Islamic Education Leadership Model in The Postmodern Era: A Synthesis of Entrepreneurial Leadership, Visionary, and Transformational Change

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ABSTRACT

The contemporary Islamic educational landscape faces fundamental disruption due to the clash between rigid modernist bureaucracies and the volatility of the postmodern era. This study aims to formulate a new leadership model capable of bridging this gap. Employing a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) with the PRISMA 2020 protocol on 62 selected articles (2002-2025), this research applies a three-stage thematic synthesis analysis. Bibliometric findings reveal a sharp dichotomy: Western literature dominates the discourse on postmodern structures, while Indonesian literature dominates the integration of theological values. The synthesis of these two poles yields the "Leader as Ecosystem Architect" conceptual model. This model redefines the leader's role from a "commander" to an "environment designer" who integrates entrepreneurial agility, participatory vision, and transformational influence. The novelty of this research lies in anchoring the model with a theological trinity: Syura (co-creation of narrative), Ijtihad (mandate for innovation), and Amanah (moral legitimacy). Managerial implications demand principals to shift teacher Key Performance Indicators from administrative compliance to innovative initiative (Ijtihad), treating measured failure as part of the organizational learning process.

Keywords: Postmodern Leadership, Ecosystem Architect, Managerial Ijtihad, Islamic Education, SLR.

ABSTRAK

Lanskap pendidikan Islam kontemporer menghadapi disrupsi fundamental akibat benturan antara birokrasi modernis yang kaku dengan volatilitas era postmodern. Penelitian ini bertujuan merumuskan model kepemimpinan baru yang mampu menjembatani kesenjangan tersebut. Menggunakan metode Systematic Literature Review (SLR) dengan protokol PRISMA 2020 terhadap 62 artikel terpilih (2002-2025), penelitian ini menerapkan analisis sintesis tematik tiga tahap. Temuan bibliometrik mengungkap adanya dikotomi tajam: literatur Barat mendominasi diskursus struktur postmodern, sementara literatur Indonesia mendominasi integrasi nilai teologis. Sintesis dari kedua kutub ini melahirkan model konseptual "Pemimpin sebagai Arsitek Ekosistem". Model ini merevisi peran pemimpin dari "komandan" menjadi "perancang lingkungan" yang mengintegrasikan kelincahan kewirausahaan, visi partisipatif, dan pengaruh transformasional. Kebaruan penelitian ini terletak pada penguncian model tersebut dengan trinitas teologis: Syura (ko-kreasi narasi), Ijtihad (mandat inovasi), dan Amanah (legitimasi moral). Implikasi manajerial menuntut kepala sekolah untuk merombak KPI (Key Performance Indicators) guru dari kepatuhan administratif menuju inisiatif inovasi (Ijtihad), menjadikan kegagalan terukur sebagai bagian dari proses belajar organisasi.

Kata Kunci: Kepemimpinan Postmodern, Arsitek Ekosistem, Ijtihad Manajerial, Pendidikan Islam, SLR.

INTRODUCTION

Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia currently operate in a global arena marked by a fundamental paradigm shift. The modernist era, with its emphasis on stability, predictability, and hierarchical structures, was gradually replaced by a fluid, complex, and uncertain postmodern state[1]. This change is not just an acceleration of tempo, but a profound transformation that challenges basic assumptions about how an organization, including an educational institution, should be managed and led. In this context, classical and managerial leadership models that focus on efficiency, bureaucratic control, and adherence to procedures, are proving increasingly inadequate to meet the challenges of the times[2].

Specifically, Islamic educational institutions face complex multidimensional challenges. On the one hand, globalization brings information, ideology, and cultural flows that demand adaptive responses without losing Islamic identity[3] And on the other hand, technological disruption is changing the pedagogical and management landscape, while socio-cultural shifts in society demand the relevance of curriculum and graduates who can compete in the dynamic world of work[4]. Internal demands for quality improvement, professionalism, and good governance are also strengthening, putting Islamic education leaders at a crossroads between maintaining tradition and embracing innovation[5].

Prior to this study, the academic discourse on educational leadership has largely bifurcated into two distinct streams. The first stream focuses on the philosophical shift from modernism to postmodernism in educational administration. Scholars like Tabrizi and Rideout[6] and Sackney et al.[7] have extensively mapped how postmodernism challenges rigid hierarchies and introduces fluid power dynamics. However, these studies predominantly operate within Western secular frameworks, often overlooking the unique theological constraints and values inherent in Islamic educational contexts.

The second stream of research focuses on the practical application of specific leadership styles within Islamic schools. Numerous recent studies, such as those by

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[1] Sirous Tabrizi and Glenn Rideout, "Styles of Educational Leadership for Modernist and Postmodernist Approaches," *International Journal for Infonomics* 9 (December 2016), https://doi.org/10.20533/iji.1742.4712.2016.0152.

[2] Tony Bush, "Educational Leadership and Management: Theory, Policy, and Practice," *South African Journal of Education Copyright © 2007 EASA* 27, no. 3 (2007): 391–406; Belay Girma, "A Review of Educational Leadership Challenges in the 21st Century," *International Journal of Education & Technology*, January 2022, 486–501.

[3] Dwi Rahmadani, Tizahara Onma Reskinta, and Gusmaneli, "Konsep Manajemen Pendidikan Islam Dalam Menghadapi Tantangan Globalisasi," *Jurnal Pendidikan Multidisipliner* 8, no. 4 (April 2025), https://edu.ojs.co.id/index.php/jpm/article/view/852.

[4] Mauliya Fani and Muhamad Yahya, "The Concept of Islamic Education in Indonesia in the Postmodernism Era," *INSANIA : Jurnal Pemikiran Alternatif Kependidikan* 28 (June 2023): 15–30, https://doi.org/10.24090/insania.v28i1.7987.

[5] Adi Surya Pranata, Yudhi Setiawan, and Deddy Ramdhani, "Konsep Dan Implementasi Inovasi Pendidikan Islam," *Journal of Classroom Action Research* 6, no. 1 (January 2024): 119–24, https://doi.org/10.29303/jppipa.v6i1.7040.

[6] Tabrizi and Rideout, "Styles of Educational Leadership for Modernist and Postmodernist Approaches."

[7] Larry Sackney, Keith Walker, and Coral E Mitchel, "Postmodern Conceptions of Power for Educational Leadership," *EAF Journal: Journal of Educational Administration and Foundations* 13, no. 2 (2015): 33–57.

