

The Role of Female Transformational Leadership in Enhancing Educational Quality in Pesantren: Empowering Teachers and Fostering Organizational Change

Siti Musfiroh^{*1}, Rezki Oktoberi², Syifa Hanifah Syandra³, Eti Hadiati⁴, Ayse Nesil Demir⁵

¹ Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Intan Lampung; sitimusfiroh21@gmail.com

² Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Intan Lampung; rezkioktoberi18@gmail.com

³ Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Intan Lampung; shanifahsyandra15@gmail.com

⁴ Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Intan Lampung; eti.hadiati@radenintan.c.id

⁵ Bozok University, Yozgat; nesil.demir@yobu.edu.tr

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ABSTRACT

This study presents a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) based on the PRISMA 2020 protocol to investigate the transformative role of female transformational leadership in improving educational quality within Islamic educational institutions, particularly pesantren (Islamic boarding schools). Unlike previous studies that predominantly examine general leadership models, this review uniquely integrates gender perspectives with the four dimensions of transformational leadership idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration—within the pesantren context. A total of five peer-reviewed articles published between 2018 and 2023 were systematically analyzed. The findings reveal that female leaders demonstrate distinctive transformational behaviors that enhance teacher motivation, professional engagement, and collaborative culture. Idealized influence and inspirational motivation emerge as strong predictors of teacher commitment, whereas intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration significantly contribute to sustained professional growth. The study offers a novel theoretical contribution by positioning female leadership as a catalyst for organizational change in pesantren and provides practical implications for developing leadership training programs that strengthen transformational competencies and institutional support for women leaders in Islamic education. These insights underscore the importance of empowering female leadership to cultivate an inclusive, trust-based, and progressive educational environment.

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Corresponding Author:

Siti Musfiroh

Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Intan Lampung; sitimusfiroh21@gmail.com

INTRODUCTION

Leadership plays a pivotal role in shaping the direction, ensuring quality, and sustaining the development of Islamic educational institutions. A leader not only sets the vision and policies but also influences the organizational culture and accountability systems, which significantly impact the learning processes and character formation of students (Assefa & Mujtaba, 2025; Chughtai et al., 2024; Einhorn et al., 2024; Plaku & Leka, 2025; Wilson Heenan et al., 2023; Yousef Farhan, 2024). In the context of Islamic education, ideal leadership transcends administrative functions by integrating Islamic

spiritual values with modern management principles. This integration ensures that educational institutions remain responsive to social changes, technological advancements, and the demands of professional excellence.

Recent empirical studies have shown that transformational leadership, particularly when led by women, significantly enhances the quality of educational services and staff morale. For example, Kasman et al. (2024) observed that female school leaders in integrated Islamic schools, who applied transformational leadership styles, effectively confronted gender stereotypes and patriarchal cultures with visionary competence, integrity, and a high commitment level, thereby improving the institution's competitiveness. Similarly, Fitri Yanti et al. (2025) found that in *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools), female leadership characterized by empathy, collaboration, and innovation directly contributed to improved educational service quality.

With the increasing access to higher education for women and the modernization of Islamic educational institutions, the role of women in leadership positions within these institutions has become more pronounced. In Indonesia, for instance, women are increasingly occupying strategic roles such as headmasters, *pesantren* administrators, and leaders of Islamic higher education institutions. Qualitative research in various *pesantren* has also revealed that social support, organizational experience, and spiritual roots are crucial factors that contribute to the emergence of visionary and adaptive female leaders.

However, despite these advancements, women's leadership in Islamic educational institutions still faces significant structural and cultural barriers. Studies by Erwani and Siregar (2024) emphasize that although the core values of Islam, as reflected in the Qur'an and Hadith, do not prohibit women from taking leadership roles, patriarchal interpretations and social stereotypes continue to limit their opportunities. Additionally, Isnaini et al. (2023) highlights that while female madrasah heads achieve high academic performance and accreditation, they still face challenges related to conflict, power dynamics, and institutional changes.

