

Faith Inspired Leadership and Teacher Professionalism in Madrasah Principals in Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the role of the madrasah principal in enhancing teacher professionalism, highlighting leadership practices, supporting and inhibiting factors, and strategic solutions in the Indonesian Islamic education context. A qualitative case study approach was employed at MA Al Ihsan Tanah Grogot in the 2023/2024 academic year. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with principals and teachers, direct observations, and document analysis. Thematic analysis was conducted to identify leadership patterns and professional development strategies. The findings reveal three key insights: (1) the principal plays multi-dimensional roles as an educator, manager, supervisor, and motivator in strengthening teacher professionalism; (2) supporting factors include strong collegiality, religious motivation, and accreditation-driven improvement, while inhibiting factors include limited resources, teacher workload, and inconsistent discipline; (3) effective solutions are found in motivational leadership, structured professional development, and a faith-based approach to teacher guidance. This research contributes to the literature on educational leadership in Islamic schools by presenting a context-specific model of principal leadership that integrates pedagogical, managerial, and spiritual dimensions. The study highlights how faith-informed leadership fosters sustainable teacher professionalism, offering implications for similar institutions in developing countries.

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INTRODUCTION

Teacher professionalism is fundamentally tied to educational quality, particularly in contexts where school leadership significantly influences student learning outcomes. In Islamic education, the madrasah principal is responsible for ensuring academic excellence while also promoting religious values (Mu'alimin et al., 2026; Zakariyah, 2024). The complexity of this role is exacerbated in situations where resources are limited, and teaching loads are heavy, alongside diverse socio-cultural expectations prevalent in these regions (Tambak & Sukenti, 2020). As highlighted by Hammad and Shah, heads of Muslim schools face the challenge of balancing secular educational standards with faith-based missions, which necessitates a madrasah principal who exhibits both pedagogical leadership and spiritual guidance (Amalia et al., 2025; Hammad & Shah, 2019). This environment enables teacher professionalism to thrive, as educators are empowered to develop their skills while aligning with the institution's religious ethos (Pamuji & Limei, 2023; Tambak & Sukenti, 2020).

Despite the critical literature on educational leadership, there is a notable gap regarding the application of Islamic leadership principles in the context of teacher professionalism within madrasahs. Many existing studies primarily adopt secular frameworks, failing to fully capture how religious values can motivate teacher professionalism in Islamic educational settings (Arar et al., 2022; Jun & Aronson, 2021). This study aims to bridge that gap by providing empirical insights into faith-driven leadership models that not only address conventional standards of professionalism but also enhance intrinsic teacher motivation through spiritual and ethical commitments (Kholida et al., 2025). Research suggests that integrating these elements fosters deeper connections between educators and their pedagogical practices, ultimately improving educational outcomes (Agustina et al., 2023; Spoelstra et al., 2021; Udahemuka et al., 2024). Expanding the discourse on educational leadership to incorporate unique perspectives from faith-based institutions is essential, especially in contexts where the intersection of religion and education significantly shapes the learning landscape.

The multifaceted role of principals, particularly in faith-based educational institutions such as madrasahs, demands a nuanced understanding of leadership that integrates both administrative efficiency and spiritual guidance. As noted (Sun, 2015), effective leadership encompasses managerial, instructional, and motivational roles, yet the literature often overlooks the unique challenges faced by principals in religious settings, especially as they navigate limited resources and increased teacher workload (Desrianti & Mulis, 2022). For instance, research indicates that principals play a vital role in "implementing madrasah management to realize educational goals effectively and efficiently," thereby underscoring their managerial significance in this context (Karanto et al., 2024). This complexity is further exacerbated by the expectation that they serve not just as administrators but also as moral exemplars, inspiring educators through ethical and religious values, a critical aspect largely absent from existing studies focused on secular education frameworks (Hasan et al., 2022).

Despite the increasing prominence of madrasahs in Indonesia's educational landscape, literature addressing the specific leadership dynamics within these institutions remains sparse. Principals are tasked with a dual responsibility of ensuring compliance with accreditation standards and fostering a robust educational environment while also upholding the religious identity of their schools (Ajigoena & Hisbullah, 2022). The interplay of these roles is particularly notable in the context of managing curriculum and accreditation alongside promoting the ethical formation of both teachers and students, which necessitates innovative leadership strategies (Subaidi et al., 2024). As noted by Ajigoena and Hisbullah, effective educational leadership requires adaptability to the unique cultural characteristics of the madrasah setting, as well as visionary leadership capable of initiating meaningful change (Ajigoena & Hisbullah, 2022). This integration of managerial and spiritual responsibilities

delineates a context-specific model that bears significant implications for understanding leadership effectiveness in faith-based education.

In the article "Transforming Principals' Leadership in the Digital Age: Technology-Based Education Administration Strategies in Junior Secondary Schools", Rosmini et al. (2024) explore the role of digital leadership in the context of education, while other research such as Abdullah et al (2024) emphasizes the importance of collaboration between managerial skills and faith-based motivation to overcome the challenges of limited resources and teacher workloads, especially in madrasahs that double function as educational and religious institutions (Salamah et al., 2024). This reinforces the argument that a holistic leadership approach, integrating technology, professional development, and spiritual values—is not only relevant in the context of public schools in the digital age (Rosmini et al., 2024), but is also key in advancing teacher professionalism in faith-based schools (Sari & Urcy, 2022).