Mubasyiroh and Muttaqin[8] and Zulaikah et al.[9], have provided empirical evidence on the effectiveness of transformational leadership in improving the quality of Islamic education. Similarly, Meung[10] has highlighted the importance of entrepreneurial leadership for innovation. However, these studies tend to examine leadership styles—transformational, visionary, or entrepreneurial—in isolation or as standalone variables. There is a noticeable scarcity of literature that attempts to synthesize these three styles into a single cohesive model, specifically one that is framed within the "ecosystem" metaphor and grounded in Islamic theological concepts like Ijtihad and Shura.

This condition gives rise to a critical gap (Gap Analysis): There is a discrepancy between the dominant leadership model that is practiced because it is often still rooted in the modernist paradigm, and the postmodern reality faced by institutions. This gap manifests itself in the form of inaction to respond to change, difficulty fostering a culture of innovation, and an inability to empower the full potential of the school community. Therefore, the formulation of a new leadership paradigm is no longer just an option, but a necessity for the sustainability and excellence of Islamic educational institutions. The selection of the synthesis of these three leadership styles—Entrepreneurial, Visionary, and Transformational—is based on the strategic urgency to respond to the volatility of the postmodern era. The literature highlights that traditional approaches or those that are purely ethically based such as Serving Leadership or Spiritual Leadership, while vital in building moral cohesion, often faces criticism for being perceived as less responsive in a context that demands rapid decision-making and radical innovation to break down bureaucratic inertia[11]. In a competitive and uncertain educational landscape, Islamic educational institutions require more than just the maintenance of the status quo; They need an active agency for reconstruction.

Specifically, Entrepreneurial Leadership was chosen because it offers risk navigation and resource optimization competencies that are crucial for the independence of the institution[12]. Visionary Leadership is needed as a guiding compass to unite the fragmentation of meaning that often occurs in postmodern societies[13]. Meanwhile, Transformational Leadership serves as a transformative driving force Mindset members of the organization

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[8] Nabilatun Mubasyiroh and Imamul Muttaqin, "Peran Kepemimpinan Transformasional Kepala Sekolah Dalam Meningkatkan Kualitas Pendidikan Islam," *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 15, no. 1 (2024): 100–111.

[9] Yayuk Zulaikah, Achmad Patoni, and Binti Maunah, "Implementasi Kepemimpinan Transformational Pada Lembaga Pendidikan Islam," *Jurnal Nakula: Pusat Ilmu Pendidikan, Bahasa Dan Ilmu Sosial* 2, no. 3 (May 2024): 113–32, https://doi.org/10.61132/nakula.v2i3.

[10] Hluing Meung, "Entrepreneurial Leadership in Education: Fostering Innovation and Creativity," *Journal of Asian Multicultural Research for Educational Study* 4, no. 3 (January 2024): 23–30, https://doi.org/10.47616/jamres.v4i3.458.

[11] Nathan Eva et al., "Servant Leadership: A Systematic Review and Call for Future Research," *The Leadership Quarterly* 30, no. 1 (February 2019): 111–32, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2018.07.004; Zaidatol Akmaliah Lope Pihie and Afsaneh Bagheri, "Self-Efficacy and Entrepreneurial Intention: The Mediation Effect of Self-Regulation," *Vocations and Learning* 6, no. 3 (October 2013): 385–401, https://doi.org/10.1007/s12186-013-9101-9.

[12] Mahmood Reza Esmaeeli and Minoo Afshani, "Postmodern Leadership in Organization," *Interdisciplinary Journal of Contemporary Research in Business* 6, no. 3 (July 2014).

[13] Burt Nanus, *Visionary Leadership: Creating a Compelling Sense of Direction for Your Organization*, 1st ed, The Jossey-Bass Management Series (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1992); Colette M. Taylor, Casey J. Cornelius, and Kate Colvin, "Visionary Leadership and Its Relationship to Organizational Effectiveness," *Leadership & Organization Development Journal* 35, no. 6 (July 2014): 566–83, https://doi.org/10.1108/LODJ-10-2012-0130.

from transactional to committed to fundamental change[14]. The integration of all three offers a framework that is not only adaptive but also generative, a capacity that is often absent from conventional managerial leadership discussions.

Philosophically, this challenge presents an interesting paradox. Postmodernism is often understood as a movement that rejects the "grand narrative" or universal truth, a position that seems to contradict Islamic education based on the revelation of the Qur'an and the Sunnah. A deeper understanding, however, shows that the criticism of postmodernism is not really aimed at the revelatory text itself, but at single, rigid, and often culturally bound interpretations that are institutionalized as the only truth in the modernist bureaucratic structure[15]. In this case, the spirit of postmodernism resonates with the Islamic intellectual tradition that is rich in renewal mechanisms, such as *Ijtihad* (earnest intellectual effort) and *Tajdid* (renewal), which serve to ensure the relevance of Islamic teachings in every era[16]. Thus, the dialogue between postmodernism and Islamic thought paves the way for deconstructing outdated leadership practices and reconstructing new models that are more dynamic, participatory, and authentic[17].

Departing from this background, this article aims to formulate a conceptual model of Islamic educational leadership that is relevant to the postmodern era by critically synthesizing the principles of entrepreneurial leadership, visionary, and transformational change in a philosophically and theologically authentic framework.

METHOD

This study applies a literature research design which is implemented with strict protocols Systematic Literature Review (SLR) based on the PRISMA 2020 standard (*Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analysis*). The use of the PRISMA protocol aims to ensure that the process of searching, filtering, and synthesizing literature is carried out in a transparent, measurable manner, and minimizes selection bias in the selection of references [18]. This approach was chosen to construct a new model of Islamic educational leadership through the synthesis of secondary data from global and national authoritative literature.