Normatively, the role of women in leadership within Islam can be viewed through two lenses: the conservative patriarchal interpretations and the emancipatory spirit of gender equality. Zhussipbek et al. (2024) critique these patriarchal interpretations and call for a gender-equitable reinterpretation of religious texts and the implementation of affirmative policies to empower women. Moreover, the evolution of female leadership in contemporary times is intricately linked to the digital age and the 5.0 society. Within this framework, Islamic educational leaders must possess digital literacy, leverage technology (including AI), and drive digital transformation to make institutional management more transparent, efficient, and innovative. Female leaders who merge Islamic spirituality with digital and professional competencies are becoming increasingly strategic in shaping inclusive, adaptive, and globally competitive Islamic educational institutions.

Moreover, the transformation of female leadership should be understood as a systemic process, rather than merely symbolic representation. Affirmative policies, gender-based leadership development programs, mentoring, and organizational culture shifts are crucial for ensuring that women are not just symbolic figures but genuine agents of change in the development of an Islamic leadership paradigm rooted in the principles of justice and mercy for all. Recent studies Zainal Badri and Zulkarnain, (2024) and Akinwale et al., (2024) highlight the importance of a multidimensional approach that combines Islamic egalitarian values with modern professionalism in developing strategic female leadership.

The purpose of this study is to comprehensively analyze the transformation of female leadership in Islamic education in the modern era. Specifically, this research aims to: 1) Identify the dynamics of the changing styles and roles of female leadership in response to social, cultural, and technological developments; 2) Uncover the structural, cultural, and ideological challenges that constrain female leadership in Islamic educational institutions; 3) Examine strategic opportunities to enhance the leadership capacities of women based on Islamic values, gender equality, and modern professionalism.

Through this study, we aim to present a new understanding of how women are not only holding leadership positions but are also active agents of transformation in shaping Islamic education governance that is fair, dynamic, and globally competitive.

METHODS

This study employs a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) design to analyze the dynamics, challenges, and opportunities of female leadership in Islamic education. The SLR methodology was chosen because it offers a transparent, replicable, and scientific approach to identifying, selecting, evaluating, and synthesizing relevant prior research (Azarian et al., 2023; Creswell et al., 2003; Mengist et al., 2020). The SLR process follows the guidelines outlined in PRISMA 2020, which is a well-established protocol for conducting systematic reviews in educational leadership studies (Azarian et al., 2023; Page et al., 2021).

A. Research Design

The research design employed in this study is a systematic literature review (SLR), which follows five essential stages: literature identification, inclusion/exclusion criteria, title and abstract screening, eligibility assessment, and data synthesis. The SLR method allows for a comprehensive review of the literature while ensuring the reliability and reproducibility of findings. The following diagram illustrates the flow of the SLR process used in this study:

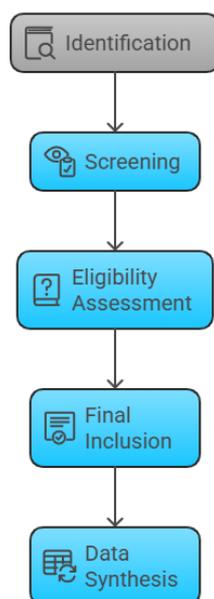


Figure 1. PRISMA Flow Diagram for Systematic Literature Review Process

B. Procedure

The research procedure follows five key stages, each designed to ensure a thorough and transparent review of the existing literature on female leadership in Islamic education.

Stage 1: Literature Identification

The initial stage involved searching for relevant articles across reputable academic databases, including Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, and Garuda. The search was conducted using a combination of keywords such as "women leadership," "female leadership," "Islamic education leadership," "gender equity in education," and "kepemimpinan perempuan." Boolean operators (AND, OR, NOT) were employed to refine the search and optimize the retrieval of relevant articles.

Stage 2: Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The inclusion and exclusion criteria were established to ensure the selection of high-quality, relevant literature for the review. The criteria for inclusion were as follows: a) Peer-reviewed journal articles; b) Published within the last five years (2018-2023); c) Focused on Islamic education, women's leadership, or gender dynamics in education; c) Available in full-text format; d) Exclusion criteria included: Non-peer-reviewed articles such as opinion pieces, essays, and internal reports and duplicates or articles not directly related to the research focus.

