

## Islamic Spiritual Leadership Model to Enhance Madrasah Quality Culture and Achieve Sustainable Development Goals

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**ABSTRACT:** *This study emphasises the importance of spiritual leadership as a key strategy in supporting the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 (Quality Education) and 16 (Resilient Institutions), considering that leadership practices in State Islamic Senior High Schools (SMAI) in Java and Kalimantan are still diverse and lack cross-cultural comparative studies. The research objective is to analyse spiritual leadership practices, identify similarities and differences across regions, assess their contribution to a quality culture, and formulate a conceptual model of spiritual leadership based on Islamic values appropriate to the educational context and the SDGs agenda. This research uses a qualitative approach with an interpretative paradigm through a multi-site study in six SMAIs, with informants from madrasah principals, teachers, and students selected through purposive and snowball sampling. The results show that spiritual leadership is the primary foundation of a quality culture through exemplary behaviour, habituation of worship, strengthening of the vision and mission, and empowerment of teachers and students. Practices in Java are more formal-strategic, while in Kalimantan they tend to be contextual-collective, based on religiosity and local wisdom, despite facing budget constraints, administrative pressures, and socio-cultural diversity. This study developed an Islamic Spiritual Leadership model for the SDGs based on faith, Islam, ihsan, Al-Ghazali's values, and the principles of the caliphate ('adl, rahma, amanah), formulated in four pillars: spiritual transcendence, ethical role model, community empowerment, and contextual adaptation. The study's limitations lie in its regional scope and the predominance of qualitative data. Further research is recommended to use a quantitative or mixed-methods approach to test the model's effectiveness more broadly. The study's primary contribution is presenting a contextual and applicable Islamic perspective in strengthening the quality culture of madrasahs while supporting the global agenda of sustainable development.*

Penelitian ini menekankan pentingnya kepemimpinan spiritual sebagai strategi kunci dalam mendukung pencapaian *Sustainable Development Goal* (SDG) 4 (Pendidikan Berkualitas) dan 16 (Lembaga yang Tangguh), mengingat praktik kepemimpinan di Sekolah Menengah Atas Islam Negeri (SMAI) di Jawa dan Kalimantan masih beragam dan kurang studi

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perbandingan lintas budaya. Tujuan penelitian adalah untuk menganalisis praktik kepemimpinan spiritual, mengidentifikasi persamaan dan perbedaan antar daerah, menilai kontribusinya terhadap budaya mutu, dan merumuskan model konseptual kepemimpinan spiritual berdasarkan nilai-nilai Islam yang sesuai dengan konteks pendidikan dan agenda SDG. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan paradigma interpretatif melalui studi multi-situs di enam SMAI, dengan informan dari kepala sekolah, guru, dan siswa yang dipilih melalui *purposive* dan *snowball sampling*. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kepemimpinan spiritual merupakan fondasi utama budaya mutu melalui perilaku keteladanan, pembiasaan ibadah, penguatan visi dan misi, serta pemberdayaan guru dan siswa. Praktik di Jawa lebih formal-strategis, sementara di Kalimantan cenderung kontekstual-kolektif, berdasarkan religiusitas dan kearifan lokal, meskipun menghadapi keterbatasan anggaran, tekanan administratif, dan keragaman sosial-budaya. Studi ini mengembangkan model Kepemimpinan Spiritual Islam untuk SDGs berdasarkan iman, Islam, ihsan, nilai-nilai Al-Ghazali, dan prinsip-prinsip kekhalifahan (*‘adl, rahma, amanah*), dirumuskan dalam empat pilar: transendensi spiritual, teladan etis, pemberdayaan masyarakat, dan adaptasi kontekstual. Keterbatasan studi ini terletak pada cakupan regionalnya dan dominasi data kualitatif. Penelitian lebih lanjut direkomendasikan untuk menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif atau metode campuran untuk menguji efektivitas model secara lebih luas. Kontribusi utama studi ini adalah menyajikan perspektif Islam yang kontekstual dan aplikatif dalam memperkuat budaya mutu madrasah sambil mendukung agenda global pembangunan berkelanjutan.

**Keywords:** *Spiritual Leadership, Quality Culture, Madrasah Aliyah.*

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Education is among the most important instruments in achieving sustainable development, particularly in pursuing Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4: Quality Education. Schools as educational institutions require the active participation of all stakeholders to ensure effective learning and equal opportunities for students (Ideswal et al., 2020). Leadership becomes a determining factor in shaping the organisational culture, motivating teachers, and ensuring that schools achieve their objectives in providing quality education (Khoiroh, 2021). Within this context, spiritual leadership has gained increasing attention because it addresses managerial functions and emphasises ethical, moral, and spiritual dimensions that contribute to holistic school development (Febrianto, 2023).

