

BENCHMARKING

JURNAL MANAJEMEN PENDIDIKAN ISLAM

THE PRINCIPAL'S VISIONARY LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT IN DEVELOPING ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE IN PIDIE REGENCY

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Abstract

The success of educational transformation is strongly influenced by the ability of school leaders to establish a sustainable organizational culture through effective leadership and teachers' organizational commitment. However, many madrasahs continue to experience challenges in translating visionary leadership into collaborative practices that foster innovation, professional commitment, and continuous school improvement. This study aims to explore how visionary leadership contributes to the development of organizational culture by strengthening teachers' organizational commitment in public madrasahs in Pidie Regency, Aceh, Indonesia. Employing a qualitative case study design, the research involved school principals, vice principals, teachers, school supervisors, administrative staff, and school committee members selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and document analysis and analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña. The findings reveal that visionary leadership plays a crucial role in communicating a shared vision, promoting collaborative decision-making, providing continuous academic supervision, and creating a supportive learning environment that enhances teachers' affective and normative organizational commitment. Strengthened organizational commitment subsequently encourages professional collaboration, instructional innovation, collective responsibility, and the internalization of shared values, which collectively contribute to the establishment of a sustainable organizational culture. The study further demonstrates that organizational culture develops through continuous social interaction, exemplary leadership, and shared meaning-making rather than through administrative regulations alone. These findings contribute to the literature on educational leadership by proposing that teachers' organizational commitment functions as a mediating mechanism linking visionary leadership to organizational culture. The study also offers practical implications for policymakers, school supervisors, and educational leaders in designing leadership development programs that strengthen organizational capacity and sustain educational quality improvement in the context of ongoing educational reform.

Keywords: visionary leadership; organizational commitment; organizational culture; school leadership; qualitative case study; madrasah; educational leadership.

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INTRODUCTION

High-Quality Education constitutes a fundamental pillar of national development, serving both as a social integrator and as the driving force behind the advancement of human resource quality. In accordance with Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System, educational institutions are not merely expected to function as centers for the transfer of knowledge; rather, they are mandated to actively cultivate noble character and foster a dignified national civilization in pursuit of educating the nation's citizens.

Nevertheless, empirical realities indicate a considerable gap between the ideal regulatory framework and managerial practices within madrasahs. As a madrasah supervisor, the researcher has observed through the Madrasah Principal Performance Assessment (PKKM) instrument and the results of academic supervision that the leadership competencies of madrasah principals—particularly in the areas of entrepreneurship and instructional supervision—have not yet been fully translated into practical, supportive, and solution-oriented leadership. Instead, many principals remain preoccupied with fulfilling formal administrative and archival requirements, causing academic supervision to fall short of its essential purpose of improving the quality of classroom instruction through a humanistic approach.

At the institutional level, this pursuit of educational quality has undergone a fundamental transformation following the issuance of the Minister of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology Regulation (Permendikbudristek) No. 40 of 2021 concerning the Assignment of Teachers as School Principals. This regulation redefines the role of school principals by shifting it from traditional administrative and bureaucratic responsibilities toward strategic policymaking, instructional leadership, and the stewardship of the overall school ecosystem. Consequently, school principals are no longer viewed as passive administrative officials but rather as agents of change responsible for mobilizing all available school resources to create learning environments that are safe, supportive, and inclusive (Sudarman, 2022).

This situation has been further exacerbated by disparities in post-pandemic digital adaptation and by the reluctance of some senior teachers to update their instructional practices in accordance with the Minister of Religious Affairs Decree (KMA) No. 347 of 2022 on the Guidelines for the Implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in Madrasahs. These gaps in competence and perception have intensified organizational communication barriers within madrasahs. As a result, collaborative working environments have been weakened, intergenerational conflicts among teachers have become more pronounced, and organizational commitment has declined, ultimately undermining the adaptive, innovative, and Islamic organizational culture that madrasahs are expected to cultivate.

