
	<p>Profetika: Jurnal Studi Islam P-ISSN: 14110881 E-ISSN: 25414534 Vol. 26, No. 3, 2025, pp. 883–898 https://doi.org/10.23917/profetika.v26i03.13702</p>	
<p>Received June 21, 2025</p>	<p>Revised November 27, 2025</p>	<p>Accepted December 30, 2025</p>

Transforming Urban Islamic Education: Principal Strategies for Fulfilling SDGs 4 on Quality Education

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Abstract

Objective: This study aims to compare strategies and identify the impact of strategies implemented by the principals of Muhammadiyah Junior High School PK Kottabarat Surakarta and Muhammadiyah Al-Kautsar PK Sukoharjo Junior High School in improving the quality of education. **Theoretical framework:** this research is based on Whetten & Cameron's theory of transformational leadership and Schultes' theory of facilitative leadership applied by principals. **Literature review:** A literature review includes literature on leadership, quality schools, and Islamic education. It is still found that existing studies focus only on general education without considering the religious dimension in Islamic education. **Methods:** data collection techniques using observation, interviews, and document studies, with credibility and dependability tests as data validity tests. Data analysis techniques consist of data reduction, data presentation, and data verification. **Results:** The results of the study showed that SMP Muhammadiyah PK Kottabarat Surakarta implemented a transformational model strategy, while SMP Muhammadiyah Al-Kautsar PK Sukoharjo focused more on a facilitative model. The two schools have similarities in their digitalization strategy, but differ in policies such as the standardization of prospective students and the handling of discipline of education personnel. The impact of this strategy at SMP Muhammadiyah PK Kottabarat Surakarta includes increasing public interest, school achievement, SBBI Award, and teacher welfare. Meanwhile, at Muhammadiyah Al-Kautsar PK Sukoharjo Junior High School, the impact can be seen in the increase in registrants, academic and non-academic achievements, and the progress of infrastructure. **Implications:** This research promotes the importance of transformational leadership in urban Islamic schools, highlighting its crucial role in improving education quality and aligning educational strategies with the achievement of SDG 4, while emphasizing the need for further studies on leadership models that integrate Islamic values in urban educational contexts. **Novelty:** The novelty of this research lies in the integration of the leadership strategies of urban Islamic school principals with the achievement of SDG 4, which is rarely discussed in the Islamic education literature.

Keywords: urban schools, transformational leadership, school principal strategy, islamic education, sdgs.

INTRODUCTION

Education plays an important role in human resource development in order to navigate structural transformation, global industrial revolutions, and changes that occur [1]. The challenge today lies in how educational institutions, both public and private, can deliver high-quality services that are adaptive to the changing times [2]. The World Bank released a report based on its survey, revealing a surprising finding: the quality of education in Indonesia remains relatively low. This is evidenced by the fact that less than 28% of students meet the expected standards. Furthermore, Worldtop20.org published a global education ranking, where Indonesia was ranked 67th out of 209 countries surveyed. Indonesia's position is bordered by Albania, which is ranked 66th, and Serbia, which is ranked 68th [3]. This survey provides an overview that shows that the quality of education in Indonesia is concerning and requires special attention from all stakeholders of relevant educational institutions.

Previous studies conducted by Virgana examined the role of school principals in improving the quality of education. One of the research findings showed that the principal's leadership significantly affected teacher performance. The better the performance of teachers, the higher the quality of education in schools [4]. In contrast to the research conducted by Virgana, this paper will provide a more in-depth discussion of the strategies used by urban Islamic school principals to improve the quality of education. Urban Islamic schools refer to Islamic-based educational institutions located in urban areas with good governance [5].

Additionally, previous research has shown that effective school leadership has a significant impact on excellence and success. Based on the results of the survey, the principal's leadership affects the quality of work of education staff [6]. Principals play an important role in moving schools towards a better future [7]. A principal must be able to evaluate the existing culture, formulate new visions to guide the school's development, and encourage the creation of a more positive environment. This can be achieved through continuous innovation and the pursuit of creative solutions to address problems or conflicts that arise [8].

In the theory of managerial hierarchy, Max Weber states that the role of a manager becomes more prominent in smaller organizational structures [9]. This theory can be attributed to the management of educational institutions, where each level of school requires a different approach in its administration. Managing elementary schools (SD) is certainly different from managing junior high schools or senior high schools [10]. The lower the school level, the greater the role of the principal. Given the important role of school principals in managing institutions, this study will examine the strategies implemented by school principals [11]. Based on these issues and the author's perception of the relevance of sustainable topics, this study was conducted to examine the strategies implemented by school principals in improving the quality of education. The author chose two different junior high schools located in Surakarta City and Sukoharjo Regency, namely SMP Muhammadiyah PK Kottabarat Surakarta and SMP Muhammadiyah Al-Kautsar PK Sukoharjo. These two schools were chosen due to several considerations, one of which is that both are categorized as urban schools [12].

