Using NVivo to Identify Cultural, Social, and Contextual Factors Influencing Leadership Practices in Islamic-based Schools: A Qualitative Research

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Article Info

ABSTRACT

This research aims to explore the cultural, social, and contextual factors that influence the practices of transformational leaders in Islamic-based schools, focusing on how these factors shape leadership styles and decision-making processes. Utilizing qualitative methods and NVivo software for data analysis, the study examines the roles of cultural values, social awareness, and community involvement in shaping the leadership practices of school principals. NVivo was employed to analyze and visualize key themes through tools such as word clouds, project map diagrams, and hierarchy charts, which helped identify and organize the most frequently mentioned concepts and relationships within the data. The findings highlight the significant impact of Islamic teachings, such as discipline, respect, cooperation, and transparency, in guiding leadership behaviors and decision-making. Culturally, leadership is deeply rooted in Islamic principles, fostering a supportive and inclusive school environment. Socially, leadership practices emphasize empathy, solidarity, and mutual aid, influencing leaders' decisions in favor of the collective good. Contextually, routine religious practices and active community involvement contribute to the holistic development of students and staff, reinforcing the principles of collaboration and shared responsibility. Overall, this study underscores the importance of cultural, social, and contextual factors in shaping transformational leadership in Islamic-based schools, illustrating how these elements guide both leadership styles and decision-making processes toward achieving educational and spiritual goals.

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, the concept of school leadership has evolved significantly, with increasing recognition of its critical role in shaping educational outcomes. Effective leadership is no longer viewed simply as administrative oversight but as a dynamic process that can inspire and mobilize entire school communities toward meaningful change (Dudar et al., 2017; Hargreaves, 2023; Kaplan & Owings, 2017). Transformational leadership is one of the most impactful among the various emerging leadership models. This approach emphasizes the ability of leaders to inspire, motivate, and guide their followers beyond mere compliance with

rules, fostering an environment where teachers, staff, and students are empowered to achieve their fullest potential.

In Indonesia, as in many other parts of the world, educational institutions face growing demands for reform and improvement. The nation's educational system is tasked with addressing diverse challenges, from improving student performance and addressing inequality to adapting to technological advances and global educational trends (Kartiasih et al., 2023; Kurniawati et al., 2018). Against this backdrop, transformational leadership has gained attention as a viable solution to these challenges, offering a framework that supports academic achievement and the broader development of school communities. This model of leadership has the potential to reshape school cultures, enhance organizational effectiveness, and improve student outcomes.

Despite its growing prominence, limited research explicitly examines how transformational leadership operates within Indonesian schools' unique social, cultural, and contextual conditions. Many studies on leadership in education focus on Western settings, making it necessary to explore how transformational leadership practices are adapted and implemented in Indonesia's diverse educational landscape. A search using Dimension AI with the keyword "education leadership" covering the years 2020-2024 shows that, in general, studies in Indonesia are still relatively limited. Figure 1 illustrates this.
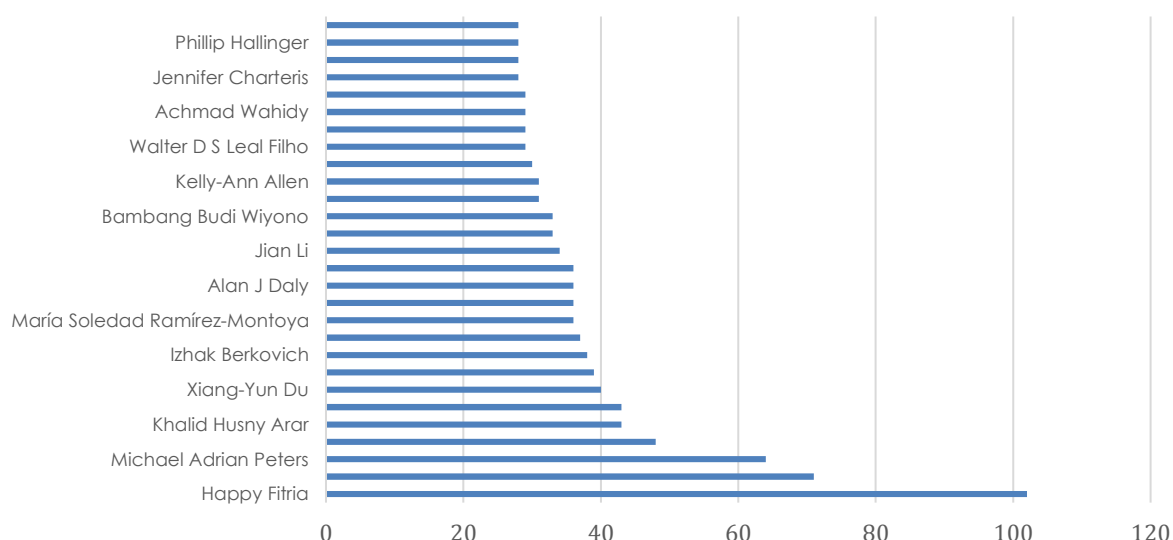

