

Principal Leadership and Organizational Culture on Teacher Performance in Public High School Banda Aceh

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ABSTRACT. This study examines the influence of principal leadership and organizational culture on teacher performance in public high schools in Banda Aceh, Indonesia, where Islamic values are embedded within educational governance and daily school practices. Employing a qualitative multiple-case study design, data were collected from sixteen public high schools through semi-structured interviews with principals and teachers, direct observations, and document analysis. To enhance the validity and trustworthiness of the findings, methodological and source triangulation were applied by systematically comparing evidence across data sources and participant groups. The findings reveal that principal leadership significantly influences teacher performance, particularly when leadership practices are participative, instructional, and grounded in Islamic ethical principles such as *musyawarah* (consultative decision-making), *amanah* (trust), and collective responsibility. Organizational culture was found to mediate this relationship by fostering collaboration, professional commitment, and instructional innovation. Schools characterized by a strong collaborative culture and consistent integration of Islamic values demonstrated higher teacher motivation, discipline, and engagement than schools with more hierarchical organizational structures. This study contributes to contemporary educational leadership literature by providing empirical evidence from a Sharia-based public education context, demonstrating that Islamic values can function as ethical and motivational resources that strengthen leadership effectiveness and organizational culture. The findings offer practical implications for educational leaders and policymakers in Aceh by highlighting the importance of integrating faith-based values with participative leadership practices to enhance teacher performance and school effectiveness.

Keywords: *Principal leadership, Organizational culture, Teacher performance, High School, Islamic values.*



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INTRODUCTION

Education plays a crucial role in shaping human resources and supporting national social and economic development. In many countries, educational reform increasingly emphasizes not only academic achievement but also leadership quality and organizational culture as key determinants of teacher performance (Djalilah et al., 2024; Pane et al., 2024; Priya & Maheswari, 2024; Sagoro et al., 2025; Samala et al., 2024; Setiawan et al., 2025; Shittu et al., 2025). Within this framework, school leadership has emerged as a central factor influencing teacher motivation, professional commitment, and instructional quality, particularly in public secondary education systems.

In Indonesia, the importance of effective school leadership is formally recognized through Law No. 20/2003 on the National Education System, which emphasizes professionalism, accountability, and character development in education (Kusumawati et al., 2025; Ma'arif & Arif, 2026; Qamariah & Hercz, 2025; Tihabsah et al., 2024). However, empirical studies examining how leadership practices operate within diverse local, cultural, and religious contexts remain limited. Previous research on principal leadership in Indonesia has largely focused on managerial and instructional aspects, often adopting general or secular frameworks (Amalia, 2026; Bjork & Raihani, 2025; Gaol, 2023; Holmes, 2025; E. Yuliana et al., 2025; L. Yuliana et al., 2025). As a result, there is still insufficient understanding of how leadership and organizational culture function in regions where religious values are institutionally embedded within public education (Cahyani et al., 2026; Madkan et al., 2025).

This gap is particularly evident in the context of Aceh. As the only province in Indonesia that formally implements Islamic law (*Syariat Islam*), Aceh presents a unique socio-cultural and educational landscape. Islamic values such as *musyawarah* (consultative decision-making), *amanah* (trustworthiness), *ukhuwah* (brotherhood), and *gotong royong* (mutual cooperation) are not only personal moral principles but are also embedded in public governance, including school administration (Ar et al., 2025; Louw, 2024; Samdani et al., 2025; Sarbini et al., 2025). Consequently, educational leadership in Aceh is expected to integrate professional competencies with religious, ethical, and communal responsibilities. Understanding how such faith-based values shape leadership practices and organizational culture is therefore essential to explaining teacher performance in this region.

International literature over the past decade has increasingly acknowledged the influence of leadership and organizational culture on teacher performance (de Jong et al., 2022; Dorukbaşı & Cansoy, 2024; Harris et al., 2022). Studies in Islamic and faith-based educational settings—such as in Kuwait, Malaysia, and parts of the Middle East, suggest that religious values can positively influence leadership ethics, discipline, and professional commitment (Alazmi, 2025; Ferdinan et al., 2024). Nevertheless, most of these studies focus on private or religious schools, while empirical research on public schools operating within a Sharia-based governance framework remains scarce. Moreover, few studies explicitly examine how Islamic values are integrated into both leadership practices and organizational culture simultaneously, and how this integration affects teacher performance.