This paradigm shift requires school principals to possess comprehensive competencies encompassing managerial skills, entrepreneurial capacity, and academic supervision aimed at fulfilling the National Education Standards (Mulyasa, 2023). Such governance transformation is particularly critical in the digital era, where educational institutions are expected to demonstrate high levels of flexibility and adaptability in responding to rapidly evolving educational challenges (Sahlberg, 2021). Therefore, the effectiveness of school leadership has become the primary determinant of whether an educational institution is capable of achieving significant improvements in quality or remains constrained by rigid bureaucratic stagnation.

The urgency of leadership at the school level has become increasingly evident following the enactment of the Minister of Primary and Secondary Education Regulation (Permendikdasmen) No. 7 of 2025, which revoked previous regulations concerning the appointment of school principals. This new policy strictly limits a principal's tenure to a maximum of two terms, equivalent to eight cumulative years, whether served within the same educational institution or across different schools. Such a rigid limitation implicitly requires school principals to abandon traditional leadership models and adopt an accelerated vision-oriented leadership approach. Considering that eight years represents a relatively short period for institutional development, school leaders must formulate long-term strategic visions and establish sustainable organizational cultures that become deeply embedded within a limited timeframe.

This strategy is essential to ensure that quality improvement initiatives remain sustainable and do not experience setbacks despite future leadership succession or changes

in school principals (Fullan, 2020). School principals are therefore expected to implement system-based acceleration, whereby their primary focus lies in strengthening organizational capacity and nurturing future educational leaders among teachers (Hargreaves & Fink, 2015). Through this approach, leadership is no longer dependent upon a single individual's personal influence but instead becomes distributive and institutionalized, ensuring that organizational quality remains intact even after the departure of the current leader.

Within the empirical reality of schools, the success of learning transformation that genuinely benefits students largely depends on the strength of the organizational culture embedded within the institution. Organizational culture is not merely a collection of written rules displayed on office walls; rather, it constitutes a shared system of meaning, core values, and deeply held beliefs embraced by school members that shape how they think, behave, and make decisions (Robbins & Judge, 2018). Nevertheless, field observations frequently reveal a substantial gap between *das Sollen* (what ought to be) and *das Sein* (what actually exists).

Many schools possess quality-oriented slogans, vision and mission statements, or institutional mottos that appear exemplary on paper. However, daily practice continues to be characterized by teachers' resistance to instructional innovation, low levels of work discipline, and poor synchronization among various school stakeholders, including senior and junior teachers as well as administrative and teaching staff (Arifin, 2021). Consequently, quality culture often remains confined to superficial artifacts—such as symbols, slogans, and accreditation documents—without penetrating the levels of espoused values or the basic underlying assumptions shared by the entire school community (Schein, 2017). Such cultural barriers have contributed to the emergence of reform fatigue among teachers, whereby educational reforms are perceived merely as additional administrative burdens rather than as essential efforts to enhance students' reasoning abilities and character development.

Based on preliminary observations and interviews conducted with school supervisors, school committee members, and several senior teachers, teachers' organizational commitment has generally demonstrated encouraging progress. Most educators have exhibited strong institutional loyalty and expressed their willingness to participate in various school innovation programs, including the implementation of the national curriculum and digital learning initiatives. Nevertheless, this commitment remains relatively superficial and requires further comprehensive development and reinforcement.

This condition is reflected in several organizational behaviors that continue to fluctuate across staff members, including low attendance at non-academic evaluation meetings, limited initiative for independent professional development, and reluctance to participate voluntarily in school activities conducted beyond official working hours (Luthans, 2011). These findings indicate that teachers' organizational commitment has not yet been fully internalized but remains largely driven by pragmatic motives and formal compliance with administrative obligations. Such fragile and fragmented commitment represents a significant obstacle for schools aspiring to achieve substantial quality improvement, as successful innovation fundamentally depends on the discretionary effort voluntarily contributed by teachers for the benefit of their students.