Figure 1. Researcher on Education Leadership

Understanding these practices is crucial for identifying the specific strategies that lead to success and addressing the distinct challenges faced by school leaders in the country. Studying leadership practices in Islamic-based schools in Indonesia not only contributes to improving the quality of education but also helps align educational leadership with the nation's cultural, social, and religious values. It ensures that these schools continue to play a pivotal role in shaping the character and future of Indonesian youth.

The purpose of this study is to conduct a deep analysis of transformational school leadership practices in Indonesia. Through this research, the study seeks to provide insights into effective leadership strategies that contribute to both educational improvement and broader institutional development. In doing so, it aims to bridge the gap in the current literature by offering a context-specific understanding of transformational leadership in Indonesian schools. The key objective is to identify the cultural, social, and contextual factors that influence the practices of transformational leaders, including how these factors shape leadership styles and decision-making processes.

2.   METHODS

2.1.   Context

This study will employ qualitative data collection methods to understand transformational school leadership practices in Indonesia comprehensively. The study was conducted in two private Islamic-based schools in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. The focus will be on exploring leadership characteristics, behaviors, and contextual factors that shape leadership practices across diverse educational settings. The data collection will primarily involve semi-structured interviews with school leaders and key stakeholders within the school environment. These interviews aim to uncover leadership styles, behaviors, and strategies used to inspire and motivate staff and students, as well as to explore how leaders navigate challenges and capitalize on opportunities.

Participants

The study involved two school principals who will provide insights into their leadership practices and experiences, Head of administration and head of the library, both of whom will offer perspectives on how leadership influences school management and operations; and ten teachers from various fields of study who will contribute their views on how transformational leadership impacts classroom practices, school climate, and overall educational outcomes.

Data Collection

Key participants were interviewed semi-structured. These interviews focused on understanding school leaders' leadership styles, the specific behaviors they exhibit in their daily practices, and the strategies they use to inspire their staff and students. Targeted interviews also gathered detailed information on the challenges leaders face and the innovative strategies they implement to address these challenges. Additionally, teachers and administrative staff provided insights into how leadership practices influence the school's performance, organizational health, and climate. Table 1 shows the instrument to gather the data.