Data was collected through systematic searches on two main database categories to ensure a balance between global theoretical insights and local practical contexts. First, an internationally reputable database (Scopus) is used to capture cutting-edge discourse on leadership in the postmodern era. Second, nationally indexed and open-access databases (Google Scholar, SINTA, DOAJ) were used to photograph the dynamics of implementation

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[14] Bernard M. Bass, "Two Decades of Research and Development in Transformational Leadership," *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology* 8, no. 1 (March 1999): 9–32, https://doi.org/10.1080/135943299398410; Bush, "Educational Leadership and Management: Theory, Policy, and Practice."
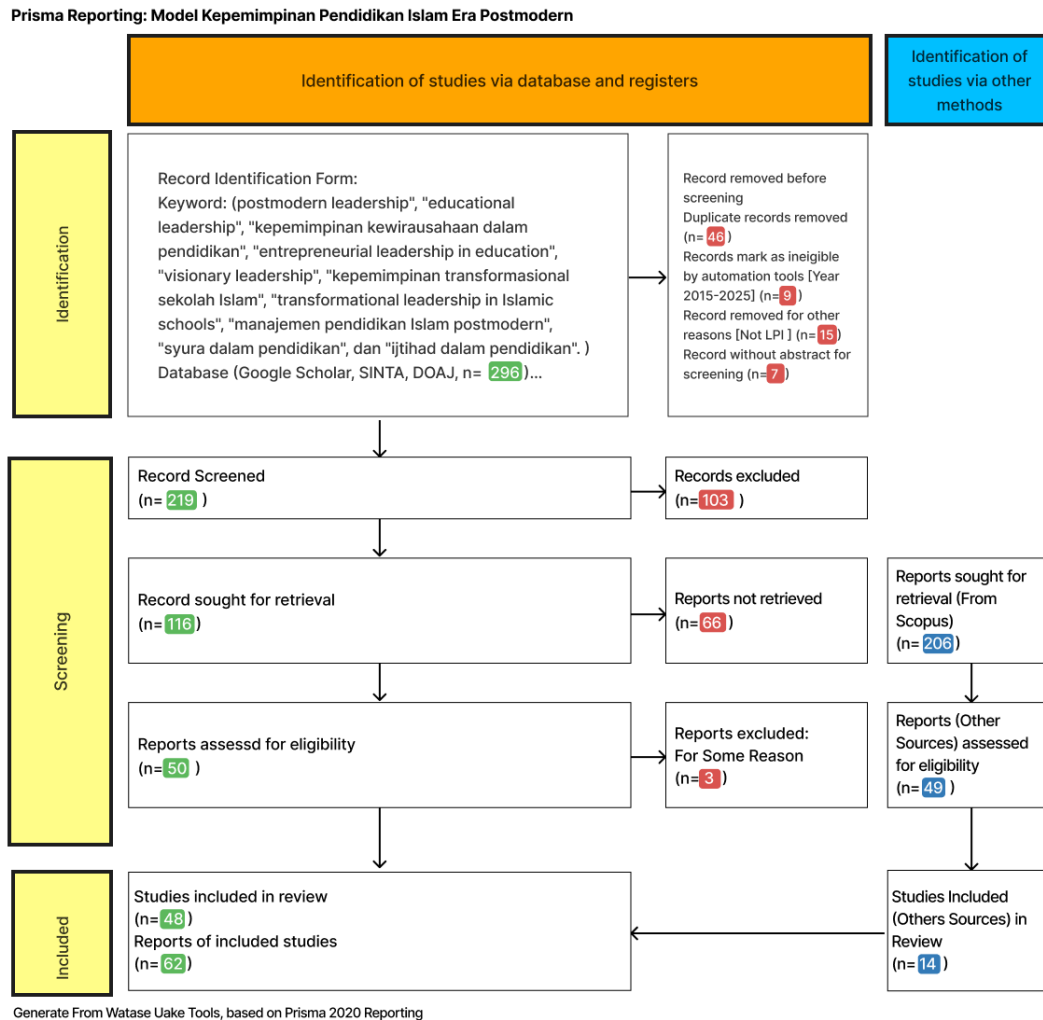
[15] Sackney, Walker, and Mitchel, "Postmodern Conceptions of Power for Educational Leadership."

[16] Amal Fathullah Zarkasyi, "Tajdid Dan Modernisasi Pemikiran Islam," *Jurnal Tsaqafah* 9, no. 2 (November 2013).

[17] Novi Yanti S and Mukhlisin, "Implementasi Ijtihad Dan Tajdid: Upaya Muhammadiyah Membangun Peradaban Ekonomi Islam," *Jurnal Studi Islam & Muhammadiyah* 1 (October 2023), https://journal.ummat.ac.id/index.php/siam/article/view/19932.

[18] Matthew J Page et al., "The PRISMA 2020 Statement: An Updated Guideline for Reporting Systematic Reviews," *BMJ*, March 29, 2021, n71, https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.n71.

and local values of Islamic education. The search keywords use Boolean operators that include combinations: "postmodern leadership", "educational leadership", "entrepreneurial leadership in education", "transformational leadership in Islamic schools", "Shura in education", and "Ijtihad in education".

Prisma Reporting: Model Kepemimpinan Pendidikan Islam Era Postmodern

Generate From Watase Uake Tools, based on Prisma 2020 Reporting

Figure 1. PRISMA Literature Selection Flow Diagram

The literature selection process is carried out through four systematic stages: Identification, Screening, Eligibility, and Inclusion. This selection flow is described in detail in Figure 1. The first stage, Identification, aims to capture the entire potential literature from a predefined database without strict initial filtering, resulting in a vast raw data set. The second stage, Screening, serves as an initial stage filter where duplication is removed and articles are checked by titles and abstracts to remove literature that is clearly irrelevant to the topic of Islamic education management or is outside the research time span. The third stage, Eligibility Test, involves reading the full text against articles that pass the screening stage. At this stage, the researcher assesses the depth of substance, methodology, and relevance of the article's findings to the research question to ensure only high-quality literature is maintained.

The final stage, Inclusion, establishes a final list of articles that meet all inclusion criteria and is ready to be synthesized to answer the formulation of the research problem.[19]

Based on Figure 1, the initial Identification stage on the Google Scholar, SINTA, and DOAJ databases produced 296 documents. Before the screening stage, duplicate documents (n=46) and documents that do not meet automatic technical criteria such as year range (n=9), non-conformity of the topic of Islamic Education Institutions (n=15), and absence of abstracts (n=7) are eliminated.

During the screening stage, researchers reviewed the titles and abstracts of 219 articles from the general database, excluding 103 that did not pertain to the research focus. Out of 116 articles reviewed in full, 50 were successfully evaluated for eligibility. At the same time, a search on the Scopus database yielded 206 possible articles, which were carefully reduced to 49 that were evaluated for full-text suitability. During the last phase of Inclusion, the study selected 62 high-quality articles for analysis. This number consists of 48 articles from the Google Scholar/SINTA/DOAJ database and 14 selected articles from Scopus. The selected articles feature direct analysis of how visionary, entrepreneurial, and transformational leadership connects with Islamic principles such as *Shura, Ijtihad,* and *Amanah.*

Data analysis was carried out following a three-stage thematic synthesis protocol adapted from Thomas & Harden. This process ensures that the resulting "Ecosystem Architect" model is not just a subjective opinion, but a logical construction of the literature data.