SMP Muhammadiyah PK Kottabarat Surakarta and SMP Muhammadiyah Al-Kautsar PK Sukoharjo emerged as well-run urban schools with an Islamic background, making them one of the most in-demand educational institutions in Solo and its surroundings. This is evidenced by the high level of public interest in the two schools. In addition, these institutions have achieved important achievements in both academic and non-academic fields [13], [14]. Another reason why the author chose SMP Muhammadiyah PK Kottabarat Surakarta and SMP Muhammadiyah Al-Kautsar PK Sukoharjo as the object of the research is that not all urban-based Islamic schools

have good governance. The quality of school governance can be assessed through the results of its graduates, achievements, and public perception of the institution.

The novelty of this study lies in the discussion that links the leadership strategy of school principals with efforts to fulfill SDG 4 (Quality Education) in the context of urban Islamic schools. So this study offers a perspective that is rarely found in the educational literature, which generally only focuses on the context of general education. The study also presents empirical evidence on the effectiveness of leadership strategies in improving the quality of education, which is rarely found in studies examining leadership in urban Islamic schools. By showing the tangible results achieved by both schools applying a specific leadership model, this article contributes to the literature on how education policies in faith-based schools can be adapted to achieve higher quality standards, particularly in the context of SDG 4 (Quality Education).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Urban Islamic education is increasingly becoming a concern in various countries, along with the development of ideas about quality education [15]. There are various studies that raise the importance of the leadership of school principals in improving the quality of education, especially in the context of Islamic schools in urban areas. A previous study revealed that the transformational leadership of school principals plays a major role in improving teacher performance, which in turn improves the quality of education in schools. This research underscores the importance of leadership that not only manages administration but can also inspire and motivate teachers and other educators.

On the other hand, Max Weber's theory of managerial hierarchy is also relevant in the context of urban Islamic education. Weber argues that the smaller the organizational structure, the greater the role of a manager or principal in directing the organization. This certainly has important implications in school management in urban areas that have complex challenges, both in terms of infrastructure, curriculum, and human resource management [16].

However, despite numerous studies reviewing the importance of leadership in education, there are still some gaps in this literature. Many studies focus on general education without considering the religious dimension in Islamic education. Therefore, research linking the leadership of school principals to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 4 on Quality Education, especially in the context of urban Islamic schools, is still very limited. A study that examines the role of urban Islamic school principals in achieving quality education by utilizing leadership models that are in accordance with Islamic characteristics is needed to enrich the existing literature [17].

Table 1. Literature Review

No	Focus Area	Key Findings	Limitations	SDGs Relevance
1	Urban Islamic Education	Urban Islamic education is growing and demands higher quality standards	Limited integration of religious values with modern educational practices	Supports SDG 4 through improved access and quality
2	Transformational Leadership	Enhances teacher performance and overall educational quality	Mostly general context, lacks focus on Islamic schools	Contributes to effective teaching and learning (SDG 4)
3	Weber's Managerial Hierarchy	Principals play a central role in smaller organizational structures	Does not address spiritual or Islamic values	Promotes effective school governance (SDG 4)

4	Leadership in Islamic Schools	Highlights importance of integrating religious values in management	Limited empirical studies in urban contexts	Supports inclusive and value-based education (SDG 4)
5	SDGs in Education	SDG 4 provides a global framework for quality education	Few studies link SDGs with Islamic school leadership	Emphasizes sustainable and equitable education

Overall, the existing literature shows that there are gaps that need to be filled regarding the application of leadership strategies in urban Islamic schools, especially those related to the achievement of SDGs 4. Therefore, this research focuses on the contribution of school principals' leadership in fulfilling these goals through strategies that are implementable and based on Islamic values that are relevant to the challenges of modern times.

METHODOLOGY

This research is classified as qualitative research because the author tries to describe a phenomenon based on the latest case, namely the quality of education in schools, which is always low [18]. The phenomenon described by the author is a phenomenon that occurs factually in the field, without any engineering. Qualitative research is a type of research that aims to describe a phenomenon or problem experienced by an individual or group [19]. In qualitative research, the theoretical framework serves as a guideline for researchers, especially during the process of data collection in the field.

In qualitative research, the theoretical framework serves as a guideline for researchers, especially during the process of collecting data in the field [20]. The approach used in this study is phenomenological. The phenomenological approach refers to a method that seeks to uncover facts based on phenomena as experienced by individuals through their life experiences [21]. The author seeks to examine the strategies used by the principals of SMP Muhammadiyah PK Kottabarat Surakarta and SMP Muhammadiyah Al-Kautsar PK Kartasura Sukoharjo as an effort to improve the quality of education, motivated by the growing phenomenon of closure and decline experienced by formal schools.