Researchers conducted research at State Islamic Senior High Schools (SMAI) in two different socio-cultural contexts, Java and Kalimantan. Institutions such as MAN 1 Blitar in East Java, SMAI 3 Banjarmasin in South Kalimantan, SMAI 2 Kutai Kartanegara, SMAI Balikpapan, SMAI Bontang, and SMAI 2 Samarinda in East Kalimantan represent diverse geographical, cultural, and organisational settings. This diversity creates a fertile ground to examine how spiritual leadership is understood,

practised, and adapted across local contexts. In addition, these schools embody the responsibility of strengthening Islamic education while also contributing to broader national and global educational agendas, making the study directly relevant to the implementation of SDG 4 and indirectly supporting SDG 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions through the promotion of ethical and spiritual leadership.

Empirically, the problem that emerges is the variation in leadership practices across educational institutions, leading to inconsistencies in cultivating a quality culture and motivating teachers (Sari, 2020). While some schools have successfully integrated spiritual leadership into daily practice, others still face challenges such as administrative rigidity, lack of teacher motivation, and limited collaboration between leaders and subordinates. Theoretically, researchers still lack consensus on systematically integrating spiritual leadership into Islamic educational institutions, especially in contexts where cultural diversity shapes leadership practices differently. The tension between the reality of inconsistent leadership practices and variable quality outcomes and the ideal vision of values-based, inclusive, and transformative leadership reflects the core research gap of this study.

Based on these challenges, the research seeks to answer the following questions: (1) How is spiritual leadership practised in State Islamic High School (SMIA) across Java and Kalimantan? (2) What are the two regions' similarities and differences in leadership approaches? (3) How does spiritual leadership contribute to building a quality school culture? (4) What model of spiritual leadership can be formulated to strengthen Islamic education institutions in line with SDGs? The objective is to analyse the current spiritual leadership practices and propose a conceptual model that can serve as a reference for educational leaders in different cultural contexts.

The grand theoretical foundation of this study is rooted in Spiritual Leadership Theory (Fry, 2003), which emphasises vision, altruistic love, and hope/faith as central constructs of leadership. This theory aligns with Islamic perspectives on leadership, as reflected in the Qur'anic values of nurturing (*tarbiyah*), motivating, and empowering followers (Al-Furqan: 74).

Previous research shows that Supriyanto et al. (2016) emphasised that job satisfaction is a key variable in improving Ihsan's behaviour through spiritual leadership and work spirituality. Usman et al. (2017) and Egel & Fry (2017) highlighted the dominance of Western perspectives in the study of spiritual leadership, so a model based on Islamic values and principles must be relevant to Muslim organisations. Muhammad et al. (2019) found that implementing spiritual leadership at BMT UGT Sidogiri Indonesia is based on Iman, Islam, and Ihsan values, which motivate employees and increase productivity. Supriyanto & Ekowati (2020) demonstrated the significant influence of spiritual leadership on Islamic Organisational Citizenship Behaviour, with Islamic Work Ethics as an important mediator. Rahmatika et al. (2022) emphasised the role of psychological empowerment as a mediator between spiritual leadership and performance, while Karim et al. (2022) classified the leadership behaviour of kiai in Islamic boarding schools into meditation, mediation, and reflection, which have a significant impact on the institution's progress. Siswanto (2022) highlighted integrating religious culture and local wisdom in shaping student character through spiritual leadership at MTs Sunan Kalijaga. Azzuhri et al. (2024) emphasised a new dimension in the Spiritual Leadership model based on Indonesian Islamic culture, emphasising Al-Ghazali's four main virtues and the concept of Qalb. Ibrahim et al. (2025) emphasised

the importance of spiritual leadership in shaping young leaders with ethics and a focus on sustainable development, which aligns with the SDGs' principles. Research trends indicate a shift from Western influences to Islamic spiritual leadership models, focusing on religious values, local culture, and character development.

Although many studies emphasise the principles of spiritual leadership in Islamic educational organisations and institutions, comprehensive research comparing spiritual leadership practices in various regions in Indonesia, such as Java and Kalimantan, identifying similarities and differences, and examining their contribution to building a culture of quality in schools, is still minimal. Most existing studies focus on individual schools or specific regions, neglecting the intercultural dimensions of leadership practices in diverse educational contexts. The novelty of this study lies in its comparative and integrative approach, analysing spiritual leadership in two distinct regional contexts and synthesising the findings into a transferable leadership model for strengthening Islamic education in line with SDGs.

Theoretically, this research enriches the discourse on spiritual leadership by contextualising it within Indonesian Islamic education and linking it to the SDG framework. This research provides a framework for educational leaders, policymakers, and practitioners to apply spiritual leadership principles to improve teacher motivation, organisational culture, and educational quality. Ultimately, this research supports the achievement of SDG 4 (Quality Education) by promoting inclusive, equitable, and values-based education, while contributing to SDG 16 (Resilient Institutions) by strengthening leadership capacity and integrity in schools.