Data analysis was conducted using a three-stage thematic synthesis protocol adapted from Thomas and Harden,[20] ensuring that the resulting "Ecosystem Architect" model is grounded in a systematic and transparent interpretation of the literature rather than subjective judgment. In the first stage, "free coding", the researcher performed a line-by-line analysis of the findings and discussion sections of 62 selected articles, generating initial codes such as "fluid leadership", "distribution of authority", "maintaining school culture", "leader as a servant", "curriculum innovation," and "team deliberation." The second stage involved the formation of descriptive themes, in which conceptually similar codes were clustered into broader categories; for example, "distribution of authority" and "deliberation" were grouped under "Collective Participation," while "innovation" and "technology adaptation" were categorized as "Responsiveness of Change." The third stage focused on the development of "analytical themes," representing a deeper level of interpretation that moves beyond surface description. By synthesizing "Collective Participation" as a social dimension with "Responsiveness of Change" as a technical dimension, the analysis revealed a transformation in leadership roles from that of a "controller" to an "environmental designer." This interpretative synthesis ultimately gave rise to the metaphorical core theme, "Ecosystem Architect," which integrates and conceptually frames all the study's findings.

[19] Endang Hariningsih et al., "Ten Years of Evolving Traditional versus Non-Traditional Celebrity Endorser Study: Review and Synthesis," *Management Review Quarterly* 75, no. 3 (September 2025): 1937–97, https://doi.org/10.1007/s11301-024-00425-0.

[20] James Thomas and Angela Harden, "Methods for the Thematic Synthesis of Qualitative Research in Systematic Reviews," *BMC Medical Research Methodology* 8, no. 1 (December 2008): 45, https://doi.org/10.1186/1471-2288-8-45.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Literature Profile and Research Distribution Map

Before delving into the thematic synthesis, the descriptive analysis of 62 selected articles in the research matrix presents an overview of the evolution of educational leadership discourse. Based on the extraction of data from the literature matrix, two significant patterns were found related to the trend of publication time and the geographical context of the study.

Figure 2 illustrates the publication trend from 2002 to the 2025 prediction. This time range was deliberately chosen to capture the complete trajectory of the discursive shift from modernist stability (early 2000s) to postmodern volatility (post-2020). Data shows an exponential surge in the quantity of research in the last three years (2023-2025). In the early decades (2002-2015), literature was dominated by fundamental theoretical studies of postmodernism and leadership metaphors. However, entering 2020 and beyond, there has been a sharp shift in focus towards implementable research and case studies. This increase indicates that the urgency to find new leadership models that are relevant to the volatility of the times is increasingly felt by the global and national academic communities.
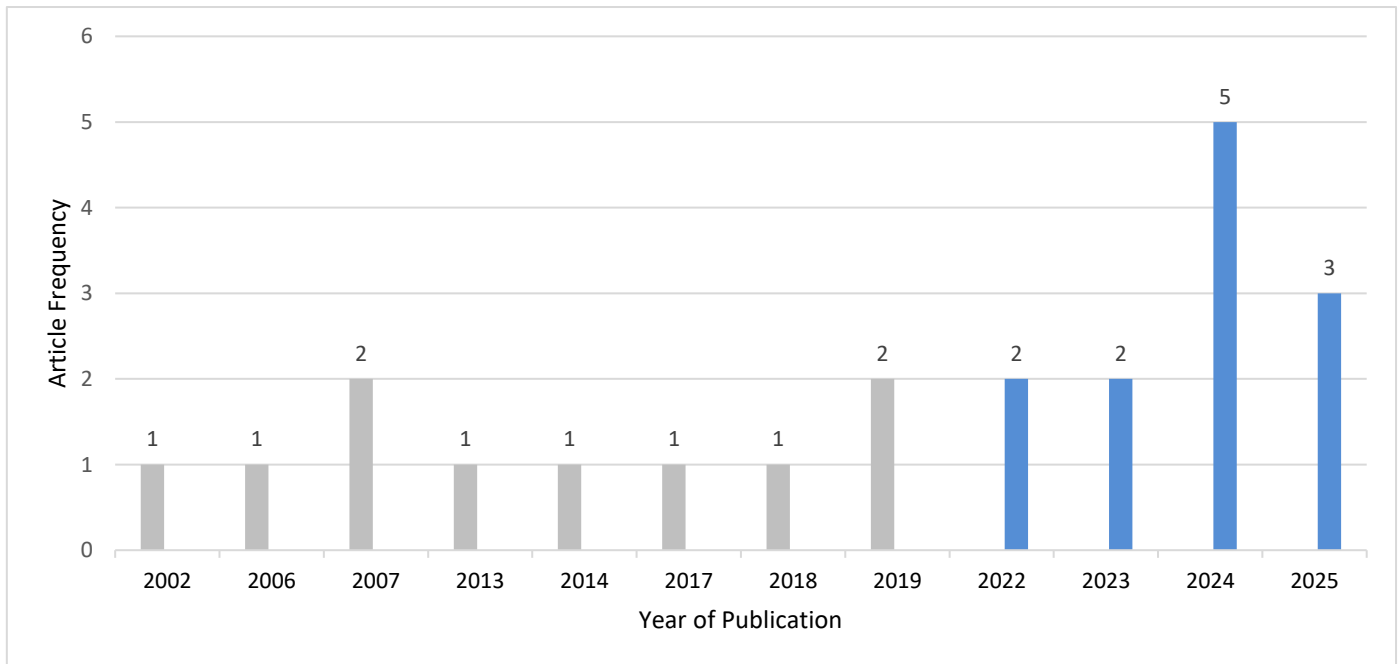

Figure 2. Increasing Trend of Educational Leadership Publications

Further, the demographic analysis of the study in Figure 3 reveals an interesting context dichotomy. The literature that discusses the philosophical foundations of postmodern and general leadership theories mostly comes from the context of developed countries (Global North) such as the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia. In contrast, literature that specifically addresses the integration of theological values—such as Shura, Ijtihad, and Islamic Transformational Leadership—is predominantly produced by researchers in Indonesia.