The subjects of this study include school principals, vice principals for curriculum, and students at SMP Muhammadiyah PK Kottabarat Surakarta and SMP Muhammadiyah Al-Kautsar PK Kartasura Sukoharjo. In addition, researchers also collected additional data in the form of records and documents. The data collection techniques used in this study are observation, interviews, and document analysis. The study applied two techniques to test the validity of the data: credibility testing and reliability testing. Data are considered credible when they show a high level of trust, which is demonstrated by the consistency between the reality observed in the field and the perceptions of the research informants [22]. The dependency test in this study is carried out through a thorough audit or re-examination of the overall research findings with accuracy and precision. At the data analysis stage, the researcher chose to use an interactive model. According to Miles, Huberman, and Saldana, the interactive model consists of data reduction, data presentation, and data verification [23].

Furthermore, this study integrates an SDGs-oriented analytical lens, particularly aligning with SDG 4 on Quality Education. The analysis examines how leadership strategies contribute to inclusive, equitable, and high-quality learning outcomes in urban Islamic schools. Indicators such as access, participation, teacher development, and institutional sustainability are considered in interpreting the findings. By embedding SDGs principles

into qualitative analysis, this research not only explores local educational practices but also situates them within a global development framework.

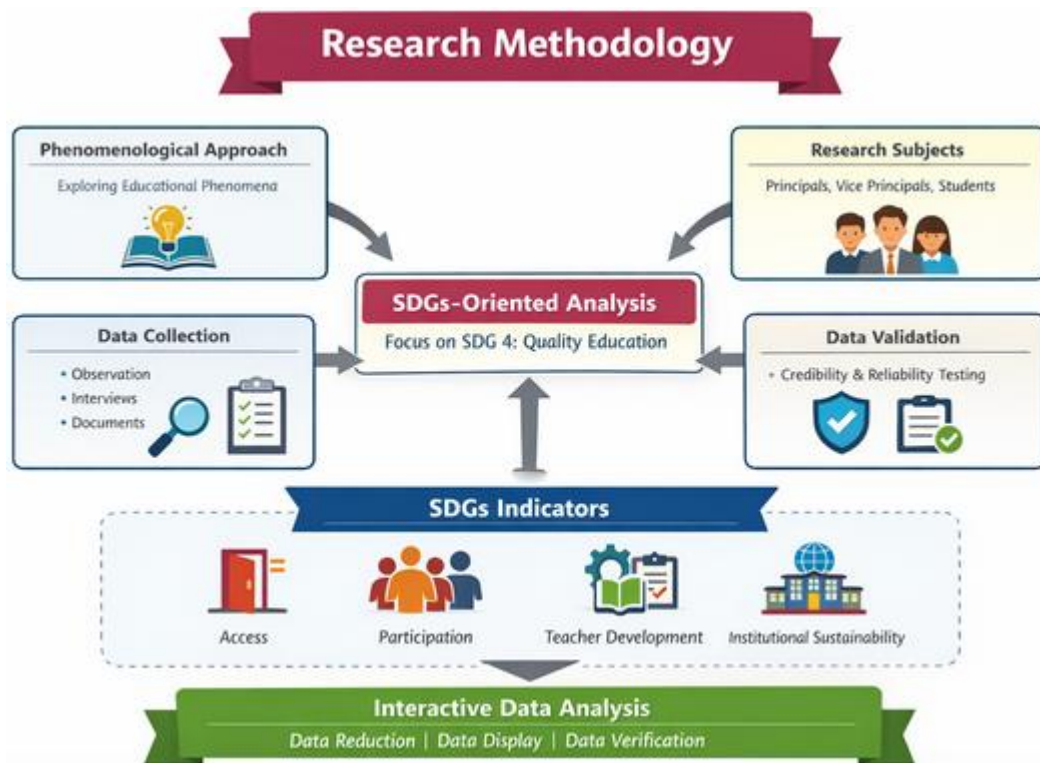


Figure 1. Research Methodology

This approach strengthens the relevance of the study, ensuring that the identified leadership strategies contribute to long-term educational transformation and sustainable school improvement in urban contexts.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

To improve the quality of education in schools, school principals implement various strategies to achieve these goals. Based on the data collected by the researchers, several findings related to the strategies used by the principals of SMP Muhammadiyah PK Kottabarat Surakarta and SMP Muhammadiyah Al-Kautsar PK Sukoharjo were identified. Based on the theory of strategy according to Whetten and Cameron, this research can be illustrated as Figure 1.