Table 1. Semi-structured interview rubrics

School Principals	Teachers	Staffs
Issue 1: Cultural factors that influence leadership practices in schools		
How do you actively shape and develop a positive school culture that supports transformational leadership practices? What are some concrete steps you have taken to create an environment that encourages innovation, collaboration, and empowerment of all school members?	How do you think our current school culture affects the way the principal leads and interacts with teachers, staff, and students? Are there specific values or norms in the school culture that support or hinder the practice of transformational leadership?	How do you think our current school culture affects the principal's leadership style in managing and developing the school? Are specific values or norms supporting or hindering transformational leadership practices?
Issue 2: Social factors influence the transformational leadership approach		
How do you adapt your transformational leadership approach to the social dynamics and specific needs of this school community, including expectations from teachers, staff, students, parents, and other stakeholders? Please provide concrete examples of how you consider these social factors in your decision-making and implementation of school programs.	How do you think the social relationships between the principal, teachers, staff, and students in our school affect the leadership approach adopted by the principal? Are there specific social dynamics that encourage or hinder the application of transformational leadership style in this school?	In your opinion, how are the social relationships between the principal, teachers, staff, and students in this school? Do these relationships support or hinder the principal in implementing the transformational leadership approach?
Issue 3: Contextual factors that pose challenges or opportunities for school leaders		
In the context of our current school, what factors do you consider to be the most significant challenges or the best opportunities in implementing transformational leadership? How do you try to overcome these challenges or take advantage of the opportunities to achieve the school's vision and mission?	What contextual factors in our school, such as resources, government policies, or the socio-economic conditions of the surrounding community, do you think pose challenges or opportunities for principals in implementing transformational leadership? Can you give concrete examples of how these factors affect leadership practices in this school?	What contextual factors in our school environment, such as the socio-economic conditions of the community, government policies, or available resources, do you think pose challenges or opportunities for principals in exercising transformational leadership? How does the principal respond to and utilize these factors to improve the school?

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was used to analyze transcripts from the interviews. The analysis focused on identifying recurring patterns and themes related to leadership behaviors, challenges, opportunities, and contextual factors. NVivo software was used to code and organize the qualitative data, enabling a systematic approach to analyzing the complex dynamics of transformational leadership in schools. This software helped in identifying key themes and trends, as well as relationships between different variables across the interviews and discussions.

3.   RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

RESULTS

3.1   Word cloud

Figure 2 is a visual representation of the most frequently mentioned words or terms in a dataset (interview transcripts). The size of each word in the cloud corresponds to its frequency of occurrence, with more prominent words representing terms that appear more often in the data. It shows key themes, concepts, or patterns in the data.
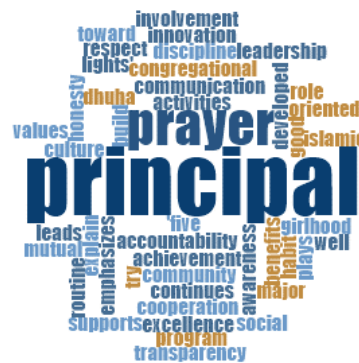

