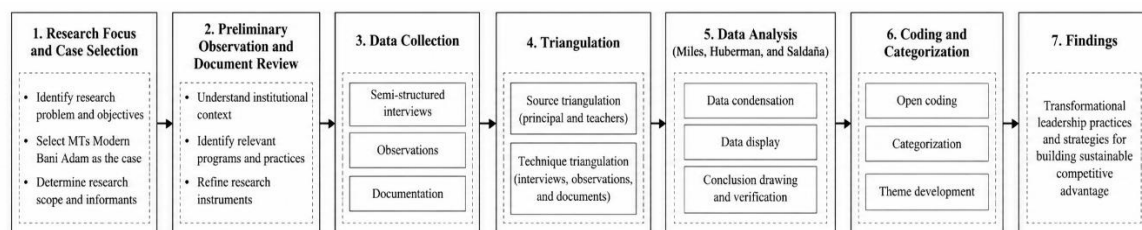


Figure 1. Research Flow

Data analysis followed the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, consisting of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification (Miles et al., 2014). Analysis was conducted iteratively throughout the research process. Interview transcripts, observation notes, and documents were initially condensed through coding and categorization. The codes were then organized according to the four dimensions of transformational leadership. Cross-theme analysis was subsequently conducted to identify relationships among the themes and to examine how individual leadership practices contributed to the development of competitive advantage. This process enabled the researchers to identify the sequential pattern connecting exemplary conduct, vision alignment, innovation development, and teacher empowerment. Conclusions were continuously compared with the available evidence and refined throughout the analysis.

Trustworthiness was established using the four criteria proposed by Lincoln & Guba (1985). Credibility was strengthened through source triangulation involving the principal and teachers, technique triangulation involving interviews, observations, and documentation, and member checking of the emerging interpretations. Dependability was supported through an audit trail documenting the research procedures and analytical decisions. Confirmability was maintained by grounding interpretations in interview transcripts, observation notes, and documentary evidence, with the analysis reviewed by the research supervisor. Transferability was addressed through detailed descriptions of the research setting, participants, procedures, and findings.

The study adhered to ethical principles for qualitative research. Official permission was obtained from the madrasah authorities, and all informants provided informed consent after receiving an explanation of the research objectives, procedures, voluntary participation, and right to withdraw. Interview recordings and transcripts were securely stored. The names of informants were used only with their consent, while other supporting sources were anonymized where necessary. The study also respected the institutional norms and Islamic values of MTs Modern Bani Adam.

C. Result

The findings indicate that sustainable competitive advantage at MTs Modern Bani Adam was developed through four interconnected transformational leadership practices: exemplary conduct, vision alignment, innovation development, and teacher empowerment. Evidence from interviews, observations, and institutional documentation consistently showed that these practices were not implemented as isolated activities. Rather, they formed a progressive pattern in which leadership behavior established organizational discipline, created shared direction, stimulated distinctive innovation, and distributed responsibility among teachers. This pattern is summarized in Table 2 and Figure 2.

Exemplary Conduct

The first finding concerns the madrasah head's use of personal example to establish discipline and a shared work ethic. The madrasah head consistently demonstrated punctuality by arriving before teachers and ensuring that scheduled activities began on time. Rather than relying solely on instructions, the head modeled the expected behavior through direct participation in madrasah activities. The madrasah head explained:

"If an event is scheduled for a certain time, the event starts exactly at that time. I also come earlier so that the teachers follow this example and practice discipline."

The practice of personal modeling was reinforced through the local expressions "*Tatak, Tetek, Tutuk*," referring to working earnestly, upholding trust, and completing tasks to the end, and "*Guyup Rukun Amrih Moncer*," which emphasizes togetherness and cooperation. These expressions were incorporated into everyday organizational practices and contributed to a shared understanding of discipline and collective responsibility.

The teachers' accounts supported this finding. Teacher 2 observed that the madrasah head had shifted from relying primarily on ordinary instructions to demonstrating the expected behavior directly:

"He now leads by example. Before, when he only gave ordinary instructions, some teachers were indifferent because many young teachers here tend to have ego issues."