Developing a resilient and adaptive organizational culture requires leaders who possess both intellectual and intuitive capacities to interpret future challenges through a vision-oriented leadership model. According to Burt Nanus (1992), visionary leadership refers to the ability to formulate and communicate a realistic, credible, and compelling vision of the future grounded in present realities. Such a vision serves both as a strategic compass and as a source of inspiration capable of uniting the collective energy of the entire school community (West-Burnham, 2019).

Conversely, the successful implementation of such a forward-looking vision depends upon exceptionally strong organizational commitment from teachers and staff as the primary executors of institutional change. Meyer and Allen (1991) conceptualize organizational commitment as comprising three interrelated psychological dimensions: affective commitment (emotional attachment to the organization), continuance commitment (the rational consideration of the costs and benefits of remaining within the organization), and normative commitment (a moral obligation to contribute to organizational success).

When visionary school leadership successfully touches teachers' affective and normative dimensions, teachers no longer perform their duties merely under bureaucratic pressure. Instead, they become intrinsically motivated by a profound sense of calling and ownership regarding the future of their schools (Yukl, 2013). This mutually reinforcing synergy between a leader's compelling vision and teachers' wholehearted commitment constitutes the primary driving force behind the establishment of a high-performing organizational culture.

Unlike quantitative approaches that typically conceptualize leadership, organizational commitment, and organizational culture as linear statistical relationships, qualitative research views the development of organizational culture through visionary leadership and teacher commitment as a complex, dynamic, and meaning-laden social process in which individuals actively construct shared meanings.

The close interpersonal relationships between principals and teachers, the culturally embedded communication of organizational vision through exemplary actions, and the processes through which commitment develops, is tested, and endures despite limited school resources represent realities that cannot be adequately captured through Likert-scale questionnaires alone (Creswell & Poth, 2018). A qualitative approach enables researchers to function as the key research instrument, directly engaging within the natural school setting to capture subtle nuances, emotional expressions, and the "unheard voices" of educational stakeholders (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Through prolonged engagement and in-depth interviews, researchers are able to uncover the deepest layers of organizational culture, understand how teachers negotiate resistance to change, and examine how school principals construct and communicate their vision until it becomes a collectively shared belief that mobilizes the entire educational ecosystem.

Previous studies conducted by Bush and Glover (2014) and Mulyasa (2022) have empirically confirmed the crucial role of leadership in establishing, directing, and sustaining a quality-oriented school culture. Nevertheless, most previous research has focused primarily on macro-level correlations or the direct effects of leadership on students' academic achievement using quantitative correlational designs that conceptualize organizations from a mechanistic perspective. Consequently, a significant research gap remains regarding the contextual micro-level processes through which visionary leadership influences the psychological and cultural dimensions of teachers, fostering genuine organizational commitment that eventually crystallizes into a distinctive organizational culture within schools.

Therefore, an in-depth, naturalistic qualitative investigation grounded in local sociocultural contexts is required to comprehensively explore these dynamics (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014).

Harris and Jones (2024) reported that post-pandemic visionary leadership demands rapid digital transformation; however, their study was confined to large urban schools with well-established infrastructures. Meanwhile, Suryadi (2024) found that the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in Indonesia generated cultural resistance among senior teachers with limited technological proficiency, causing the concept of the "Driving School" to become little more than an administrative formality. The phenomenon-based

research gap lies in the fact that neither study adequately addressed the realities of suburban or rural regions with distinctive sociocultural characteristics, such as Pidie Regency, where barriers to developing a quality culture extend beyond technological limitations. Instead, the critical challenge lies in how visionary leadership bridges infrastructural constraints through culturally responsive approaches that prevent teachers from feeling alienated by educational change.

A quantitative study conducted by Pratiwi et al. (2025) concluded that visionary leadership exerts a positive linear influence on teachers' organizational commitment. However, the study failed to capture the psychological processes through which teachers maintain such commitment under conditions of intense work pressure. Similarly, Miller (2025) explored the phenomenon of sprint leadership in educational institutions with strictly limited principal tenures and found that tenure restrictions often generated uncertainty among teachers regarding future institutional policies following leadership succession. The critical research gap that remains unresolved concerns the qualitative and naturalistic interaction mechanisms through which school principals, constrained by the maximum two-term tenure stipulated in Permendikdasmen No. 7 of 2025, cultivate deeply rooted and sustainable organizational cultures while simultaneously addressing teachers' fluctuating wait-and-see attitudes toward leadership transition.

