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## Unveiling the Excellent Leadership Qualities and Practices of Principals in Islamic Schools: A Systematic Literature Review

Saidah Mohd Said , Sabariah Sharif\*   
and Mohd Khairuddin@Jerry Abdullah   
University Malaysia Sabah, Malaysia

**Abstract.** This systematic literature review (SLR) aimed to investigate leadership practices among Islamic school principals to determine their characteristics and influential factors. Guided by the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic reviews and Meta-Analysis (PRISMA) approach, the study scrutinized 16 articles published between 2017 and 2022 sourced from three databases: Scopus, Dimensions, and Google Scholar. The findings unveil several themes, including instructional practices, leadership styles, good exemplars, relationship and engagement, ethical values, communication, flexibility, adaptability, and justice. These themes underscore the intricate nature of Islamic school leadership and its intersection with cultural and contextual factors. Intrinsic aspects, such as spirituality, attitude, and ability, and extrinsic components, such as organizational context and socio-religious influences, significantly mold principals' practices. These insights echo previous research accentuating the role of attitudes, norms, and perceived behavioral control in shaping leadership behavior. The study emphasizes cultivating affirmative attitudes and cultural norms to foster inclusive and diverse environments. The implications underscore the need for multifaceted leadership strategies, adaptability, and ethical values. Future studies are recommended to incorporate quantitative methods and broaden the geographical scope for a comprehensive grasp of Islamic school leadership. Thus, this SLR advances insights into Islamic school leadership, facilitating effective practices across diverse educational settings.

**Keywords:** educational leadership; Islamic school; leadership shaping factors; leadership practices; school principal

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\* Corresponding author: Sabariah Sharif, [sabariah@ums.edu.my](mailto:sabariah@ums.edu.my); Mohd Khairuddin@Jerry Abdullah, [khair@ums.edu.my](mailto:khair@ums.edu.my)

## 1. Introduction

Islamic schools occupy a unique and profound position that extends beyond their role as mere vessels of knowledge. These institutions play a pivotal role in molding their students' values and character by nurturing individuals with a holistic and principled outlook (Usri et al., 2021). Within this narrative, the school principal emerges as a pivotal figure who assumes responsibilities beyond administrative duties. The principal is responsible for developing a comprehensive educational environment that harmonizes contemporary objectives with ethical underpinning, thereby fostering academic excellence among students that resonates with ethical dimensions (Fullan, 2015; Grissom et al., 2021; Kin et al., 2019). According to Kelkay (2020), schools' advancement and progress are evident through professional principals' adeptness in effectively utilizing human resources and facilities. These principals demonstrate their professionalism by engaging and empowering the human resources capable of facilitating and implementing various school initiatives. Their leadership significantly plays a vital role in shaping the organizational strategy of the school, which is aimed at realizing the institution's vision, mission, and objectives. Today's rapidly changing world emphasizes the necessity of effective leadership in fostering positive change, promoting ethical values, and achieving organizational goals (Egel & Fry, 2017). Moreover, Bhatti et al. (2019) underscored the recent developments that emphasized the significance of spirituality and religious belief in the domains of leadership and management, highlighting the role of these elements in shaping values, behaviors, and decision-making processes.

Embedded within this discourse is a compelling imperative underscoring the urgency of exploring the intricate leadership qualities exemplified by Islamic school principals. A constellation of salient findings underscores this compelling impetus. The conspicuous dearth of comprehensive insights into Islamic leadership (Shah, 2016) has gained added resonance, given Islam's global prominence as the second most practiced religion worldwide and the primary religion in Asia (Brooks & Mutohar, 2018). This convergence accentuates the necessity for scholarly research into the interplay between Islam, leadership practices, and cultural dynamics (Sunier, 2012). Simultaneously, the insights posited by Brooks and Mutohar (2018) reinforce this study's quest to unveil effective leadership practices in Islamic schools, while fostering diverse and inclusive educational environments. Coinciding with these tenets, as illuminated by Harun et al. (2021), the absence of empirical studies beyond Malaysia underscores dimensions across diverse contexts. By considering these insights, this study investigates the intricate facets of leadership practices among Islamic school principals by offering a foundational framework for enriching scholarly discourse and bridging the vital research gap.

Therefore, the objective of the present SLR is twofold, as stated below:

1. Identify the characteristics of leadership practices among Islamic school principals.
2. Examine the underlying elements that shape the leadership practices exhibited by Islamic school principals.