This study addresses these gaps by examining principal leadership and organizational culture in public high schools in Banda Aceh. Unlike previous research that treats religion as a peripheral or contextual variable, this study positions Islamic values as an integral component of leadership and organizational culture. By doing so, it contributes to the growing international discourse on faith-based educational leadership, offering empirical evidence from a public education system where religious values are institutionally embedded rather than informally practiced. The findings extend existing leadership theories—particularly transformational and distributed leadership—by demonstrating how they interact with Islamic ethical principles in shaping teacher motivation, collaboration, and professional performance.

Beyond its local significance, this research contributes to international educational leadership literature by illustrating how culturally and religiously grounded leadership models can support inclusive, ethical, and sustainable school improvement. In an era when educational systems worldwide are grappling with balancing global standards and local identities, the Aceh case provides an important example of how faith-based values can coexist with modern leadership practices in public education (Arizona et al., 2025; Rozanita et al., 2026).

To address these issues, this article is structured as follows. The next section presents the research methodology, explaining the qualitative case study design, participant selection, data collection procedures, and analytical framework. The results section then reports the main findings organized around principal leadership, organizational culture, and the role of Islamic values in shaping teacher performance. The discussion section interprets these findings in relation to existing

literature and leadership theories, highlighting their theoretical and practical implications. Finally, the conclusion summarizes the key findings, outlines contributions to theory and practice, and offers recommendations for policymakers and future research.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach using a multiple-case study design to explore how principal leadership and organizational culture influence teacher performance within a Sharia-based educational context. The case study design was selected because it allows for an in-depth examination of leadership practices and organizational dynamics as they occur naturally within their real-life socio-cultural setting (Yin, 2018). Given that public high schools in Banda Aceh operate under Islamic law, leadership and organizational culture are deeply embedded in religious and cultural norms. This design therefore aligns with the research objectives, which seek to understand the interaction between leadership, Islamic values, and teacher performance.

The research was conducted in sixteen public high schools in Banda Aceh, purposively selected to represent variation in location and school performance. Participants included sixteen principals and thirty-two teachers. Principals were selected based on a minimum of three years of leadership experience and active involvement in school-based management, while teachers were required to have at least five years of teaching experience and active participation in school programs. Data were collected between January and March 2025 through semi-structured interviews, direct observations, and document analysis. Interviews focused on leadership practices, organizational culture, teacher involvement, and the integration of Islamic values. Observations examined leadership–teacher interactions, collaborative practices, and routine religious activities, while documents such as supervision records, meeting minutes, and school policies were analyzed to support institutional evidence.

Data validity was ensured through methodological and source triangulation by comparing findings from interviews, observations, and documents across principals and teachers. Ethical considerations were addressed by obtaining informed consent, ensuring voluntary participation, and anonymizing participant identities. To reduce researcher bias, reflexive notes were maintained throughout the study. Data analysis followed the interactive model of (Huberman, 2014), involving data condensation, thematic coding, and cross-case comparison. Themes were developed inductively and interpreted in relation to the research questions and relevant leadership and organizational culture theories, ensuring analytical rigor and credibility.

RESULT

Overview of Analytical Process

Qualitative data from interviews, observations, and documents were analyzed through an inductive coding process. Initial open coding was conducted to identify recurring ideas related to leadership practices, organizational culture, Islamic values, and teacher performance. These codes were then grouped into categories and refined into three overarching themes: (1) principal leadership styles, (2) organizational and collaborative culture, and (3) integration of Islamic values in school practices. Cross-case comparisons were conducted across schools to identify similarities and variations in leadership perceptions and organizational dynamics.

