



Instructional Leadership and Spiritual-Based Academic Supervision in Strengthening School Religious Culture

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Abstract

This study examines the integration of instructional leadership and spiritual-based academic supervision in fostering a substantive religious culture within Islamic elementary education. Using a qualitative approach, the research analyzes how supervisory mechanisms are transformed from administrative control into a comprehensive spiritual mentoring process. The findings reveal that the synergy between academic supervision and spiritual leadership creates a religious climate through daily habituation, the integration of Islamic values into the curriculum, and the implementation of a 'hidden curriculum.' Furthermore, the study identifies that adaptive leadership strategies and ecosystem synergy between the school and parents are crucial in overcoming urban environmental barriers. The results demonstrate that this holistic supervision model significantly enhances students' religious character and elevates public trust in the institution. This research contributes to the discourse on educational leadership by positioning spiritual values as the core of academic oversight to achieve long-term character transformation.

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INTRODUCTION

Islamic education currently faces significant challenges driven by rapid technological advancements, societal shifts, and the complexities of the VUCA (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, and Ambiguity) era.¹ In this era of digital disruption, the erosion of religious and moral values among students presents a critical challenge, particularly for educational institutions located in rapidly changing urban environments.² Within this context, Islamic primary schools

¹ Cecep Sobar Rochmat et al., "The Quality of Education from Islamic Perspective Analysis of The Merdeka Belajar Curriculum in Facing The Society 5.0 Era," *Jurnal Tarbiyatuna* 14, no. 1 (2023): 75–93, <https://doi.org/10.31603/tarbiyatuna.v14i1.8633>.

² Wiwik Wida Farwati, "Principal Instructional Leadership in Building a Religious School Culture for Students' Character Development," *Journal of Educational Management Research* 4, no. 6 (2025): 3190–205, <https://doi.org/10.61987/jemr.v4i6.1597>; Sindy Karulita and Muthia Umi Setyoningrum, "DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION IN ISLAMIC EDUCATION: ACHIEVING EQUITABLE ACCESS THROUGH DIGITAL INCLUSION IN THE ERA OF DISRUPTION," *PROCEEDING OF INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON EDUCATION, SOCIETY AND HUMANITY* 3, no. 1 (2025): 94–104.

serve not merely as centers for academic knowledge transfer, but as foundational institutions for shaping children's personality, morality, and social behavior from an early age.³ Therefore, the systemic cultivation of a robust religious culture is an absolute necessity. This culture acts as an institutional immune system that protects students from negative global influences, ensuring that holistic Islamic education glorifies knowledge without reducing core Islamic values.

The successful internalization of this religious culture relies heavily on the leadership and strategic interventions of the madrasah principal. The role of the principal in an Islamic school is inherently complex, requiring a delicate balance of managerial, instructional, administrative, and religious leadership responsibilities.⁴ Traditionally, the principal's supervisory duties have often been reduced to administrative routines, occupying a significant portion of their time alongside general managerial tasks. However, supervision must be recognized as far more than an administrative checklist or a limited tool for evaluating teacher professionalism.⁵ Instead, instructional supervision is a strategic instrument that addresses the cognitive, behavioral, and affective dimensions of holistic educational development.⁶ Through continuous supervision, reflective evaluation, and direct engagement in daily religious activities, principals can systematically enforce and integrate religious values into the school's core policies and daily learning processes.⁷

A comprehensive review of recent literature highlights three dominant clusters regarding leadership and school culture in Islamic education. The first cluster focuses on the management of character education and daily habituation programs, emphasizing the integration of Islamic values into the curriculum but often overlooking the structural supervisory mechanisms that drive these initiatives.⁸ The second cluster heavily investigates principal supervision, yet it primarily frames supervision as a mechanism to enhance teacher pedagogical competence, self-efficacy, and job satisfaction, rather than as a tool for overarching cultural transformation.⁹ The third cluster explores spiritual and moral leadership, demonstrating how a principal's visionary approach, exemplary role

³ Irfan Kuncoro et al., "Character Education Management in Early Childhood Education," *Thawalib: Jurnal Kependidikan Islam* 6, no. 2 (2025): 225–36, <https://doi.org/10.54150/thawalib.v6i2.417>.