These demographic findings confirm the existence of gaps as well as opportunities. Western theories provide a framework for "containers" (postmodernism), while Indonesian

research provides "content" (Islamic values). This research, through the Ecosystem Architect model, is here to bridge the two poles: using the flexibility of Western postmodern structures to revive classical Islamic leadership values in a contemporary format.
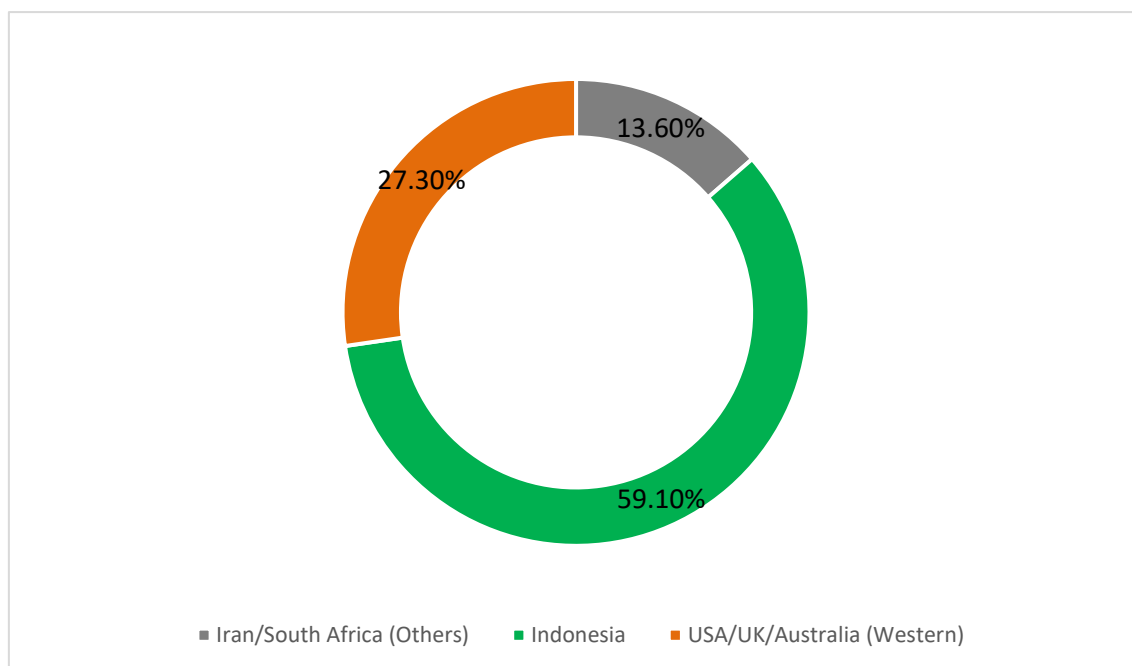
Figure 3. Geographical Distribution of Research Context

Deconstructing Leadership in Postmodern Optics

The postmodern paradigm fundamentally challenges the basic assumptions that underpin modern theories of leadership. If modern leadership tends to view organizations as rationally manageable machines with a clear hierarchical structure, postmodernism sees them as a complex and fluid network of social relations [21]. One of the main criticisms of postmodernism is its rejection of the existence of a single objective reality. On the contrary, he posits the existence of multiple reality that are socially constructed by individuals and groups through language and discourse[22]. The implications for leadership are profound: there is no longer "one best way" to lead. Every policy or decision of a leader is open to a variety of interpretations, and the truth becomes relative to the local context and the individual's perspective.

Furthermore, postmodern thinkers such as Michel Foucault revolutionized the understanding of power. Power is no longer seen as something that is owned exclusively by the leaders at the top of the hierarchy, but rather as something that is dispersed, productive, and operates through discourse (*Stuart Stuart*) that shapes the way we think and act [23]. In the context of education, this means that power is not only in the hands of the principal, but is also embedded in the curriculum, assessment methods, classroom layout, and even in the

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[21] Tabrizi and Rideout, "Styles of Educational Leadership for Modernist and Postmodernist Approaches."

[22] Victoria Konidari and Nikolaos Stathopoulos, "System-Level Educational Leadership as a Resilience Building Mechanism: The Case of Greece," *Forum for Education Studies* 3, no. 2 (April 2025): 2458, https://doi.org/10.59400/fes2458.

[23] Sackney, Walker, and Mitchel, "Postmodern Conceptions of Power for Educational Leadership."

language used in everyday life. Postmodern leaders realize that their influence does not come from formal authority alone, but from their ability to understand and navigate the various discourses of power that exist within institutions.

The application of postmodern optics in educational leadership demands a radical shift from a command-and-control model to a more participatory and inclusive approach. Rigid hierarchy rejected in favor of a flatter and more flexible structure [24]. Instead of being the center of decision-making, leaders are encouraged to "decentralize" their authority, empowering voices that have been marginalized—teachers, students, staff, and even communities—to actively participate in shaping the reality of schools [25]. The focus shifts from the vision of a single leader to the polyphony of voices (*Multiple voices*), where leadership becomes a collective process to negotiate common meaning and goals.

In the practical context of Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) or *madrasah*, this implies a shift from a rigid, single-figure authoritarianism to a more dialogical governance model akin to *Bahtsul Masail*, where diverse interpretations and inputs from junior teachers and staff are valued in decision-making. Consequently, power is not exercised to enforce uniformity, but distributed to empower subject-teacher forums (*MGMP*) to design flexible curricula that integrate religious texts with contemporary skill demands

The Dialectic of Vision and Innovation: Marrying Visionary Leadership and Entrepreneurship

Traditionally, visionary leadership has been defined as a leader's ability to create and articulate an exciting and convincing picture of the future, capable of generating commitment and directing collective energy[26]. This vision serves as a moral and strategic compass for the organization. However, from a postmodern perspective, this concept of a single vision formulated top-down is problematic [27]. Such a vision risks becoming a monolithic grand narrative, one that can suppress dissent, silence alternative voices, and impose uniformity of thought, ultimately stifling creativity and adaptation [28].

The synthesis proposed here is to reconceptualize the role of visionary leaders. Instead of being a "prophet" who carries a vision from above, postmodern leaders act as "weavers of narratives" or "story curator" [29]. This role involves facilitating a dialogue process in which a shared vision is not forced[30], but arises organically from the interweaving of

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[24] Crystal J Collins, William Allan Kritsonis, and Faculty Mentor, *National Agenda: Implementing Postmodern Strategies to Guide Educational Leaders in Creating Schools for Quality Learning in Public Education in America* (2020).