## II. METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with an interpretive paradigm because it aims to deeply understand the practice of spiritual leadership in building a culture of quality in madrasas through the perspective of educational practitioners. The researcher chose this paradigm to answer research questions regarding the practices, differences, contributions, and models of spiritual leadership in State Islamic Senior High Schools (SMAI) in Java and Kalimantan and formulate a conceptual model relevant to the SDGs context. The type of research used is multi-site research, because the researcher conducted research in six SMAIs: SMAI 1 Blitar (East Java), SMAI 3 Banjarmasin (South Kalimantan), SMAI 2 Samarinda, SMAI 2 Kutai Kartanegara, SMAI Balikpapan, and SMAI Bontang (East Kalimantan) from August to November 2024 (Creswell, 2019).

The research subjects were the madrasah principal, teachers, and students as informants, while the research object was the practice of spiritual leadership and its influence on quality culture. Data sources comprised primary data (observation results, interviews, and direct interactions with the madrasah principal, teachers, and students) and secondary data (official documents such as vision and mission, work plans, quality programs, and activity reports). Data collection techniques included: (1) observation, focusing on the exemplary attitudes of the madrasah principal, interactions, teacher motivation, and the condition of the quality culture; (2) in-depth interviews with structured guidelines for the madrasah principal, teachers, and students; and (3) documentation, in the form of analysis of the madrasah's vision and mission documents, programs, and policies related to quality culture.

Informants were selected using purposive sampling based on their involvement in school leadership and quality, followed by snowball sampling to complete the data. Researchers tested the validity of the data through triangulation of sources, techniques, and time, as well as member checking (Sugiyono, 2022). Data analysis was conducted using the interactive model of Miles et al. (2014), through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and drawing/verifying conclusions, resulting in a comprehensive understanding of spiritual leadership in building a culture of quality in various madrasah contexts.

### III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Spiritual leadership in State Islamic Senior High Schools (SMAI) spread across Java and Kalimantan shows that leadership practices not only focus on administrative or academic aspects, but also emphasise the integration of spiritual values that form the basis of all educational activities. Based on interviews, observations, and documentation, the principals of madrasahs in SMAI 1 Blitar, SMAI 3 Banjarmasin, SMAI 2 Kutai Kartanegara, SMAI Balikpapan, SMAI Bontang, and SMAI 2 Samarinda, summarised in tables 1, 2, and 3, consistently apply leadership based on religious and moral values, thus creating a harmonious work climate and encouraging a positive quality culture in the school environment.

**Table 1. Summary of spiritual leadership interviews: building a quality culture in madrasahs by region**

Region	Understanding Spiritual Leadership	Implementation	Quality Culture	Challenge
Java (SMAI 1 Blitar)	Spiritual leadership is the ability to lead based on spiritual values.	Honesty, sincerity, responsibility, compassion, and orientation towards the common good.	Built through exemplary behaviour, values, and a spirit of worship, the best quality is born from a pure heart.	Pressure of academic/administrative targets, differences in cultural background and understanding
South Kalimantan (SMAI 3 Banjarmasin)	Spiritual leadership emphasises a work climate of value, integrity, motivation, harmony of organisational goals and individual spiritual needs.	Not only focus on performance, moral values, the meaning of life, and role models.	Encourage awareness of work as worship, continuous development, and inspiration.	Limited facilities and funds; challenges of modernisation and digitalisation that affect student attention
East Kalimantan	SMAI 2 Kutai Kartanegara: Emphasises religiosity, noble morals, exemplary behaviour, role models in worship, sincerity, and trustworthiness SMAI Balikpapan: Religiosity is inherent in spiritual leadership, and leaders reflect their attitudes through their behaviour SMAI Bontang: Religious-based, leaders demonstrate religious	SMAI 2 Kutai Kartanegara: congregational prayer, prayer, 5S, morning Quran recitation, moral strengthening SMAI Balikpapan: love curriculum SMAI Bontang: religious curriculum, Dhuha prayer, Quran recitation, good communication SMAI 2 Samarinda:	SMAI 2 Kutai Kartanegara: role models, habituation, performance appreciation, sincere and professional teachers, high-achieving students with noble character SMAI Balikpapan: Involving all parties, coaching programs and competition quarantine SMAI Bontang: Employee placement according to field, monitoring and	SMAI 2 Kutai Kartanegara: maintaining consistency, teacher/student motivation sometimes declines, and there are differences in cultural backgrounds SMAI Balikpapan: teachers do not support activities, inadequate facilities, and a limited budget SMAI Bontang: differences in backgrounds between

leadership SMAI 2 Samarinda: Religious through habituation	Dhuha prayer, Quran recitation, lectures, <i>Muhadhoroh</i> , religious activities IRMANDA	evaluation, community development, exemplary teachers SMAI 2 Samarinda: Building positive routines for all members of the madrasah community	school residents and the surrounding community SMAI 2 Samarinda: limited budget, sometimes requiring donations for activities
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**Table 2. Summary of observation results on spiritual leadership in building a quality culture in madrasas per region**