These objectives seek to explore various leadership aspects within the unique context of Islamic schools, especially beyond the Malaysian context, aiming to unveil specific qualities principals exhibit. It is extended to broadening the scope of research and enhancing the understanding of the leadership practices across various Islamic schools contextually. This SLR ultimately offers a comprehensive understanding of principals' pivotal role within Islamic schools. The review also provides actionable insights to better understand the enhancement of their leadership practices through future research. By examining the characteristics of school principals in this religious-based school practice, the present pursuit addresses existing gaps (Harun et al., 2021) in research domains related to Islamic school leadership. This endeavor highlights the need to illuminate the dimensions of leadership, thereby enhancing the quality and robustness of research outcomes and contributing to the comprehensive understanding of the field. Additionally, the findings are expected to enrich the understanding of leadership qualities exhibited by the principals of Islamic schools, aligning with and reinforcing the objectives of Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013–2025. This plan aims to enhance school performance by improving the capabilities of head teachers and principals through an emphasis on school-based management (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2013).

## **2. Literature Review**

As influenced by the principles of international action, the effective leadership practices of principals hold significant implications for achieving the success of schools and fostering inclusive and diverse learning environments (Day & Sammons, 2016). Given the intricate and dynamic nature of the educational landscape, it becomes imperative to have capable school principals who exert a positive influence through appropriate leadership behaviors. These behaviors serve as catalysts by motivating the entire school community to work with enthusiasm and commitment, ultimately leading to students' success (Botha & Aleme, 2023). Nonetheless, delving deeper into the realm of effective leadership in the Islamic school context calls for a comprehensive examination of the factors shaping principals' attitudes, subject norms, and perceived behavioral control. Understanding these complexities not only adds depth to the discussion on educational leadership but also provides insights into optimizing leadership strategies within the unique context of Islamic schools. Previous studies have provided valuable insights into behavior and practices that correlate with effective leadership (Grissom et al., 2021; Yukl et al., 2019). The involvement and interaction in the teacher instructional activities create a conducive environment for learning (Liebowitz & Porter, 2019). This environment encourages teamwork and career advancement and being methodical with limited educational resources (Grissom et al., 2021). Similar to the findings of studies by Yukl et al. (2019) and Grissom et al. (2021), the aspects of the principal's leadership style are also closely related to various personal dimensions, as they pertain to the connection between the leader, followers, and context (Hansen, 2016). These dimensions include personality traits, cognitive skills, motivational skills, and social skills (Ng et al., 2015). Personal traits and behavior, beliefs, communication, and a comprehensive

grasp of the issue and environment are the fundamental concepts that underpin effective leadership (Garza et al., 2014; Gurr et al., 2005).

Nevertheless, examining how these findings align with the unique context and values of Islamic education is essential. Additionally, the connection between the principal's leadership style and the various personal dimensions (Hansen, 2016; Ng et al., 2015) raises questions regarding the specific qualities that are the most relevant and effective for Islamic school principals. Besides, the growing diversity within Muslim school communities presents a pressing need to explore educational leaders' roles in establishing inclusive and culturally responsive school environments. These leaders must navigate the complex challenge of promoting socio-political equity, while fostering a unified Muslim identity that embraces the community's cultural richness and diversity (DeCuir, 2016). Drawing from Rafiki's (2020) insights, a compelling perspective emerges in relation to the pragmatic role undertaken by Islamic school principals. Rafiki's (2020) work has illuminated the significance of nurturing a collaborative and participatory ethos among school stakeholders, which seamlessly aligns with the foundational Islamic teaching tenets that advocate for mutual consultation (*shura*) and community engagement. This approach not only enriches the decision-making process but also engenders a sense of shared ownership and collective responsibility. By translating these principles into action, the principals can establish an inclusive and harmonious educational milieu that harmonizes with Islamic values, while strategically tackling contemporary challenges. Moreover, this symbiotic connection between Islamic values and the practical role of educational leaders aligns with the insights of Tri Na'imah and Muhibbin (2020). This underscores the vital importance of self-management aligned with Islamic principles, organizational development aligned with the school's vision, meaningful relationships with students and stakeholders, curriculum expertise, and effective leadership of teachers.

### 3. Methodology

An SLR involves a methodical and well-planned analysis of previously published research. According to Dewey and Drahota (2016), an SLR entails organizing, selecting, and evaluating existing research to address a specific research question. We utilized the SLR procedure (Xiao & Watson, 2019) in this investigation.