[25] Robert Beach et al., *Organizational Change in the Field of Education Administration* (The Open University of Hong Kong, 2020), 79–79, http://cnx.org/contents/469c94af-40cb-4ed1-bf02-3dcd5ac4b753@2.4http://cnx.org/content/col10402/1.2/http://cnx.org/contents/469c94af-40cb-4ed1-bf02-3dcd5ac4b753@2.4.

[26] Daud Rahmat Efendi and Andi Arif Rifa'i, "Transformational Leadership of School Principals in the Development of Islamic Education," *Nidhomiyyah: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam* 6, no. 2 (July 2025): 117–29, https://doi.org/10.38073/nidhomiyyah.v6i2.2719.

[27] Easaw Alemayehu Assefa and Bahaudin G Mujtaba, "Exploring Transformational Leadership in Education by Leveraging Diversity and Technology for Inclusive Practices," *International Journal of Public Leadership*, ahead of print, June 2025, https://doi.org/10.1108/IJPL-10-2024-0112.

[28] Sackney, Walker, and Mitchel, "Postmodern Conceptions of Power for Educational Leadership."

[29] Collins, Kritsonis, and Mentor, *National Agenda: Implementing Postmodern Strategies to Guide Educational Leaders in Creating Schools for Quality Learning in Public Education in America*.

[30] Ilyas and Nispi Syahbani, "Reconstructing School and Madrasah Management through the Integration of Values, Transformational Leadership, and Curriculum Innovation," *Journal of Educational Management Research* 4,

various stories, hopes, and aspirations shared by all members of the community. Leaders create a safe space for everyone to voice their perspectives, and then skillfully help weave those diverse narrative threads into a coherent and inspiring tapestry of shared meaning. The vision that results from this process has stronger durability because it is collectively owned.

This shared narrative then becomes the ideological foundation that triggers real action, and this is where entrepreneurial leadership plays its crucial role. Entrepreneurial leadership is characterized by a proactive attitude, the ability to identify opportunities, the courage to take measurable risks, and a relentless focus on innovation to create new value [31]. If a shared narrative answers the questions of "why" and "why" we change, then entrepreneurial leadership provides the energy and mechanism to answer the "how" of that change is realized. In a postmodern environment that rejects rigid structures and encourages experimentation, the entrepreneurial spirit finds fertile ground to thrive [32]. Leaders with an entrepreneurial spirit do not wait for instructions, but actively seek new ways to realize a shared narrative, whether through curriculum innovation, new program development, technology utilization, and strategic partnership building (Shawn & Day, 2017).

Transformational Leadership as an Engine for Participatory Change

If reconstructed visionary leadership provides direction and entrepreneurial leadership provides an innovative impetus, then transformational leadership provides a method or "machine" to drive change in a participatory and humane manner. This model, popularized by Bernard Bass, operates through four main pillars that are highly relevant to the context of Islamic education[33].

First, the idealistic influence, where leaders act as role models who demonstrate high integrity, strong ethical standards, and commitment to vision. In Islamic education, this is in line with the concept of *uswatun hasanah* (good example), where leaders gain trust and respect not because of their position, but because of their reliable character [34].

Second, Inspirational Motivation, which is the leader's ability to communicate high expectations and articulate a shared vision in a way that inspires and motivates team members to transcend personal interests for the good of the organization. Case studies in various Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia show that transformational principals actively motivate teachers and staff through discussion forums, meetings, and one-on-one meetings to foster collective enthusiasm and commitment [35].

Third, Intellectual Stimulation, where leaders encourage creativity, innovation, and critical thinking. They challenge old assumptions, invite staff to question established practices, and create a safe environment to experiment with new methods. This has proven

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no. 2 (July 2025): 583–94, https://doi.org/10.61987/jemr.v4i2.894.

[31] Meung, "Entrepreneurial Leadership in Education: Fostering Innovation and Creativity."

[32] Esmaeeli and Afshani, "Postmodern Leadership in Organization."

[33] Efendi and Rifa'i, "Transformational Leadership of School Principals in the Development of Islamic Education."

[34] Zulaikah, Patoni, and Maunah, "Implementasi Kepemimpinan Transformational Pada Lembaga Pendidikan Islam."

[35] Mubasyiroh and Muttaqin, "Peran Kepemimpinan Transformasional Kepala Sekolah Dalam Meningkatkan Kualitas Pendidikan Islam."

to be effective in encouraging innovation in the learning process in Islamic schools, such as the integration of technology and adaptation to the new curriculum[36].

Fourth, individual considerations, i.e. the leader's ability to act as a coach or mentor for everyone. Transformational leaders recognize and value each team member's unique needs, strengths, and aspirations, and provide personalized support for their professional development[37]. This practice manifests itself in the form of providing relevant training and ongoing moral support for teachers in Islamic educational institutions [38].

In the context of the proposed 'Ecosystem Architect' model, transformational leadership functions as the essential 'social energy' that activates the designed environment. While the architect designs the structural systems (through entrepreneurial strategies), transformational behaviors, specifically intellectual stimulation and individual consideration, ensure that the ecosystem's inhabitants (teachers and staff) actively engage with those structures. Thus, transformational leadership is not merely a complementary style, but the operational engine that allows an Ecosystem Architect to foster a living, organic culture of innovation rather than a static administrative hierarchy.

Synthesis of the Model "Leader as Ecosystem Architect": Postmodern Islamic Education Leadership

The synthesis of postmodern deconstruction, vision-innovation dialectics, and transformational change engines gives birth to a new leadership model that can be analogized through the metaphor "Leader as Ecosystem Architect" [39]. The use of metaphors in leadership studies is very important because it simplifies complex ideas and shapes the way we understand and practice leadership [40]. This metaphor is consciously chosen to replace outdated images of leadership. The leader is no longer a "machine operator" (modernist metaphor) who makes sure all components work according to standards, nor is he a "hero" (traditional metaphor) who single-handedly saves the organization[41].

An ecosystem architect does not control every organism within it but rather designs an environment—with the right structure, rules of interaction, and flow of resources—in which life can grow and develop organically and sustainably. In the context of education, leaders as ecosystem architects focus on designing organizational cultures, communication systems, and collaboration platforms that allow innovation, creativity, and leadership to

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[36] Efendi and Rifa'i, "Transformational Leadership of School Principals in the Development of Islamic Education."