Region	Exemplary Attitude of the Madrasah Principal	Interaction between the Principal and Teachers & Students	Spiritually Valued Programs	Teacher Motivation	Quality Culture	Differences in Spiritual Leadership
Java (SMAI 1 Blitar)	Showing an example in discipline, worship, attention to teachers and students	The interaction went well and harmoniously.	Group prayers before lessons, congregational prayers, regular recitations, and commemoration of Islamic holidays	Teachers are motivated, although some need improvement	Discipline and cleanliness need improvement, but the overall quality culture is good.	Cannot compare directly with Kalimantan; effective leadership through citizen participation and exemplary leadership
South Kalimantan (SMAI 3 Banjarmasin)	The head of the madrasah demonstrates discipline and worship that is exemplary.	The interaction went very well.	Routine recitation, moral development, clean Friday & almsgiving, teacher empowerment, da'wah activities, Al-Qur'an study	The teacher is very enthusiastic and motivated	All parties are involved in improving the quality of madrasas	Unable to pinpoint specifics, local cultural differences may influence spiritual values.
East Kalimantan	SMAI 2 Kutai Kartanegara: A role model in everyday life SMAI Balikpapan: A role model in everyday life SMAI Bontang: A role model in everyday life SMAI 2 Samarinda: A role model in everyday life	Warm, familial, harmonious, mutually constructive interactions	SMAI 2 Kutai Kartanegara: Dhuha prayer, Quran recitation, prayer, Friday alms donation, congregational prayer, greeting, smiles MAN Balikpapan: financial transparency, Islamic treasures, long clothing MAN Bontang: Friday <i>dhikr</i> and <i>ratibul haddad</i> , <i>gharimah</i> , Dhuha prayer, Quran recitation, prayer MAN 2 Samarinda: Dhuha prayer, Quran recitation, prayer, Friday <i>muhadhoroh</i> , alms donation	The teacher looks motivated and enthusiastic.	Discipline, cleanliness, cooperation, and quality of learning are going well; the leadership's exemplary behaviour supports this.	There are no specific differences; minor differences may arise due to the cultural background and customs of the madrasa residents.

**Table 3. Summary of the results of the documentation of spiritual leadership in building a quality culture in madrasahs per region**

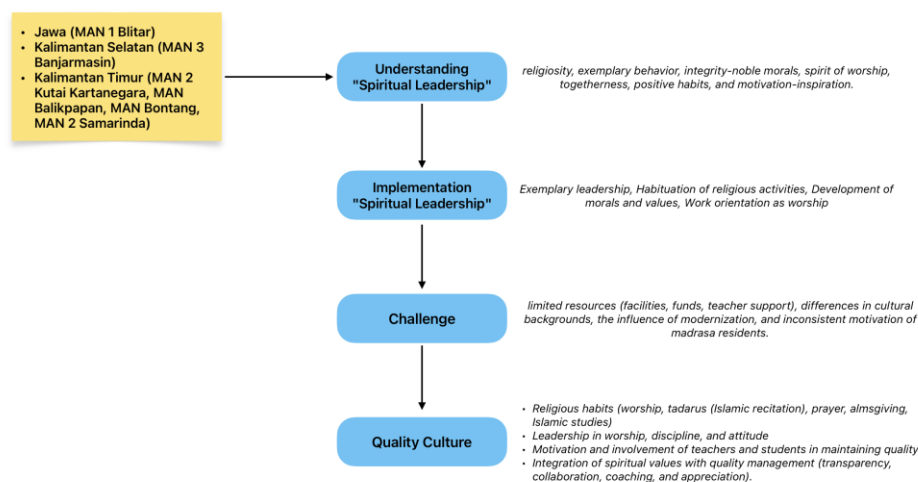
Region	Madrasah Vision, Mission, and Goals Document that Reflects Spiritual Leadership	Work Plan Document (RKM) and Programs related to Quality Culture
Java (SMAI 1 Blitar)	Vision: A superior madrasah with an Islamic character, competitive, inclusive, and environmentally friendly.	The RKM document already reflects spiritual leadership.
Kalimantan Selatan (SMAI 3 Banjarmasin)	Vision: to become a superior madrasah in academic achievement and strengthening spiritual character based on local wisdom and Islam <i>rahmatan lil-alamin</i>	Reflecting spiritual leadership
East Kalimantan	SMAI 2 Kutai Kartanegara: A superior, high-achieving madrasah with a global perspective, Islamic character, based on faith and piety SMAI Balikpapan: Superior academic achievement and noble character, based on faith, piety, and local wisdom SMAI Bontang: Superior academic achievement, global perspective, based on faith and piety, and noble character SMAI 2 Samarinda: Superior academic achievement, global perspective, Islamic character, based on faith and piety	All RKM documents reflect spiritual leadership.

