

ISLAMIC INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP AND ITS INFLUENCE ON TEACHING QUALITY AT PONDOK PESANTREN WALI SONGO SRAGEN

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Keyword
<p><i>Islamic Instructional Leadership, Pesantren Education, Teaching Quality, Educational Ethics, Islamic Leadership</i></p>

Abstract
<p><i>This study aims to examine the implementation of Islamic instructional leadership and its influence on the quality of teaching at Pondok Pesantren Wali Songo Sragen, a pesantren that integrates traditional Islamic values with a formal education system. In response to the demands for educational improvement and innovation, there is a need for a leadership model that is not only instructionally effective but also aligned with religious values. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation. The findings reveal that leadership at this pesantren emphasizes role modeling (uswah), trust-based mentoring, and moral-spiritual guidance in efforts to improve teacher performance. Teachers demonstrated significant improvements in lesson planning, implementation, and evaluation, driven by leadership grounded in Islamic values such as amanah (trustworthiness), ikhlas (sincerity), and syura (consultation). This research contributes theoretically by offering a contextual adaptation of the instructional leadership model in Islamic education. Practically, the findings provide a framework for pesantrens and Islamic schools seeking to enhance learning quality through value-based leadership. The study also underscores the importance of institutional support to sustain Islamic leadership beyond reliance on individual charisma.</i></p>

INTRODUCTION

Education is a fundamental pillar in building civilization and the quality of human resources (Soraya, 2021). In the context of Islamic education, pondok pesantren holds a strategic position as a faith-based educational institution that not only develops students' intellectual capacity but also their spiritual and moral integrity (Basit et al., 2025). In line with the times and the growing demands for educational quality, pesantren are required to carry out various reforms in their management and leadership systems, including aspects of teaching and learning (Nugraha et al., 2023). One relevant and increasingly discussed approach is instructional leadership, a leadership style that focuses on improving the quality of the teaching and learning process (Ngatini et al., 2025).

Instructional leadership refers to the active involvement of school leaders—in this case, the principal or pesantren leader—in supporting, guiding, and directing teaching and learning activities to achieve optimal outcomes (Pramana et al., 2025). Unlike administrative leadership, which tends to focus on bureaucratic management, instructional leadership emphasizes pedagogical functions such as curriculum development, teacher competency enhancement, learning evaluation, and the creation of a conducive academic climate (Ahmad, 2022).

In the pesantren environment, leadership is viewed not only from a managerial perspective but also through the lens of Islamic values that are strongly embedded in the leader's character, such as amanah (responsibility), role modeling, sincerity, and a spiritual approach in motivating and mentoring both teachers and students (Khoir & Hidayat, 2025). Therefore, Islamic instructional leadership becomes a highly relevant concept to explore, particularly in the effort to improve teaching quality, which lies at the core of the educational process (Herlina, 2025).

Pondok Pesantren Wali Songo Sragen, as one of the growing Islamic educational institutions in Central Java, has implemented various quality improvement programs, including the strengthening of its leadership system to support the learning process. However, there has been limited scientific research specifically exploring how instructional leadership based on Islamic values is practiced by the pesantren leadership, and to what extent it influences teachers' classroom teaching practices. Yet, teaching quality is a crucial indicator in evaluating the success of the educational process, especially in shaping students' competencies and character.

This study was conducted to fill that gap, with the aim of analyzing the practice of Islamic instructional leadership implemented at Pondok Pesantren Wali Songo Sragen, as well as examining its influence on the quality of teaching carried out by the teachers. A qualitative descriptive approach was employed to enable the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of the social context, values, and practices exercised by the pesantren leaders in supporting the learning process.

By using in-depth interview techniques, participatory observation, and documentation, this study is expected to illustrate how Islamic values are not merely used as normative guidelines but are truly internalized in leadership actions that support the improvement of teaching quality. The findings of this research are also expected to contribute to the development of an Islamic educational leadership model that is relevant to contemporary needs, without losing the identity of the pesantren as a value-based Islamic educational institution.

Through an understanding of Islamic instructional leadership, policymakers in Islamic educational institutions are expected to gain practical guidance to enhance teaching effectiveness, empower teachers, and build a healthy and productive academic climate. Therefore, this research is important not only on a theoretical level but also holds high practical value for the development of the pesantren education system in Indonesia.