[37] Efendi and Rifa'i.

[38] Mubasyiroh and Muttaqin, "Peran Kepemimpinan Transformasional Kepala Sekolah Dalam Meningkatkan Kualitas Pendidikan Islam."

[39] Amanda Heffernan, Deborah Netolicky, and Nicole Mockler, "New and Alternative Metaphors for School Leadership," *Journal of Educational Administration and History* 51, no. 2 (April 2019): 83–86, https://doi.org/10.1080/00220620.2019.1585768.

[40] Thomas Oberlechner and Viktor Mayer-Schoenberger, "Through Their Own Words: Towards a New Understanding of Leadership Through Metaphors" (Cambridge, 2002), https://www.hks.harvard.edu/publications/through-their-own-words-towards-new-understanding-leadership-through-metaphors.

[41] Amanda Datnow, Vicki Park, and John Diaz, "From Plate Spinner to Flight Attendant: Metaphors of the Principalship in Complex Times," *Leadership and Policy in Schools*, November 16, 2025, 1–16, https://doi.org/10.1080/15700763.2025.2584213.

emerge from different levels and corners of the organization. Its primary role is to facilitate healthy and productive interactions, not to dictate outcomes.

This model is not only in line with postmodern philosophy, but it is also firmly rooted in the fundamental principles of Islam, which give it theological authenticity and legitimacy.

a. *Shura* (Deliberation): The principle of deliberation is the operational foundation for ecosystem architects. Shura is an Islamic mechanism for the dialogical process of creating a shared narrative and ensuring inclusive and participatory decision-making [42]. It is a practical manifestation of postmodern values that value "double voices" and reject unilateral decisions. Through Shura, ecosystem architects ensure that the design of their organization's "building" truly reflects the needs and aspirations of all its residents[43].

b. *Ijtihad* and *Tajdid* (Innovation and Reform): These two concepts provide a theological mandate for the entrepreneurial and transformational aspects of this model. Ijtihad, as the exercise of reason to find solutions to new problems, and *Tajdid*, as the spirit of renewal, is the Islamic justification for continuing to innovate, experiment, and adapt to the challenges of the times [44]. Ecosystem architects are not only allowed but are theologically obligated to perform *Ijtihad* in designing structures and processes that are relevant to the contemporary context.

c. *Amanah* (Trust and Responsibility): In this model, the leader's source of authority and influence no longer lies in his formal position in the hierarchy, but rather in *Amanah*, the trust that the community places in him. This mandate is obtained through integrity, competence, and consistent exemplary[45]. This principle resonates directly with the pillars Idealized Influence in transformational leadership, where leaders lead through influence born of trust and respect, not from fear or bureaucratic obligation [46].

To clarify the proposed paradigm shift, theoretical validation of this shift is summarized in Table 1, which maps the fundamental differences between the old paradigm (Modernist/Bureaucratic) and the new paradigm (Ecosystem Architects) based on the synthesis of the literature that has been analyzed. Table 1 proves that the "Ecosystem Architect" model is not merely a change in management style, but rather an ontological reform in the way Islamic education is managed.

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[42] Ruby Eka Saputra and Suranta, "Sistem Syura Dalam Islam : Studi Kasus Partai Keadilan Sejahtera" (2006), https://www.lib.ui.ac.id/detail?id=20159779&lokasi=lokal.

[43] Putry Kartika Aprilya and Agus Tohawi, "Implementasi Prinsip Syura Dalam Sistem Pemerintahan Daerah," *Islamic Law: Jurnal Siyasah* 9, no. 1 (December 2024): 1–15, https://doi.org/10.53429/iljs.v9i1.593; Muhammad Rizky, "Syura Sebagai Basis Etis Politik Islam," *POLITEA : Jurnal Politik Islam* 5, no. 1 (December 2022): 2022–2022.

[44] Zarkasyi, "Tajdid Dan Modernisasi Pemikiran Islam."

[45] Zainal Putra and Jasman Ma'ruf, "Teuku Umar Leadership as Reflection of Islamic Leadership," *Nidhomul Haq: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam* 7 (March 2022): 1–14, https://doi.org/10.31538/ndh.v7i1.1834.

[46] Mubasyiroh and Muttaqin, "Peran Kepemimpinan Transformasional Kepala Sekolah Dalam Meningkatkan Kualitas Pendidikan Islam."

Table 1. Paradigm Shift in Islamic Education Leadership

Leadership Attributes	Modernist/Traditional Paradigm	Ecosystem Architect Model
Power Structure	Hierarchical, Top-Down, Centralized	Collaborative, Distributed, Flexible Networks
	Organizations are seen as machines with rigid vertical chains of command to ensure mechanical control and efficiency.[47]	Organizations are seen as living social networks; power is de-centered and fluid according to the context.[48]
Vision	Single Vision	Shared Narrative Co-Creation
	Formulated by leaders at the top and "sold" down. It is monolithic and often ignores diversity.[49]	Weaved together through inclusive dialogue. The vision emerged from the collective aspirations of the school community.[50]
Decision Making	Managerial, Centralized, Authority-Based	Participatory *Shura* (Deliberation)
	Decisions are taken centrally based on standard rules and the prerogative of the position.[51]	The decision was born from a deliberative process involving various stakeholders.[52]
Authority Sources	Formal Position	*Amanah* & Idealized *Influence*
	Compliance is based on bureaucratic legality and formal structures.[53]	Influence is obtained from spiritual *Amanah* (trust), integrity, and personal competence.[54]
Approach to Change	Planned & Linear	*Ijtihad & Tajdid* (Experimental)
	Change is considered a predictable, gradual process; resistance must be suppressed.[55]	Change is adaptive and innovative; The courage to take risks (*ijtihad*) is encouraged for renewal.[56]
Member Roles	Subordinates	Partners & Contributors (*Khalifah*)
	Technical executor of the instructions of superiors; passive and reactive.[57]	Active agents who have the autonomy to innovate and contribute to a shared mission.[58]
Leaders' Key Focus	Stability & Compliance	Ecosystem & Culture Design
	Maintain the status quo, minimize risk, and manage administration.[59]	Designing value systems, cultures, and spaces that spark innovation and collaboration.[60]

Source: Results of Researcher Data Processing (2025).

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[47] Bush, "Educational Leadership and Management: Theory, Policy, and Practice"; Tabrizi and Rideout, "Styles of Educational Leadership for Modernist and Postmodernist Approaches."