Teacher 1 similarly reported that the madrasah head consistently arrived early, participated directly in various activities with staff, and maintained consistency in implementing planned programs. These accounts were corroborated through observation, which showed that the madrasah head arrived before activities began and led activities according to the established schedule. Documentation of the madrasah's activity schedules further supported the consistency of this practice across different institutional activities.

Thus, the empirical evidence indicates that exemplary conduct was manifested through punctuality, personal modeling, participation in activities, and culturally embedded expressions of collective responsibility. These practices established discipline and a shared work ethos that served as the initial organizational foundation for the subsequent leadership practices.

Vision Alignment

The second finding concerns the madrasah head's efforts to establish a shared institutional direction by reframing competition with other educational institutions as an opportunity for improvement rather than as a threat. This perspective was communicated through weekly and monthly meetings and other coordination forums. In these settings, teachers were encouraged to adopt a growth mindset and to consider changes that could benefit the madrasah and its students.

The madrasah head explained that the current institutional vision emphasized introducing MTs Modern Bani Adam to the wider community by highlighting student achievements and the madrasah's distinctive programs:

"Our vision right now is focused on introducing MTs Bani Adam to the public by highlighting our achievements in competitions and the excellent programs we carry out at the madrasah."

Teacher 1 described the recurring development meetings as spaces not only for evaluating ongoing programs but also for discussing development plans, exchanging ideas, and resolving emerging challenges. Teacher 2 confirmed that teachers' ideas and innovations were considered through collective discussion before implementation:

"In principle, the madrasah head always responds to the ideas and innovations put forward by teachers to align the vision. Not all ideas are implemented immediately; they are usually discussed first in a meeting or evaluation forum to check their suitability with the madrasah's needs."

Although the informants did not explicitly use the term "vision alignment," observations of monthly teacher meetings demonstrated that the practice was consistently implemented through discussion, evaluation, planning, and teacher participation.

The evidence therefore shows that vision alignment was operationalized through recurring communication forums, participatory planning, evaluation, and the reframing of institutional competition as an opportunity for development. Rather than functioning as a one-time communication of institutional goals, the vision was continuously reinforced through interaction between the madrasah head and teachers.

Innovation Development

The third finding concerns the development of distinctive programs as a response to the madrasah's need to establish public trust and institutional recognition. According to the madrasah head, the institution initially had only 18 students, many of whom had not been accepted by other schools. This situation encouraged the madrasah to develop distinctive programs that could demonstrate its educational value to the community. The madrasah head explained:

"We started with a small number of students (18 students), so we needed something distinctive to gain the community's trust. We began with OSN [Olympiad] training, then developed various flagship programs such as Tahfidz and the Adi Pangastuti school initiative, along with the Matsamba application for digital learning. The guiding principle is that every program must add value and become a hallmark of MTs Modern Bani Adam."

Based on this orientation, the madrasah developed Science Olympiad training, the 3-Juz Tahfidz program, Hasthalaku and Adi Pangastuti programs, literacy and numeracy initiatives, bilingual learning, and the Matsamba digital-learning application. The Matsamba application had already been adopted before the COVID-19 pandemic. Teachers confirmed that the development of these innovations involved open discussion and collaborative generation of ideas rather than top-down implementation. The madrasah head also supported implementation through training and by bringing in external resource persons when teachers required additional competencies.

The development of distinctive programs was accompanied by documented student achievements. As presented in Table 1, students achieved placements in the OMNAS-15 Provincial Final in Central Java in Mathematics, Science, and English. The documentation also records achievement in the Boyolali Regent's Cup. These achievements provide empirical evidence of the outcomes associated with the madrasah's effort to develop distinctive programs and competitive student performance.