Figure 1 presents a cross-case synthesis of the data in Tables 1, 2, and 3, showing that the practice of spiritual leadership and quality culture in Islamic Senior High Schools (SMAI) has a relatively similar general pattern in both Java and Kalimantan, but with unique nuances according to each local context. At SMAI 1 Blitar (Java), the principal defines spiritual leadership as a foundation of honesty, responsibility, compassion, and orientation towards the common good. Its implementation emphasises the exemplary behaviour of the madrasah principal and the strengthening of a culture of regular worship, thus impacting the formation of a spirituality-based quality culture despite constraints on academic targets and differences in the backgrounds of the school community. Researchers found that SMAI 3 Banjarmasin (South Kalimantan) implemented a similar approach, where the principal emphasised integrity and aligning organisational goals with individual spiritual needs. All community members actively play a role in maintaining quality through ongoing development, preaching activities, and clean Fridays. Challenges faced include limited facilities and the impact of digital modernisation on student focus.

Meanwhile, in East Kalimantan (SMAI 2 Kutai Kartanegara, SMAI Balikpapan, SMAI Bontang, and SMAI 2 Samarinda), spiritual leadership is rooted in religiosity and the habit of worship. All madrasahs emphasise routine religious practices such as dhuha prayer, *tadarus*, communal prayer, and special activities such as muhadhoroh and dhikr in congregation. A quality culture is born through the example of leaders, the habituation of all school members, and the placement of roles according to competence. The difference lies in the challenges faced. MA SMAI N 2 Kutai Kartanegara must maintain consistent motivation of school members, SMAI Balikpapan faces a lack of

teacher support and budget constraints, SMAI Bontang faces differences in socio-cultural backgrounds, while SMAI 2 Samarinda faces limited operational funds.

Based on observations and documentation, the three regions (Java, South Kalimantan, and East Kalimantan) demonstrate consistency between the madrasah vision and mission, the principals' spiritual leadership practices, and the quality culture programs implemented. The differences lie in the form of activities, the intensity of school community participation, and the contextual challenges faced. Therefore, the researchers concluded that spiritual leadership in all madrasas is the primary foundation for building a quality culture, with the principal acting as the main role model, motivating teachers and students. However, external factors such as infrastructure support, consistent motivation, and local socio-cultural conditions greatly influence the success of implementation.



**Figure 1.** *Spiritual leadership: building a culture of quality in madrasas in Java and Kalimantan*

### How is Spiritual Leadership Practised in State Islamic High School (SMAI) across Java and Kalimantan?

Researchers observed spiritual leadership in SMAI Java and Kalimantan, which is based on religious values, exemplary behaviour, the habit of worship, and the integration of the madrasah's vision and mission with a culture of quality. The principal and teachers at SMAI 1 Blitar (Java) practice spiritual leadership through honesty, sincerity, responsibility, and compassion by displaying exemplary behaviour and fostering a spirit of worship, even though they face challenges in administrative pressure and cultural differences. Such a practice of spiritual leadership is in line with Supriyanto et al. (2016) and Supriyanto & Ekowati (2020), who emphasised the influence of spiritual leadership on job satisfaction, Ihsan behaviour, and Islamic Organisational Citizenship Behaviour (IOCB) through strengthening spiritual values. In Kalimantan, the practice of spiritual leadership emphasises religious habits such as congregational prayer, *tadarus* (religious reading), *dhikr* (remembrance of God), prayer, recitation of the Koran, and moral development programs in Kutai Kartanegara, Balikpapan, Bontang, and Samarinda, which form a quality culture based on noble character and togetherness. This practice aligns with Fry (2003), who emphasises the importance of intrinsic motivation through vision, hope/faith, and altruistic love to build commitment and productivity.

Previous research also shows that spiritual leadership in Islamic schools is rooted in the values of faith, Islam, and Ihsan (Muhammad et al., 2019), which aligns with the exemplary practices of madrasah principals in Blitar and East Kalimantan. Berlian & Tasrim (2023) added that Qur'anic and Hadith values such as trustworthiness, responsibility, sincerity, and discipline can increase motivation, commitment, and work quality, a reflection seen in teacher performance appreciation at SMAI 2 Kutai Kartanegara and competition coaching at SMAI Balikpapan. Meanwhile, research by Siswanto (2022) in Madura showed how local wisdom forms spiritual leadership based on religious culture, while SMAI 2 Banjarmasin also integrates local wisdom with Islam *rahmatan lil-'alamin*. This local context is reinforced by Karim et al. (2022, 2025), who found variations in the spiritual leadership practices of kiai in Islamic boarding schools based on prayer, *uswah hasanah*, deliberation, and sharia *muamalah*, which are relevant to the practice of deliberation and open communication in Kalimantan madrasahs.