⁴ Saikatu Asfiah and Dwi Esti Andriani, "Principal Duties in Integrated Islamic Junior High Schools: : A Case Study in Sleman Regency, Yogyakarta," *Belajea: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 10, no. 1 (2025): 263–84, <https://doi.org/10.29240/belajea.v10i1.12855>.

⁵ Nilasari Siagian et al., "School Principal Supervision and Teacher Professionalism: A Study on Leadership in Islamic Schools," *Munaddhomah: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam* 6, no. 2 (2025): 223–37, <https://doi.org/10.31538/munaddhomah.v6i2.1765>.

⁶ Nurani et al., "Instructional Supervision, Teacher Self-Efficacy, and the Strengthening of Teacher Competence on Islamic Education: A Literature Review," *Istawa : Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 10, no. 2 (2025): 135–50.

⁷ Farwati, "Principal Instructional Leadership in Building a Religious School Culture for Students' Character Development"; Imam Ghazali et al., "Kepemimpinan Moral Spiritual Untuk Karakter Religius Di MTs Nurul Hidayah Pemasang," *IQRO: Journal of Islamic Education* 8, no. 2 (2025): 803–23, <https://doi.org/10.24256/iqro.v8i2.7284>.

⁸ Kuncoro et al., "Character Education Management in Early Childhood Education"; Achmad Suprayitno, "The Role of Spiritual Leadership in Strengthening the Religious Culture of Schools," *International Journal of Islamic Pedagogical Research* 1, no. 1 (2025): 36–51, <https://doi.org/10.65789/ijipr.v1i1.38>.

⁹ Mustaqim Mustaqim, "The Effect of a Principal's Instructional Supervisory Practice on Teacher Satisfaction in the Religious Ministry Schools of Semarang, Indonesia," *Journal of Social Studies Education Research* 12, no. 1 (2021): 194–215; Nurani et al., "Instructional Supervision, Teacher Self-Efficacy, and the Strengthening of Teacher Competence on Islamic Education"; Siagian et al., "School Principal Supervision and Teacher Professionalism."

modeling, and altruistic values can foster a cohesive Islamic environment, reduce negative behaviors like bullying, and build inclusive schools.¹⁰

Despite the extensive discourse in these areas, the existing literature remains fragmented regarding how supervisory practices directly intersect with the systemic institutionalization of religious culture. Character education initiatives often remain isolated and insufficiently integrated into the broader school culture because the structural link between leadership supervision and cultural habituation is missing.¹¹ There is a discernible empirical gap concerning how principals in urban Islamic primary schools specifically leverage their instructional and managerial supervision as a primary vehicle to cultivate, monitor, and sustain a religious culture amidst the intense pressures of modern social disruption. To address this theoretical and empirical void, this study investigates the supervisory strategy of the madrasah principal in developing a religious culture at Madrasah Ibtidaiyyah Fatahillah Kalibata, South Jakarta. The novelty of this research lies in reframing principal supervision from a conventional administrative and professional evaluation tool into a holistic, culturally transformative strategy. By analyzing how supervision is systematically applied to internalize religious values in a complex urban educational setting, this study aims to provide profound theoretical contributions to the field of Islamic educational management and offer practical paradigms for school leaders striving to strengthen their institutional religious identity.