Table 1. Student Competition Achievements at MTs Modern Bani Adam

No.	Competition Category	Competition	Level	Student
1	Mathematics	OMNAS-15	Level 4 – Provincial Final (Central Java)	Loveta Amalya Dwi Purba
2	Mathematics	OMNAS-15	Level 4 – Provincial Final (Central Java)	Julia Zahra Witriasih

No.	Competition Category	Competition	Level	Student
3	Science	OMNAS-15	Level 4 – Provincial Final (Central Java)	Kanaya Ranum Maria Kiffity
4	English	OMNAS-15	Level 4 – Provincial Final (Central Java)	Khansa Nayla Salsabila
5	Boyolali Regent's Cup	Pre-Youth Class G	Regional	Azka Dipa Ramadhan

Source: School documentation and the official Instagram account of MTs Modern Bani Adam Boyolali (2025/2026).

The evidence in Table 1 indicates that innovation development was not limited to the introduction of programs but was accompanied by measurable institutional outputs in the form of student participation and achievements in academic and regional competitions. Thus, innovation development was manifested through distinctive flagship programs, digital learning, collaborative idea generation, and the development of student achievement.

Teacher Empowerment

The fourth finding concerns the distribution of responsibilities according to teachers' competencies, experience, and potential. Teacher empowerment began with the formulation of program concepts, objectives, and targets, followed by the appointment of teachers as program coordinators according to their areas of expertise. The madrasah head explained:

"I do not appoint teachers carelessly; I first assess their competence and potential. I then entrust the implementation of programs in their respective fields to them. If there are aspects they have not yet mastered, we provide training or bring in a resource person to ensure the program runs smoothly."

Teacher 2 confirmed that responsibilities were assigned according to individual abilities and that teachers were given autonomy to plan and manage program implementation. The madrasah head provided direction and support when difficulties arose rather than immediately taking over the responsibility:

"We are trusted to manage the program according to our abilities. The madrasah head does not immediately take over when obstacles arise; instead, he provides guidance and support, so that we can learn while carrying responsibility for the programs we handle."

Observation confirmed that different programs were managed by different teachers according to their assigned responsibilities, while the madrasah head functioned primarily as a coordinator rather than exercising direct control over every activity. Documentary evidence, including assignment letters, committee structures, and training records, further confirmed the distribution of responsibilities and capacity-building practices.

These findings demonstrate that teacher empowerment was implemented through competence-based task assignment, delegated autonomy, mentoring, and targeted capacity building. Responsibility for program implementation was therefore distributed across teachers rather than concentrated exclusively in the madrasah head.

Summary of Empirical Findings

The four themes and their supporting evidence are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Summary of Themes, Sub-themes, and Empirical Evidence

Theme (Dimension)	Sub-themes	Key Empirical Evidence
Exemplary Conduct	Punctuality and personal modeling; shared work ethos (“Tatak, Tetek, Tutuk”); communal cooperation (“Guyup Rukun Amrih Moncer”)	Head and teacher interviews; direct observation of schedule adherence; activity documentation
Vision Alignment	Reframing competition as opportunity; recurring communication forums; growth-mindset cultivation	Head and teacher interviews; observation of meetings; work-plan and meeting-minute documentation
Innovation Development	Distinctive flagship programs (Science Olympiad, Tahfidz, Hasthalaku, Adi Pangastuti); digital learning (Matsamba); collaborative idea generation	Head and teacher interviews; program documentation; student achievement records (Table 1)
Teacher Empowerment	Competence-based task assignment; delegated autonomy; capacity-building support	Head and teacher interviews; observation of program management; assignment letters and training records

Source: Synthesized from interview, observation, and documentation data (2026).

Table 2 demonstrates that each leadership dimension was supported by evidence from more than one data source. The findings consistently show a relationship between the madrasah head’s leadership practices and the development of organizational capabilities: exemplary conduct established discipline and collective responsibility; vision alignment established shared institutional direction; innovation development generated distinctive programs and documented student achievements; and teacher empowerment distributed responsibility and capacity across teachers.