The importance of classroom management skills for Islamic Religious Education teachers, while Adiyono et al (2023) emphasize the role of educational supervision in improving teacher professionalism in madrasahs, showing that teacher professionalism is not only an internal demand of the education system but also a global standard that is still under-researched in faith-based schools (Adiyono et al., 2025b; Aseery, 2025). So far, the study of educational leadership has been conducted more in secular or public schools with little attention to religious contexts where leadership includes academic and spiritual responsibilities (DeCuir, 2025; Shula, M. (2025). Although the existing literature discusses the managerial and instructional roles of principals, there is still a lack of systematic exploration of how these roles are integrated with religious values in supporting teacher professionalism. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by providing a specific analysis of madrasah leadership in Indonesia, not only describing the role of leadership but also examining how faith-based strategies can complement professional standards. Thus, the study argues that religious values-based leadership can be a unique model for improving teacher professionalism in the midst of resource constraints—an argument that has not been empirically tested in similar studies.

This study addresses this gap by investigating how the principal of MA Al Ihsan Tanah Grogot enhances teacher professionalism. It examines leadership practices, enabling and inhibiting factors, and strategies for overcoming barriers. The novelty lies in highlighting a faith-driven leadership model that integrates professional standards with religious motivation, offering new insights into leadership practices in Islamic schools (Khofi, 2025). By doing so, the study not only enriches the discourse on educational leadership but also introduces a context-specific framework that demonstrates how spiritual values can be systematically mobilized to strengthen teacher professionalism. This integration offers a practical response to structural challenges such as resource constraints and workload, while simultaneously fostering intrinsic motivation among teachers. Unlike previous research that tends to isolate managerial or instructional dimensions, this study illustrates a holistic approach where professional competence and faith-based ethics converge, thereby advancing both the theoretical understanding and practical application of leadership in faith-based education.

This study presents a compelling challenge to the prevailing notion that enhancing teacher professionalism relies solely on technical training, standardized evaluations, and resource allocation. The findings suggest that a faith-informed leadership model offers a sustainable source of motivation and discipline, especially in contexts with limited external support. The integration of ethical and spiritual guidance with professional expectations fosters a culture wherein teacher commitment arises not only from compliance with policies but also from a profound sense of moral responsibility and religious duty (Rezaei Kalantari & Nadi Khalili, 2018). As highlighted, "madrasah principals create a culture where teacher commitment is not solely driven by compliance," but rather by an internalized dedication to their roles (Pamuji & Limei, 2023). This faith-driven approach is often neglected in

mainstream leadership literature, positioning this research as a crucial contribution to expanding the theoretical landscape of educational leadership.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative descriptive case study design (Yin, R.K., 2018) to gain an in-depth understanding of the role of the madrasah principal in enhancing teacher professionalism. A case study was considered appropriate because it allows the researcher to explore leadership practices in a real-life context, where the boundaries between the phenomenon and its environment are not clearly defined. By focusing on a single institution—MA Al Ihsan Tanah Grogot, an accredited Islamic senior high school in East Kalimantan—this study aimed to capture rich and contextualized insights into how leadership strategies are enacted within a faith-based educational setting.

The participants of this study included the principal, ten teachers, and several supporting staff members who were directly involved in the daily teaching and administrative processes of the school. Participants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure that the voices of those most engaged in leadership and professional development were represented. This diverse range of participants enabled the researcher to triangulate perspectives, capturing both the leadership strategies of the principal and the lived experiences of teachers who are the direct beneficiaries of these strategies.

Data collection for this study was carried out using multiple techniques to ensure both depth and reliability in understanding the roles and impact of leadership within the madrasah setting. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the principal and teachers, allowing for a flexible yet systematic exploration of leadership practices, challenges faced, and strategies for professional development. According to Lady et al (2024), “triangulation is a method used to ensure the accuracy of data by cross-checking or comparing it with external sources,” and this principle was firmly applied in our multi-faceted approach. Participant observations during various school activities—meetings, teaching sessions, and informal interactions—were integral to examining actual leadership behaviors in practice. Additionally, document analysis included reviewing school policies, accreditation reports, and records of meetings to provide a comprehensive context and support for our findings. This triangulation of interviews, observations, and document analyses enabled the researcher to generate a rich and nuanced set of data reflective of the complexities inherent in educational leadership.

The data analysis followed a thematic approach, as outlined (Milles et al (2014), which involved an iterative process of data reduction, coding, and formulation of thematic matrices to identify connections between leadership practices and the factors influencing teacher professionalism. The methodical process began with data reduction, where transcripts and notes were distilled to extract essential themes. This was followed by a rigorous coding phase in which significant patterns related to leadership and professional development were categorized and refined. The presentation of data in thematic matrices facilitated the identification of relationships among leadership actions, enabling factors, and barriers to professionalism. Trustworthiness was bolstered through methodological triangulation, member-checking with participants to confirm interpretations, and peer debriefing aimed at reducing researcher bias. These steps ensured that our findings were not only credible and dependable but also transferable to similar contexts in faith-based education, encouraging further reflection on how leadership can be effectively optimized in these settings.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Before presenting the findings and discussion, it is important to emphasize that this section systematically outlines the core results of the study, derived from in-depth interviews, participant observations, and document analysis. The findings are not presented merely in a descriptive manner but are critically examined about established theoretical frameworks and previous scholarly works. Accordingly, this section aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the principal's role in enhancing teacher professionalism, the enabling and inhibiting factors encountered, as well as the strategies employed to overcome these challenges. At the same time, it highlights the novelty and contribution of this study to the broader discourse on educational leadership in Islamic schooling contexts.