From a global perspective, research by Egel & Fry (2017) and Usman et al. (2017) critiques the dominance of Western models and promotes the construction of Islamic-based spiritual leadership. This is consistent with madrasah practices in Indonesia, which emphasise Islamic values, in contrast to the more individualistic Western model. Research by Azzuhri et al. (2024) even developed a model based on Al-Ghazali and the concept of Qalb, which is highly relevant to the sincerity and trustworthiness of madrasah principals in East Kalimantan. Furthermore, Brooks & Brooks (2022); Eisl et al. (2025) emphasised that spiritual leadership in multifaith and faith-based communities can strengthen school-community relationships, an aspect also evident in Indonesian madrasahs through the involvement of school members and parents in religious activities.

Field practice also impacts teacher motivation and school quality, which aligns with research by Hsieh (2022); Li et al. (2023, 2024, 2025) that spiritual leadership improves well-being, grit, PsyCap, and calling and reduces teacher burnout. Despite limited resources, the motivated teachers at SMAI Bontang and SMAI 2 Kutai Kartanegara support this. Meanwhile, research by Rahmatika et al. (2022) emphasises the importance of mediating factors in psychological empowerment, which is relevant to the finding that budget constraints in Samarinda encourage collective initiatives from madrasah residents. Juharyanto (2021) and Nurabadi (2021) also demonstrate the significant contribution of spiritual leadership to school quality and student achievement, as reflected in student achievement in madrasahs in Kalimantan. Furthermore, Karadağ (2020) emphasises that perceptions of spiritual leadership correlate with student academic success, in line with the culture of religious quality in Balikpapan and Banjarmasin.

The practice of spiritual leadership in Javanese-Kalimantan madrasahs has a sustainable development dimension, as Ibrahim et al. (2025) emphasised, namely instilling the values of justice, compassion, and leadership as a mandate to shape a generation of character. This is reflected in the madrasah's vision and mission, which emphasises faith, piety, and noble morals, as found in the RKM documentation. Msila (2020) emphasises the importance of compassion, care, and a shared vision in building teacher commitment, even though the change process is slow. This condition parallels the madrasahs in Indonesia, which are struggling to face the challenges of modernisation and limited resources. Research by Martinez-Soto et al. (2024) reminds us of the need to review the construct validity of Fry's model, which provides an opportunity to enrich

the practice of spiritual leadership in madrasahs with a contextual approach, such as Al-Ghazali's (Azzuhri et al., 2024).

Thus, spiritual leadership practices at SMAI Java and Kalimantan encompass not only personal exemplary behaviour and the practice of worship, but also the integration of vision, teacher empowerment, and a quality culture rooted in Islamic values. This reinforces findings across the literature that spiritual leadership enhances motivation, well-being, commitment, and achievement. However, its effectiveness is strongly influenced by local context, mediating factors, and resource limitations, which must be managed with trust and deliberation.

### **What are the Similarities and Differences in Leadership Approaches Between the Two Regions?**

Based on research findings in Java and Kalimantan, there are similarities in that spiritual leadership is manifested through exemplary behaviour, habituating worship, and instilling religious values such as honesty, trustworthiness, responsibility, and compassion. Both regions view work as a form of worship, building a quality culture through continuous development, and maintaining teacher and student motivation to remain focused on spiritual and academic goals. These practices align with Fry (2003) ideas, which emphasise vision, faith or hope, and altruistic love as pillars of spiritual leadership. Several studies, such as those by Supriyanto & Ekowati (2020) and Supriyanto et al. (2016), also show that spiritual leadership can create job satisfaction, *Ihsan* (good deeds), and Islamic Organisational Citizenship Behaviour (IOCB). Meanwhile, research by Juharyanto (2021); Karadağ (2020) confirms that spiritual leadership contributes directly and indirectly to school quality and student achievement. This is clearly reflected in the practice of madrasahs in Java and Kalimantan, which have successfully integrated the spiritual dimension with academic achievement.

Differences in spiritual leadership between Java and Kalimantan are evident in their orientation and implementation strategies. In Java, such as at SMAI 1 Blitar, spiritual leadership emphasises integrating spiritual values with achieving academic and administrative targets. Conversely, madrasahs in Kalimantan emphasise a collective approach through a family-like climate and strengthening structured religious programs, such as *dhuha* prayer, *tadarus* (religious reading), Friday almsgiving, and competition quarantines. This pattern is influenced by local cultural factors, budget constraints, and the level of teacher support, in line with the findings of Rahmatika et al. (2022), who stated that the influence of spiritual leadership on performance requires mediation in the form of psychological empowerment. Similarly, Azzuhri et al. (2024) emphasised the importance of a spiritual leadership model based on Islam and local wisdom, while Muhammad et al. (2019) emphasised the role of the values of faith, Islam, and *ihsan* (good character) in leadership practice. Thus, although both regions share the same value base, their implementation differs: Java tends to be formal-strategic. At the same time, Kalimantan is more contextual-collective, emphasising daily religious practices and adaptation to resource limitations.