Table 1. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
Peer-reviewed journal articles	Non-peer-reviewed articles (e.g., opinion pieces)
Published in the last five years (2018-2023)	Articles not related to Islamic education or gender dynamics
Full-text availability	Duplicates or irrelevant articles
Focus on women's leadership or gender dynamics in education	Non-academic sources (e.g., blogs, news articles)

Stage 3: Title and Abstract Screening

All identified articles were screened based on their titles and abstracts. This initial screening helped eliminate irrelevant studies, ensuring that only articles directly related to the study's objectives were considered. This step was performed according to the PRISMA guidelines, which recommend this stage as the first filter in systematic reviews.

Stage 4: Eligibility Assessment

The next stage involved a full-text review of the selected articles to assess their eligibility. This step ensured that the articles included in the final analysis made significant contributions to the topic of female leadership in Islamic education, specifically addressing structural, cultural, and ideological challenges, as well as opportunities for advancement.

Stage 5: Data Synthesis

Data synthesis was carried out through a qualitative thematic analysis. Articles that met the inclusion criteria were reviewed and coded based on three primary themes: a) Dynamics of Female Leadership: This theme explored the changing roles and styles of female leaders in Islamic education institutions; b) Challenges in Female Leadership: This theme analyzed the structural, cultural, and ideological barriers faced by female leaders; c) Opportunities for Female Leadership: This theme identified strategic opportunities for enhancing women's leadership capacities through gender equality, Islamic values, and modern professionalism.

Table 2. Data Synthesis Themes and Codes

Theme	Code	Description
Dynamics of Female Leadership	DL1, DL2, DL3	Explores the evolution of female leadership roles and styles.
Challenges in Female Leadership	CL1, CL2, CL3	Analyzes the barriers faced by women in leadership positions.
Opportunities for Female Leadership	OL1, OL2, OL3	Identifies opportunities to enhance women's leadership capabilities.

The synthesis of data was performed by categorizing the findings into these thematic codes, followed by a cross-study comparison to identify commonalities and differences in the findings across the reviewed literature. The results were then synthesized into a comprehensive narrative that describes the overall landscape of female leadership in Islamic educational settings.

C. Data Source

The data for this study consist of academic documents, including peer-reviewed journal articles, book chapters, academic books, and reputable conference proceedings. No human participants were involved in this research as it is based entirely on secondary data derived from published literature.

D. Data Collection Techniques

The collection of data involved downloading and organizing articles that met the inclusion criteria. Each article was then reviewed, and key information was extracted into a table that included the following details: author(s), year of publication, objectives, methods, main findings, and relevance to the focus of the research.

E. Data Analysis Techniques

The data analysis was carried out using qualitative thematic synthesis, a widely used method in systematic reviews to identify recurring patterns and themes across different studies. The process involved coding the articles based on the three primary themes established in the research, allowing for the identification of key concepts and insights. Once the articles were coded, similar codes were grouped together to form broader, overarching themes that captured the essence of the findings. Additionally, a cross-study comparison was conducted to examine the patterns, similarities, and gaps in the literature, helping to provide a deeper understanding of the subject matter. This systematic approach ensured that the analysis was both comprehensive and transparent, adhering to the rigorous standards expected of high-quality literature reviews.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The PRISMA Flow Diagram (Figure 1) illustrates the systematic process followed for the literature review in this study. It provides a visual representation of the stages involved in selecting the relevant studies for inclusion in the review. The process began with the identification of 150 articles, followed by screening, eligibility assessment, and final inclusion, which narrowed down the selection to 5 articles. These 5 articles were then analyzed and synthesized to identify the key themes related to transformational leadership in educational settings.

