

Implementation of Servant Leadership in the Context of Islamic Boarding School-Based Excellence and International Curriculum

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the implementation of servant leadership in an outstanding Islamic boarding school (pesantren)-based institution that adopts an international curriculum. The research was conducted at SMA Darul Ulum 2 Unggulan BPPT Jombang, a Cambridge International School. Using a qualitative case study approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and document analysis. A surprising finding of this study is the school's success in consistently internalizing servant leadership principles—such as empathy, mentoring, and empowerment—within a globally standardized educational environment. The study contributes a new perspective by demonstrating how Islamic values can be integrated with international education demands, while also confirming previous research on the effectiveness of servant leadership in enhancing teacher well-being and student motivation. Adaptation strategies identified include teacher training, communication forums among students, teachers, and parents, flexible scheduling, and tiered evaluation systems. Despite its success, this study is limited in scope, focusing on a single case and lacking variation in educational levels and locations. Future research involving more diverse settings and a mixed-method approach is needed to provide a more comprehensive understanding and to inform effective policy development for value-based Islamic education in the era of globalization.

Kata kunci:
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Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis implementasi servant leadership pada sebuah institusi pendidikan unggulan berbasis pesantren yang mengadopsi kurikulum internasional. Penelitian ini dilakukan di SMA Darul Ulum 2 Unggulan BPPT Jombang, sebuah sekolah berstandar Cambridge International. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan studi kasus kualitatif, data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi partisipatif, dan analisis dokumen. Temuan yang mengejutkan dari penelitian ini adalah keberhasilan sekolah dalam menginternalisasi prinsip-prinsip servant leadership—seperti empati, pendampingan, dan pemberdayaan—secara konsisten dalam lingkungan pendidikan yang berstandar global. Penelitian ini memberikan perspektif baru dengan menunjukkan bagaimana nilai-nilai Islam dapat diintegrasikan dengan tuntutan pendidikan internasional, sekaligus mengonfirmasi penelitian-penelitian sebelumnya tentang efektivitas servant leadership dalam meningkatkan kesejahteraan guru dan motivasi belajar siswa. Strategi adaptasi yang diidentifikasi meliputi pelatihan guru, forum komunikasi antara siswa, guru, dan orang tua, penjadwalan yang fleksibel, serta sistem evaluasi berjenjang. Meskipun berhasil, penelitian ini memiliki keterbatasan pada ruang lingkupnya, karena hanya berfokus pada satu studi kasus dan belum mencakup variasi jenjang maupun lokasi pendidikan. Oleh karena itu, penelitian lanjutan dengan konteks yang lebih beragam dan pendekatan mixed-method diperlukan untuk memperoleh pemahaman yang lebih komprehensif dan untuk merumuskan kebijakan yang efektif dalam pendidikan Islam berbasis nilai di era globalisasi..

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INTRODUCTION

In the era of globalization and the Fourth Industrial Revolution, education faces the challenge of producing graduates who are not only academically competent but also possess strong character. Traditional leadership models that rely on authority and hierarchy are increasingly considered ineffective in shaping inclusive and collaborative learning environments. As an alternative, the servant leadership approach has emerged, emphasizing service, empathy, and the empowerment of individuals. Studies show that servant leadership can enhance teacher job satisfaction and student engagement in the learning process (Kainde & Mandagi, 2023). However, the implementation of this model within Islamic education institutions—especially those pesantren-based schools adopting international curricula—still requires deeper exploration (Muhammad & Sari, 2021; Purwaningtyas et al., 2023).

Servant leadership is highly relevant in the context of Islamic education as it aligns with Islamic values such as sincerity (*ikhlas*), trustworthiness (*amanah*), and social responsibility. This leadership model is capable of fostering a learning environment that supports students' spiritual and moral development. Furthermore, servant leadership can strengthen teacher-student relationships and encourage active participation in school activities. However, adapting this model within pesantren-based schools that implement international curricula necessitates a profound understanding of local cultural dynamics and values (Monigir et al., 2024). Previous research has also indicated that the success of servant leadership is strongly influenced by school organizational context and culture (Mubarak et al., 2023; Nikmah, 2024).