METHOD

This research employed a qualitative approach utilizing a case study design. The qualitative approach was selected because this study aims to comprehensively understand the supervisory strategy of the madrasah principal in developing a religious culture, as well as its practical implementation and impact within a real-world educational setting.¹² The case study design allows the researcher to explore the phenomenon comprehensively within a specific context, namely Madrasah Ibtidaiyyah Fatahillah Kalibata, South Jakarta. This location was deliberately chosen because the institution possesses a structured religious habituation program and a strong commitment to strengthening the students' Islamic character. The research subjects included the madrasah principal, acting as the primary policy-maker and supervisor, alongside the educational staff directly involved in executing the religious programs. These subjects were selected using a

¹⁰ Rd Furqon and Diding Nurdin, "Fostering a Bullying-Free School Environment: The Role of Principals' Spiritual Leadership in Primary Education," *AL-ISHLAH: Jurnal Pendidikan* 17, no. 2 (2025): 2315–30, <https://doi.org/10.35445/alishlah.v17i2.6251>; Ghazali et al., "Kepemimpinan Moral Spiritual Untuk Karakter Religius Di MTs Nurul Hidayah Pemalang"; Febriyanti Ghayatul Qushwa and Hefniy, "Spirituality-Based Leadership Transformation in Building Inclusive Schools: Study of Efforts to Improve the Quality of Education in the Midst of Social Challenges," *Managere: Indonesian Journal of Educational Management* 6, no. 2 (2024): 179–93, <https://doi.org/10.52627/managere.v6i2.510>.

¹¹ Farwati, "Principal Instructional Leadership in Building a Religious School Culture for Students' Character Development."

¹² James P. Takona, "Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches / Sixth Edition," *Quality & Quantity* 58, no. 1 (2024): 1011–13, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11135-023-01798-2>.

purposive sampling technique based on their relevance and direct involvement with the research focus.¹³

To acquire comprehensive and robust information, data were collected through three primary techniques: in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to gather profound insights regarding the principal's supervisory strategies, the practical implementation of the religious programs, and their subsequent impact on the madrasah's culture. Concurrently, participant observation was carried out to directly witness the supervisory practices, the execution of religious habituations, and the daily social interactions among the school community. Furthermore, a documentation study was utilized to analyze the institution's vision and mission statements, annual work programs, religious habituation schedules, supervision reports, and religious activity archives. This documentation served to corroborate and strengthen the validity of the data obtained from interviews and observations.¹⁴

The collected data were analyzed inductively using the interactive model proposed by Miles and Huberman, which encompasses three concurrent flows of activity. The process began with data reduction, involving the rigorous selection and simplification of data strictly relevant to the research focus. This was followed by data display, where the reduced data were systematically organized into a descriptive narrative to facilitate understanding. The final step involved drawing conclusions and verification, which is a continuous process of interpreting the data's meaning until valid findings are established.¹⁵ This analytical process was conducted simultaneously from the initial data collection phase through to the conclusion of the study. Finally, to ensure the trustworthiness and credibility of the findings, data authenticity was rigorously tested using triangulation techniques. This included source triangulation, which involved cross-verifying data obtained from the principal, teachers, and educational staff, as well as technique triangulation, which compared the findings from the interviews, observations, and document analyses. Additionally, member checking was conducted by confirming the interpreted findings with the informants to ensure the accuracy and congruence of the data representation.¹⁶

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Integration of Academic Supervision and Spiritual Leadership

At MI Fatahillah Kalibata, managerial and academic supervision has transformed from a mere administrative control mechanism into a comprehensive ideological and spiritual mentoring

¹³ Fajar Mohammad Izzuddin et al., "STRATEGI DAN TANTANGAN KURIKULUM MERDEKA BERBASIS DEEP LEARNING DI MAN 3 JOMBANG," *Jurnal Pendidikan Sosial Dan Humaniora* 5, no. 2 (2026): 2211–19.

¹⁴ Sisfi Khafidz Fanani, "MANAGERIAL STRATEGIES IN TEACHER WELFARE POLICIES FOR ISLAMIC EDUCATION: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF INDONESIA AND MALAYSIA," *Benchmarking* 10, no. 1 (2026): 130–37, <https://doi.org/10.30821/benchmarking.v10i1.28348>.