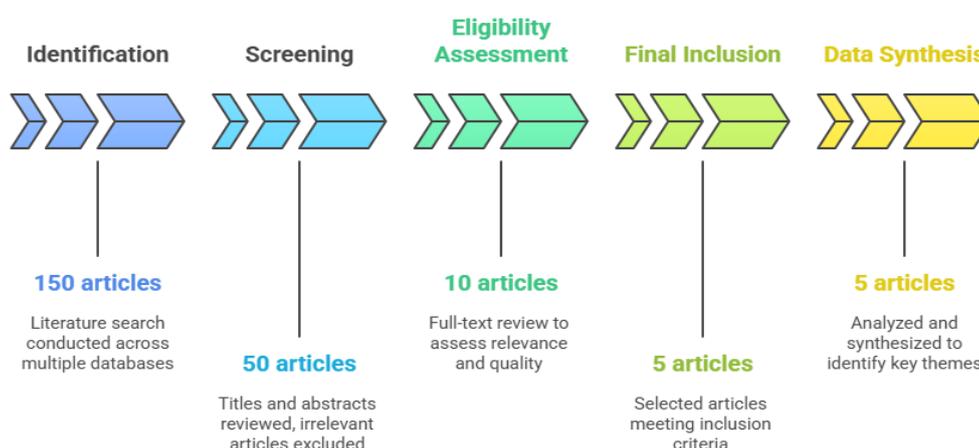


Figure 2. PRISMA Flow Diagram Showing Final Article Selection for Data Synthesis

A. Impact of Idealized Influence on Teacher Motivation

The dimension of idealized influence in transformational leadership is crucial in fostering teacher motivation. Leaders who exhibit idealized influence are seen as role models, displaying behaviors that inspire respect, trust, and admiration from their followers. This influence is rooted in the leader's ethical conduct, commitment to values, and ability to create a shared vision that resonates with the staff. Research has consistently shown that when school leaders demonstrate high moral standards and integrity, it strengthens teachers' belief in the school's mission and purpose, thereby enhancing their motivation and commitment to their work (Kasman et al., 2024).

In the context of Islamic educational institutions, idealized influence becomes even more significant due to the integration of Islamic spiritual values and leadership principles. Leaders who align their actions with these values not only inspire teachers to engage in their roles but also encourage a deeper connection with their work, transcending mere professional responsibility to encompass a sense of spiritual and moral duty. As observed by Fitri Yanti et al. (2025), female leaders in pesantren, who demonstrate qualities such as empathy, vision, and integrity, create an environment where teachers feel more invested in their professional development and the welfare of their students.

The positive impact of idealized influence is further highlighted in the studies by Chughtai et al. (2024), which suggest that leaders who embody idealized influence cultivate a supportive

school climate that encourages teachers to take initiative, collaborate, and innovate. By promoting trust and respect, these leaders inspire teachers to give their best, not only in terms of academic achievement but also in fostering holistic student development.

Thus, the role of idealized influence extends beyond simple motivation; it is integral to cultivating a school culture where teachers are intrinsically motivated to improve their teaching practices and contribute to the school's long-term vision. This underscores the importance of leadership development programs focusing on cultivating ethical and transformative leadership behaviors, which are vital for creating sustainable and high-performing educational environments.

B. Challenges in Implementing Intellectual Stimulation

Intellectual stimulation, one of the core dimensions of transformational leadership, is vital for fostering innovation, critical thinking, and continuous professional development among teachers. However, this study reveals that the effectiveness of intellectual stimulation is heavily dependent on the organizational context in which it is applied. Leaders who promote intellectual stimulation by encouraging teachers to question assumptions, explore new ideas, and engage in creative problem-solving often face significant challenges when the necessary organizational support structures are lacking.

The lack of resources such as professional development programs, time for collaborative activities, and access to up-to-date teaching materials can hinder the potential of intellectual stimulation. As noted by Chughtai et al. (2024), intellectual stimulation is most effective when accompanied by well-structured opportunities for teachers to engage in continuous learning and development. Without these resources, teachers may feel unsupported or unable to implement new strategies effectively, which undermines the impact of intellectual stimulation.

Additionally, institutional inertia can be a barrier to implementing intellectual stimulation. In schools with rigid organizational structures and resistance to change, even the most well-meaning leaders may find it difficult to foster a culture of intellectual curiosity and innovation. This finding aligns with the observations of Plaku and Leka (2025), who argue that leadership must work to dismantle barriers within the organizational culture to create an environment where intellectual stimulation can thrive. Without a culture that values continuous improvement and critical thinking, intellectual stimulation risks being relegated to a superficial or tokenistic effort.

Moreover, the effectiveness of intellectual stimulation is often diminished by external pressures, such as curriculum constraints, standardized testing requirements, and other regulatory measures that limit teachers' autonomy and creativity. As such, while intellectual stimulation is crucial for fostering innovation, its impact can be significantly dampened when teachers feel constrained by external expectations and a lack of flexibility in their teaching roles.