The SLR procedure commenced by formulating the relevant research question. The development of research questions is a paramount aspect of producing an SLR to identify the scope of the investigation (Fernández del Amo et al., 2018). To formulate the research question, insights from studies by Harun et al. (2021) and Rafiki (2020), which examined leadership in religious schools and the qualities of Islamic leadership, were incorporated. Second, by employing the PICO formulation ('P' = population, 'I' = interest, 'Co' = context) guided by Mohamed Shaffril et al. (2020), we concentrated on principals (population), leadership quality (interest), and Islamic schools (context). This formulation helped in shaping the central research question:

- What are the key characteristics of leadership practices among Islamic school principals?



### 3.1 Identification

Based on the formulated research question, three main keywords were identified: “principal”, “leadership quality”, and “Islamic school”. To enrich the search using these keywords, we identified their synonyms, related terms, and variations by using an online thesaurus (thesaurus.com) and asked the opinion of an education expert. This process produced several keywords, such as “leadership characteristics”, “feature”, “elements”, “Muslim school”, “religious school”, “madrasahs”, “headmaster”, and “leader”. By expanding the range of keywords and search terms, the identification process increased the comprehensiveness of the literature search and ensured that all the relevant articles were identified. We utilized three databases, namely Scopus, Google Scholar, and Dimensions, to conduct the search. Scopus stood out for its broad content coverage, spanning from psychological science, economics, and sociology to humanities. It is also known for its extensive abstracts and citations (Mohamed Shaffril et al., 2018). Subsequently, the Google Scholar database assisted the search by providing open-access resources, including articles, proceedings, theses, and reports (Xiao & Watson, 2019). Furthermore, inclusion of the Dimensions database was deemed pivotal. Renowned for its extensive collection of multidisciplinary academic publications and research outputs, Dimensions served as a fitting choice to ensure a holistic exploration across diverse dimensions. Utilizing multiple databases was prudent to enhance results potency and address potential limitations in individual databases (Xiao & Watson, 2019). Recognizing the risk of retrieval bias from relying on a single database, as Durach et al. (2017) highlighted, reinforced the rationale for leveraging multiple sources in the comprehensive and meticulous literature search. Searching in the Scopus database involved the Boolean operator “AND” to combine the principal terms; and “OR” was used to conduct searches based on words synonymous with the keyword (Breretona et al., 2007). Nevertheless, manual searching, namely “handpicking”, based on similar keywords was used in the Google Scholar and Dimensions databases. The search string and the manual hand searching based on keywords were performed as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1: Search string and keywords used for the systematic review process**

Database	Search string
Scopus	TITLE-ABS-KEY ("Leadership quality*" OR "leadership characteristics*" OR "leadership feature*" OR "leadership excellence" OR "leadership element*" OR "leadership trait*" OR "leadership attribute*" OR "school leadership*" OR "educational leadership" OR "curriculum leadership" OR "Islamic educational leadership") AND TITLE-ABS-KEY ("Islamic school*" OR "religious school*" OR "Muslim school*" OR "Islamic organisation*" OR "Islamic education*" OR "Muslim school leader*" OR "religious education" OR "academic and Islamic education*" OR "madrasahs" OR "tahfiz school" OR "Islamic education management" OR "private Islamic schools" OR "government-aided religious school" OR "integrated Islamic schools") AND TITLE-ABS-KEY ("principal*" OR "headmaster*" OR "leader*")

Google Scholar	Islamic school, Muslim schools, principal's leadership, leadership qualities, leadership practices, leadership, OR principal OR Islamic OR school "educational leadership"
Dimensions	Leadership quality, leadership characteristics, leadership practices, Islamic school, Muslim school, school principal

### 3.2 Screening

The second step involved screening. During this process, the articles were either included or excluded from the study using specific criteria. We prioritized empirical research papers due to their primary data. To ensure precision, only articles written in English, a language we understand well, were considered. Due to the substantial volume of documents the Google Scholar and Dimensions databases generated, we implemented additional filters. These filters narrowed the search scope to articles published in 2022 and restricted the selection to the fields related to the study, including philosophy and religious studies, education, strategic management, organizational behavior, and the education system. This meticulous filtration process was intricately aligned with the central objective of the SLR, which focuses on examining leadership practices among Islamic school principals. Consequently, this targeted filtering strategy enhanced the relevance and applicability of the collected articles. The results of the inclusion and exclusion criteria are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2: Inclusion and exclusion criteria involved in the screening process**