Figure 2. Word Cloud Diagram

3.2   Project map diagram

Figure 3 shows the project map diagram to visually represent and organize the relationships between different components of the research issue. It visualizes the connections between themes, concepts, nodes, or data sources. The diagram illustrates how different elements of the data are interrelated, allowing for a clearer understanding of the structure.
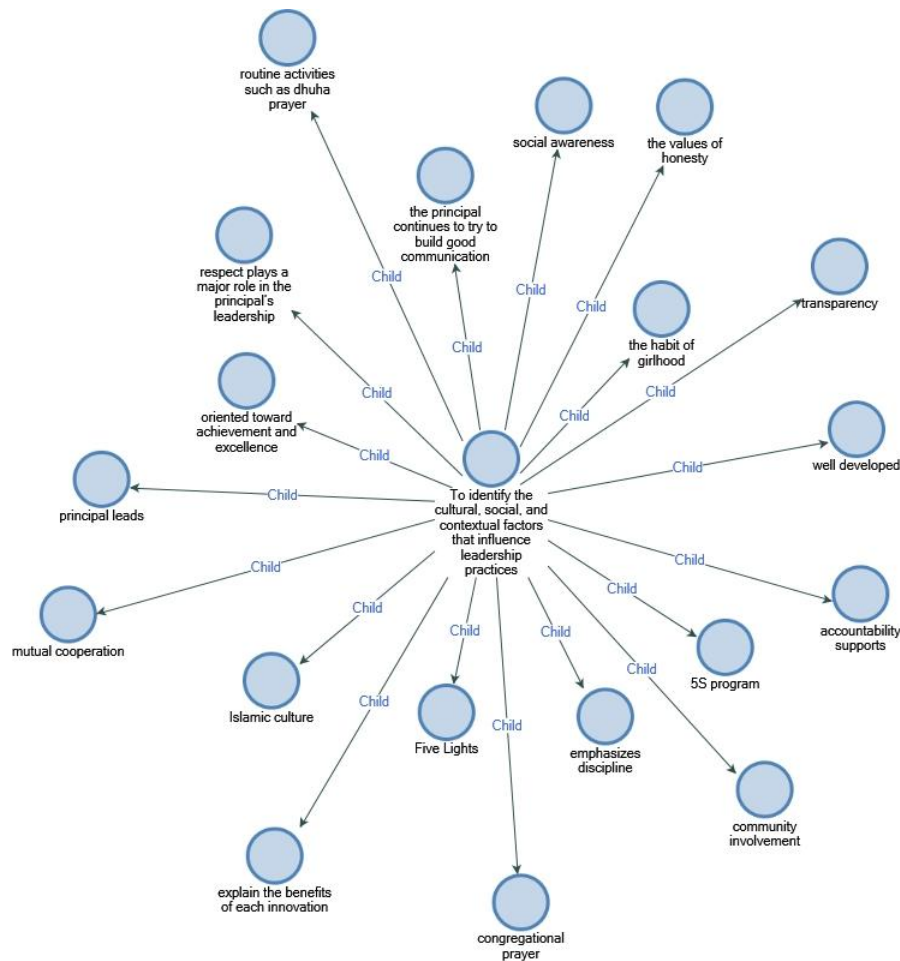
Figure 3. Project map diagram

3.3   Hierarchy Chart

Figure 4 visually represents the structure of themes, nodes, or categories. It displays the relationships and hierarchy between different themes, sub-themes, and their associated data based on the interviews. It shows how main themes (parent nodes) are broken down into sub-themes (child nodes) to understand how different pieces of data relate to overarching categories in terms of school leadership.
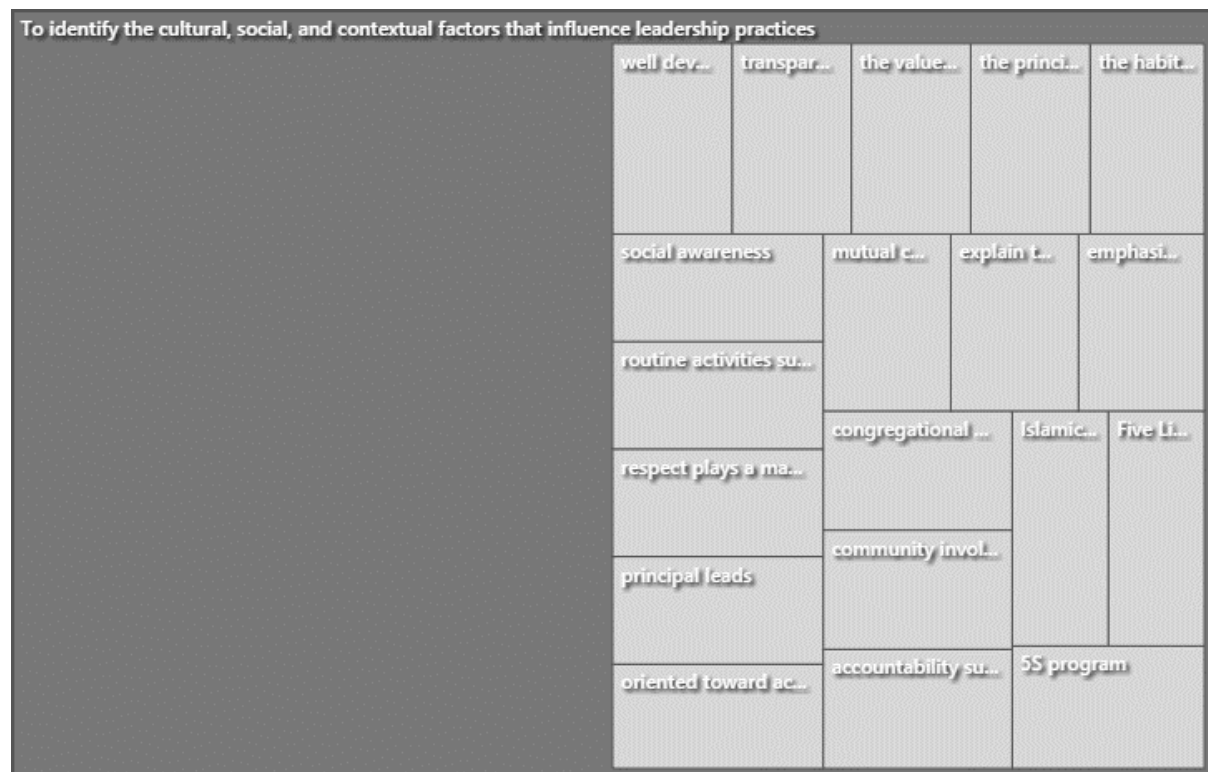
Figure 4. Hierarchy Chart

DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

The data from the word cloud indicates that leadership, as a central issue, is closely linked with religious practices, particularly prayer. This connection highlights the significant role that Islamic values play in shaping the leadership practices within the school. Following prayer, other prominent values such as respect, congregational activities, discipline, cooperation, and transparency also emerge as key themes. These values are foundational in guiding leadership behavior and creating a positive school culture. The prominence of these values in the word cloud reflects the integral role they play in fostering a learning environment that is both spiritually and socially enriching.

This finding aligns with the project map diagram, which references several concepts that respondents identified as critical in shaping the leadership of the school principal. Among the most frequently mentioned concepts are a focus on achievement and excellence, Islamic culture, emphasis on discipline, respect, and good communication. These concepts are essential to leadership in Islamic-based schools, with the principal acting as a role model in demonstrating these values (Abdullah, 2019; Haron et al., 2020; Wijaya et al., 2021). The emphasis on achievement and excellence points to the importance of setting high standards for both academic and moral development (Tharp, 2018). Meanwhile, respect and good communication underscore the need for effective interpersonal interactions, vital in fostering an environment of mutual understanding and cooperation (Solomon & Theiss, 2022).

Furthermore, the hierarchical chart offers a more detailed view of the cultural, social, and contextual aspects of leadership. In the cultural aspect, leadership is seen as being deeply intertwined with the application of Islamic teachings, where values such as discipline, respect, and cooperation shape the daily operations and interactions within the school. Socially, leadership is linked to fostering a sense of community and collective responsibility, with an emphasis on cooperation and respect for others. Contextually, leadership practices are influenced by routine religious activities, community involvement, and the principal's role in guiding the school with transparency and accountability. All these elements work together to create a school environment that is aligned with Islamic principles and conducive to both academic and personal growth.

3.4   Cultural Aspect

In Islamic-based schools, leadership in the cultural aspect is strongly influenced by the consistent application of Islamic values and teachings in daily activities (Alazmi, 2023; Anwar & Sholeh, 2021; Arar et al., 2022). These values serve as the moral and ethical foundation for the entire school community (Arar et al., 2023), including the principal, teachers, staff, and students. The implementation of Islamic teachings such as honesty, discipline, responsibility, and mutual respect guides decision-making and behavior in the school. Moreover, the well-established values developed within the school reflect a strong and stable culture (Alazmi, 2023). These values may have been internalized by the entire school community, creating an environment that supports the achievement of Islamic educational goals. For instance, the regular practice of communal worship, the application of Islamic etiquette in daily interactions, and the cultivation of a learning spirit based on religious teachings are standard practices that reflect these values.