[48] Beach et al., *Organizational Change in the Field of Education Administration*; Sackney, Walker, and Mitchel, "Postmodern Conceptions of Power for Educational Leadership."

[49] Girma, "A Review of Educational Leadership Challenges in the 21st Century."

[50] Ilyas and Syahbani, "Reconstructing School and Madrasah Management through the Integration of Values, Transformational Leadership, and Curriculum Innovation."

[51] Fani and Yahya, "The Concept of Islamic Education in Indonesia in the Postmodernism Era."

[52] Aprilya and Tohawi, "Implementasi Prinsip Syura Dalam Sistem Pemerintahan Daerah"; Saputra and Suranta, "Sistem Syura Dalam Islam : Studi Kasus Partai Keadilan Sejahtera."

[53] Tabrizi and Rideout, "Styles of Educational Leadership for Modernist and Postmodernist Approaches."

[54] Putra and Ma'ruf, "Teuku Umar Leadership as Reflection of Islamic Leadership"; Zulaikah, Patoni, and Maunah, "Implementasi Kepemimpinan Transformational Pada Lembaga Pendidikan Islam."

[55] Girma, "A Review of Educational Leadership Challenges in the 21st Century."

[56] Esmaeeli and Afshani, "Postmodern Leadership in Organization"; Zarkasyi, "Tajdid Dan Modernisasi Pemikiran Islam."

[57] Bush, "Educational Leadership and Management: Theory, Policy, and Practice."

[58] Beach et al., *Organizational Change in the Field of Education Administration*; Mubasyiroh and Muttaqin, "Peran Kepemimpinan Transformasional Kepala Sekolah Dalam Meningkatkan Kualitas Pendidikan Islam."

[59] Fani and Yahya, "The Concept of Islamic Education in Indonesia in the Postmodernism Era."

[60] Heffernan, Netolicky, and Mockler, "New and Alternative Metaphors for School Leadership."

a. Validation of Power Aspects: The shift from hierarchy to networks (line 1) is validated by Sackney et al.[61] who emphasize that in the postmodern era, power should be seen as a dispersed productive energy, not the exclusive property of the principal.

b. Validation of Theological Aspects: The integration of Islamic values is evident in the aspects of decision-making and legitimacy (lines 3 & 4). The concepts of *Shura*[62] validated by Saputra & Suranta[63] and *Amanah* validated by Putra & Ma'ruf[64] are the main differentiators that give "spirit" to this model, ensuring that postmodern flexibility remains tied to transcendent ethics.

c. Validation of Innovation Aspects: The use of the concept of *Ijtihad* as a foundation for change (line 5) answers the criticism that Islamic educational institutions are often stagnant[65]. This model requires leaders to carry out *Tajdid* (renewal) on an ongoing basis, making innovation a worship, not just a business strategy.

Thus, Table 1 becomes empirical evidence that the proposed model has a robust literature foundation and high contextual relevance. This "Ecosystem Architect" model is not just a combination of several theories, but a system that is integrated and mutually reinforcing. The postmodern perspective opens space for participatory visionary processes; the resulting shared narrative triggers entrepreneurial actions; and transformational leadership behavior becomes a tool to facilitate the entire process, all of which are grounded in the principles of *Shura, Ijtihad,* and *Amanah*.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the modernist-bureaucratic leadership model that has dominated the management of Islamic educational institutions has been dysfunctional in the face of the volatility of the postmodern era. Rigid hierarchical structures and single vision have been proven to hinder the agility of institutions in responding to rapid changes.

As an antithesis, this research offers the "Leader as Ecosystem Architect" model—an integrative synthesis that fuses vision acuity, entrepreneurial courage, and transformational drive. In contrast to the secular model, this paradigm is locked by a trinity of theological values: Shura as a mechanism for narrative co-creation, Ijtihad as a mandate for innovation, and Amanah as the basis for moral legitimacy. In this model, leaders no longer function as commanders who control compliance, but rather as architects who design an environment in which each individual feels empowered to grow and contribute.

These findings demand a radical change in the operational governance of schools/madrasas that go beyond just changing jargon. The first crucial step is the courage of the principal to overhaul the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) of teachers, which have been shackled by administrative compliance alone—such as the completeness of lesson plans and attendance—into indicators based on innovation initiatives or *Ijtihad*. In this new paradigm, teachers are judged on the frequency of pedagogical experiments and the creative

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[61] Sackney, Walker, and Mitchel, "Postmodern Conceptions of Power for Educational Leadership."
[62] Saputra and Suranta, "Sistem Syura Dalam Islam : Studi Kasus Partai Keadilan Sejahtera."
[63] Saputra and Suranta.
[64] Putra and Ma'ruf, "Teuku Umar Leadership as Reflection of Islamic Leadership."
[65] Zarkasyi, "Tajdid Dan Modernisasi Pemikiran Islam."

solutions they offer, where measurable failures are seen as a valuable learning process, not a punishable mistake.

In line with these changing metrics, the governance of power must also be reformed through the decentralization of authority. Strategic decision-making should no longer be centralized exclusively in the principal's room but should be distributed through the institutionalization of small project-based forums (*agile teams*) based on the Shura principle. These teams need to be given autonomy to execute tactical decisions quickly without being hampered by tiered bureaucracy, as long as they remain aligned with the institution's larger narrative. To support this transformation, the allocation of HR development budgets must be significantly shifted from standard administrative training to the formation of an entrepreneurial mindset. Staff should view school challenges as chances to enhance academic and economic value, helping maintain the institution's independence and sustainability amid uncertainty.

However, this study is not without limitations. First, as a Systematic Literature Review (SLR), the proposed 'Ecosystem Architect' model remains a theoretical construct synthesized from secondary data and has not yet been empirically validated in specific field settings. Second, the data collection was restricted to digitally indexed articles (Scopus and SINTA), which may have excluded valuable insights from non-digitized classical Islamic texts (*Turats*) or gray literature that are relevant to the pesantren context. Therefore, this study recommends that future researchers go beyond conceptual validation and enter the realm of empirical measurement. The development of the "Islamic Education Ecosystem Index" instrument is needed to measure how conducive the culture of school organizations is to the practice of Ijtihad and collaboration. In addition, longitudinal studies are needed to see the direct correlation between the application of the Ecosystem Architect model and the improvement of student achievement and the competitiveness of graduates in the global market.

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