Integrated Pattern of Findings

Cross-theme analysis revealed that the four dimensions were interconnected rather than functioning as independent leadership practices. Exemplary conduct provided the behavioral foundation through discipline, personal modeling, and collective work values. This foundation supported vision alignment, which was maintained through regular communication, participatory discussion, and shared institutional direction. The shared direction subsequently supported innovation development, reflected in the creation of

distinctive flagship programs, digital learning initiatives, and collaborative program development. Finally, teacher empowerment distributed responsibility for these programs according to teachers' competencies and provided the autonomy and support necessary for their implementation.

This integrated pattern is presented in Figure 2, in which transformational leadership by the madrasah head is connected to four dimensions: exemplary conduct, vision alignment, innovation development, and teacher empowerment. These dimensions correspond respectively to disciplined organizational culture, shared institutional direction, distinctive flagship programs, and distributed teacher leadership, which collectively lead toward sustainable competitive advantage through public trust, achievement, and enrollment.

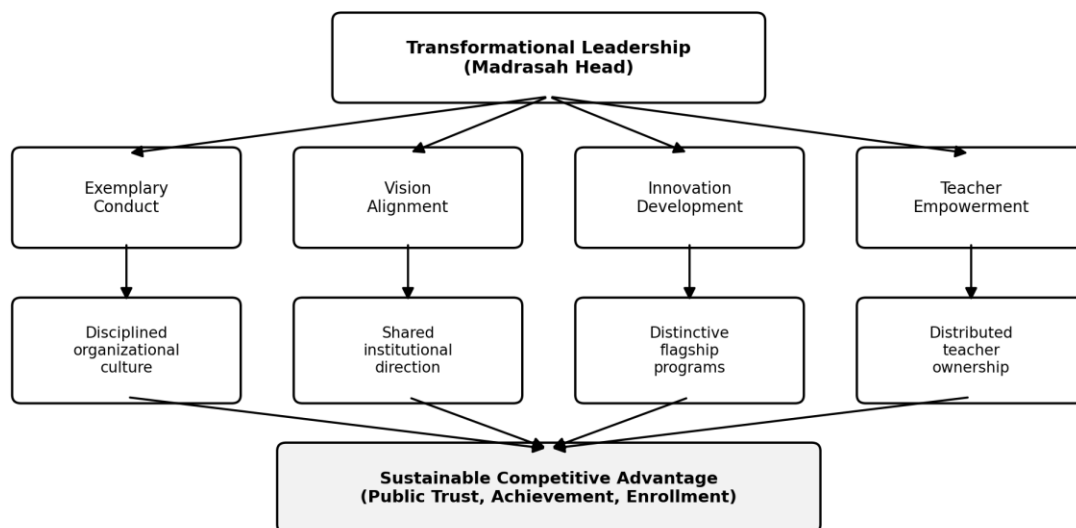


Figure 2. Conceptual Model of Findings

Overall, the findings indicate that sustainable competitive advantage at MTs Modern Bani Adam was developed through the integration of the four leadership practices rather than through any single flagship program. The empirical evidence shows a progressive pattern in which leadership by example established the organizational foundation, shared vision provided direction, innovation produced distinctive institutional offerings, and teacher empowerment distributed the capacity required to sustain these initiatives. This pattern directly answers the research question concerning how the madrasah head implements transformational leadership in building sustainable competitive advantage.

D. Discussion

The findings show that transformational leadership at MTs Modern Bani Adam operates not as four independent leadership behaviors, but as a sequential and culturally embedded process through which sustainable competitive advantage is developed. The four dimensions identified—exemplary conduct, vision alignment, innovation development,

and teacher empowerment—correspond to Idealized Influence, Inspirational Motivation, Intellectual Stimulation, and Individualized Consideration in Bass & Riggio (2006) framework. Their significance lies in the way one dimension creates the conditions for the next: exemplary conduct builds trust and discipline, vision alignment converts trust into shared direction, intellectual stimulation turns that direction into innovation, and individualized consideration distributes the resulting capacity across teachers. This pattern provides the central answer to the research question: transformational leadership builds competitive advantage when its dimensions function as an interconnected organizational process rather than as isolated leadership attributes.