Theme 1: Principal Leadership Styles and Teacher Performance (RQ1)

The findings indicate that principal leadership plays a central role in shaping teacher motivation and performance across public high schools in Banda Aceh. Most teachers (25 out of 32) perceived their principals as demonstrating participative and supportive leadership styles, characterized by openness, regular communication, and teacher involvement in decision-making. These leadership practices were particularly evident in curriculum planning, instructional supervision, and professional development activities. Teachers described principals who actively listened to their concerns and encouraged dialogue as creating a more motivating and supportive work environment.

Teachers working under participative leadership reported higher professional commitment and willingness to improve instructional practices. A teacher from SMAN 14 Banda Aceh explained, *“I feel motivated to improve my teaching because the principal always provides constructive feedback and involves us in evaluating our performance.”* This perception was reinforced by observational data, which showed that principals in these schools frequently conducted classroom visits, followed up observations with reflective discussions, and invited teachers to share suggestions during staff meetings. Such practices contributed to a sense of shared responsibility and professional trust between principals and teachers.

To synthesize the patterns emerging from interview data and classroom observations, Figure 1 presents a visual representation of the relationship between principal leadership styles, teacher motivation, and instructional practices. The figure integrates supporting evidence from interview quotes, classroom observations, and staff meetings to illustrate how different leadership approaches lead to contrasting outcomes in teacher performance.

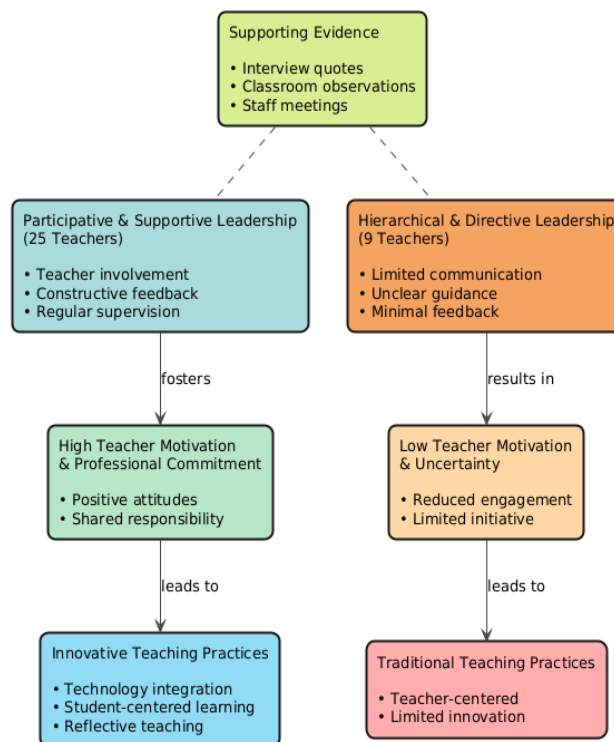


Figure 1. Relationship between principal leadership styles and teacher performance in public high schools in Banda Aceh

As shown in Figure 1, participative and supportive leadership fosters high teacher motivation and professional commitment, which subsequently leads to innovative teaching practices such as technology integration, student-centered learning, and reflective instruction. In contrast, hierarchical and directive leadership-reported by nine teachers-is associated with limited communication, unclear guidance, and minimal feedback, resulting in low teacher motivation and uncertainty. A teacher from SMAN 5 Banda Aceh noted, *“Sometimes there is miscommunication because the principal assumes teachers already understand priorities without clear direction.”* Observational data from these schools revealed fewer opportunities for dialogue, less frequent instructional supervision, and limited feedback following classroom observations, which were reflected in more traditional, teacher-centered classroom practices with minimal innovation.

Cross-school comparisons further demonstrate that leadership practices directly influence teachers’ instructional behaviors and capacity for innovation. Schools where principals regularly provided feedback and encouraged professional growth showed greater use of digital tools, group discussions, and problem-based learning strategies. Conversely, schools with less supportive leadership tended to maintain conventional teaching approaches and limited experimentation.

Overall, these findings indicate that principal leadership not only shapes teacher motivation but also plays a decisive role in determining the quality and innovativeness of classroom instruction, thereby directly addressing the first research question.