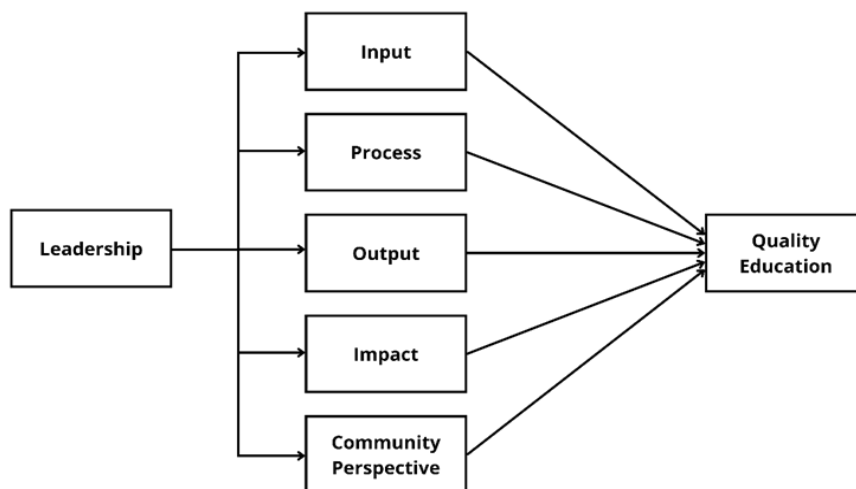


Figure 2. Theoretical Framework

Based on Figure 1, it can be interpreted that Quality Education is the ultimate goal that an education system wants to achieve. This goal does not stand alone, but is the result of a complex and interconnected ecosystem. The achievement of quality education begins with input, which includes resources such as students, teachers, curriculum, and facilities. This input is then processed through a Process that represents learning methods, classroom management, and academic-operational activities in schools. This entire process is driven and directed by Leadership, which acts as a catalyst and navigator.

Effective leadership will ensure that the process runs optimally to produce outputs, i.e., measurable direct results such as academic grades, graduation, and certification. Consistent and quality output will ultimately create a broader and long-term impact in the form of graduates who are competent, characterful, and able to contribute to society. This entire journey from input to impact is inseparable from Community Perspective, which emphasizes that the success of education must be assessed and supported by the surrounding social ecosystem. Thus, quality education is the culmination of the integration of all these components, where leadership becomes the main driver that ensures inputs are processed properly to produce outputs that have a positive impact and are recognized by society.

The strategy implemented by the principal of SMP Muhammadiyah

SMP Muhammadiyah PK Kottabarat Surakarta implements an integrated transformational strategy to improve the quality of education, positioning schools as one of the choices of the community. This strategy is realized through various policies, including school taglines, standardization of students and educators, the reward and punishment system, and approaches to maintain relationships with the surrounding community. The school's tagline, "smart school & transformative learning," serves as a distinctive identity and competitive advantage. In line with Michael Porter's theory of competitive advantage, this tagline is designed to capture the public's attention and reflect the school's commitment to providing a high-quality education [24]. This tagline is applied in all academic and non-academic programs, so that it becomes a strong identity for the school.

Standardization of student admissions is also carried out to ensure the quality of prospective students. There are two admission paths: the regular path through the entrance exam, and the merit-based path without testing for students who have achieved at the sub-district and national levels. This strategy supports improving the quality of education by ensuring that students have strong academic and non-academic abilities. In addition, standardization is also applied to teaching and education staff. Teachers are required to have at least a bachelor's degree (S-1), while educational staff must have at least a high school diploma, with preference given to those with organizational experience. This policy is adopted to ensure that all human resources in the school environment have competencies that support the creation of a high-quality learning process. This initiative is in line with Usman's theory, which emphasizes the importance of the performance of educators and staff in maintaining the quality of education [25].

The principal's leadership plays an important role in realizing the school's vision and mission. The strategies implemented include providing clear explanations to all stakeholders, forming a work team, conducting deliberations to design stages of achieving the vision, and holding weekly evaluations to monitor progress. The principal also gives autonomy to each department to operate independently. The supervisory role of the principal is in line with Mulyasa's theory, which emphasizes the importance of leadership skills in organizing educational programs [26]. To improve discipline and professionalism, the school implements a policy of rewards and punishments for teachers, staff, and students. Teachers and staff who show discipline receive recognition, while those who break the rules are sanctioned.

Students are also monitored through a points-based system. This strategy is in line with Eveline Siregar's theory of the importance of professionalism in education [27].

In terms of motivation, the principal functions as a motivator by instilling a positive mindset in teachers and staff. Religious approaches, such as the belief that work is a form of worship and the continuation of the struggle of early Muhammadiyah figures, became the basis of this motivation. This strategy helps foster a strong work ethic that aims to achieve the highest quality of education. Relationships with the surrounding community are maintained through social activities and community involvement. The school actively participates in community programs such as *jogo tonggo*, social service initiatives, distribution of basic food packages, and the giving of Ramadan gifts. In addition, school facilities are provided for community activities, such as group exercises and meetings. This approach reflects the empathetic character of the school's leadership [28].