The first finding concerns exemplary conduct, through which the madrasah head established discipline primarily by modeling the expected behavior. The head explained, “If an event is scheduled for a certain time, the event starts exactly at that time. I also come earlier so that the teachers follow this example and practice discipline.” Teachers similarly observed the head’s punctuality, direct participation, and consistency. One teacher stated, “He now leads by example. Before, when he only gave ordinary instructions, some teachers were indifferent because many young teachers here tend to have ego issues.” These findings indicate that behavioral modeling was more influential than verbal instruction because it made organizational expectations visible and credible. This is consistent with Bass and Riggio’s explanation of Idealized Influence, in which leaders gain trust and respect by embodying expected values. Safi’i (2023) similarly emphasizes exemplary and consistent leadership. The Javanese expressions “Tatak, Tetek, Tutuk” and “Guyup Rukun Amrih Moncer” show that this behavior was culturally localized through discipline and harmony, consistent with Setiyani (2020). Thus, the study extends transformational leadership literature by showing that Idealized Influence is translated into locally meaningful practices that create a disciplined organizational culture. Such culture can become a competitive resource because quality can be maintained without continuous direct supervision (Prasetyo, 2022).

The second finding shows that exemplary conduct was followed by vision alignment. Rather than presenting competition as a threat, the head framed it as an opportunity to improve quality and public recognition. He stated, “Our vision right now is focused on introducing MTs Bani Adam to the public by highlighting our achievements in competitions and the excellent programs we carry out at the madrasah.” Vision alignment was reinforced through weekly and monthly meetings and coordination forums. One teacher explained that the head consistently responded to teachers’ ideas, but proposals were discussed collectively before implementation “to check their suitability with the madrasah’s needs.” This suggests that Inspirational Motivation operated as a continuing conversational process rather than a one-time articulation of institutional vision. Bass and Riggio’s theory explains this as communicating meaningful goals and connecting individual efforts with shared purpose. The finding is consistent with Sopwandin et al (2025) and Saifullah et al (2023), who associate shared vision and communication with organizational direction and participation. However, unlike Nurlatifah et al (2025), who operationalize

transformational dimensions mainly through measurable indicators, this study demonstrates how vision alignment is negotiated through interpersonal interaction. In a small madrasah, repeated face-to-face communication allows teachers to understand priorities and develop ownership. Consequently, shared vision directs limited resources toward distinctive programs and strengthens collective commitment (Sopwandin et al., 2025).

The third finding concerns intellectual stimulation, which transformed shared direction into concrete innovation. The head described the institution's early condition: "We started with a small number of students (18 students), so we needed something distinctive to gain the community's trust." In response, the madrasah developed Science Olympiad training, 3-Juz Tahfidz, Hasthalaku, Adi Pangastuti, literacy and numeracy activities, bilingual learning, and the Matsamba digital learning application. Teachers confirmed that these programs were developed collaboratively rather than imposed entirely from the top. The finding is consistent with Bass and Riggio's Intellectual Stimulation and with Yang & Xu (2026) and Alshuhumi et al (2025), who link transformational leadership with innovation. However, this case adds an important contextual explanation: innovation emerged not merely from a general desire for development, but from an urgent need to overcome weak initial legitimacy. With only 18 students and limited public recognition, distinctive programs became a strategy for rebuilding community trust. Competitive advantage therefore lies not in any single program, but in the madrasah's capacity to generate and integrate innovations across academic, character, and technological domains. This supports the view that innovation capability, rather than an isolated product, provides a more sustainable basis for differentiation (Encu, 2025).