Principal's Multi-Role Leadership

The Role of the Head of the Madrasah as an Educator

The findings of the study show that madrasah heads play an active role as educators by providing academic and moral guidance to teachers. The head of the madrasah not only emphasizes the technical aspects of teaching but also directs teachers to instill Islamic character values in every learning process. This is done through official forums such as teacher meetings or in daily informal interactions, thereby creating a conducive and religious educational climate.

As educators, the head of the madrasah also strives to foster the spirit of continuous learning for teachers. Teachers are encouraged to participate in training, seminars, and self-development activities in order to improve their professional competence. In addition, the head of the madrasah provides an exemplary example in discipline and perseverance in learning, which is an inspiration for teachers to continue to improve their quality. Thus, the role of the head of the madrasah as an educator is seen not only in the academic dimension, but also in the spiritual dimension. This combination makes the learning process more meaningful because teachers not only pursue curriculum targets, but also instill moral values that are in line with the vision of the madrasah.

Table 1. The Role of the Head of Madrasah as Educator

Aspects	Key Findings	Impact on Teachers	Impact on Madrasah
Academic & Moral Guidance	The head of the madrasah gives directions related to teaching strategies and Islamic values	Teachers need to better understand the integration of knowledge and religion	Religious learning environment
Encouragement of Self-Development	Teachers are encouraged to participate in training, seminars, and workshops	Professional competence increased	Madrasah accreditation is maintained
Example	The Madrasah head sets an example of discipline and diligence in study	Teachers imitate the attitude of the head of the madrasah	Madrasah culture is more disciplined and productive

Table 1. above shows that the role of the head of the madrasah as an educator is reflected in three main aspects, namely academic and moral guidance, encouragement of self-development, and example. Through academic and moral guidance, the head of the madrasah not only directs teachers to the technical aspects of learning but also instills Islamic values so that teachers are able to integrate knowledge with religion in teaching practice. The encouragement to participate in training, seminars, and workshops encourages the improvement of teachers' professional competence, which has an impact on maintaining the quality of schools, including accreditation. Meanwhile, the example of madrasah heads in terms of discipline and perseverance in learning inspires teachers to imitate this positive attitude, so as to create a school culture that is more disciplined, religious, and productive.

Thus, these three aspects complement each other in creating an educational ecosystem that supports the improvement of teacher professionalism while strengthening the school's Islamic identity.

The Role of the Head of the Madrasah as a Manager

In his capacity as a manager, the head of the madrasah is able to manage and coordinate the various resources that the school has. Research shows that madrasah heads carry out careful planning related to the division of tasks, schedule management, and the use of school facilities and infrastructure to support the improvement of teacher professionalism.

The head of the madrasah also implements a participation-based management strategy, where each teacher is involved in the planning of the school program. Through this approach, teachers feel valued and have a sense of ownership of the policies made, so they are more motivated to carry out their duties professionally. In addition, madrasah heads are able to create transparent and accountable governance in the management of school administration and finances. This gives teachers confidence because they feel supported by a clear and directed management system.

Table 2. Describes the role of the head of the madrasah as a manager, which is reflected in three main aspects: planning and coordination, teacher involvement, and transparent governance. Through careful planning and coordination accompanied by participatory management, teachers feel valued so that their professionalism increases. The involvement of teachers in the design of school programs through regular discussions and meetings fosters a sense of ownership of the policies taken. Meanwhile, accountable administrative and financial governance with open reports and periodic evaluations creates teachers' trust in the system, while strengthening support for the running of school organizations.

Table 2. The Role of Madrasah Principals as Managers

Aspects	Key Findings	Strategies Applied	Impact
Planning & Coordination	The head of the madrasah divides tasks, manages schedules & facilities	Participatory management	Teachers feel valued, professionalism increases
Teacher Involvement	Teachers participate in planning school programs	Routine discussions & meetings	Teachers' sense of ownership of school policies
Transparent Governance	Accountably managed administration & finance	Open reports, periodic evaluations	Teachers feel trusted and supported by the system

The Role of the Head of the Madrasah as a Supervisor

As a supervisor, the head of the madrasah carries out academic supervision periodically to ensure that teachers carry out learning in accordance with applicable standards. This supervision is carried out through class visits, direct observation of the teaching and learning process, and review of learning tools prepared by teachers. In the implementation of supervision, the head of the madrasah is not authoritarian, but rather emphasizes the coaching approach. Teachers are given constructive input on teaching methods, media use, and learning evaluation strategies. Thus, supervision is not seen as a mere means of control, but also as a means of teacher professional development. The results of the study show that the supervision carried out by the head of the madrasah has a positive impact on improving the quality of teaching. Teachers feel more confident because they receive direct guidance, and this helps them improve their weaknesses and optimize their potential.