¹⁵ Dodi Suhendi et al., "The Integration of Vocational and Soft Skills Education for Santri at Miftahul Ulum Islamic Boarding School, Bangunsirna," *Eduprof: Islamic Education Journal* 7, no. 2 (2025): 615–26, <https://doi.org/10.47453/eduprof.v7i2.436>.

¹⁶ Ahtisham Younas et al., "Framework for Types of Metainferences in Mixed Methods Research," *BMC Medical Research Methodology* 25, no. 1 (2025): 18, <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12874-025-02475-8>.

process.¹⁷ Based on the interview results, the principal emphasized that supervision must be based on Islamic values and oriented towards worship. "*For us, supervision is not about finding teachers' mistakes, but a process of reminding each other in goodness (tawasi bil haq). The intention must be straight for worship,*" stated the principal. This paradigm shift aligns with the concept of spiritual leadership that integrates vision, altruistic values, and a humanistic approach to strengthen the religious climate in the school environment.¹⁸ By positioning supervision as a spiritual endeavor, the principal effectively combines practical support with psychological empowerment, thereby fostering self-efficacy and reducing teacher resistance to the evaluation process.¹⁹

Structurally, this integration is clearly seen in the academic supervision strategy that specifically targets the inclusion of Islamic values in the instructional design.²⁰ The principal strictly checks Lesson Plans (RPP) to ensure that the moral and spiritual dimensions are not just complementary but strategically planned in pedagogical activities.²¹ Classroom observations show that teachers consistently open lessons with collective prayers and Al-Qur'an recitation. Furthermore, teachers actively link general subject materials with Islamic concepts (Kauniyah verses). This structured integration of religious values into academic activities is a concrete manifestation of instructional leadership that directly impacts the strengthening of students' religious character. Continuous mentoring and evaluation ensure that spiritual character education is managed as a complete, integrated process at the school level.²²

Culturally, the madrasah principal acts as a "living supervision instrument" through exemplary behavior (*uswah*) and a persuasive approach. Field observations prove that the principal is consistently and directly involved in daily religious routines, such as congregational Dhuha prayers and morning dhikr with the madrasah community. This direct involvement of the leader serves as a primary mechanism for internalizing values, where teachers and students can directly witness the practice of the values emphasized in institutional policies.²³ When finding teachers who have not maximized the integration of religious values in class, the principal avoids rigid formal reprimands but instead applies reflective dialogue and personal mentoring (coaching). "*The principal's approach is very personal. If something is lacking, we are invited to talk heart-to-heart,*

¹⁷ Topan Iskandar et al., "Islamic Leadership Management in the Development of a Religious School Culture," *Journal of General Education and Humanities* 5, no. 2 (2026): 2581–94, <https://doi.org/10.58421/gehu.v5i2.1203>; Nurani et al., "Instructional Supervision, Teacher Self-Efficacy, and the Strengthening of Teacher Competence on Islamic Education."

¹⁸ Suprayitno, "The Role of Spiritual Leadership in Strengthening the Religious Culture of Schools."

¹⁹ Ghazali et al., "Kepemimpinan Moral Spiritual Untuk Karakter Religius Di MTs Nurul Hidayah Pematang"; Nurani et al., "Instructional Supervision, Teacher Self-Efficacy, and the Strengthening of Teacher Competence on Islamic Education."

²⁰ Farwati, "Principal Instructional Leadership in Building a Religious School Culture for Students' Character Development."

²¹ Syarifah et al., "Integrating Pancasila Student Profile and Islamic Education: A Character Education Model within the Independent Curriculum," *Dirasah : Jurnal Studi Ilmu Dan Manajemen Pendidikan Islam* 9, no. 1 (2026): 339–50.

²² Rahmi Rahmi and Fitriyani Kosasih, "Managing the Integration of Spiritual Values for Character Formation: A Multi-Site Case Study in Indonesian Elementary Schools," *Journal of General Education and Humanities* 5, no. 1 (2026), <https://doi.org/10.58421/gehu.v5i1.1136>.