The fourth finding shows that innovation was sustained through individualized consideration and teacher empowerment. The head explained, "I do not appoint teachers carelessly; I first assess their competence and potential. I then entrust the implementation of programs in their respective fields to them. If there are aspects they have not yet mastered, we provide training or bring in a resource person to ensure the program runs smoothly." A teacher similarly stated, "We are trusted to manage the program according to our abilities. The madrasah head does not immediately take over when obstacles arise; instead, he provides guidance and support, so that we can learn while carrying responsibility for the programs we handle." These practices correspond to Individualized Consideration because teachers receive differentiated responsibilities, support, and opportunities to develop capabilities. Bass and Riggio explain that transformational leaders recognize individual needs and potential through coaching. The finding is consistent with Dian et al (2022), which emphasizes leadership support and employee development. It differs from Saifudin et al (2024), where individualized consideration is discussed mainly as a mechanism for improving individual performance. In this case, empowerment also performs an organizational function. Because the madrasah has a small teaching staff, distributing responsibility according to competence reduces dependence on the head and strengthens

continuity. Teacher empowerment therefore converts individual capability into collective capacity and supports sustainable competitive advantage.

Taken together, the findings reveal a sequential mechanism that extends the conventional treatment of transformational leadership dimensions as separate constructs. Idealized Influence creates disciplined behavior and trust; Inspirational Motivation transforms that trust into shared institutional direction; Intellectual Stimulation channels that direction into distinctive innovation; and Individualized Consideration distributes the capacity required to sustain it. Each dimension therefore becomes a condition for the next rather than an independent or merely additive predictor. The model extends Bass and Riggio's framework by showing how transformational leadership becomes culturally situated and organizationally cumulative in an Islamic educational institution. The study thus answers the research question by demonstrating that sustainable competitive advantage is produced through the interaction of leadership, culture, shared direction, innovation, and distributed teacher competence. The advantage is not attached solely to the madrasah head or to a single flagship program, but embedded in an organizational process that can continue beyond individual leadership.

E. Implication

Building on the sequential leadership process identified above, these findings carry concrete implications for both theory-building and practice. Theoretically, they suggest that future models of transformational leadership in Islamic education should treat contextual embeddedness – institutional history, scale, and cultural idiom – as a core analytic category rather than a background variable, and should test how the four dimensions sequence and depend on one another rather than only estimating their additive, independent contribution to an outcome. Practically, these findings can be translated directly into the design of madrasah-head training programs: modules on exemplary leadership should include structured self-reflection and peer role-modeling exercises rather than ethics lectures alone; modules on vision alignment should require trainees to design and practice recurring participatory forums, such as weekly or monthly evaluation meetings, rather than one-off vision workshops; modules on innovation should incorporate guided idea-incubation projects that link teacher creativity to concrete institutional-differentiation strategies; and modules on individualized consideration should train heads in competency-mapping and mentoring schemes that deliberately distribute program ownership so that institutional capacity does not depend on any single individual. For policymakers, particularly the Ministry of Religious Affairs and madrasah supervisory bodies, these findings imply that human-resource development policy for Islamic educational institutions should require transformational-leadership certification as a prerequisite for madrasah-head appointment and promotion, allocate a dedicated budget line for teacher capacity-building tied to program management rather than academic training alone, and require madrasahs to document succession and mentoring plans as part of institutional accreditation, so that the competitive advantage built through leadership does not erode when personnel change.

F. Limitation and Suggestion for Further Research

This study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting its findings. First, the study employed a qualitative case study design at a single madrasah, MTs Modern Bani Adam, Boyolali, which limits the transferability of the findings to other Islamic educational institutions with different organizational, cultural, and geographical contexts. Second, the data were obtained from three informants, consisting of the madrasah head and two teachers directly involved in flagship programs. Although interviews were complemented by observation and documentation and supported through triangulation, the perspectives of students, parents, administrative staff, and other stakeholders were not included. Third, the study focused specifically on transformational leadership and its relationship with sustainable competitive advantage, so other potentially relevant factors, such as organizational resources, community support, institutional policy, and external competition, were not examined in depth.