Theme 2: Organizational and Collaborative Culture (RQ2)

Organizational culture emerged as a significant factor influencing teacher performance across public high schools in Banda Aceh. Approximately 65% of teachers described their school culture as collaborative, emphasizing teamwork, mutual assistance, and open communication among school members. In these schools, teachers reported feeling more engaged in daily school activities and more responsible for achieving collective goals. Collaborative norms were particularly visible in curriculum discussions, lesson planning, and professional development activities, where teachers were encouraged to share ideas and instructional experiences.

Teachers working within collaborative organizational cultures expressed a stronger sense of professional belonging and commitment. A teacher from SMAN 13 Banda Aceh explained, *“The principal encourages discussion and collaboration, especially in curriculum decisions, which makes us feel responsible for school programs.”* Classroom observations supported this perception, showing frequent formal meetings, subject-based teacher groups, and informal peer discussions focused on instructional improvement. These practices fostered active participation and shared ownership of school programs, creating a supportive environment for continuous professional growth.

To illustrate how organizational culture shapes teacher engagement and professional development, Figure 2 presents a visual synthesis of the relationship between collaborative and rigid organizational cultures and their implications for teacher performance. The figure integrates evidence from interview quotes, classroom observations, and teacher meetings to highlight contrasting cultural patterns across schools.

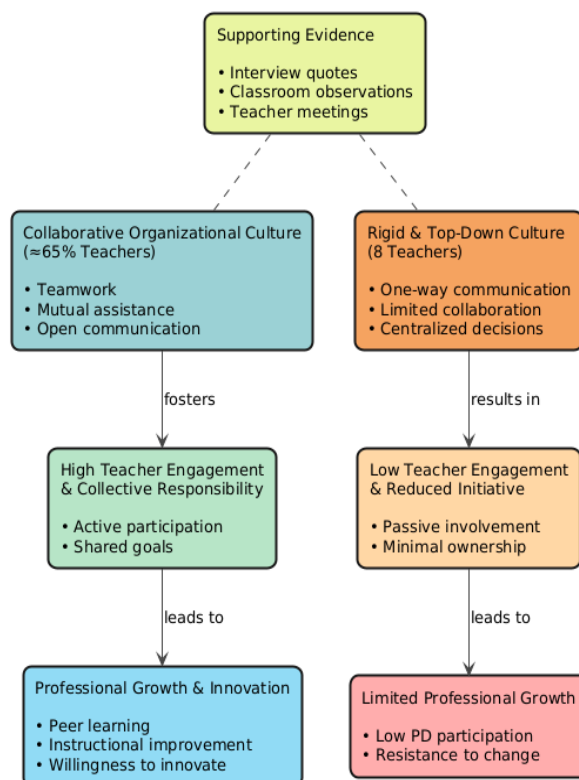


Figure 2. Relationship between organizational culture and teacher performance in public high schools in Banda Aceh

As shown in Figure 2, a collaborative organizational culture fosters high teacher engagement and collective responsibility, which subsequently leads to professional growth and instructional innovation through peer learning, instructional improvement, and willingness to innovate. In contrast, a rigid and top-down organizational culture—reported by eight teachers—is

characterized by one-way communication, limited collaboration, and centralized decision-making. Teachers in these environments reported lower engagement and reduced initiative, describing their involvement as largely passive with minimal ownership of school programs. Observational data revealed limited peer interaction, infrequent collaborative meetings, and low participation in professional development activities, resulting in constrained professional growth and resistance to instructional change. These cross-school comparisons demonstrate that organizational culture mediates how leadership practices are translated into teacher engagement and performance, thereby directly addressing the second research question.

Theme 3: Integration of Islamic Values in Leadership and Culture (RQ3)

A distinctive finding of this study is the strong integration of Islamic values into leadership practices and organizational culture in public high schools in Banda Aceh. Most principals (13 out of 16) emphasized that Islamic principles such as *musyawarah* (consultation), *amanah* (trust), and *gotong royong* (mutual cooperation) guided decision-making and daily interactions within schools. These values were not treated merely as symbolic norms but were embedded in leadership behaviors, organizational expectations, and professional relationships. Principals described these principles as providing moral direction and legitimacy to leadership practices, particularly in managing teachers and fostering collective responsibility.