Table 3. The Role of the Principal as Supervisor

Aspects	Key Findings	Approach Used	Impact on Teachers
Academic Supervision	Done periodically: class visits & observations	Constructive, not authoritarian supervision	Teachers get constructive input
Learning Tools Review	Lesson plans and teaching tools reviewed	Direct input from the head of the madrasah	Teachers fix devices better
Supervision Results	Helping teachers fix weaknesses	Personal & group coaching	Teachers are more confident and increase their professionalism

Table 3. shows the role of the head of the madrasah as a supervisor, which is realized through periodic academic supervision, review of learning tools, and follow-up of supervision results. Supervision is carried out with a constructive approach through class visits and observations, so that teachers get constructive input without feeling authoritarily supervised. The review of the lesson plan and teaching tools, accompanied by direct input from the head of the madrasah, encourages teachers to improve the quality of learning planning. The results of supervision are then followed up with personal and group coaching, which not only helps teachers improve their weaknesses but also increases their confidence and professionalism in teaching.

The Role of the Head of the Madrasah as a Motivator

The head of the madrasah also acts as a motivator who encourages teachers to work with full dedication. Motivation is provided through appreciation, reinforcement, and reinforcement based on religious values, so that teachers have a strong intrinsic drive to behave professionally. In addition to providing verbal motivation, the head of the madrasah also creates a harmonious and family-friendly working atmosphere. This makes teachers feel valued and treated fairly, thus giving rise to a higher commitment to their profession. In this context, spirituality-based motivation is the advantage of madrasahs over general educational institutions. The head of the madrasah reminded that the teacher's duty is not only a job, but also a form of worship and moral responsibility to Allah SWT.

Table 4. Summary of the Role of the Madrasah Principal and Its Implications

Role	Key Focus	Impact on Teachers	Impact on Schools
Educator	Academic, moral, exemplary guidance	Professional & religious teachers	Meaningful learning
Manager	Planning, coordination, participation	Teachers are more motivated and directed	Effective & transparent governance
Supervisor	Academic supervision & coaching	Confident and directed teachers	Improved learning quality
Motivator (can be added)	Appreciation and spiritual encouragement	Teachers are more disciplined and dedicated.	Positive work culture

Table 4. summarizes the four strategic roles of madrasah heads in improving teacher professionalism, namely as educators, managers, supervisors, and motivators. As educators, the head of the madrasah emphasizes academic, moral, and exemplary guidance so that teachers grow into professional and religious educators, with more meaningful learning. In the role of manager, the head of the madrasah manages the planning, coordination, and participation of teachers, which motivates them to work more purposefully and produce effective and transparent school governance. As a supervisor, the head of the madrasah carries out academic supervision and coaching that makes teachers more confident and improves the quality of teaching in the classroom. Meanwhile, the role of

motivators is manifested through appreciation and spiritual encouragement that fosters discipline and dedication of teachers, as well as forming a positive work culture in madrasas.

Table 5. Research Interview Snippets

Theme	Interview Quotes	Interpretasi
The Role of Madrasah Heads as Educators	<i>"The head of the madrasah always reminds us not only to focus on the subject matter, but also to instill Islamic values in learning."</i> (Teacher A)	The head of the madrasah functions as an educator who emphasizes academic and spiritual integration.
Role as a Manager	<i>"In regular meetings, he involves teachers in developing school programs, so we feel more appreciated."</i> (Teacher B)	Participatory management strategies create a sense of ownership among teachers over school policies.
Academic Supervision	<i>"He often comes into the classroom to observe, but he gives more constructive input, not finding faults."</i> (Teacher C)	Supervision is carried out with a coaching approach, increasing teacher confidence.
Motivation Based on Religious Values	<i>"We are always reminded that teaching is worship. It makes me more motivated even though the facilities are limited."</i> (Teacher D)	Spiritual motivation is an important factor that maintains the dedication of teachers in the midst of limited resources.
Inhibiting Factors: Workload	<i>"Sometimes it's hard to divide the time because in addition to teaching, we have a lot of administration to complete."</i> (Teacher E)	Excessive administrative burden limits teachers' opportunities to develop self-competence.

Table 5. presents interview snippets that describe the strategic role of madrasah heads in improving teacher professionalism. From the teacher's quotes, it can be seen that the head of the madrasah plays the role of an educator by emphasizing the integration of Islamic values, as a manager through participatory management, and as a supervisor with a coaching approach. In addition, religious value-based motivation has proven to be a major driver of teacher dedication, despite obstacles in the form of high administrative workload. This data shows how the leadership practice of madrasah heads has a direct impact on teachers' attitudes, motivation, and professionalism in their daily lives.

Implementation of Direct Guidance in Planning and Discipline

The findings of the study also show that the head of the madrasah provides direct guidance to teachers in compiling learning tools. This guidance includes the preparation of lesson plans, the selection of appropriate teaching methods, and the integration of Islamic values in teaching materials. With this assistance, teachers feel more prepared to carry out the learning process in the classroom. In terms of discipline, the head of the madrasah applies clear and consistent rules, both in attendance and in the completion of learning administration. The head of the madrasah gave an educational reprimand to teachers who were not disciplined, as well as giving appreciation to teachers who showed an example. This step is effective in fostering a disciplined and professional work culture. Teachers are encouraged to obey the rules not only because of formal obligations, but also because of the moral awareness that is cultivated through the leadership of the madrasah head.

A Religious Values-Based Approach

A religious values-based approach is a characteristic of the leadership of the head of the madrasah at MA Al Ihsan Tanah Grogot. The head of the madrasah consistently instills that every action of the teacher—both in teaching and guiding students—is part of worship that is worth the reward. With this approach, teachers have a deeper motivation to improve their professionalism. They not only work to meet performance targets or administrative demands, but also to obtain the pleasure of Allah SWT. This makes the professionalism of teachers in madrassas not only supported by

pedagogic skills, but also by spiritual commitment. These findings show that faith-based leadership can be an effective alternative model to improve the professionalism of teachers, especially in Islamic educational institutions.