METHOD

1. Research Approach and Type

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach, aiming to describe, understand, and interpret the phenomenon of Islamic instructional leadership within the real-life context of a pesantren (Bado, 2021). This approach was chosen because it is suitable for exploring the in-depth meaning of leadership practices based on Islamic values and their impact on teaching quality—an aspect that cannot be measured solely through quantitative methods

2. Research Location and Subjects

The research was conducted at Pondok Pesantren Wali Songo Sragen, an Islamic educational institution that integrates the pesantren system with formal education. The research subjects consist of:

- a. The pesantren leader/caregiver, who serves as the main instructional leader
- b. The school principal
- c. Subject teachers

3. Data Collection Techniques

Data were collected using three main techniques (Bado, 2021):

- a. In-depth Interviews
- b. Participatory Observation
- c. Documentation

4. Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis in this study uses the Miles and Huberman model (1994), which consists of three stages (Bado, 2021):

- a. Data Reduction
Selecting, simplifying, and focusing the data based on the themes of Islamic instructional leadership and teaching quality.
- b. Data Display
Presenting the data in the form of descriptive narratives and thematic tables to make it easier to identify patterns and relationships between categories.
- c. Conclusion Drawing and Verification
Interpreting the overall meaning of the data and drawing valid conclusions based on field findings. Verification is carried out continuously throughout the data collection process.

5. Data Validation

The validity of the data was maintained through several strategies (Bado, 2021):

- a. Source Triangulation
Source triangulation to test the credibility of the data was conducted by cross-checking data obtained from various sources such as interviews, archives, and other documents.
- b. Technique Triangulation
Technique triangulation was used to test data credibility by checking data obtained from the same source using different techniques. For example, data obtained through observation was verified through interviews.
- c. Time Triangulation
Time can influence the credibility of data. Data collected through interviews in the morning, when the respondents are still fresh, generally yields more valid results. Therefore, credibility testing must involve checking data through observations, interviews, and documentation at different times or situations until credible data is obtained.

RESULTS

Characteristics of Islamic Instructional Leadership at Pondok Pesantren Wali Songo Sragen

Observations and interviews reveal that the leadership at Pondok Pesantren Wali Songo Sragen implements Islamic instructional leadership through an approach rooted in role modeling (*uswah hasanah*), personal mentoring, and spiritual values. This leadership is reflected not only in managerial aspects such as curriculum organization and academic program planning but also in the leader's ability to serve as a direct role model in behavior, knowledge, and ethics. The leader becomes a central figure of inspiration, shaping teachers' work ethic and students' motivation to learn.

Islamic values such as *amanah* (trustworthiness), *ikhlas* (sincerity), *tawadhu'* (humility), and *syura* (consultation) are not merely used as slogans, but serve as operational principles in educational policymaking. This aligns with the model of Islamic leadership, which emphasizes moral character (*akhlaq*) as an inseparable component of a leader's professionalism (Mustafidin, 2025; Huda & Supriyanto, 2022). The leader's active involvement in academic affairs also illustrates that Islamic instructional leadership is proactive rather than merely administrative, as emphasized in Hallinger's (2003) concept.

The leader serves not only as a visionary guide but also as a pedagogical mentor for teachers. This is evident in their direct involvement in classroom supervision, the provision of constructive feedback, and the implementation of teacher professional development programs, such as methodology training, *tahsin* and *tahfidz* workshops, as well as the integration of

technology in learning (Laili & Hamid, 2024; Fadillah & Ramdhani, 2023). Such involvement highlights a key characteristic of instructional leadership within an Islamic context.

The Influence of Leadership on Teaching Quality

Field data indicate that Islamic instructional leadership directly contributes to improving the quality of teaching among teachers. This improvement is reflected in three main aspects:

1. Lesson planning has become more systematic and adaptive. Teachers are encouraged to prepare instructional tools such as lesson plans (RPP) with discipline, taking into account students' characteristics and local needs. This reflects a growing awareness of the teacher's role as a planner of instruction, not merely a passive deliverer of content.
2. Teaching implementation has shifted from monotonous lecture methods to more participatory and contextual strategies, such as halaqah, kitab discussions, case studies, and thematic projects. These innovations have emerged due to direct support from school leadership in the form of facilities and collaborative spaces for teachers (Basit & Irfan, 2025; Pramana & Jazuli, 2025).
3. Learning evaluation now assesses not only cognitive abilities but also includes the evaluation of students' manners (adab), attitudes, and moral character. This broadens the meaning of "teaching quality" to include spiritual and moral dimensions, making quality a holistic integration rather than purely academic.

Overall, the approach of Islamic instructional leadership being implemented has facilitated both professional and spiritual development of teachers, in alignment with Hallinger's (2003) findings and further contextualized within Islamic education by Arifin & Shulhani (2025).

Internalization of Islamic Values in Leadership Practice

One of the essential findings of this study is that Islamic values do not remain at a symbolic or normative level, but truly become the substance of leadership practice. Teacher development is carried out through a personal and spiritual approach, rather than an authoritarian one. Criticism of teacher performance is delivered through a hikmah-based method that embraces and encourages reflection, rather than judgment (Nugraha & Sudrajad, 2025; Mumtaz & Anwar, 2025).

In addition, the values of ukhuwah (brotherhood) and syura (consultation) serve as the foundation for collective decision-making. The leader does not operate in a top-down manner, but instead engages in strategic dialogue with teachers to design academic programs, plan quality improvement agendas, and respond to social dynamics within the pesantren. This participatory and collaborative culture results in a harmonious and solid organization, aligned with the collective principles of leadership in the pesantren tradition (Khoiri & Hidayat, 2025; Herlina & Munawara, 2025).