Routine religious practices also played a central role in reinforcing these values and shaping teachers’ professional conduct. Daily congregational prayers, Qur’an recitation, and sessions of moral reflection were consistently observed as part of school routines. These practices contributed to discipline, time management, and ethical awareness among teachers. As one principal explained, “The discipline of prayer times is reflected in teachers’ punctuality and commitment to their duties.” Observational data confirmed that teachers adjusted teaching schedules around prayer times and demonstrated greater consistency in attendance and task completion.

To illustrate how Islamic values operate as an integrative framework linking leadership, organizational culture, and teacher performance, Figure 3 presents a visual synthesis of evidence from principal interviews, teacher interviews, and school observations. The figure depicts the interaction between Islamic leadership values and religious school practices and their combined influence on organizational culture and teacher outcomes.

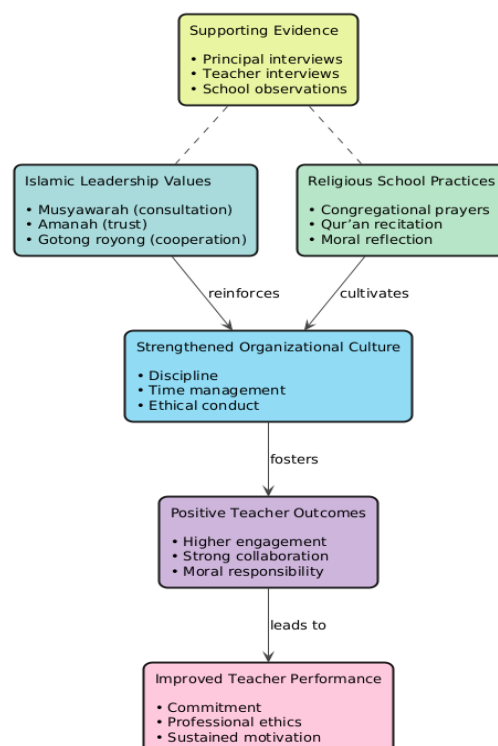


Figure 3. Integration of Islamic values in leadership and organizational culture influencing teacher performance

As shown in Figure 3, Islamic leadership values and religious school practices jointly reinforce a strengthened organizational culture characterized by discipline, effective time management, and ethical conduct. This strengthened culture fosters positive teacher outcomes, including higher engagement, stronger collaboration, and a heightened sense of moral responsibility. These outcomes, in turn, lead to improved teacher performance reflected in greater commitment, adherence to professional ethics, and sustained motivation. Cross-school comparisons revealed that schools with stronger and more consistent integration of Islamic values demonstrated higher levels of collaboration and teacher engagement than schools where such values were less emphasized. Overall, these findings indicate that Islamic values function as a unifying and reinforcing mechanism that aligns leadership practices with organizational culture, thereby enhancing teacher performance and directly addressing the third research question.

Comparison Across Schools and Summary of Findings

The findings reveal clear variations across schools. Schools characterized by participative leadership and collaborative culture infused with Islamic values showed higher teacher motivation, stronger professional commitment, and more innovative teaching practices. Conversely, schools with hierarchical leadership and weaker collaborative norms reported lower teacher engagement.

Table 1. Summary of Key Findings Across Themes

Theme	Key Findings	Frequency/Pattern
Leadership Style	Participative leadership enhances motivation and performance	25 of 32 teachers
Organizational Culture	Collaborative culture supports engagement and innovation	22 of 32 teachers
Islamic Values	Faith-based practices strengthen discipline and ethics	27 of 32 teachers
Leadership Challenges	Hierarchical leadership reduces motivation	9 of 32 teachers

Overall, the results directly address the study's objectives by demonstrating that (1) principal leadership significantly influences teacher performance, (2) organizational culture mediates this relationship, and (3) Islamic values function as a reinforcing mechanism that strengthens both leadership effectiveness and collaborative culture in public high schools in Banda Aceh.