Database	Number of articles retrieved using the search string	Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria	Remaining articles
Scopus	31	Empirical research paper, English language, compatibility with the study topic	Book chapter, book, review paper, non-English language, incompatibility with the study topic	8
Google Scholar	469 (Sorted since 2022)	Empirical research paper, English language, compatibility with the study topic	Book chapter, book, review paper, non-English language, incompatibility with the study topic, beyond most recent year (2022)	11

<b>Dimensions</b>	148 (Sorted since 2022 & related field of research: philosophy and religious studies, education, strategic management, organisational behaviour, and the education system)	Empirical research paper, English language, compatibility with the study topic	Book chapter, book, review paper, non-English language, incompatibility with the study topic, beyond most recent year (2022), outside the research field	<b>4</b>
<b>Total articles for evaluation in the subsequent stage</b>				<b>23</b>

### 3.3 Eligibility and Quality Appraisal

A total of 23 articles selected proceeded to the third phase – eligibility. During this pivotal phase, a thorough examination was conducted, which included reviewing article titles, abstracts, and main contents. The purpose was to ensure that the selected articles adhered to the inclusion criteria and to determine the suitability of the articles for integration into the ongoing study in harmony with its research objectives. Furthermore, in alignment with the principles guided by Downes et al. (2016) on undertaking evidence-based practice, an independent external evaluation process comprising a distinguished professor and associate professor from the education faculty within the university was undertaken. This process minimizes potential biases and reinforces the strength of the article assessment process conducted by the reviewers. This evaluation functioned as an independent examination to ascertain the congruence of the research question by acting as the primary guiding factor.

Moreover, the quality assessment process highlighted two pivotal criteria. First, the study's comprehensive elucidation of methodology regarding the leadership practiced by Islamic school principals was critically evaluated. Second, the handling of the quality of principal leadership within Islamic schools in this study underwent meticulous examination. By employing a three-tiered response scale, namely high, moderate, and low, the evaluation process strictly adhered to these criteria. With unanimous consensus between us and an external evaluator from the university's Faculty of Education, the complete eligibility and quality appraisal process aligned with the high and moderate response criteria. As a result of this rigorous eligibility process, seven articles were excluded due to their limited alignment with the study's parameters, which could result in low response scores. Consequently, only 16 articles remained eligible for comprehensive analysis within the study's context.

### 3.4 Data Analysis

The study relied on thematic analysis to synthesize the findings of the articles in the review. Due to its adaptability and methodical method, thematic analysis was selected to synthesize information collected from the various study types. The study followed methods developed by Flemming et al. (2019), which stress the suitability of thematic synthesis in synthesizing data from diverse research

designs. The first step in the analysis involved generating initial codes organized at a granular and specific level. Subsequently, using the coded information as a starting point, we established themes by drawing parallels and developing associations across the retrieved data. The inductive coding approach was utilized to identify and connect these themes to the preliminary information, ensuring that they are representative of the whole (Braun & Clarke, 2019). During this process, eight themes emerged from the analysis which provided insights into the topic under review. We repeated the same process to develop the themes for the subsequent findings based on the study's second objective.