These challenges highlight the need for a multifaceted approach to supporting intellectual stimulation, including the provision of adequate resources, the development of an open and flexible organizational culture, and the alignment of leadership practices with teachers' needs and professional growth aspirations. Only by addressing these barriers can the full potential of intellectual stimulation be realized in schools, leading to more innovative and motivated teachers who are empowered to drive positive educational outcomes.

C. The Importance of Organizational Culture in Transformational Leadership

Organizational culture plays a pivotal role in determining the effectiveness of transformational leadership. While transformational leadership behaviors such as idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration can drive positive change, their success is largely dependent on the culture of the organization in which they are applied. A culture that fosters collaboration, trust, and continuous professional development significantly enhances the impact of transformational leadership on teachers' motivation, commitment, and overall school performance.

As shown in the study, transformational leaders are more effective when they work within a culture that supports their leadership behaviors. For example, a school environment that values

collaboration and open communication enables leaders to inspire and motivate their staff more effectively. When teachers feel supported by their leaders and have opportunities for professional growth, they are more likely to be engaged and committed to their work. This is consistent with Wilson Heenan et al. (2023), who argue that a positive organizational culture, which encourages collaboration and shared responsibility, is essential for effective leadership and improved educational outcomes. In schools with a strong culture of trust and cooperation, teachers are more likely to embrace intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration, both of which are crucial for professional development.

Furthermore, the impact of transformational leadership is amplified when the organizational culture aligns with the values and goals of the leadership style. Leaders who model transformational behaviors are more likely to succeed when they foster a culture of innovation and openness to change. For instance, when leaders encourage teachers to take risks, experiment with new teaching methods, and engage in continuous learning, the organizational culture becomes one that thrives on creativity and innovation. This aligns with the findings of Chughtai et al. (2024), who suggest that transformational leadership is most effective when supported by a culture that values learning and growth.

In contrast, in schools where the organizational culture is hierarchical, rigid, or resistant to change, the impact of transformational leadership may be diminished. Teachers may feel less empowered to innovate or may struggle with implementing new practices. Thus, for transformational leadership to fully realize its potential, school leaders must focus not only on embodying transformational behaviors but also on shaping an organizational culture that supports these behaviors. This includes fostering an environment where teachers feel valued, supported, and encouraged to continuously improve their practice.

Ultimately, a strong organizational culture that aligns with transformational leadership behaviors creates a dynamic, motivating, and growth-oriented environment for both teachers and students. By prioritizing organizational culture alongside leadership development, educational institutions can maximize the benefits of transformational leadership, leading to enhanced teacher satisfaction, improved student outcomes, and a more collaborative school community.

D. Implications for Policy and Practice

The findings from this study have important implications for both educational policy and the practice of school leadership. As educational systems evolve, it is crucial that leadership frameworks and policies adapt to promote more effective, inclusive, and motivating leadership practices, especially in light of the significant role transformational leadership plays in enhancing educational quality.

Firstly, the study suggests that leadership development programs must focus not only on cultivating the individual competencies of school leaders but also on fostering a culture that supports transformational leadership. The emphasis should be placed on ensuring that leaders, particularly those in female-dominated contexts, are equipped with the necessary tools to integrate idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration into their leadership styles. In practice, this means incorporating both gender-sensitive leadership training and professional development initiatives that emphasize emotional intelligence, communication skills, and conflict resolution, which are vital in fostering a supportive school climate (Kasman et al., 2024; Fitri Yanti et al., 2025).

Secondly, policy makers should consider the structural and resource-based barriers that limit the effectiveness of intellectual stimulation. While leaders can motivate and inspire creativity among their staff, the availability of sufficient resources, including professional development programs, technology, and collaborative platforms, plays a crucial role in the successful implementation of transformational leadership behaviors. Therefore, educational policies must prioritize resource allocation to ensure that school leaders can provide the intellectual stimulation needed to foster innovation and professional growth among teachers. This includes investing in mentorship programs, peer collaboration networks, and ongoing

professional learning opportunities to support teacher development (Chughtai et al., 2024; Wilson Heenan et al., 2023).