DISCUSSION

This study set out to examine how principal leadership and organizational culture influence teacher performance in public high schools in Banda Aceh, with Islamic values functioning as an integral contextual and normative framework. The discussion elaborates the findings by explicitly addressing each research question, situating them within contemporary leadership and organizational culture theories, and comparing them with empirical studies conducted over the past decade, particularly in Islamic and culturally distinctive educational contexts.

Principal Leadership and Teacher Performance (RQ1)

The findings indicate that principal leadership plays a decisive role in shaping teacher motivation, instructional practices, and professional commitment. Teachers working under participative and instructional leadership reported higher engagement, greater use of technology, and stronger motivation to improve teaching quality (Amirudin et al., 2024; Hidayah et al., 2025; Madkan et al., 2025; Nurdi & Ahmad, 2025). These results align with recent studies demonstrating that leadership for learning and instructional leadership significantly enhance teacher professional

development and performance (Amzat et al., 2022; Balqis et al., 2025; Daulay et al., 2024; Dorukbaşı & Cansoy, 2024; He et al., 2024; Karakose et al., 2025).

Importantly, this study reveals that leadership effectiveness in Banda Aceh is strengthened when leadership practices are grounded in Islamic ethical values. Teachers perceived leadership practices rooted in *musyawarah* (consultative decision-making) and *amanah* (trust) as fostering fairness, transparency, and moral accountability (Azizah & Mardiana, 2024). This finding supports recent Indonesian and Islamic-context research showing that leadership infused with religious values enhances teacher self-efficacy, commitment, and instructional quality (Alazmi, 2025; Elfira et al., 2024; Ferdinan et al., 2024). In contrast to purely technical leadership models, the Aceh context demonstrates that ethical legitimacy and spiritual credibility function as powerful motivational resources for teachers.

Organizational Culture and Collaborative Practices (RQ2)

The second research question addressed the influence of organizational culture on teacher performance. The findings show that collaborative organizational cultures—characterized by teamwork, open communication, and shared responsibility—mediate the relationship between leadership and teacher outcomes. Teachers in schools with strong collaborative norms reported higher engagement in professional development and instructional innovation. This finding is consistent with recent systematic reviews emphasizing collaboration as a key mechanism for sustained teacher learning and school improvement (de Jong et al., 2022; Vangrieken et al., 2015).

In the Aceh context, collaboration is reinforced by Islamic values such as *gotong royong* (mutual cooperation) and *ukhuwah* (brotherhood), which frame collaboration as both a professional and moral obligation. This moral framing differentiates Aceh schools from secular contexts, where collaboration is often driven by accountability demands or performance metrics (Irwandi et al., 2025; Kalsum et al., 2025; Lopes Cardozo et al., 2022; Ramli et al., 2025; Wibowo, 2020). Conversely, schools with hierarchical and rigid organizational cultures showed lower teacher motivation and reduced participation in innovation, supporting findings from Indonesian studies linking bureaucratic cultures to weakened teacher performance (Fuad et al., 2022; Meyer et al., 2023; Riza et al., 2025; Zeb et al., 2021).

Islamic Values as a Reinforcing Leadership–Culture Framework (RQ3)

The third research question explored how leadership and organizational culture interact through Islamic values. The findings demonstrate that Islamic values act as an integrative and reinforcing framework that strengthens leadership practices and organizational culture simultaneously. Routine religious activities such as congregational prayers, Qur'an recitation, and moral reflection enhanced discipline, time management, and ethical awareness among teachers (Arifi et al., 2026; Mubi et al., 2024; Mukhammad & Bon, 2026; Turrohma & Prasetya, 2026). These findings are consistent with recent studies showing that religious practices embedded in school routines contribute to professional discipline and collective responsibility (Ferdinan et al., 2024; Raudhatinur, 2019).