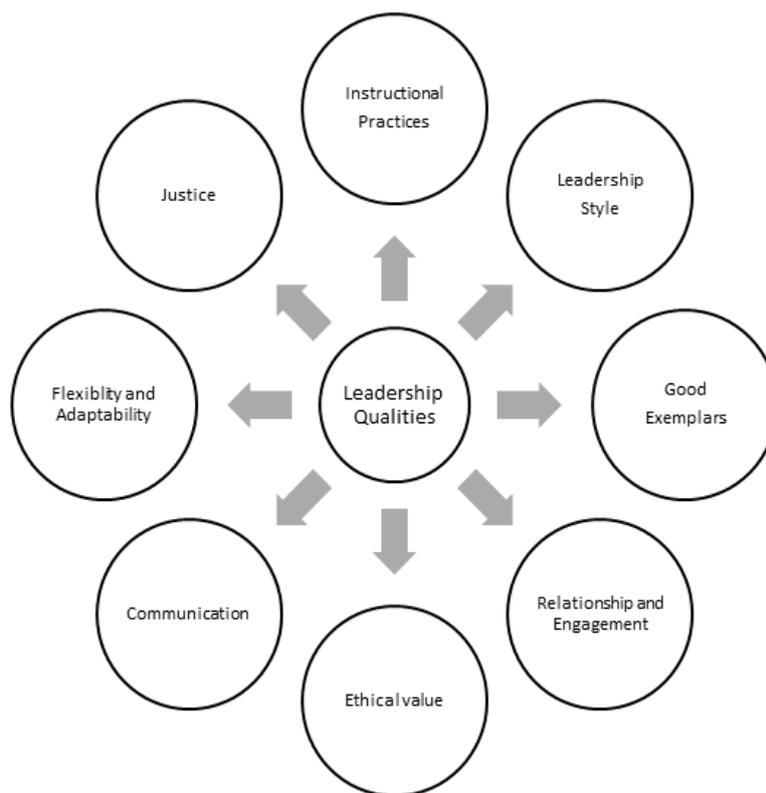
#### 4. Results

The overall background of the 16 highlighted articles is depicted in Table 3.

**Table 3: List of the studies reviewed**

<b>Author and publication year</b>	<b>Country of study</b>	<b>Study design</b>
Raihani (2017)	Thailand	Qualitative
Ezzani and Brooks (2018)	United States	Qualitative
Brooks et al. (2020)	Indonesia	Qualitative
Brooks and Ezzani (2021)	United States	Qualitative
Syarafuddin et al. (2021)	Indonesia	Qualitative
Saleemad et al. (2022)	Thailand	Mixed methods
Sholeh et al. (2022)	Indonesia	Qualitative
Hamengkubuwono and Pratama (2022)	Indonesia	Qualitative
Wajdi et al. (2022)	Indonesia	Qualitative
Rohman et al. (2022)	Indonesia	Qualitative
Zenab et al. (2022)	Indonesia	Qualitative
Thohri (2022)	Indonesia	Qualitative
Chehdimae and Mohd Ali (2022)	Thailand	Quantitative
Illah et al. (2022)	Indonesia	Qualitative
Ismail et al. (2022)	Indonesia	Qualitative
Nailul Khoiri et al. (2022)	Indonesia	Qualitative

According to the reviewed studies, the intricacies of leadership qualities within Islamic schools are illuminated by the identification of eight main themes, as depicted in Figure 2.



**Figure 2: Leadership qualities identified in the review**

According to the reviewed studies, instructional practices encapsulate seven sub-themes that enhance teachers' competency (Hamengkubuwono & Pratama, 2022; Illah et al., 2022; Rohman et al., 2022; Sholeh et al., 2022; Zenab et al., 2022), supervision (Hamengkubuwono & Pratama, 2022; Illah et al., 2022; Ismail et al., 2022), motivation and encouragement (Hamengkubuwono & Pratama, 2022; Illah et al., 2022; Ismail et al., 2022; Rohman et al., 2022; Thohri, 2022), monitoring (Hamengkubuwono & Pratama, 2022; Rohman et al., 2022), planning (Illah et al., 2022; Zenab et al., 2022), and visioning (Ismail et al., 2022; Raihani, 2017).

Principals play a pivotal role in enhancing human resources and competencies. They provide digital skills training (Sholeh et al., 2022), including in information technology (IT) and English (Illah et al., 2022; Zenab et al., 2022). Furthermore, they encourage creativity among teachers through activities and competitions (Hamengkubuwono & Pratama, 2022), while collaboration, coaching, and workshops bolster the teachers' competencies (Rohman et al., 2022). In addition, supervision practices undertaken by principals encompass multifaceted strategies that ensure effective education management and quality learning. Principals employ digital tools such as WhatsApp, Google Meet, and Zoom to provide direct instructions (Sholeh et al., 2022). Additionally, they guide teachers and lead morning activities, which foster an optimal learning environment (Hamengkubuwono & Pratama, 2022). Moreover, educational supervision emphasizes teacher development, innovative teaching methods, and the well-being of students (Illah et al., 2022). This approach also aligns with the goal of Islamic boarding schools to cultivate morally upright students (Ismail et al., 2022). By continuing the multifaceted approach, principals motivate their subordinates

through intensive appreciation, improved welfare, and rewards (Hamengkubuwono & Pratama, 2022; Rohman et al., 2022). They foster collaboration, nurture religious characteristics, and acknowledge excellence (Illah et al., 2022; Ismail et al., 2022; Thohri, 2022). Transitioning to monitoring, principals consistently assess learning tools and teaching outcomes to ensure their effectiveness (Hamengkubuwono & Pratama, 2022). They oversee institutional activities, environments, and human development to achieve holistic management (Rohman et al., 2022).