The overall strategy shows that SMP Muhammadiyah PK Kottabarat Surakarta has implemented a transformational leadership model in accordance with the theory developed by Whetten and Cameron [29]. The principal can inspire, provide direction, and bring together all elements of the school in a collective effort towards progress. This combination of innovation, discipline, and an empathetic approach has allowed the school to maintain its edge amid educational competition, while also becoming the preferred choice for parents looking for quality education for their children.

The principal can inspire, provide direction, and bring together all elements of the school in a collective effort towards progress. This combination of innovation, discipline, and an empathetic approach has allowed the school to maintain its edge amid educational competition, while also becoming the preferred choice for parents looking for a quality education for their children [30]. This tagline is applied not only to academic programs but also to non-academic activities, which reflects the school's commitment to technological innovation in supporting the learning process.

Even though it does not apply the standard criteria for accepting new students, SMP Muhammadiyah Al-Kautsar PK Sukoharjo provides an opportunity for all applicants to meet the class quota. This policy is based on the geographical location of the school in the suburbs, where competition is fierce. The school believes that through quality learning, students' academic and non-academic competencies can be gradually improved. This inclusive approach is in line with Prasetyo and Ahmadi's theory of education quality strategies, which emphasizes the importance of meeting the needs of students without discrimination [31].

However, strict standards are applied in the selection of teachers and education personnel. The recruitment process involves administrative screening, subject matter tests, and assessment of academic potential to ensure that only qualified and competent individuals are accepted. This policy is in line with a theory that emphasizes the importance of educator performance in maintaining the quality of education. By employing professional and dedicated educators, SMP Muhammadiyah Al-Kautsar PK Sukoharjo ensures the maintenance of a consistent quality of education.

In implementing the school's vision and mission, the principal plays an active role as a supervisor. This process involves collaborative planning with all stakeholders, needs analysis, and integrated program development. The vision and mission are realized through a well-designed program accompanied by a clear division of responsibilities across various sectors. The principal also uses a dialogical approach when dealing with members of the school community who are less active in contributing. This approach includes one-on-one discussions that aim to understand the challenges at hand and offer relevant solutions. Such policies reflect a cooperative

attitude that emphasizes constructive problem-solving, in line with Eveline Siregar's theory of educator professionalism [32].

To maintain the enthusiasm of teachers and educational staff, the principal adopts a motivational approach that combines spiritual and communal aspects. Activities such as routine recitation, joint prayers, motivational messages through the KAKARI (Word of the Day) program, and weekly meetings featuring inspirational stories foster a harmonious work atmosphere. In addition, material awards, such as incentives and recognition during special occasions, are given to high-performing and dedicated educators. This initiative is in line with Wahjosumidjo's theory, which emphasizes the role of school principals as motivators in creating a conducive work environment [33]. On the social side, SMP Muhammadiyah Al-Kautsar PK Sukoharjo maintains good relations with the surrounding community through various social activities, such as the distribution of basic food packages, sacrificial meat, bazaars, and free medical services. The school also actively participates in environmental initiatives, including community fund contributions and providing assistance to sick or bereaved residents. This approach reflects the empathy of the principal, in accordance with Zakki's theory, which highlights the importance of leaders showing genuine concern for the surrounding community.

The overall strategy implemented by the principal reflects the application of a facilitative leadership model, as outlined by Whetten and Cameron. This model emphasizes the ability of principals to facilitate teamwork, manage conflicts, provide constructive feedback, and utilize resources effectively. Such an approach allows schools to address a wide range of challenges, including limited resources, while maintaining a strong focus on improving the quality of education [34]. This facilitative strategy fosters an inclusive, collaborative, and innovative environment, positioning SMP Muhammadiyah Al-Kautsar PK Sukoharjo as a competitive educational institution and still relevant to the demands of the times.

Comparative Leadership Strategies of Two Muhammadiyah Junior High School Principals in Enhancing Educational Quality Outcomes

Table 2. Comparison of the School Principal's Strategy

Strategy Aspects	SMP Muhammadiyah PK Kottabarat Surakarta	SMP Muhammadiyah Al-Kautsar PK Sukoharjo
Input Selection & Standards	Strict Selection: Apply strict input standardization for students (regular track & minimum achievement at the sub-district level).	Open Acceptance: Not applying strict standardization; All applicants are accepted to meet the quota.
	High HR Standards: Teachers at least S1; Minimum high school education staff with organizational experience preferences.	High HR Standards: Recruitment of teachers and staff through administrative screening, material exams, and rigorous academic exams.
Implementation of Vision & Mission	Top-Down Communication: Visions and missions are communicated in a simple way to stakeholders.	Collaborative: Visions and missions are formulated collaboratively with all stakeholders.
	Structured Planning: Forming a team, designing milestones through	Delegation of Authority: Vision and missions are translated into programs, and each division is