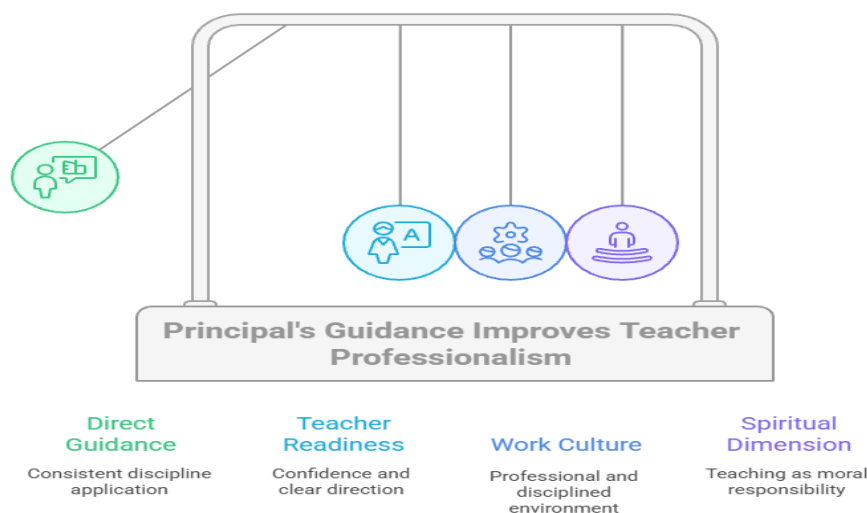


Figure 1. The Role Model of Madrasah Head Guidance in Improving Teacher Professionalism

Figure 1. illustrates that the guidance of madrasah heads plays a significant role in improving the professionalism of teachers through four main aspects. First, direct guidance ensures the consistent application of discipline so that teachers have clear work standards. Second, teacher readiness fosters confidence and provides a definite direction in carrying out learning. Third, work culture creates a professional and disciplined work environment, encouraging teachers to work according to ethics and standards. Finally, the spiritual dimension emphasizes teaching as a moral and worshipful responsibility, which strengthens the teacher's intrinsic motivation. These four aspects complement each other, forming a leadership model that unites discipline, competence, work culture, and spirituality in improving teacher professionalism.

Supporting and Inhibiting Factors

The results of the research are related to supporting factors and inhibiting factors in 6 paragraphs. I divide it into two parts: 3 paragraphs for supporting factors, 3 paragraphs for inhibiting factors.

Supporting Factors: Religious Culture

The results of the study show that religious culture is one of the main factors that support the improvement of teacher professionalism at MA Al Ihsan Tanah Grogot. This culture is reflected in daily activities such as reading the Qur'an before lessons begin, congregational prayers, and regular religious activities that internalize spiritual values in school life. This religious environment creates a moral awareness for teachers that teaching is not just a job, but a mandate and worship. This awareness encourages teachers to be more professional, disciplined, and responsible in carrying out their duties.

Supporting Factors: Collegality Collaboration

In addition to religious culture, collaboration between teachers also plays an important role as a supporting factor. Teachers at MA Al Ihsan Tanah Grogot show a high spirit of cooperation, both in the preparation of learning tools, the management of extracurricular activities, and in providing input to each other to improve the teaching and learning process. This collaboration strengthens the sense of togetherness and solidarity among educators, thereby increasing motivation and professionalism. The head of the madrasah facilitates this collaboration through regular meeting forums and teacher working groups, which are a means of sharing experiences and learning strategies.

Supporting Factors: Accreditation Incentives

The drive to maintain and improve school accreditation is also an important driver of teacher professionalism. With an A accreditation status, MA Al Ihsan Tanah Grogot has a high target to maintain the quality of education. Teachers feel a collective responsibility to support the achievement of accreditation indicators, such as the preparation of teaching tools, competency improvement, and consistency in learning assessment. The positive pressure of this accreditation system serves as an external motivation that encourages teachers to maintain high standards of professionalism.

Table 6. Summary of Factors Supporting Teacher Professionalism

Factor	Key Focus	Impact on Teachers	Impact on Schools
Religious Culture	Religious activities & spiritual values	Professional & moral teachers	Schools with a strong Islamic identity
Collegality Collaboration	Academic and non-academic cooperation	Solid, innovative, motivated teachers	Conducive & collaborative work environment
Accreditation Incentives	Quality Target & Accreditation A	Consistent and competent teachers	The school maintains high quality

Table 6. summarizes the three main supporting factors for improving teacher professionalism at MA Al Ihsan Tanah Grogot, namely religious culture, collaboration, collegality, and accreditation incentives. Religious culture through religious activities and the internalization of spiritual values form professional and moral teachers, as well as strengthen the school's Islamic identity. Collegality collaboration in academic and non-academic activities fosters solidarity, innovation, and teacher motivation, which in turn creates a conducive and collaborative work environment. Meanwhile, accreditation incentives serve as an external incentive that fosters consistency and teacher competence, while maintaining the quality of schools to maintain high-quality standards.

Factors Inhibiting Resource Limitations

Although there are many supporting factors, the study also found the presence of inhibiting factors. One of them is the limitation of resources, both in terms of infrastructure and financial facilities. Some learning support facilities such as laboratories, technology media, and teaching materials are still limited, limiting teachers' innovation in developing learning methods. These limitations hinder teachers from fully implementing technology-based and innovative learning that is the demand of the digital era.