Regarding planning practices by principals, including program preparation, quality enhancement, community engagement, and recognition (Zenab et al., 2022), the process involves meeting development teams and staff, thereby nurturing collective participation in various school activities and programs. In curriculum planning, annual meetings, curriculum formation, documentation, and assessment program establishment are essential (Illah et al., 2022). Moreover, visioning abilities encompass the creation of compelling school directions (Raihani, 2017), while the *kiai* (traditional Islamic school leader) adeptly guides teachers towards future-aligned learning in Islamic boarding schools by expertly assigning tasks to achieve strategic goals (Ismail et al., 2022). Principals are also involved in teaching for a limited number of hours, leveraging their socio-spiritual skills to motivate continuous student learning (Rohman et al., 2022).

Analysis of the reviewed articles also unveiled a spectrum of leadership styles, encompassing democratic, managerial, transformational, charismatic, strategic educational leadership, and laissez-faire approaches. Rooted in Islamic and general values, democratic leadership cultivates inclusivity and community involvement. On the other hand, managerial leadership emphasizes structured execution and task efficiency (Thohri, 2022). Concurrently, transformational leadership demonstrates personal commitment and adaptability to evolving educational demands (Saleemad et al., 2022; Thohri, 2022). Charismatic leadership hinges on personal authority, responsiveness, trust-building, and proactive behavior (Wajdi et al., 2022). Additionally, principals exhibit high-level strategic educational leadership, which enhances effective school management (Chehdimae & Mohd Ali, 2022). In contrast, the laissez-faire style adopted by some *kiai* grants autonomy to teachers and staff, thereby empowering them (Ismail et al., 2022). Besides, the articles highlight that principals play exemplary roles by demonstrating discipline and compassionate communication and providing examples for teachers and students (Syarafuddin et al., 2021). This emulation extends to the success and reputation of Islamic-based schools, which foster community engagement (Hamengkubuwono & Pratama, 2022). Teachers and madrasah leaders significantly influence students' character in the school environment (Rohman et al., 2022). Furthermore, the consistent positive behavior of principals cultivates an atmosphere of excellence among teachers and students (Illah et al., 2022).

The theme of "ethical value" in the context of principals' personal attributes is exemplified by their promotion of human values and intact personalities (Wajdi et al., 2022). Principals are steadfast in upholding moral and religious values by

acting as a foundation against the tide of technological advancement. Their working resonates with Prophet Muhammad's teachings and examples, underlining the significance of adhering to Islamic values in all aspects of leadership (Thohri, 2022). Additionally, principals exhibit gentleness and considerate support, fostering comfort and goodwill among staff (Saleemad et al., 2022). The findings also indicate that Islamic school principals adeptly cultivate relationships and engagement through various elements. They do this by building synergy with parents, committees, and teachers, promoting unity and problem-solving (Hamengkubuwono & Pratama, 2022). Additionally, they establish external partnerships to enhance internal quality (Zenab et al., 2022). This harmonious collaboration aligns decisions with common interests (Thohri, 2022). Initiatives such as family day strengthen bonds within schools by fostering a sense of belonging (Raihani, 2017). Moreover, principals work collaboratively to design curricula that encourage interfaith understanding (Ezzani & Brooks, 2018). These practices showcase their vital role in creating an inclusive and engaged educational environment.

Regarding exemplifying effective communication, Islamic school principals employ persuasive strategies to engage stakeholders and ensure transparent program communication (Rohman et al., 2022). Moreover, engaging stakeholders and ensuring clear program communication and interpersonal skills foster a positive school environment that encourages open expression of opinions (Saleemad et al., 2022). Additionally, principals demonstrate courage by consistently speaking out against discrimination and injustice (Ezzani & Brooks, 2018). The review also highlights adaptability and flexibility practices. Open principals engage the community through diverse activities, fostering school involvement (Brooks et al., 2020). Flexibility involves adjusting to change, prioritizing, and utilizing current data (Saleemad et al., 2022). Progressive principals encourage critical awareness, prompting students to question injustices (Brooks & Ezzani, 2021). On the other hand, challenging environments demand strategic compromise (Raihani, 2017). Balanced community responsiveness aids in decision-making (Ezzani & Brooks, 2018), while justice in educational leadership emphasizes fairness, impartiality, and consideration of all viewpoints (Saleemad et al., 2022). Furthermore, social justice in Islam involves challenging inequitable norms through resistance to what is morally right (Brooks & Ezzani, 2021).