	deliberation, and conducting weekly evaluations.	authorized with principal supervision.
Discipline & Motivation System	Reward and Punishment: Implement a clear reward and punishment system for teachers, staff, and students.	Dialogue and Empathy: The main approach is through personal dialogue to find solutions, accompanied by a reward and punishment system.
Innovative Programs	Full Day School: Strengthens students' character as well as academic and non-academic competencies.	Digital Schools: All KBM is carried out digitally with laptops and e-modules, supported by adequate ICT infrastructure.
Human Resources Development (Teachers)	External Development: Encourage teachers to participate in MGMP, training, and workshops outside of school.	Internal Development & Incentives: Offers training/workshops and incentives in the form of further study opportunities for outstanding teachers.
Community Engagement	Active Participation in Social Activities: "Jogo Tonggo", distributing necessities, Ramadan packages, and facilitating community events.	Direct Participation & Services: RT contributions, visits to sick residents, necessities/sacrificial meat, bazaars, and free medical services.
The Basis of the Theory Adopted	Prasetyo & Ahmadi's Theory, Mulyasa, Philip Crosby: Emphasizing the quality of input, leadership as a supervisor, and the achievement of outstanding performance.	Usman's Theory, Eveline Siregar, E. Mulyasa (Innovator): Emphasizing educator performance, professionalism, and the role of school principals as creative innovators.

Table 1, it shows that SMP Muhammadiyah PK Kottabarat Surakarta implements strict input standardization in the admission of new students to maintain the quality of education. Students can be admitted through the regular (test-based) pathway or the merit pathway (non-test-based) for those who have demonstrated at least academic or non-academic achievement at the sub-district level. In addition to students, standardization is also applied to teachers and education staff. Teachers are required to have at least a bachelor's degree (S1), while educational staff must be at least high school graduates, with preference given to those with organizational experience. This standard is in line with Prasetyo and Ahmadi's theories, which emphasize the importance of student and teacher quality as a key component in education quality strategies. On the other hand, SMP Muhammadiyah Al-Kautsar PK Sukoharjo does not apply this standardization in the process of admitting students.

All applicants are accepted to meet the registration quota, given the school's location in the suburbs and competition from neighboring schools. The school focuses on improving student competencies through learning programs, including the implementation of the concept of a digital school. Although there are no strict admission standards for students, strict standards are applied in the recruitment of teachers and educational staff, which involve administrative screening, subject matter testing, and academic exams. This approach shows the school's commitment to

maintaining the quality of its educators, in line with Usman's theory of the important role of educator performance in improving the quality of education [35].

Each school has its own strategy to implement its vision and mission to improve the quality of education [36]. SMP Muhammadiyah PK Kottabarat communicates its vision and mission to all stakeholders in a simple way, forms teamwork, designs stages of achievement through deliberation, and conducts weekly evaluations. The principal also implements a system of rewards and punishments for teachers, staff, and students to maintain discipline and motivation at work. This strategy is in line with Mulyasa's theory, which describes the principal as a supervisor who is responsible for effectively managing and leading all aspects of education [37]. SMP Muhammadiyah Al-Kautsar PK Sukoharjo formulates its vision and mission collaboratively with all stakeholders, conducts needs analysis, and translates the vision and mission into school programs. Each division is authorized to carry out its duties under the supervision of the principal.

The principal's approach to addressing offenses involves a personal dialogue aimed at finding solutions and showing empathy for individual problems. While the reward and punishment system is also applied to students and teachers, the emphasis remains on a dialogical approach. This strategy is in line with the importance of professionalism among educators and education staff [38]. In an effort to improve the quality of education, SMP Muhammadiyah PK Kottabarat Surakarta has implemented a full-day school program to strengthen students' character values and improve academic and non-academic competence. The program provides a longer time for teachers to guide students more comprehensively, resulting in significant achievements. This achievement reflects the concept of Outstanding Performance from Philip Crosby's theory, which refers to results that exceed standards and expectations [39].

On the other hand, SMP Muhammadiyah Al-Kautsar PK Sukoharjo applies the concept of a digital school to support modern learning. All teaching and learning activities are carried out digitally using laptops and e-modules. Facilities such as Wi-Fi, CCTV, LCD projectors, and sound systems in each classroom contribute to the success of this concept. This strategy reflects E. Mulyasa's theory of school principals as creative innovators in applying interactive and effective learning methods to improve the professionalism of teachers and education staff. In addition to programs for students, both schools also focus on teacher and education staff development. SMP Muhammadiyah PK Kottabarat encourages its teachers to participate in subject teacher forums (MGMP), training, and workshosp. Meanwhile, SMP Muhammadiyah Al-Kautsar offers development programs such as training and workshops, as well as providing prizes in the form of further study opportunities for long-serving teachers. This initiative aims to improve the skills and professionalism of educators, in line with Eveline Siregar's theory of education quality strategies through improving the quality of human resources [40].