Further research should therefore examine whether the sequential relationship identified in this study can be observed in other madrasahs and Islamic educational institutions with different sizes, leadership structures, and cultural settings. Comparative multi-site studies involving several institutions could strengthen the transferability of the proposed framework and identify contextual variations in how the four transformational leadership dimensions operate. Future studies could also incorporate perspectives from students, parents, staff, and other stakeholders to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the leadership process. In addition, quantitative or mixed-method research could test the relationships among exemplary conduct, vision alignment, innovation development, teacher empowerment, and sustainable competitive advantage identified in this qualitative study. Such research would help determine whether the sequential framework developed from this case can be generalized beyond the specific context of MTs Modern Bani Adam.

G. Conclusion

This study concludes that transformational leadership at MTs Modern Bani Adam builds sustainable competitive advantage through a sequential process of exemplary conduct, vision alignment, innovation development, and teacher empowerment. These dimensions work interdependently to establish trust and discipline, create shared direction, generate distinctive programs, and strengthen distributed teacher capacity. The findings extend Bass and Riggio's transformational leadership framework by demonstrating its culturally embedded application in an Islamic educational institution and show that sustainable competitive advantage is strengthened through leadership practices that integrate organizational culture, innovation, and teacher development.

References

- Alshuhumi, S. R. A., Al-Hidabi, D. A. M. Y., & Akinbode, A. I. (2025). Examining the Mediating Role of Innovative Organizational Culture Between Transformational Leadership Styles and Organizational Commitment. *Frontiers in Education*, 10, Article 1646970. <https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2025.1646970>
- Bass, B. M., & Riggio, R. E. (2006). *Transformational Leadership* (2nd ed.). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. <https://routledge.com/9780805847628>
- Burns, J. M. (1978). *Leadership*. Harper & Row. Retrieved from <https://vpd.swanlibraries.net/Record/a363752>
- Dian, D., Faizal, I., & Hasanah, N. D. (2022). Leadership and Capacity Building; The Construction of Madrasah Quality Improvement. *Al-Tanzim: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam*, 6(1), 79–90. <https://doi.org/10.33650/al-tanzim.v6i1.3179>
- Encu, A. (2025). Beyond Traditional Models: Exploring the Synergy of Total Quality Management and Educational Excellence in Madrasah. *Al-Tanzim: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam*, 9(2), 427–441. <https://doi.org/10.33650/al-tanzim.v9i2.10804>
- Gammelgaard, B. (2017). Editorial: The Qualitative Case Study. *The International Journal of Logistics Management*, 28(4), 910–913. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJLM-09-2017-0231>
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic Inquiry*. SAGE Publications.
- Mahsusi, Huda, S., Fahmi, M., Kusen, Haryanti, N. D., & Wajdi, M. B. N. (2024). Achieving Excellence: The Role of Digital Transformation in Madrasah Management and Islamic Culture. *Cogent Arts & Humanities*, 11(1), Article 2304407. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311983.2024.2304407>
- Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, J. (2014). *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Nifasri. (2025). Adapting Transformative Leadership in Islamic Education: Insights From Madrasah. *Al-Tanzim: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam*, 9(1), 270–284. <https://doi.org/10.33650/al-tanzim.v9i1.10803>
- Nurlatifah, S., Komariah, A., Permana, J., & Sururi, S. (2025). Transformational Leadership Assessment in Universities: A Framework for Institutional Development. *IRJE: Indonesian Research Journal in Education*, 9(2), 1354–1368. <https://doi.org/10.22437/irje.v9i02.51276>
- Pahwa, M., Cavanagh, A., & Vanstone, M. (2023). Key Informants in Applied Qualitative Health Research. *Qualitative Health Research*, 33(14), 1251–1261. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10497323231198796>