Factors Inhibiting Teachers' Workload

Another factor that hinders is the high workload of teachers. In addition to teaching in the classroom, teachers are also required to complete learning administration, participate in madrasah activities, and sometimes concurrently serve on extracurricular activity committees. This excessive workload makes it difficult for some teachers to allocate time for self-competency improvement, such as participating in training or research. As a result, teachers' professionalism is sometimes hampered because their focus is more on administrative routines.

Inhibiting Factors for Inconsistent Discipline

In addition to limited resources and workload, the study also found that teacher discipline in some cases, is still inconsistent. Although the majority of teachers show high commitment, there are still teachers who lack discipline in attendance and in completing learning administration. The head of the madrasah has tried to provide guidance, but personal factors and individual motivation remain a challenge. This indiscipline can reduce the effectiveness of the program to improve professionalism, so it requires a more intensive approach from the madrasah leadership.

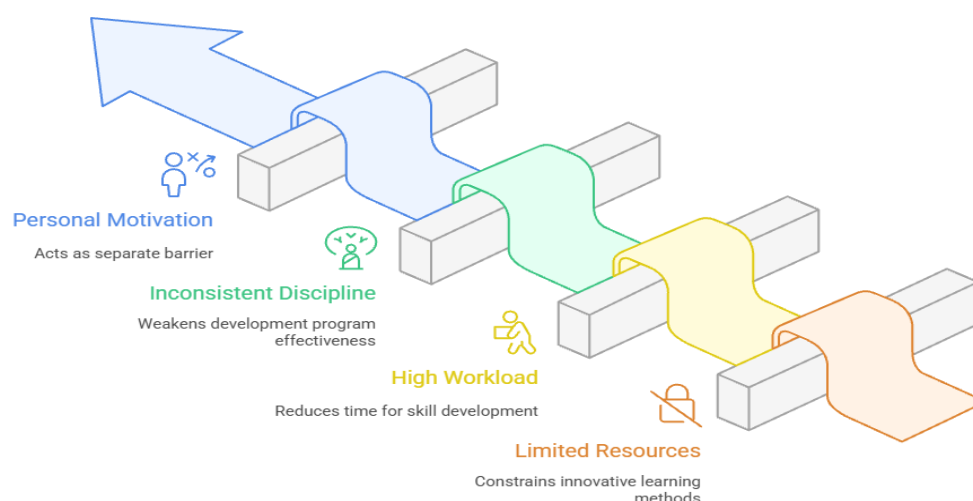


Figure 2. Factors Inhibiting Teacher Professionalism

Figure 2. shows that the stagnation of teacher professionalism is influenced by four main inhibiting factors, namely personal motivation, inconsistent discipline, high workload, and limited resources. Weak personal motivation is a barrier because it reduces the teacher's intrinsic drive to develop. Inconsistent discipline weakens the effectiveness of the coaching program that has been designed by madrasah leaders. Meanwhile, the high workload makes it difficult for teachers to divide their time for self-development, so the opportunity for improving competence is reduced. On the other hand, limited infrastructure and financial support limit technology-based learning innovations. These four factors are interrelated and become serious challenges that need to be overcome in order to improve teacher professionalism to run optimally.

Table 7. Interview Snippets on Supporting and Inhibiting Factors of Teacher Professionalism

Theme	Interview Quotes	Interpretasi
Supporting Factors: Religious Culture	"We used to read the Qur'an before the lesson started, it reminded us that the teacher's job is worship." (Teacher F)	Religious culture fosters moral awareness that teaching is a mandate and worship.
Supporting Factors: Collaboration	"If there is difficulty in making teaching tools, we usually discuss together in a working group." (Teacher G)	Collegial collaboration increases teacher solidarity and professionalism.
Supporting Factors: Accreditation	"We want to maintain an A accreditation, so all teachers are trying to complete the administration and improve quality." (Teacher H)	Accreditation is an external motivation to maintain quality standards and professionalism.
Inhibiting Factors: Limited Resources	"Our laboratory is still limited, so it's difficult to develop practice-based learning methods." (Teacher I)	Limited facilities hinder teacher learning innovation.
Inhibiting Factors: Workload	"In addition to teaching, there is a lot of administration to be done; sometimes it makes us exhausted." (Teacher J)	Excessive administrative burden reduces the teacher's self-development time.
Inhibiting Factors: Discipline	"There are still teachers who sometimes go to class late or delay completing administration." (Teacher K)	The indiscipline of some teachers is a challenge in maintaining professionalism.

Table 7. shows that the professionalism of teachers at MA Al Ihsan Tanah Grogot is supported by three main factors, namely religious culture, collaborative collegiality, and encouragement of school accreditation. Religious culture fosters moral awareness that teaching is a mandate and worship,

collaboration between teachers strengthens solidarity while improving competence, and accreditation functions as an external motivation to maintain the quality of education. On the other hand, the study also found obstacles, including limited resources that limit innovation, excessive workload that reduces opportunities for self-development, and indiscipline of some teachers that interfere with the effectiveness of professionalism improvement programs. This interview data confirms that the leadership of madrasah heads must be able to optimize supporting factors while finding solutions to overcome obstacles.