²³ Ghazali et al., "Kepemimpinan Moral Spiritual Untuk Karakter Religius Di MTs Nurul Hidayah Pematang"; Iskandar et al., "Islamic Leadership Management in the Development of a Religious School Culture."

so we feel guided, not judged," said one of the teachers. This leadership model, which combines rational stimulation with reflective dialogue, proves effective in building a safe, supportive, and character-based school environment.²⁴ Pedagogical support through a reflective instructional coaching approach is also confirmed to be far more effective than traditional training models in strengthening the quality of teacher instruction.²⁵

Ecosystem Synergy and Adaptive Strategies in Overcoming Barriers

The sustainability of religious culture at MI Fatahillah Kalibata is maintained through a systematic monitoring cycle and a robust synergy between the madrasah and the family ecosystem. A central instrument in this process is the "Buku Mutaba'ah Yaumiyah" (daily worship monitoring book), which facilitates parents' involvement in tracking their children's religious activities at home. This strategy recognizes that religious character formation requires contextual and consistent strategies across both school and family settings.²⁶ Continuous monitoring, supported by teacher observation and active home-school collaboration, ensures that spiritual habituation is internalized holistically rather than remaining a fragmented school initiative.²⁷ Such collaboration with stakeholders is a strategic mechanism to sustain character development programs and manage student progress beyond formal educational boundaries.

However, implementing a religious culture in an urban setting involves significant barriers, such as diverse student backgrounds, limited instructional time, and external environmental pressures. To address these, the principal employs adaptive leadership strategies that focus on pedagogical resilience and organizational responsiveness.²⁸ For instance, the madrasah utilizes home visits to engage with families where religious support may be limited, ensuring a shared vision for character development. This approach allows the institution to maintain quality standards and educational consistency despite resource constraints or conflicting community influences.

Furthermore, to mitigate the limitations of formal class hours, the principal optimizes the "hidden curriculum" as a powerful pedagogical tool. Islamic values are embedded into the school's daily routines and social interactions, such as queuing etiquette, *adab* in the canteen, and collective responsibility for cleanliness.²⁹ This hidden curriculum subtly yet effectively reinforces students'

²⁴ Iis Nuraeni et al., "The Reflective-Stimulation Leadership Model to Reduce Bullying in Islamic Junior High Schools," *Al-Tanzim: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam* 9, no. 3 (2025): 991–1002, <https://doi.org/10.33650/al-tanzim.v9i3.12158>.

²⁵ Giovana Milagros Panta Panta, "CAUSAL EFFECTS OF TEACHER PEDAGOGICAL SUPPORT USING STRUCTURAL EQUATIONS," *International Journal of Applied Mathematics* 38, no. 11s (2025): 1560–72, <https://doi.org/10.12732/ijam.v38i11s.1270>.

²⁶ Tania Umairah, "Teachers' Strategies for Shaping Islamic Character in Elementary School Students with Special Needs," *Indonesian Journal of Character Education Studies* 2, no. 2 (2025): 93–102, <https://doi.org/10.64420/ijces.v2i2.328>.

²⁷ Syarifah et al., "Integrating Pancasila Student Profile and Islamic Education."

²⁸ Rahmi and Kosasih, "Managing the Integration of Spiritual Values for Character Formation"; Lilis Suwandari et al., "Pedagogical Resilience of Elementary School Teachers in the Context of Marginalized School Governance (Case Study of Samudrajaya 03 State Elementary School, Bekasi)," *Journal of Educational Sciences* 10, no. 4 (2026): 745–59, <https://doi.org/10.31258/jes.10.4.p.745-759>.