### **How Does Spiritual Leadership Contribute to Building a Quality Culture in Schools?**

Spiritual leadership is a crucial foundation for building a culture of quality in madrasahs, as it instils vision, values, and role models that foster intrinsic motivation in teachers and students. Field research at SMAI 1 Blitar, SMAI 3 Banjarmasin, and madrasahs in East Kalimantan demonstrates that collective worship practices, the instilling of noble

morals, and warm leadership interactions successfully create a valuable and inspiring work climate. These findings align with the theory by Fry (2003), which emphasises vision, faith, and altruistic love as drivers of commitment. They also align with research by Supriyanto & Ekowati (2020) and Supriyanto et al. (2016), which demonstrates the influence of spiritual leadership on job satisfaction, Ihsan (good character), and Islamic Organisational Citizenship Behaviour. Other empirical studies also confirm that spiritual leadership contributes positively to motivation, performance, and religious work culture (Berlian & Tasrim, 2023; Juharyanto, 2021; Karadağ, 2020; Msila, 2020; Nurabadi, 2021), and is even relevant in a multicultural context, as shown by Brooks & Brooks (2022); Eisl et al. (2025).

Research by Karim et al. (2022, 2025); Muhammad et al. (2019); Siswanto (2022) emphasises the importance of the values of faith, Islam, and Ihsan, the exemplary behaviour of Islamic scholars, and the practice of Islamic transactions in shaping students' character and fostering the entrepreneurial spirit of students. This is in line with the practice of madrasa leadership in Kalimantan, which emphasises the habit of prayer, *tadarus*, and moral development. This Islamic-based leadership model also responds to criticisms by Usman et al. (2017) and Egel & Fry (2017) regarding the dominance of Western perspectives in spiritual leadership literature, by offering enriched concepts derived from the Qur'an, Hadith, and the virtues of Al-Ghazali as emphasised by Azzuhri et al. (2024). Research by Jamil (2015) also emphasises the relevance of leadership based on the characteristics of the Prophet Muhammad Saw, which is clearly reflected in the exemplary behaviour of madrasa principals in the field. A study by Ibrahim et al. (2025) links spiritual leadership with sustainable development (SDGs), showing that this leadership is relevant for improving the quality of education and preparing a generation of leaders with integrity who are helpful for the wider community.

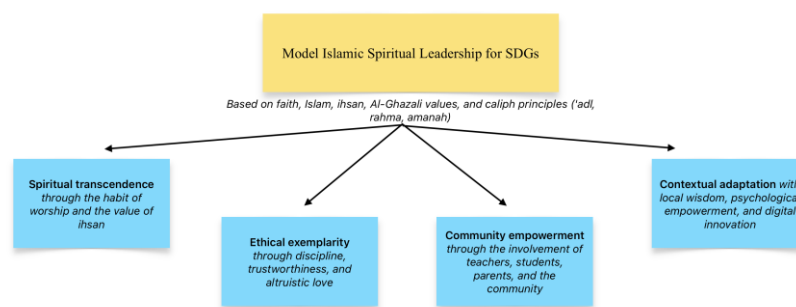
The contribution of spiritual leadership to the quality culture of madrasas is not automatic but is influenced by various mediating factors, context, and challenges. Rahmatika et al. (2022) showed that psychological empowerment is an important mediator in strengthening this relationship, while research by Li et al. (2023, 2024, 2025) emphasised the role of grit, trust, and career calling in reducing burnout and improving teacher well-being. Hsieh (2022) also emphasised that teachers' psychological capital is a mediator leading to increased organisational commitment. On the other hand, Martinez-Soto et al. (2024) highlighted the limited validity of Fry's model, thus requiring contextual adaptation to ensure spiritual leadership is relevant in various situations. Field findings support this view, as budget constraints, academic pressures, and diverse cultural backgrounds have been shown to hinder the consistent application of spiritual values. Thus, spiritual leadership contributes significantly to shaping madrasas' quality culture through Islamic vision, role models, and intrinsic motivation. However, its effectiveness remains highly dependent on the local context, availability of resources, and mediation strategies applied in educational management.