The study's second objective was to examine the underlying elements that shape the exhibited leadership practices of Islamic school principals. These elements are illustrated in Figure 3.



**Figure 3: Elements that shape principals' leadership practices**

The first intrinsic element is the aspect of spirituality, which entails upholding Islamic values (Thohri, 2022). Critical spirituality (Brooks & Ezzani, 2021) profoundly shapes leadership, serving as the core and essential foundation in molding the individual's behavior and attitude. The second intrinsic element is attitude (Wajdi et al., 2022). According to Sholeh et al. (2022), decision-making actions and leadership style (Nailul et al., 2022) serve as indicators of principals' attitudes. Conversely, the ability element underscores the pivotal role of a leader's capabilities in fostering critical thinking and effective leadership (Wajdi et al., 2022). The extrinsic element encompasses organizational context (Zenab et al., 2022), along with cultural and socio-religious factors (Brooks et al., 2020; Ezzani & Brooks, 2018; Ismail et al., 2022; Raihani, 2017; Rohman et al., 2022; Saleemad et al., 2022). Cultural and socio-religious aspects notably impact leadership actions, as they contribute to policies and actions in challenging situations by promoting social cohesion (Raihani, 2017) and cross-cultural communication (Saleemad et al., 2022) and influencing the laissez-faire leadership style (Ismail et al., 2022). In addition, principals' socio-religious beliefs and behaviors also shape their leadership practice (Brooks et al., 2020). The identified elements significantly differentiate principals' leadership practices, making them contextually relevant and impactful.

## 5. Discussion

The findings of this thorough examination of the literature significantly contribute to the understanding of the elements influencing leadership behavior and shed light on the leadership qualities practiced by Islamic school principals. Moreover, these findings directly address the research question by providing valuable insights into the specific qualities and practices exhibited by the principals in this educational context. These findings also align with the theoretical framework, which emphasizes the role of attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control in shaping individuals' intentions and actions (Ajzen, 1991). One key finding emphasizes the significance of principals' positive attitudes towards their

roles and responsibilities. Moreover, the findings highlight the influence of subjective norms on principals' behavior, wherein societal expectations and cultural norms (Brooks et al., 2020; Ezzani & Brooks, 2018; Raihani, 2017; Saleemad et al., 2022) shape their leadership behavior, management abilities, effective communication, and values. These diverse elements foster an inclusive and diverse school environment. Additionally, the identified leadership qualities of flexibility and adaptability, relationship and engagement, and communication demonstrate principals' perceived behavioral control. Principals who possess these qualities demonstrate a sense of self-efficacy and confidence in navigating through challenges, cultivating relationships, and continually enhancing their leadership practices within the diversity of the school's community contextual background. The insights also align with Rafiki's (2020) findings regarding the collaborative ethos in Islamic schools, underlining the need for scholarly exploration of Islam, leadership, and cultural dynamics (Sunier, 2012). Additionally, the findings further endorse the study's goal of revealing effective leadership practices in diverse and inclusive educational settings (Brooks & Mutohar, 2018). Overall, these findings contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the factors that shape principals' intentions and actions. The review sheds light on the multifaceted nature of leadership in Islamic schools and facilitating the advancement of effective leadership practices in the educational context.

Furthermore, Ng et al. (2015) discovered that school principals in Singapore are expected to improve teaching and learning outcomes through a multifaceted role that includes setting expectations, supervising instructions, providing feedback, and promoting teacher collaboration. Ng et al. (2015) also found that instructional leadership practices correlate with better school-level academic achievement, as stressed by Hamengkubuwono and Pratama (2022), Zenab et al. (2022), and Rohman et al. (2022). Nevertheless, the practices may be tailored to the specific needs of different schools, including primary and secondary and Islamic and non-Islamic schools, to guarantee effective instructional practices. Additionally, principals may benefit from training and professional development opportunities and access to resources and tools to enhance their instructional leadership. Nonetheless, Jamil et al. (2017) reported on the existence of several concerns and problematic issues in the professional development of teachers in Malaysia that require attention. These include the lack of coherence and coordination among different professional development initiatives, limited support, lack of resources for teachers in rural and remote areas, and the need for a sustainable and comprehensive approach to teacher professional development. Therefore, implementing solutions such as greater collaboration and communication among stakeholders, conducting targeted programs for teachers according to their specialization areas and contexts, and planning long-term strategies are amazing options to ensure that teachers receive high-quality, practical training. In addition, the analysis also revealed a correlation between the practices of motivating and encouraging teachers. Nevertheless, motivation and encouragement should not involve giving only credit, certificates, and recognition but also in terms of celebrations, such as feasts and other events (Ishak & Ghani, 2012). Celebrations

strengthen relationships and create joy among school community members towards a particular achievement.