Compared with Islamic education research in other Sharia-based contexts, such as Kuwait and faith-based schools in Indonesia, the Aceh case demonstrates a hybrid model. Rather than emphasizing control or compliance, leadership in Banda Aceh integrates religious discipline with participative leadership and collaborative culture. This supports findings by (Dutta & Sahney, 2022), who highlight the mediating role of school climate, while extending their work by demonstrating how religious values deepen commitment and ethical coherence within public schools. The integration of Islamic values also contributed to teachers' emotional well-being and sense of purpose. This finding resonates with recent research showing that positive school leadership enhances teacher well-being and motivation (Goetz et al., 2024), suggesting that in Aceh, emotional well-being is closely intertwined with spiritual fulfillment.

Contribution to Contemporary Educational Leadership Literature

This study contributes to recent global educational leadership literature by providing empirical evidence from a public education system where religious values are institutionally embedded. While many studies on faith-based leadership focus on private or religious schools, this research demonstrates that Islamic values can strengthen leadership effectiveness and organizational culture in public schools (Aslihah & Washudin, 2023; Aziz et al., 2025; Cahyani et al., 2026). The findings extend recent leadership theories by positioning cultural and religious values as reinforcing mechanisms that enhance collaboration, motivation, and ethical conduct rather than as contextual limitations.

In line with recent international findings on distributed and collective leadership (Harris et al., 2022; Liu et al., 2023), this study shows that faith-based moral accountability can deepen collective responsibility and professional solidarity. The Aceh case thus offers a transferable insight for education systems seeking to balance global leadership frameworks with local cultural and religious identities.

Practical Implications

Based on the findings, several actionable recommendations can be proposed. Leadership development programs in Aceh should integrate contemporary instructional and transformational leadership competencies with Islamic ethical principles. School principals should institutionalize consultative decision-making and collaborative professional learning communities grounded in moral responsibility. Policymakers are encouraged to recognize faith-based values as strategic assets in improving teacher performance and organizational effectiveness within public education.

Limitations and Future Research

This study has limitations that warrant further research. The qualitative design and limited sample restrict generalizability beyond Banda Aceh. Future studies could adopt mixed-method or quantitative approaches to measure the strength of leadership and cultural influences on teacher performance. Comparative research across Islamic and non-Islamic regions, as well as cross-national studies in Sharia-based education systems, would further advance understanding of how cultural and religious values shape educational leadership. Future research may also include student learning outcomes to capture the broader impact of faith-based leadership practices.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the influence of principal leadership and organizational culture on teacher performance in public high schools in Banda Aceh, with Islamic values as an integral contextual framework. The findings show that principal leadership significantly affects teacher motivation and performance when leadership practices are participative and instructional. Organizational culture was found to mediate this relationship by shaping collaboration, professional engagement, and innovation, while Islamic values such as *musyawarah* (consultation), *amanah* (trust), *ukhuwah* (brotherhood), and *gotong royong* (mutual cooperation) reinforced both leadership effectiveness and organizational culture. These results confirm that leadership, culture, and faith-based values operate as interconnected factors in improving teacher performance within Sharia-based public education.

Theoretically, this study contributes to contemporary educational leadership literature by demonstrating that Islamic values function as ethical and motivational resources rather than contextual constraints. By integrating religious principles with participative leadership and collaborative organizational culture, the findings extend recent leadership frameworks and provide empirical support for a culturally grounded leadership model in public schools. This contribution is particularly relevant to global educational leadership discourse, as it illustrates how cultural and religious values can strengthen professional practice and organizational effectiveness in diverse educational contexts.

Practically, the findings suggest that school principals in Aceh should adopt leadership approaches that integrate instructional competence with Islamic ethical principles through consultative decision-making, continuous supervision, and collaborative professional learning communities. Policymakers are encouraged to support leadership development programs that combine contemporary leadership competencies with faith-based values, reduce excessive administrative burdens, and promote collaboration across schools. Future research should employ mixed-method or quantitative designs to examine the strength of these relationships, conduct comparative studies across regions or educational systems, and explore student learning outcomes to capture the broader impact of faith-based educational leadership.

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