The community involvement efforts of the two schools also show their concern for the surrounding community as part of the strategy to maintain positive relationships. SMP Muhammadiyah PK Kottabarat Surakarta actively participates in various social activities, such as the jogo tonggo program, the distribution of monthly necessities, the giving of Ramadan gift packages, and the facilitation of community events in the school environment. This strategy reflects the principal's empathy, in line with Zakki's theory of the importance of sincere and solution-oriented interaction in leadership. Meanwhile, SMP Muhammadiyah Al-Kautsar PK Sukoharjo contributed through active participation in community-based activities, such as RT contributions, visits to sick residents, and distribution of necessities or sacrificial meat during religious holidays. Other programs, including bazaars and free medical services, are also

organized for the local community. These strategies reflect the values of empathy and positive interaction between the school and the surrounding community [41].

SMP Muhammadiyah PK Kottabarat Surakarta and SMP Muhammadiyah Al-Kautsar PK Sukoharjo use different but complementary approaches to improve the quality of education. SMP Muhammadiyah PK Kottabarat Surakarta emphasizes standardization and character formation through a full-day school system, while SMP Muhammadiyah Al-Kautsar PK Sukoharjo utilizes technology within the framework of a digital school. Both institutions focus on human resource development through training and recognition programs, as well as maintaining strong public relations to ensure the sustainability of the quality of education. These strategies illustrate how both schools apply relevant educational theories to create a high-quality, competitive learning environment [42].

Fundamentally, the basic philosophy embraced by the two schools shows a significant difference, where SMP Muhammadiyah PK Kottabarat Surakarta implements a transformative approach through a full day school program designed to shape the character and competencies of students intensively and comprehensively, while SMP Muhammadiyah Al-Kautsar PK Sukoharjo is more inclined towards a facilitative approach by providing infrastructure and a digital environment that allows learning to take place positively. more independent. This difference in philosophy then influenced the input selection strategy, where Kottabarat implemented a quality filter system with strict student selection to ensure the quality of input, while Al-Kautsar chose a more open admission policy that focused on quality transformation in the process.

In terms of governance, the implementation of the vision and mission in Kottabarat is carried out with a structured approach and top-down communication, in contrast to the Al-Kautsar model, which prioritizes collaborative formulation and delegation of authority to each division. Differences are also seen in the motivation and discipline systems; Kottabarat enforces a clear reward and punishment system, while Al-Kautsar prioritizes a dialogical and empathetic approach to solving problems. Finally, in the professional development of teachers, Kottabarat relies more on external development, such as MGMP and training, while Al-Kautsar offers internal development programs equipped with advanced study incentives, which further emphasize their facilitative character.

Comparative Impact of Principal Strategies on Educational Quality Improvement in Urban Muhammadiyah Junior High Schools

The strategy implemented by the principal of SMP Muhammadiyah PK Kottabarat Surakarta has had a significant impact on the progress of the school. As explained by the school principal, the increasing public interest in SMP Muhammadiyah PK Kottabarat Surakarta is evidenced by the increasing number of registrants. In addition, the school has been recognized as an outstanding institution nationally and was awarded the SBBI Award for the 2023/2024 academic year as the best brand in the Greater Solo area. Another important impact was the increase in school admissions by Solo residents, which is proof that the existence of SMP Muhammadiyah PK Kottabarat Surakarta is recognized in the city of Solo, despite its status as an institution affiliated with Muhammadiyah.

In addition, the welfare of teachers has improved, as the absence of students in private schools will damage their well-being. The positive impact currently experienced by SMP Muhammadiyah PK Kottabarat Surakarta is the result of the strategic efforts of the principal and the support of various stakeholders. These results are in line with Sallis' theoretical framework of the benefits of quality education strategies, which include satisfying students and their parents as school clients,

achieving preferred school status, and improving the overall image of the school in a positive direction [43].

Meanwhile, the strategy implemented by the principal has had a positive impact on the development of SMP Muhammadiyah Al-Kautsar PK Sukoharjo. As explained by the principal, student interest has increased, the number of prospective students during the new student admission period (PPDB) has increased, the goals of the program formulated collaboratively have been achieved, there has been a positive response from human resources to the programs organized by the school, awards have been given to teachers and education personnel who meet the criteria, school achievement in both academic and non-academic fields has increased, and school facilities and infrastructure have developed significantly.

The impact resulting from the strategy implemented by the principal of SMP Muhammadiyah Al-Kautsar PK Sukoharjo in an effort to improve the quality of education is in line with Sallis' theoretical framework on the benefits of education quality strategy. These impacts include increased satisfaction among students and their parents as school clients, the formation of healthy competition, increased professionalism among teaching and administrative staff, the achievement of preferred school status, opportunities to succeed in a competitive environment, and an overall improvement in the school's public image in a positive direction.