Another point established from this review is the need for profound leadership in Islamic schools. Perpetual development and progress should be the principal's top priority (Illah et al., 2022). Principals should implement successful strategies (Hamengkubuwono & Pratama, 2022), such as talent development programs and continuous supervision, and address digital transformation (Sholeh et al., 2022). In their research on the finest leadership practices for learning organizations such as schools, Ishak and Ghani (2012) discovered that principals perform post-mortems to obtain feedback for making progress. Continuous evolution and improvement encourage a culture of reflection and self-assessment among teachers, leading to more effective teaching practices and better student outcomes. The advancement process also encourages a culture of self-reflection, a factor that empowers learning organizations (Voulalas & Sharpe, 2005).

In addition, leadership in Islamic schools is crucial in enhancing school management and fostering a sense of belonging among students from diverse backgrounds (Chehdimae & Mohd Ali, 2022; Ezzani & Brooks, 2018). Effective leaders in this context can adapt to dynamic and volatile environments, embrace change, and influence the progression of students' thinking (Raihani, 2017; Thohri, 2022). Ezzani and Brooks (2018) stated that principals can create a harmonious space where students can simultaneously connect with their American and global communities by promoting cultural syncretism and valuing diversity. According to these stances, a successful Islamic school leadership requires a combination of technical skills, flexibility, adaptability, and exceptional behavioral competencies.

As per the analysis, the study also identified the ethical values theme, particularly principals' ethical and spiritual values. It is essential to note that an individual's concept of value is not static, as it can change depending on their current needs and circumstances (Barrett, 2013). Viinamaki (2009) explained that several factors could impact an individual's values, including personal disposition, current situation, organizational factors, education, and gender. Therefore, principals should continuously evaluate and reflect on their values and how they align with the ethical values of the school to uphold and maintain good values and practices. Additionally, schools should deliver constant education and training to principals and create a supportive organizational culture that prioritizes and reinforces these values. By taking these actions, schools can promote and reinforce an influential culture of ethical and spiritual values among its leaders to benefit the student community.

This exploration has also revealed that both intrinsic and extrinsic elements significantly shape principals' practices and influence their roles. This alignment emphasizes the pivotal role of Islamic school principals in skillfully navigating the complex educational landscape. These findings also indicate that contextual factors significantly impact principals' effectiveness and the formation of their perspectives, which resonates with prior studies on the Islamic school conceptual

framework (Brooks & Mutohar, 2018), in addition to the elements of spirituality and their skills.

As the present review predominantly comprised qualitative studies with limited quantitative data and focused primarily on Indonesia, the United States, and Thailand, it underscores the necessity for more extensive research in the future. The inclusion of quantitative studies can provide a more comprehensive understanding of leadership practices among Islamic school principals. Furthermore, extending the geographical scope beyond the abovementioned countries would enhance the generalizability of the findings. In order to address the limited contextualization, future research could delve into socio-cultural factors, educational systems, and local dynamics, thus offering a holistic comprehension of Islamic school leadership across diverse settings.

## 6. Conclusion

This exploration of leadership practices among Islamic school principals unveiled a spectrum of leadership characteristics, including instructional practices, leadership styles, good exemplars, relationship and engagement, ethical values, communication, flexibility and adaptability, and justice, as well as the elements shaping their practices. The elements encompass intrinsic aspects, such as spirituality, attitude, and ability, and extrinsic factors, such as organizational context and cultural and socio-religious influences. The power of leadership to drive change within communities is widely acknowledged as it adapts to the dynamic human landscape. No singular leadership approach is universally effective, prompting extensive research on leadership characteristics within various educational contexts. These insights hold implications for leadership development, policy formulation, and educational enhancement in Islamic school contexts. By shedding light on these dimensions, this study advances the understanding of Islamic school leadership, laying the groundwork for future inquiries and fostering positive educational outcomes.

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