Furthermore, the findings stress the importance of organizational culture in ensuring the success of transformational leadership. Therefore, school leadership programs and educational policies must focus on creating environments that are conducive to collaboration, trust, and innovation. By promoting values such as transparency, open communication, and accountability, educational institutions can develop a culture where transformational leadership behaviors are supported, recognized, and replicated by all levels of staff. Additionally, school leadership frameworks should integrate supportive organizational structures that allow for flexibility, creativity, and continuous professional development (Plaku & Leka, 2025).

Finally, the study highlights the need for inclusive leadership policies that recognize the unique challenges faced by women in leadership positions. Although female leaders have made significant strides in educational leadership, particularly in Islamic educational settings, they still face cultural and structural barriers. Therefore, it is crucial for educational systems to implement affirmative policies that promote gender equity, encourage leadership opportunities for women, and address the gender biases that exist within school systems. Policy changes should aim at promoting female leaders who combine Islamic values with modern leadership competencies, ensuring a balance between spirituality, professionalism, and gender equity in school leadership roles (Erwani & Siregar, 2024; Zainal Badri & Zulkarnain, 2024). In conclusion, the implications for policy and practice derived from this study call for a holistic approach that integrates leadership development, resource allocation, organizational culture building, and gender-sensitive policies. These efforts will not only enhance the quality of education but will also create a sustainable and innovative leadership paradigm capable of addressing the challenges of modern educational systems.

Discussion

The findings from this study emphasize the significant role of transformational leadership in improving educational quality, especially in the context of Islamic educational institutions. In particular, the four dimensions of transformational leadership idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration are shown to have a profound impact on teacher motivation, commitment, and professional growth. These dimensions not only shape the school environment but also influence teacher engagement and the overall school climate.

The dimension of idealized influence is particularly crucial in fostering teacher motivation. Leaders who exhibit strong moral values and integrity inspire respect and trust, which in turn motivates teachers to align their personal and professional goals with the vision of the institution. This finding resonates with Kasman et al. (2024), who argue that leaders who embody ethical standards and integrity create a conducive environment for teacher development, enhancing teachers' intrinsic motivation. Furthermore, in Islamic education, the integration of spiritual values with leadership practices adds an extra layer of significance to idealized influence, enabling teachers to feel a deeper sense of responsibility towards their roles (Fitri Yanti et al., 2025; Dudun Ubaedullah & Rafli M. Ubaid Al-Rahman, 2025; Hidayat et al., 2025; Irvy, 2020; Saefulloh et al., 2021; Taisir et al., 2024). This is in line with Chughtai et al. (2024), who also emphasize the importance of ethical leadership in establishing a trust-based, supportive school culture.

The impact of inspirational motivation is similarly profound. Leaders who communicate a compelling vision and inspire teachers to achieve common goals contribute to a sense of purpose and collective achievement within the school. This aligns with previous studies, such as those by Kasman et al. (2024) and Fitri Yanti et al. (2025), which found that inspirational leadership helps overcome barriers posed by gender stereotypes and societal norms, thereby enhancing the overall educational experience in Islamic institutions. These findings are particularly significant in the context of Islamic education, where female leaders, by demonstrating inspirational motivation, can bridge cultural divides and improve institutional outcomes.

While intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration are both important for teacher development, the challenges related to their implementation were also apparent in the findings. Intellectual stimulation encourages teachers to engage in critical thinking and innovation, but its effectiveness is contingent on the availability of organizational support and resources. This challenge is highlighted in the study by Riza et al. (2025) and Kareem et al. (2025), which suggests that intellectual stimulation is most effective when supported by an organizational culture that fosters continuous learning and professional development. This resonates with the findings of Plaku & Leka (2025), who emphasize the need for dismantling organizational barriers to create an environment conducive to intellectual curiosity.

Moreover, individualized consideration, which focuses on personalized support for teachers' growth, is essential for ensuring that teachers feel valued and understood. However, as the study indicates, this dimension is more effective when accompanied by adequate resources such as mentorship programs and professional development opportunities. The role of school leaders in providing these resources cannot be overstated, as Chughtai et al. (2024) and Wilson Heenan et al. (2024) note that individualized consideration is only impactful when it is backed by a supportive infrastructure that allows for the growth and development of teachers.