Leadership in Islamic-based schools is often communal or collective, where the principal and teachers work together to manage and lead the school (Basit et al., 2023). This collective leadership encourages active participation from all parties, including teachers, students, and the surrounding community, to create a harmonious learning environment. It is based on the principles of unity in Islam, such as *shura* (consultation) and cooperation (Abdullah, 2019). Thus, the cultural aspect of leadership in Islamic-based schools reflects the vigorous implementation of Islamic teachings, the development of well-established values, and collective leadership that promotes collaboration and participation from the entire school community.

Based on the discussion, Table 2 shows the important indicators for Leadership Practices in Islamic-based schools regarding the Cultural Aspect.

Table 2. The Cultural Aspect Indicators

No	Indicators	Remark
1	Consistent Application of Islamic Values and Teachings	Regularly practice Islamic principles such as honesty, discipline, responsibility, and mutual respect daily.

No	Indicators	Remark
2	Development of Well-Established Values	Internalizing Islamic values by the entire school community creates a stable and strong school culture supporting Islamic educational goals.
3	Regular Practice of Communal Worship and Islamic Etiquette	Conducting daily congregational prayers, Quran recitation, and the application of Islamic etiquette (*Adab*) in interactions.
4	Collective Leadership and Participation	Promoting shura (consultation) and cooperation to foster teamwork and active participation among the principal, teachers, students, and the surrounding community.
5	Cultivation of a Learning Spirit Based on Islamic Teachings	Encouraging a culture of continuous learning and moral development guided by Islamic principles and religious teachings.

These indicators reflect how leadership practices in the cultural aspect are grounded in Islamic values, collective efforts, and the daily reinforcement of religious teachings.

3.5 Social Aspect

Leadership in the social aspect is evident in the high level of social awareness cultivated within the school environment. The principal and teachers play a crucial role in fostering this awareness by encouraging care and compassion for others within and outside the school community (Cherkowski, 2018; Kaplan & Owings, 2017; Wijaya et al., 2021). Values such as empathy, solidarity, and *ta'awun*(mutual assistance) are integrated into various social programs, such as *zakat* (charity), *infak* (donations), and *sedekah* (alms), which teach students to be mindful of those who are less fortunate (Thaidi et al., 2023). This aligns with Islamic teachings emphasizing maintaining social balance through acts of kindness and responsibility toward society (Abdullah, 2019; Muhammad, 2020).

Moreover, respect and mutual regard are integral to the daily life of an Islamic-based school. School leadership promotes a culture of respect among all members of the school community—students, teachers, and staff. This principle of respect is derived from Islamic *adab* (etiquette), which teaches individuals to behave with kindness and courtesy, both in speech and action (Ali, 2019). Respect for others, regardless of background or status, fosters an inclusive environment that is filled with mutual respect, ensuring that social interactions within the school remain harmonious. Cooperation also serves as a foundation for social leadership in Islamic-based schools. The principal encourages strong collaboration between all parties within the school, including students, teachers, and parents. The principle of *shura* (consultation), a key aspect of decision-making in Islam, is implemented to ensure that everyone feels heard and that their opinions are valued (Moghimi, 2018). This cooperation creates a collective and participatory learning environment where everyone works together toward the common goal of enhancing the quality of education grounded in Islamic values.

Based on the discussion, Table 3 expresses the important indicators for Leadership Practices in Islamic-Based Schools regarding the Social Aspect.