- Prasetyo, M. A. M. (2022). Organizational and Cultural Transformation of Pesantren in Creating a Competitive Culture. *Qalamuna: Jurnal Pendidikan, Sosial, dan Agama*, 14(1), 73–88. <https://doi.org/10.37680/qalamuna.v14i1.1267>
- Rofiqi, Zainiyati, H. S., Niam, K., Kusaeri, & Zuhri, A. M. (2026). Educational Leadership Transformation in Traditional Settings: Policy Adaptation and Distributed Authority in Indonesian Pesantren. *Leadership and Policy in Schools*, 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15700763.2025.2608041>
- Safi'i, A. (2023). Behavior of Madrasah Heads in Creating an Effective Madrasah Culture. *Ta'allum: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 11(1), 85–98. <https://doi.org/10.21274/taalum.2023.11.1.85-98>
- Saifudin, E., Satibi, I., Kurniawan, B., & Eliyanto. (2024). Kepemimpinan Transformasional Kepala Madrasah dalam Meningkatkan Kualitas Pendidikan. *An-Nidzam: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan dan Studi Islam*, 11(1), 110–122. <https://doi.org/10.33507/an-nidzam.v11i1.2081>
- Saifullah, A., Maunah, B., Patoni, A., & Saputra, P. R. (2023). Dimensions of Transformational Leadership in Improving the Competitiveness of Islamic Education Institutions. *Cendekia: Jurnal Kependidikan dan Kemasyarakatan*, 21(2), 163–179. <https://doi.org/10.21154/cendekia.v21i2.6702>
- Setiyani, W. (2020). The Exerted Authority of Kiai Kampung in the Social Construction of Local Islam. *Journal of Indonesian Islam*, 14(1), 51–76. <https://doi.org/10.15642/JIIS.2020.14.1.51-76>
- Sopwandin, I., Baits, A., & Rostiana, I. N. (2025). Optimizing Competitive Advantages in Amslati Flagship Programs: A Strategic Approach to Enhance Islamic Boarding Schools' Competitiveness. *Qalamuna: Jurnal Pendidikan, Sosial, dan Agama*, 17(1), 239–250. <https://doi.org/10.37680/qalamuna.v17i1.6838>
- Suhid, A., Naser, M. Y. M., Ahmad, A. M., Abah, N. C., Jusoh, R., & Zaremohzzabieh, Z. (2021). Challenges and Readiness of Islamic Education Teachers in Innovative Teaching and Learning. *Jurnal Ilmiah Peuradeun*, 9(2), 293–308. <https://doi.org/10.26811/peuradeun.v9i2.588>
- Wahananto, J., Noviyanti, S. F., & Nasyiri, A. N. (2023). Leadership in Developing a Culture of Quality (Case Study in Madrasah Aliyah Negeri Lamongan). *Ar-Rosikhun: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam*, 3(1), 17–30. <https://doi.org/10.18860/rosikhun.v3i1.18243>
- Yang, C., & Xu, Z. (2026). Principal Visionary Leadership and Teacher Instructional Innovation: Mediating Roles of Teacher Workplace Well-Being and Collaboration. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 17, Article 1701099. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2026.1701099>

Yoserizal, Darmayanti, R., Septrisia, R., Rusdinal, Hadiyanto, & Rifma. (2024). The Impact of Transformational Leadership on Educational Environments: A Systematic Review. *Mimbar Ilmu*, 29(3), 401–410. <https://doi.org/10.23887/mi.v29i3.90157>

Zakariyah. (2024). Improving Madrasah Competitiveness Through Excellent Islamic Education Development Strategies. *Nazhruna: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 7(1), 140–155. <https://doi.org/10.31538/nzh.v7i1.4541>

Author's Biography

	M. Azzam Bachtiar.  He was born in Kendal, Indonesia, on June 22, 2003. He is an undergraduate student in Islamic Education at Universitas Islam Negeri Salatiga, Indonesia. His academic interests include Islamic education and educational management. Email: m.azzambachtiar22@gmail.com
	Purnomo. He is an academic and lecturer at Universitas Islam Negeri Salatiga, Indonesia. He currently serves as Head of the Department of Islamic Education, Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training, where he contributes to academic leadership and the development of Islamic education. Email: purnomo@uinsalatiga.ac.id