### **What Model of Spiritual Leadership Can be Formulated to Strengthen Islamic Education Institutions in Line with SDGs?**

Research findings in Javanese and Kalimantan madrasas indicate that spiritual leadership is manifested through exemplary behaviour, the practice of worship, integrity, and concern for the welfare of the madrasa community, which significantly impacts the culture of quality by increasing teacher motivation, student achievement,

and the creation of a religious work atmosphere. These findings align with the theory by Fry (2003), which emphasises vision, faith/hope, and altruistic love as the basis for intrinsic motivation. They are also reinforced by research by Supriyanto et al. (2016) and Supriyanto & Ekowati (2020), demonstrating the significant influence of spiritual leadership on job satisfaction, Ihsan behaviour, and Islamic Organisational Citizenship Behaviour. Similarly, research by Berlian & Tasrim (2023); Jamil (2015); Muhammad et al. (2019) confirms that the values of faith, Islam, and *ihsan*, as well as the example of the Prophet Muhammad Saw with his disciplined, trustworthy, and responsible character, can be the main pillars of leadership in madrasas. In Asia, research by Hsieh (2022); Juharyanto (2021); Karadağ (2020); Li et al. (2023, 2024, 2025) further strengthens the evidence of a positive relationship between spiritual leadership, teacher motivation, organisational commitment, well-being, and student learning outcomes. This aligns with field findings in East Kalimantan, which demonstrated increased teacher motivation and madrasah quality through consistent religious practices.

Research by Rahmatika et al. (2022) and Martinez-Soto et al. (2024) revealed that the influence of spiritual leadership on performance is not always direct, but instead mediated by other factors such as psychological empowerment and the accuracy of theoretical models. This is evident in SMAI 1 Blitar, which faces challenges in terms of academic targets and cultural diversity, and SMAI 2 Samarinda, which is limited in budget. In this context, Karim et al. (2022, 2025) and Siswanto (2022) emphasise the importance of the role of kiai (Islamic scholars) and the strengthening of local traditions such as prayer, good examples, and local wisdom in supporting spiritual leadership. This view is in line with Azzuhri et al. (2024); Egel & Fry (2017); Usman et al. (2017), who emphasise the need for an Islamic spiritual leadership model based on the Qur'an, Hadith, and Qalb values as an alternative to overcome the dominance of Western leadership models. This finding is also strengthened by research by Brooks & Brooks (2022); Eisl et al. (2025); Msila (2020), which shows that the integration of religion, spirituality, and local culture can strengthen school leadership practices in various multicultural contexts.



**Figure 2.** Islamic spiritual leadership model for SDGs

Based on this synthesis, a model of Islamic Spiritual Leadership for SDGs is formulated in Figure 2, which is based on faith, Islam, *ihsan*, Al-Ghazali's values, and the principles of the caliphate, namely *'adl*, *rahma*, and *amanah*, as emphasised by Ibrahim et al. (2025). This model is intended to shape the internal quality culture of Islamic educational institutions and supports the achievement of sustainable development goals through social justice, inclusiveness, and community welfare. Conceptually, this model encompasses four main pillars. *First*, spiritual transcendence through the habituation of

worship and the appreciation of the value of *ihsan* (Muhammad et al., 2019; Siswanto, 2022). *Second*, ethical exemplarity manifested through discipline, trustworthiness, and altruistic love (Berlian & Tasrim, 2023; Fry, 2003). *Third*, community empowerment by involving teachers, students, parents, and the community in building an educational ecosystem (Brooks & Brooks, 2022; Eisl et al., 2025; Msila, 2020). *Fourth*, contextual adaptation that integrates local wisdom, psychological empowerment, and digital innovation (Juharyanto, 2021; Karadağ, 2020; Rahmatika et al., 2022). With these foundations, this spiritual leadership model strengthens the quality of Islamic educational institutions and is also relevant to the global SDGs agenda, particularly in quality education, equality, and sustainable development.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Spiritual leadership in madrasahs has been proven to be the primary foundation in building a culture of quality by emphasising the values of faith, Islam, and *ihsan*, which are manifested through the exemplary behaviour of the madrasah principal, the habituation of worship, strengthening the vision and mission, and empowering teachers and students. The main findings show similarities in practices in Java and Kalimantan by integrating religious values, honesty, trustworthiness, and compassion. However, implementation patterns differ: Java is more formal-strategic in integrating academic aspects with spirituality, while Kalimantan is more contextual-collective through routine religious programs and local wisdom. Differences in challenges, such as budget constraints, administrative pressures, and socio-cultural diversity, affect leadership effectiveness. This study contributes to the literature by producing a model of Islamic Spiritual Leadership for SDGs based on faith, Islam, Ihsan, Al-Ghazali's values, and the principles of the caliphate (*'adl, rahma, amanah*), and formulated in four pillars: spiritual transcendence, ethical exemplarity, community empowerment, and contextual adaptation. This model strengthens the quality of Islamic educational institutions and supports the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly quality education, equality, and community well-being. The limitations of this study lie in its limited coverage (Java and Kalimantan) and the predominance of qualitative data that does not measure the quantitative impact of spiritual leadership on academic achievement. Therefore, further research is recommended to expand the geographic context, use a mixed-methods approach, and empirically test the effectiveness of the Islamic Spiritual Leadership for SDGs model for broader application in strengthening Islamic educational institutions in the global era.

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