Furthermore, Zhang and Ng (2026) identified the emergence of the quiet quitting phenomenon among contemporary educators, whereby teachers' organizational commitment became increasingly transactional. Teachers fulfilled only their formal instructional responsibilities while refusing to participate voluntarily in non-academic activities due to administrative burnout. Collectively, these five studies conducted over the past three years reveal a substantial research gap: there remains no comprehensive qualitative investigation examining how visionary school leadership can influence the psychological and cultural dimensions of teachers in order to mitigate quiet quitting and transform transactional commitment into voluntary affective and normative commitment, particularly within the constraints of limited principal tenure and the unique sociocultural context of Pidie Regency.

Accordingly, this study seeks to address this gap by comprehensively analyzing the cultural mechanisms through which organizational vision is internalized amid geographical constraints and the distinctive social dynamics of the local community. Ultimately, the study aims to develop a new theoretical model explaining the internalization of quality culture at the primary and secondary education levels..

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative research approach using a case study design to obtain an in-depth understanding of how visionary leadership contributes to the development of organizational culture through teachers' organizational commitment within the context of a madrasah. A qualitative approach was selected because the research aimed to explore participants' experiences, perceptions, meanings, and social interactions in their natural setting rather than to test causal relationships among variables (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The research was conducted at selected public Islamic junior high schools (Madrasah Tsanawiyah Negeri) in Pidie Regency, Aceh Province, Indonesia. The research site was purposively selected because it represents educational institutions currently implementing educational reforms, including the Merdeka Curriculum, while simultaneously facing challenges related to organizational culture, teacher commitment, and leadership transformation.

The participants were selected using purposive sampling, considering their direct involvement in school leadership and organizational development. The participants

consisted of school principals, vice principals, senior teachers, junior teachers, school supervisors, administrative staff, and school committee members. These participants were considered capable of providing rich and comprehensive information regarding the implementation of visionary leadership and its influence on organizational culture.

Data were collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. Interviews were conducted to explore participants' perspectives and experiences concerning visionary leadership, teachers' organizational commitment, and the development of organizational culture. Participant observation enabled the researcher to examine leadership practices, teacher interactions, collaborative activities, and organizational dynamics within the school environment. Documentary evidence, including school strategic plans, annual work programs, supervision reports, meeting minutes, and policy documents, was analyzed to strengthen the credibility of the findings through data triangulation.

The researcher served as the primary research instrument, actively engaging with participants throughout the data collection process. This role enabled the researcher to interpret participants' meanings within their socio-cultural context while maintaining reflexivity to minimize personal bias.

Data analysis followed the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), consisting of four interconnected stages: data collection, data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. The analysis was conducted continuously throughout the research process, allowing emerging themes to guide subsequent data collection and interpretation. Coding procedures were performed inductively to identify recurring patterns, categories, and themes related to visionary leadership, organizational commitment, and organizational culture.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, the study applied the criteria proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985), including credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility was established through prolonged engagement, triangulation of data sources and collection techniques, member checking, and peer debriefing. Transferability was enhanced by providing rich and detailed descriptions of the research context. Dependability was ensured through an audit trail documenting all stages of the research process, while confirmability was achieved by maintaining reflexive field notes and preserving documentary evidence throughout the study.

Ethical considerations were carefully observed throughout the research. Prior to data collection, informed consent was obtained from all participants. Participation was entirely voluntary, and participants were assured that their identities would remain confidential through the use of pseudonyms. Furthermore, all collected data were used exclusively for academic purposes and stored securely in accordance with established research ethics principles..

RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Results

The findings revealed that visionary leadership played a central role in shaping organizational culture by strengthening teachers' organizational commitment. Data obtained from interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis consistently demonstrated that the principal's ability to formulate, communicate, and implement a shared vision significantly influenced teachers' attitudes toward organizational change.