The principal's leadership strategy, which is oriented to the transformational and facilitative model, has a strong relevance to the leadership principles in the Qur'an [44]. Transformational leadership that emphasizes example, inspiration, and motivation is reflected in QS. Al-Ahzab verse 21:

لَقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِي رَسُولِ اللَّهِ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ لِّمَن كَانَ يَرْجُوا اللَّهَ وَالْيَوْمَ الْآخِرَ وَذَكَرَ اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا

Means: "Indeed, in the Messenger of Allah there is indeed a good example for you, for those who hope for Allah and the Day of Resurrection and who remember Allah much."

Based on the above verse, it shows that educational leaders should ideally not only direct, but also set a real example in attitude, behavior, and moral integrity [45]. Meanwhile, facilitative leadership that emphasizes involvement, empowerment, and deliberation is in line with the principles of shura in QS. Ash-Shura verse 38:

وَالَّذِينَ اسْتَجَابُوا لِرَبِّهِمْ وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَأَمْرُهُمْ شُورَىٰ بَيْنَهُمْ وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنْفِقُونَ

Means: "(It is also better and more eternal for) those who accept (obey) the call of God and perform prayers, while their affairs are (decided) by deliberation among them. They give away part of the sustenance that We bestow upon them." Thus, a principal's leadership strategy that integrates transformational and facilitative aspects not only supports the achievement of educational goals but also is in accordance with Qur'anic values that emphasize collaboration, participation, and exemplary leadership in the leadership process.

Analysis

This study highlights that school principal leadership strategies significantly contribute to improving educational quality within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 4 on Quality Education. The transformational leadership model implemented at SMP Muhammadiyah PK Kottabarat Surakarta demonstrates a structured and results-oriented approach, emphasizing strict standards, discipline, and continuous evaluation. This approach supports SDGs by promoting effective learning environments, improving teacher performance, and ensuring measurable educational outcomes.

In contrast, the facilitative leadership model at SMP Muhammadiyah Al-Kautsar PK Sukoharjo emphasizes inclusivity, collaboration, and adaptability. By adopting digital school innovations and open student admission policies, this model aligns with SDGs principles of equitable access, participation, and lifelong learning opportunities. Both strategies reflect different but complementary pathways toward achieving sustainable education. Furthermore, the integration of Islamic values within leadership practices strengthens moral responsibility, social engagement, and community involvement, which are essential for holistic development. Overall, aligning leadership strategies with SDGs enhances not only institutional effectiveness but also long-term sustainability, inclusiveness, and resilience of urban Islamic education systems.

CONCLUSION

The principal of SMP Muhammadiyah PK Kottabarat Surakarta uses a transformational leadership model, while SMP Muhammadiyah Al-Kautsar PK Sukoharjo adopts a facilitative strategy. While there are similarities between the two, they differ in certain policy aspects, such as student admission standards and teacher discipline management. The strategies implemented by the principal of SMP Kottabarat have produced significant results, including increased public interest, national-level school achievement awards, SBBI Award recipients, and improved teacher welfare, which directly support the achievement of SDGs, particularly in ensuring quality education. Meanwhile, the strategy at SMP Al-Kautsar has resulted in an increase in the number of student admissions during PPDB (new student registration), successful school programs, positive responses from human resources, awards, increased academic and non-academic achievements, and improvements in infrastructure and facilities, aligning with the broader goals of SDGs in education development. Based on the above conclusions, the author offers several recommendations: a) School principals should provide more intensive supervision and guidance to teachers and education personnel to ensure that education quality improvement strategies can be achieved optimally in line with SDGs targets; b) Teachers and education staff are encouraged to consistently participate in training sessions and workshops organized by schools or other institutions to acquire knowledge that can be applied during the learning process in schools, thereby improving the quality of education; c) Future researchers are expected to further explore and develop studies related to education quality improvement strategies, to expand and refine previous research efforts.

Acknowledgments

The author would like to express sincere gratitude to the Research and Innovation Institute (LRI) of Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta (UMS) for the financial support provided for the implementation of this research through Assignment Letter Number: 418.36/A.3-III/LRI/XII/2024. This funding played a crucial role in facilitating the smooth progression of the research process, from the planning stage to the preparation of the final report. The support from LRI UMS reflects the institution's commitment to advancing scientific knowledge and innovation within the academic community and serves as a motivation for researchers to continue producing scholarly work and contributing to their respective fields.

Author Contribution

All authors contribute equally to the paper, with roles as chair, member, translator of the article, and final editor. All authors have read and approved the final manuscript.

Conflicts of Interest

All authors do not have any conflicts of interest related to this article.

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