The novelty of this research lies in its comprehensive approach to examining the interplay between all four dimensions of transformational leadership. While previous studies have often focused on individual dimensions, this study provides a holistic view of how these dimensions collectively shape the organizational culture and educational outcomes. By integrating these dimensions, school leaders can foster an environment that promotes both professional development and institutional success. Additionally, the focus on female leadership within Islamic education, which remains an underexplored area, adds valuable insights into how women leaders navigate structural, cultural, and ideological barriers while driving educational change.

Implications for policy and practice suggest that educational leadership development programs should not only focus on enhancing individual leadership competencies but also on creating an organizational culture that supports transformational leadership behaviors. Leaders, particularly in female-dominated contexts, must be equipped with the tools to integrate the four dimensions of transformational leadership effectively. Policies should prioritize resource allocation to facilitate intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration, ensuring that teachers have the necessary support and professional development opportunities.

Furthermore, inclusive leadership policies that promote gender equity are crucial to ensuring that women leaders are empowered to create transformative educational environments. This study underscores the importance of a multifaceted approach to leadership in educational institutions, one that integrates transformational leadership behaviors with a supportive organizational culture. By fostering an environment where teachers feel motivated, valued, and supported, educational leaders can significantly enhance the quality of education, particularly in the context of Islamic education institutions.

CONCLUSION

This study highlights the specific ways in which the four dimensions of transformational leadership idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration directly enhance teacher motivation, commitment, and continuous professional growth. The key finding shows that idealized influence and inspirational motivation consistently strengthen teacher loyalty and alignment with institutional goals, while intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration drive sustained pedagogical improvement. The review also demonstrates that these leadership effects are amplified in Islamic educational settings, where spiritual ethical values shape organizational behavior, offering a unique theoretical contribution by positioning transformational leadership as a value-based framework particularly suited to pesantren.

Theoretically, this study contributes by integrating gender and contextual perspectives into transformational leadership research, emphasizing how female leaders' transformational behaviors

function as catalysts for organizational improvement in Islamic education. Practically, the findings support the need for leadership development programs that strengthen transformational competencies, build supportive institutional environments, and enhance opportunities for women leaders within pesantren.

Future research should examine how transformational leadership interacts with institutional culture, governance structures, and teacher well-being across diverse educational settings.

LIMITATIONS

This study is subject to several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, despite initiating the PRISMA 2020 screening process with 150 identified articles, only five peer-reviewed studies met the inclusion criteria, resulting in a relatively small corpus that may not fully represent the breadth of available empirical evidence on female transformational leadership in Islamic education. Second, the reviewed literature is predominantly situated within Indonesian pesantren contexts, which limits the generalizability of findings to Islamic educational institutions in other national or regional settings where organizational cultures, gender dynamics, and governance structures may differ substantially. Third, the temporal boundary of 2018-2023, while intentional for ensuring recency, may exclude relevant foundational studies and does not fully account for the rapidly evolving dynamics of digital transformation within Islamic educational institutions. Fourth, as a secondary data-based methodology, this systematic literature review does not incorporate direct empirical evidence such as interviews or observations, meaning that the lived experiences of female leaders navigating structural and cultural barriers remain insufficiently captured. Finally, the inherent risk of publication bias in systematic reviews whereby studies with positive outcomes are more likely to be published may inflate the perceived effectiveness of the transformational leadership dimensions examined. Future research should therefore consider expanding the geographical and temporal scope of inclusion criteria, integrating primary qualitative or mixed-methods data from diverse pesantren contexts, and exploring how emerging digital leadership competencies intersect with transformational leadership behaviors among women leaders in Islamic education.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION

SM conceptualized the study, designed the systematic literature review framework, and led the overall writing and finalization of the manuscript. RO conducted the literature search across academic databases, applied the inclusion and exclusion criteria, and contributed to the data synthesis and thematic analysis. SH performed the title and abstract screening, assisted in the eligibility assessment, and contributed to drafting the findings and discussion sections. EH supervised the research process, provided critical review and revisions of the manuscript, and ensured methodological rigor in accordance with PRISMA 2020 guidelines. ND contributed to the theoretical framing, provided comparative perspectives on international leadership contexts, and reviewed the final manuscript for academic quality and coherence. All authors have read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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