Strategic Solutions

Faith-Based Motivation through Religious Values

This study found that motivation based on religious values is the main strategy of madrasah heads in improving teacher professionalism. The head of the madrasah consistently emphasizes that the teaching profession is a form of devotion and worship to Allah SWT. This spiritual awareness provides an intrinsic impetus for teachers to carry out their duties with full responsibility, discipline, and dedication. Religious values such as amanah, sincerity, and istiqamah are the moral foundation that strengthens the professionalism of teachers in the madrasah environment.

In addition, a religious-based approach has proven effective in creating a more harmonious work climate. The teacher feels that his work has a broader meaning than just an administrative obligation. They are motivated to continue to improve their teaching skills because they realize that any improvement in the quality of learning will be worth the reward. This shows that the spiritual dimension is able to strengthen the teacher's professional commitment in a sustainable manner.

Structured Professional Development (Training and Peer Collaboration)

Other findings show that madrasah heads pay serious attention to structured professional development. Teachers are encouraged to take part in training both at the internal and external levels of the school, in order to update pedagogic insights and improve teaching skills. This training not only focuses on the technical aspects of learning, but also on strengthening the integration of Islamic values into the curriculum. Thus, the professionalism of teachers develops holistically, including academic as well as spiritual competence.

In addition to formal training, collaboration between teachers is also an important means of professional development. The head of the madrasah facilitates discussion forums, teacher working groups, and regular meetings as a forum for sharing experiences and best practices. Through this collaboration, teachers support each other in designing teaching tools, evaluating learning methods, and solving problems that arise in the classroom. This collaboration of collegality strengthens solidarity while improving competence collectively.

Rewards and Recognition for High-Performing Teachers

The research also found that giving awards and recognition to outstanding teachers is one of the effective strategies in increasing professionalism. The head of the madrasah gave appreciation to teachers who showed superior performance, both through direct speeches, certificates, and the opportunity to participate in advanced training. These awards create a healthy competitive atmosphere among teachers, thus encouraging them to continuously improve the quality of teaching.

Furthermore, the form of recognition is not only formal, but also appears in everyday interactions. Teachers who work with high dedication receive moral rewards in the form of trust and greater responsibility than madrasah heads. This not only increases individual motivation, but also fosters a sense of pride and professional satisfaction. Thus, the reward and recognition system functions as a mechanism that strengthens teachers' commitment to professionalism, as well as fostering a positive work culture in madrasahs.

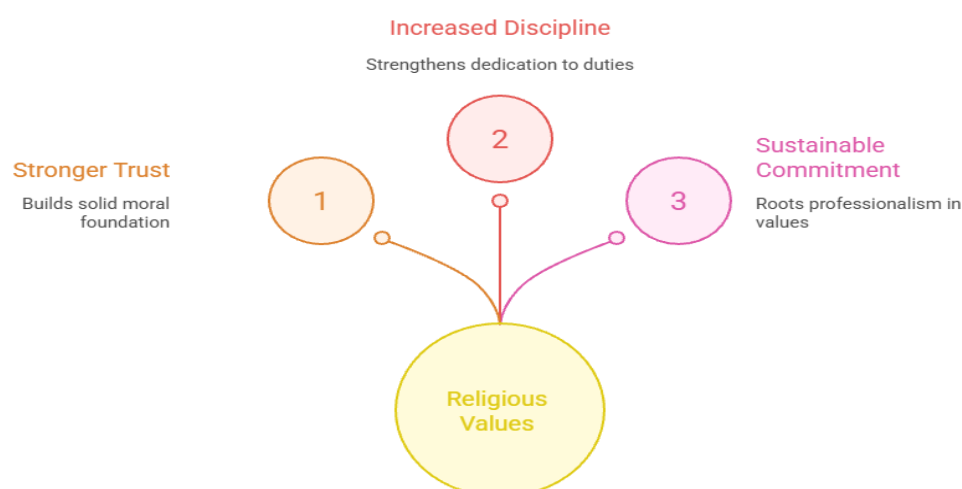


Figure 3. The Role of Religious Values in Improving Teacher Professionalism

Figure 3. shows how religious values play an important role in improving teacher professionalism through three main aspects. First, religious values build stronger trust by providing a solid moral foundation for teachers in carrying out their duties. Second, religious values encourage increased discipline, which reinforces teachers' dedication to professional responsibility. Third, religious values foster a sustained commitment, so that the professionalism of teachers is not only based on external demands, but also rooted in spiritual awareness and Islamic values. Thus, the integration of religious values becomes an effective foundation to form teacher professionalism holistically and continuously.

Discussion

The findings of this study respond to the objectives outlined in the introduction by illustrating how principals in Islamic schools, specifically at MA Al Ihsan Tanah Grogot, enhance teacher professionalism through leadership practices that integrate religious values. The principal's embodiment of various functions—educator, manager, supervisor, and motivator—aligns with established leadership frameworks articulated by Said et al (2023) and Arar et al (2022). The notion of faith-driven leadership offers an extension to these frameworks, suggesting that professionalism can be sustained through intrinsic motivation rooted in spiritual commitment (Muhajir et al., 2025). This approach counters the conventional reliance on purely technical or managerial methods, indicating that effective leadership in faith-based educational settings necessitates a holistic model that encompasses spiritual dimensions.