Table 3. The Social Aspect Indicators

No	Indicators	Remark
1	Fostering Social Awareness and Compassion	Encouraging care, empathy, and compassion for others through programs such as zakat (charity), infak (donations), and sedekah (alms) to support the less fortunate.
2	Promoting Respect and Mutual Regard	Establishing a culture of mutual respect based on Islamic adab (etiquette), ensuring kindness, courtesy, and inclusivity in daily interactions among students, teachers, and staff.
3	Encouraging Solidarity and Mutual Assistance (Ta'awun)	Integrating values of solidarity and ta'awun (mutual assistance) into school programs, promoting unity and shared responsibility in the school community.
4	Implementing Cooperation and Collaboration	Facilitating strong collaboration among all stakeholders, including students, teachers, parents, and the community, to achieve shared educational goals.
5	Practicing Shura (Consultation) in Decision-Making	Promoting participatory leadership by implementing shura (consultation), ensuring every voice is heard and valued in the decision-making process.

These indicators highlight the role of school leadership in building a socially aware, inclusive, and cooperative environment that aligns with Islamic values.

3.6 Contextual Aspect

Leadership in the contextual aspect is reflected in the practices of the school principal, who plays both a spiritual and managerial role (Egel & Fry, 2017; Rothausen, 2017; Truong & Hallinger, 2017). The principal is not only responsible for managing the operational aspects of the school but also leads by exemplifying the Islamic behaviors and values intended to be implemented within the school community. In this context, the principal often serves as a role model for teachers, students, and staff, demonstrating Islamic principles such as honesty, responsibility, and etiquette (Fullan, 2023). Leadership grounded in religious values shapes the school culture, aligning it with the goals of Islamic education.

Furthermore, routine activities that support the implementation of Islamic values are also a crucial part of leadership within the school. Activities such as congregational prayers, Quran recitation, and teaching Islamic ethics are regularly practiced to instill religious values in students' daily lives (Anwar & Sholeh, 2021; Arar et al., 2022; Elhoshi et al., 2017). These activities are not merely formalities but are designed to strengthen students' character and foster an Islamic culture within the school environment. The principal's leadership in organizing and ensuring the smooth execution of these routine activities is key to creating a conducive and religiously grounded learning atmosphere.

Community involvement is also a significant contextual factor in leadership within Islamic-based schools. Schools typically maintain strong relationships with the surrounding community, including students' parents, religious leaders, and local groups (Allen et al., 2018). The principal facilitates active community participation in various school activities, such as religious study programs, social initiatives, and collaborations in the development of school facilities. Community involvement strengthens social ties and expands support in achieving educational goals (Mishra, 2020). This participation also reflects the principles of cooperation and consultation in Islam, where all parties work together for the common good. Additional

elements that may influence leadership practices include transparency, accountability, and the SS program, which are related to performance improvement and management.

Based on the discussion, Table 4 describes the important indicators for Leadership Practices in Islamic-based schools regarding the Contextual Aspect.

Table 4. The Contextual Aspect Indicators

No	Indicators	Remark
1	Spiritual and Managerial Leadership	The principal serves as a role model, demonstrating Islamic behaviors such as honesty, responsibility, and Islamic etiquette in managing the school's spiritual and operational aspects.
2	Routine Religious Activities	Organizing and ensuring the smooth execution of routine practices such as congregational prayers, Quran recitation, and teaching Islamic ethics to instill values and strengthen students' character.
3	Community Involvement and Engagement	Facilitating active community participation, including parents, religious leaders, and local groups, in school programs such as religious studies, social initiatives, and facility development.
4	Transparency and Accountability	Implementing transparent and accountable leadership practices to ensure trust, fairness, and performance improvement in school management.
5	Alignment with Islamic Educational Goals	Ensuring leadership practices support the achievement of Islamic educational goals by fostering a religiously grounded and conducive learning atmosphere.

These indicators reflect the principal's dual role in leading spiritually and operationally, integrating routine religious practices, and fostering strong community ties for the success of Islamic-based schools.