²⁹ Iskandar et al., "Islamic Leadership Management in the Development of a Religious School Culture."

integrity, discipline, and religious morals by creating a pervasive spiritual climate.³⁰ By integrating these implicit elements, the leadership ensures that character building remains a continuous and school-wide process that complements the formal religious curriculum.³¹

The Impact of Supervision on Character Transformation and Public Trust

The implementation of structured supervisory strategies at MI Fatahillah Kalibata has led to profound transformations in student character and institutional reputation. Effective spiritual and instructional leadership serves as a strategic mechanism for fostering an inclusive, character-driven school climate.³² This transformation is most visible in students' daily behavior, where consistent religious habituation and the integration of values into the curriculum have fostered increased discipline, empathy, and social responsibility.³³ By internalizing Islamic values such as *adab* and respect through both the formal and hidden curricula, students develop a cohesive religious identity that is reflected in their daily social interactions.³⁴ As one student remarked during an interview, "I feel that the teachers here do not just teach us from books; they guide our hearts to be more disciplined and respectful to others." This holistic character formation is a tangible outcome of leadership that balances managerial oversight with spiritual role modeling.

Furthermore, the successful development of a substantive religious culture has significantly escalated public trust in the institution. Leadership that is participative, consistent, and grounded in professional governance fosters a stronger institutional reputation and rising community interest.³⁵ When a madrasah is perceived as a safe and morally upright environment—evidenced by the disciplined and ethical behavior of its staff and students—it naturally attracts a stable and loyal enrollment. Interviews with community members confirm this positive perception: "We see the results in the students' character; they demonstrate the values the madrasah stands for, which makes us confident in sending our children here." This positive "domino effect" on public perception underscores that academic supervision, when integrated with spiritual values, does not only enhance internal instructional quality but also secures the institution's position as a trusted and prestigious center for character education.

CONCLUSION

³⁰ Abdurrahman Abdurrahman et al., "The Influence of Hidden Curriculum on Student Character Development in Yemeni Madrasahs," *International Journal of Education and Teaching Studies* 1, no. 1 (2026): 1–12.

³¹ Ulfa Fitria and Nur Khalimah, "Implementation of the Hidden Curriculum in the Formation of the Religious Character of Students," *Curricula: Journal of Curriculum Development* 3, no. 2 (2024): 363–74, <https://doi.org/10.17509/curricula.v3i2.73181>; Rahmi and Kosasih, "Managing the Integration of Spiritual Values for Character Formation."

³² Ghazali et al., "Kepemimpinan Moral Spiritual Untuk Karakter Religius Di MTs Nurul Hidayah Pematang."

³³ Suprayitno, "The Role of Spiritual Leadership in Strengthening the Religious Culture of Schools"; Syarifah et al., "Integrating Pancasila Student Profile and Islamic Education."

³⁴ Abdurrahman et al., "The Influence of Hidden Curriculum on Student Character Development in Yemeni Madrasahs"; Faisol Hakim, "A Model for Vocational Curriculum Management in Senior High Schools to Enhance Graduate Independence," *Nawasena: Interdisciplinary Journal of Islamic Studies* 1, no. 1 (2026): 24–36.

³⁵ Abdul Manaf, "A School Culture-Based Empowerment Model to Strengthen Religious Traditions in Madrasah," *RASAFAT: Research and Studies on Academic Frameworks and Thought* 1, no. 1 (2025): 49–68.

The study concludes that the effectiveness of academic supervision in strengthening religious culture depends on the integration of spiritual values into managerial and pedagogical processes. Supervision at the elementary level is not merely an evaluative tool but a spiritual endeavor that fosters teacher self-efficacy and student moral development. By combining instructional leadership with a humanistic and persuasive approach (*uswah*), school leaders can create a resilient educational ecosystem. The results also highlight the importance of the hidden curriculum and parental involvement through monitoring instruments like the 'Buku Mutaba'ah Yaumiyah' to ensure the sustainability of religious habituation. Ultimately, this integrated leadership model serves as a strategic pathway to improving institutional quality and securing public trust through demonstrable character transformation in students.

DECLARATION OF AI AND AI ASSISTED TECHNOLOGIES IN THE WRITING PROCESS

In the preparation of this manuscript, the author(s) utilized DeepL and ChatGPT to assist with translating specific segments and standardizing specialized academic terminology. All outputs were subsequently reviewed and revised by the author(s), who assume full responsibility for the final content of the publication.

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