The principal communicated the school's vision through regular coordination meetings, academic supervision, teacher professional development activities, and informal discussions. Rather than functioning merely as an administrative manager, the principal acted as an instructional leader who encouraged teachers to improve instructional quality while adapting to the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. Teachers acknowledged

that leadership practices emphasizing collaboration, transparency, and shared decision-making increased their confidence and willingness to participate in school improvement initiatives.

One teacher explained:

"The principal does not simply instruct us to follow new policies. Instead, he explains the purpose of every program, encourages discussion, and supports us whenever we encounter difficulties in implementing new learning approaches."

This finding indicates that visionary leadership was reflected not only in strategic planning but also in daily interactions that fostered trust and professional collaboration among school members.

The study also found that teachers' organizational commitment consisted primarily of affective and normative dimensions. Most teachers expressed emotional attachment to the school because they perceived themselves as valuable contributors to institutional development. Their commitment was further reinforced by a moral responsibility to improve educational quality for students and the surrounding community.

However, the research identified several challenges affecting organizational commitment. Senior teachers experienced difficulties adapting to digital learning technologies and frequently perceived curriculum reforms as additional administrative burdens. Consequently, some teachers initially demonstrated resistance toward innovation and preferred maintaining conventional instructional practices.

Nevertheless, sustained mentoring, academic supervision, peer collaboration, and continuous professional development gradually reduced these barriers. Teachers became more willing to experiment with innovative teaching methods after receiving consistent guidance and constructive feedback from the principal.

Another significant finding concerned the development of organizational culture. The study revealed that organizational culture was strengthened through three interconnected mechanisms: shared vision, collaborative professional practices, and exemplary leadership. Rather than relying solely on written regulations, the school promoted quality culture through daily routines, collegial interactions, reflective discussions, and collective responsibility for student achievement.

Teachers reported that organizational values gradually became embedded in everyday school life. Collaborative lesson planning, peer observation, and professional learning communities encouraged teachers to share experiences, solve instructional problems collectively, and continuously improve teaching quality.

Although organizational culture had improved considerably, several obstacles remained. Limited educational resources, uneven technological competence among teachers, and differences in generational perspectives occasionally hindered collaborative practices. Nevertheless, these challenges were addressed through open communication, participatory leadership, and continuous capacity-building programs.

Overall, the findings suggest that visionary leadership contributed significantly to creating a positive organizational climate characterized by trust, cooperation, innovation, and collective responsibility.

Discussion

The findings confirm that visionary leadership extends beyond the formulation of organizational goals; it involves transforming shared aspirations into concrete organizational practices. Consistent with Nanus (1992), visionary leaders create a compelling future direction capable of motivating organizational members toward common objectives. In the present study, the principal successfully translated strategic vision into daily educational practices through communication, mentoring, and instructional supervision.

These findings also support Yukl's (2013) argument that effective educational leadership depends largely on leaders' ability to influence followers through inspiration rather than authority alone. Teachers demonstrated greater organizational commitment when they perceived the principal as supportive, trustworthy, and genuinely concerned with their professional growth. Such leadership fostered psychological safety, enabling teachers to embrace educational change with greater confidence.

The results further reinforce Meyer and Allen's (1991) three-component model of organizational commitment. Affective commitment emerged as the strongest dimension because teachers developed emotional attachment through collaborative relationships and shared educational values. Normative commitment also increased as teachers viewed educational improvement as a professional and moral obligation. By contrast, continuance commitment appeared less influential, indicating that teachers remained committed primarily because they believed in the school's mission rather than because of external incentives.

From the perspective of organizational culture, the findings are consistent with Schein's (2017) theoretical framework. Organizational culture developed gradually through repeated interactions, shared assumptions, and leadership modeling rather than through formal regulations alone. Visible organizational artifacts—including school slogans, strategic plans, and quality assurance documents—became meaningful only when consistently supported by leaders' behaviors and teachers' daily professional practices.