Thus, Islamic instructional leadership carries spiritual, social, and transformational dimensions—distinguishing it from bureaucratic leadership models that tend to lack value-based elements.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study show that Islamic instructional leadership as implemented at Pondok Pesantren Wali Songo Sragen reflects a form of leadership that emphasizes not only teaching effectiveness but also the spiritual values that lie at the heart of Islamic education. This leadership approach expands the classical concept of instructional leadership, which is often technocratic, into one that is more holistic and ethically nuanced. While in Hallinger's (2003) framework, the instructional leader serves as an evaluator, curriculum coordinator, and developer of the academic climate, in the pesantren context, this role is broadened to that of a murabbi ruhaniyah (spiritual mentor), who also directly influences the character formation of both teachers and students. In other words, leadership in a pesantren is not only measured by academic outcomes but also by the success in instilling Islamic ethics and a transformative work culture.

The integration of Islamic values into the implementation of instructional leadership fundamentally distinguishes this model from practices in secular institutions. The process of teacher development is not driven solely by formal instructions and structural regulations but is supported by role modeling, spiritual dialogue, and a hikmah-based approach. Leadership in this context aligns more closely with the notion of “moral influence” rather than mere “structural authority”. This reinforces the argument that Islamic leadership authority stems from the personal integrity of the leader, not merely from their administrative position (Huda & Supriyanto, 2022; Mumtaz & Anwar, 2025). In fact, this form of leadership creates a healthy educational ecology, where teachers feel included, heard, and personally mentored—fostering strong loyalty and high work motivation.

In practical terms, the Islamic instructional leadership approach has also proven effective in improving the quality of learning. Teachers become more enthusiastic in developing instructional materials, adopting new methods, and actively engaging in self-evaluation. This is a direct result of a work environment built on trust, ukhuwwah (brotherhood), and musyawarah (collaborative consultation). However, it must be acknowledged that this success heavily depends on the central figure of the leader; without systematic leadership regeneration or training, the sustainability of this model becomes vulnerable. Therefore, an institutional system is needed to structurally support this leadership model—not merely relying on individual charisma. Such institutional support may take the form of standard operating procedures (SOPs) for teacher development, Islamic instructional leadership training, or leadership regeneration programs for pesantren leaders.

From a theoretical perspective, this study enriches the discourse on Islamic educational leadership by offering a hybridization between instructional leadership and spiritual leadership. The findings contribute to the development of a pesantren-specific leadership model that is not only locally relevant but also holds potential as a global reference for values-based educational practices. Amid the challenges of globalization and digitalization—which often risk eroding the essence of spiritual education—this leadership model serves as a balancing force between the demands of modernity and the roots of traditional values. The pesantren, with its rich heritage of values and communal structure, can serve as an example of an adab-based educational ecosystem that maintains pedagogical effectiveness. Therefore, further research should be directed toward the development of a theoretical framework for the Instructional-Spiritual Leadership Model, which can be tested more broadly across various institutions and socio-religious contexts.



Figure 1. Model Visualization: Islamic Instructional Leadership in Pesantren

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the Islamic instructional leadership implemented at Pondok Pesantren Wali Songo Sragen serves as an effective, contextual, and meaningful leadership approach in enhancing the quality of learning and in shaping the character of both educators and students. This leadership does not focus solely on cognitive outcomes but also integrates core Islamic values—such as trustworthiness (amanah), role modeling (uswah), sincerity (ikhlas), and consultation (musyawarah)—into all aspects of the educational process.

Specifically, the pesantren leader plays an active role as a visionary guide, teacher mentor, academic facilitator, and spiritual advisor. The integration of these technical and ethical roles has encouraged teachers to be more disciplined in planning, more innovative in implementation, and more just and holistic in evaluating the teaching and learning process. The most tangible implication of this model is the creation of a pesantren educational ecosystem that is quality-oriented, value-driven, and that fosters teacher loyalty and professionalism.

Furthermore, this study demonstrates that instructional leadership can be effectively adapted within the Islamic education context if it is reinforced by spiritual principles and local culture. Therefore, the Islamic instructional leadership model is not only applicable in pesantren, but also holds potential as a new theoretical framework for value-based educational leadership development in madrasahs, integrated Islamic schools, and other community-based educational institutions.

However, this study also identifies several structural challenges that need to be addressed, such as the lack of formal training for teachers, heavy workloads, and gaps in the adoption of educational technology. For this reason, the success of Islamic instructional leadership must be supported by an adaptive and sustainable institutional system, and should be further developed into institutional models and Islamic educational policies that are broader and more applicable. It is hoped that this research can serve as a foundation for the development of Islamic educational leadership theory and practice that is rooted in values, yet responsive to contemporary challenges.

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