Based on the discussion and the descriptions provided in Table 2 through Table 4, a conceptual model can be developed as a diagram to represent Leadership Practices in Islamic-Based Schools. This model aligns with the cultural, social, and contextual aspects illustrated in Figure 5.
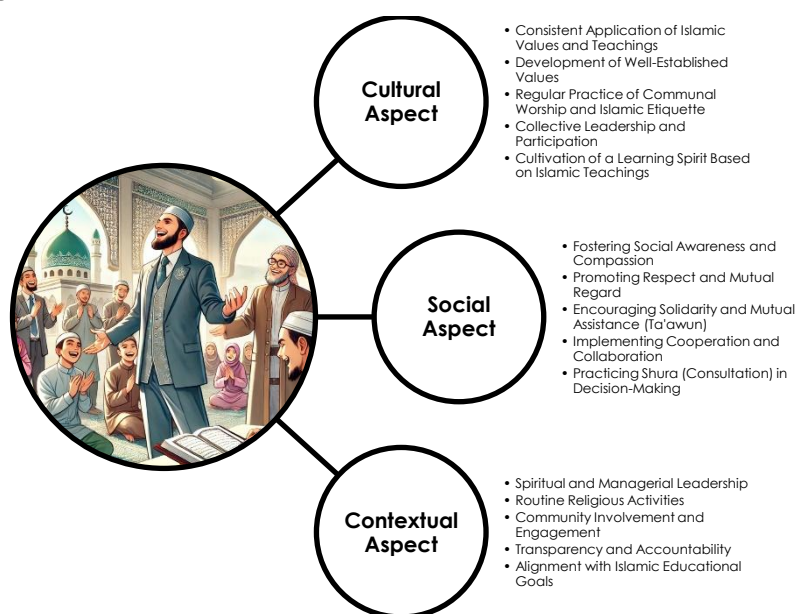

Figure 5. The Model of Leadership Practices in Islamic-based Schools

The cultural aspect emphasizes the consistent application of Islamic values, such as honesty, discipline, respect, and cooperation, as the ethical foundation for the school community through shared leadership practices. The social aspect highlights fostering social awareness, empathy, and mutual assistance through programs like *zakat*, *infak*, and *sedekah*, while promoting respect, cooperation, and consultation (*shura*). The contextual aspect focuses on the principal's dual role as a spiritual and managerial leader, organizing religious activities like prayers and Quran recitation and fostering community involvement with transparency and accountability. Together, these three aspects—cultural, social, and contextual—form the foundation of leadership practices in Islamic-based schools, as illustrated in Figure 5, creating a holistic environment grounded in Islamic values.

4.   CONCLUSION

The findings highlight the significant role that cultural, social, and contextual elements play in shaping effective transformational leadership, especially in an Islamic-based school setting. Leadership is deeply influenced by Islamic values and teachings, which guide the ethical and moral frameworks of leaders. Practices such as prayer, discipline, respect, cooperation, and transparency are integral to the school culture and directly inform leadership behaviors. These cultural elements create a school environment that encourages collaboration, mutual respect, and a focus on both academic and personal development, aligned with Islamic principles. The leadership style within this context is oriented toward fostering a supportive and inclusive environment, with an emphasis on the moral and spiritual development of both staff and students. The research revealed that transformational leadership is closely linked to social awareness and community engagement. Leaders in Islamic-based schools prioritize the well-being of others, promote social responsibility, and encourage cooperation among teachers, students, and the wider community. Leadership practices in this aspect are rooted in the values of empathy, solidarity, and mutual aid (ta'awun), which are central to Islamic teachings. These social values influence leaders' decision-making processes, ensuring that decisions are made with consideration for the collective good, promoting harmony and mutual respect within the school community. Lastly, the study demonstrated that leadership is shaped by both routine religious practices and the involvement of the community. The school principal, as both a spiritual and managerial leader, exemplifies the integration of Islamic values in daily school operations, including regular activities such as congregational prayers and Quran recitation. Furthermore, the involvement of parents, local religious leaders, and the broader community plays a key role in shaping leadership practices. This collaborative approach, grounded in principles of consultation and cooperation, reinforces a sense of shared responsibility and collective effort in achieving the school's educational and spiritual goals.

5.   ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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