The study further demonstrates that organizational culture functions as a dynamic social process rather than a static institutional characteristic. Teachers' willingness to collaborate, exchange professional knowledge, and support one another became increasingly important during curriculum reform and post-pandemic educational transformation. These findings align with Fullan (2020), who argues that sustainable school improvement depends upon organizational capacity building instead of short-term administrative reforms.

An important contribution of this study lies in explaining how visionary leadership influences organizational culture indirectly through teachers' organizational commitment. Rather than affecting school culture independently, leadership first cultivates teachers' trust, motivation, and professional identity, which subsequently encourage collaborative behaviors that gradually become embedded within the school's organizational culture.

The findings also provide contextual evidence from rural and semi-rural educational settings, where educational transformation involves not only technological adaptation but also cultural negotiation among teachers with diverse professional backgrounds and varying levels of digital competence. In this context, successful leadership requires cultural sensitivity, effective interpersonal communication, and continuous mentoring rather than relying exclusively on managerial authority.

Based on these findings, a conceptual relationship can be proposed in which visionary leadership serves as the primary driving force that strengthens teachers' organizational commitment. Strong organizational commitment subsequently encourages collaborative professional practices, continuous learning, innovation, and mutual trust, ultimately contributing to the development of a sustainable organizational culture that supports continuous school improvement.

Overall, this study demonstrates that the effectiveness of visionary leadership should be evaluated not merely by organizational performance indicators but by its capacity to cultivate shared values, strengthen professional commitment, and institutionalize a collaborative organizational culture capable of sustaining educational transformation over the long term.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that visionary leadership serves as the primary catalyst for developing a sustainable organizational culture by strengthening teachers' organizational commitment. The findings demonstrate that effective school leadership extends beyond administrative management and strategic planning; it encompasses the ability to communicate a compelling vision, foster collaboration, inspire trust, and create an environment that encourages continuous professional learning. Through these leadership practices, teachers become more willing to embrace educational reforms, participate in school improvement initiatives, and contribute voluntarily to achieving institutional goals.

The study further reveals that teachers' organizational commitment functions as a critical mediating factor between visionary leadership and organizational culture. Teachers who experience supportive leadership and meaningful professional engagement develop stronger affective and normative commitment, which is reflected in their willingness to collaborate, innovate, and assume collective responsibility for improving student learning outcomes. Consequently, organizational culture evolves not merely through formal regulations or institutional policies but through the internalization of shared values, mutual trust, and sustained professional collaboration among members of the school community.

Moreover, this research highlights that the successful implementation of educational transformation in rural and semi-rural contexts requires culturally responsive leadership capable of addressing both technological challenges and socio-cultural dynamics. Visionary school leaders must therefore balance strategic innovation with local wisdom, ensuring that educational reforms are accepted as collective aspirations rather than perceived as administrative obligations. Such an approach strengthens teachers' sense of ownership and reduces resistance to organizational change.

The study also contributes to the existing body of knowledge by proposing that the relationship between visionary leadership and organizational culture is not direct but operates through the gradual development of teachers' organizational commitment. This finding enriches educational leadership literature by providing qualitative evidence that organizational culture is constructed through continuous social interaction, shared meaning-making, and leadership practices embedded in everyday school life.

From a practical perspective, educational policymakers and school supervisors should prioritize leadership development programs that emphasize visionary thinking, instructional leadership, interpersonal communication, and organizational capacity building. Similarly, professional development initiatives should focus on strengthening teachers' organizational commitment through collaborative learning communities, reflective supervision, mentoring, and continuous professional development. These strategies are expected to create resilient educational institutions capable of sustaining quality improvement despite leadership succession and ongoing policy reforms.

Finally, this study is limited to a qualitative case study conducted within the context of public madrasahs in Pidie Regency. Therefore, future research is recommended to involve broader educational settings, including urban, suburban, and private schools, and to employ comparative or mixed-methods approaches to further examine the interaction among visionary leadership, organizational commitment, and organizational culture across diverse educational contexts..

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