Moreover, the study elucidates how integrating religious values into leadership provides an explanatory framework for understanding why teachers maintain their professionalism in the face of constraints like limited resources and heavy workloads. Unlike traditional leadership models that focus on external incentives—hallmarks of Hallinger's model, Presbitero (2017), this study emphasizes the pivotal role of intrinsic motivation informed by religious consciousness. This perspective resonates with Sergiovanni's concept of “moral leadership,” where values and ethics serve as key motivators for teachers (De Lurdes, 2025; Said et al., 2023). The present research enriches this idea by providing empirical evidence from an Islamic educational context, demonstrating how Qur'anic principles and hadith can operationalize leadership practices (Machmudah et al., 2026), challenging conventional wisdom that often overlooks the spiritual motivations underpinning professional conduct.

In the context of digital learning innovation, research by Adiyono et al (2024) explores educational management strategies and learning interactions to improve student engagement, while these findings also reinforce previous research, such as Said et al (2023) and Arar et al (2022), on the

role of instructional and managerial leadership. However, this study also identifies the uniqueness of religious value-based leadership—as shown (Muaddyl Akhyar et al., 2024), which not only strengthens the identity of teachers but is also manifested in real-world practices such as supervision and collegial collaboration, as explained (Muh Habibulloh et al., 2025). Thus, even though (Adiyono et al., 2024) focus on digital transformation, this study simultaneously confirms that the integration of spiritual and professional dimensions in educational leadership, especially in an Islamic environment—remains relevant even in the technological age, as the two reinforce each other to create a holistic learning ecosystem. Moreover, as highlighted (Adiyono et al., 2025a), the increasing reliance of students on artificial intelligence (Badawi, 2026) in academic settings demonstrates the urgency for leadership that can balance technological adoption with ethical and spiritual guidance, ensuring that digital transformation does not diminish but rather strengthens character and integrity in education.

The implications of this study's findings are profound and highlight both theoretical and practical significance. Theoretically, this research enhances the discourse on school leadership by incorporating spirituality and religious values into the framework of teacher professionalism—an area that has been largely underexplored in international literature (Abed & Darawsheh, 2022; Triharjanti & Tjahjono, 2023). As noted by Said et al (2023), leadership practices in many educational contexts often overlook the integration of ethical values grounded in spirituality. The results from the MA Al Ihsan Tanah Grogot case indicate that when principals embody these values, they create a more motivating environment for teachers. This research contends that “policymakers and educational leaders should recognize religious culture as a resource” rather than a hindrance in professional development (Abed & Darawsheh, 2022). Incorporating training programs that integrate ethical and spiritual reinforcement alongside technical skills can foster greater teacher commitment, potentially leading to improved educational outcomes.

From a broader perspective, the implications extend to global debates on educational leadership, particularly as many developing countries grapple with similar challenges such as inadequate resources, insufficient facilities, and excessive teacher workloads (Bush, 2009; Said et al., 2023; Wolhuter et al., 2016). The Indonesian madrasah experience exemplifies how intrinsic, faith-based motivation can be a buffer against these structural limitations, fostering resilience and long-term dedication among educators. As Siswanto & Radiana (2024), Woods & Roberts (2019), and Hallinger (2018) point out, addressing these challenges requires innovative leadership models that are adaptable to local contexts. This research advocates for hybrid models that merge professional standards with spiritual values, suggesting that such frameworks may be more sustainable in faith-based or resource-constrained educational settings, thus challenging the dominance of Western-centric leadership paradigms that often disregard these crucial cultural and religious dimensions.

Finally, this study paves the way for future research avenues aimed at exploring the efficacy of faith-driven leadership models in other religiously affiliated schools, encompassing Catholic, Hindu, or Buddhist institutions. Comparative studies could provide insights into whether similar leadership frameworks yield positive results across various contexts, while longitudinal studies might investigate the sustainability of these models concerning student outcomes and institutional growth (Adiyono et al, 2026; Misdah et al., 2025). Moreover, employing mixed-methods research could quantitatively assess the impact of faith-informed leadership on teacher performance, retention, and satisfaction, complementing the qualitative insights gathered in this study. Such future inquiries will not only deepen the theoretical landscape of educational leadership but also yield practical lessons across diverse educational systems striving to balance professionalism with cultural and religious identity (Chen et al., 2022; Yusuf, 2022).

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that madrasah principals hold a strategic position in enhancing teacher professionalism by combining educational leadership functions—educator, manager, supervisor, and motivator—with the integration of religious values. The findings confirm the research objective that leadership in faith-based contexts requires a holistic model that goes beyond managerial efficiency to encompass moral and spiritual motivation. This model successfully addresses the challenges of limited resources and teacher workload by fostering intrinsic motivation rooted in Islamic principles and by providing structured opportunities for professional development through training, collegial collaboration, and recognition systems. Beyond its local context, the study contributes to the broader discourse on school leadership by presenting a faith-informed framework that enriches existing theories of instructional and managerial leadership, thereby offering a globally relevant alternative model.

In addition to reinforcing the central role of leadership in sustaining teacher professionalism, this study suggests directions for future inquiry. Comparative studies across other faith-based schools and longitudinal analyses of leadership impacts on teacher and student outcomes are recommended to test the sustainability and transferability of this model. Further, integrating quantitative measures could strengthen the evidence base by demonstrating the tangible outcomes of faith-driven leadership on school effectiveness. In sum, the research highlights that religious values, when systematically embedded in leadership practice, can serve as a resilient foundation for professionalism in resource-constrained educational contexts, while also contributing to the diversification of international leadership scholarship.

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