Boarding schools that integrate international standards, such as the Cambridge International Curriculum, face significant challenges in reconciling local values with global expectations. Effective leadership is essential to bridge these paradigms and create synergy between Islamic teachings and global competencies. In this regard, servant leadership provides a promising alternative by focusing on service and the empowerment of the school community. Nevertheless, empirical research on the application of servant leadership within such a context remains limited. This study aims to fill this gap by analyzing how servant leadership is implemented at SMA Darul Ulum 2 Unggulan BPPT Jombang, a Cambridge International School (Aboramadan et al., 2020; Mahidi et al., 2023; Zakiyyah et al., 2024).

In addition, this study seeks to identify adaptation strategies employed by the school to internalize servant leadership values alongside the international curriculum. This is essential to ensure that the leadership practices are not merely symbolic but are embedded in the daily practices of the educational process. The

research also explores how servant leadership can increase the global competitiveness of graduates (Thai' Atun et al., 2024).

The identified research gap lies in the lack of empirical studies concerning the implementation of servant leadership in pesantren-based schools that adopt international curricula. Most existing studies focus on general education settings or faith-based schools without adequately addressing the complexities involved in integrating local religious values with global standards. Furthermore, studies examining the relationship between servant leadership and graduate competitiveness in the globalization era remain scarce. This study aims to fill that gap by providing empirical data and a contextual analysis of leadership practices in this unique educational setting. Accordingly, the study contributes a novel perspective on servant leadership in Islamic schools operating within global educational frameworks.

Ultimately, this study is expected to contribute significantly to the development of educational leadership theory and practice, particularly in pesantren-based schools with international curricula. The findings may serve as a foundation for designing leadership development programs tailored to the needs of Islamic education. In addition, the study's implications are expected to inform policymakers in formulating strategies for Islamic education that integrate local religious values while being responsive to global demands. Therefore, this research offers not only academic insights but also practical relevance for enhancing educational quality and alumni competitiveness in the era of globalization.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a qualitative approach with a case study design to deeply explore how the values of servant leadership are applied within the context of an outstanding pesantren-based school that adopts an international curriculum (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The case study method was chosen because it provides a comprehensive understanding of the complexity of leadership practices at SMA Darul Ulum 2 Unggulan BPPT Jombang Cambridge International School. The research subjects consisted of the principal, vice principals, teachers, and students, selected using purposive sampling based on the criterion of having direct experience with the implementation of servant leadership values (Miles et al., 2019).

Data were collected using three primary methods: in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. Interviews were conducted with the principal, teachers, and students, guided by an interview protocol developed based on servant leadership indicators relevant to the educational context (Yin,

2018). Participant observation focused on daily school activities, teaching and learning processes, and teacher–student interactions that reflected servant leadership values. Meanwhile, document analysis involved reviewing school policies, syllabi, performance reports, and meeting minutes (Bowen, 2009). The researcher served as the main instrument, supported by interview guidelines, observation sheets, and document checklists to ensure the validity of data collection (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Data validity was enhanced through methodological triangulation, source triangulation, and member checking.

The data were analyzed using a thematic analysis approach, including the steps of data transcription, open coding, theme categorization, and interpretation. The NVivo software was utilized to improve the accuracy and consistency of the analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2019). Ethical considerations were maintained by obtaining official approval from the school and the research ethics committee, providing complete information to the participants, and securing informed consent, along with ensuring the confidentiality of data. Data trustworthiness was reinforced through triangulation of methods and sources, member checking, and auditing by qualitative research experts to assess the consistency of the findings (Donkoh & Mensah, 2023).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Servant Leadership Practice at SMA Darul Ulum 2

The results of the study showed that the principal and teachers at SMA Darul Ulum 2 applied the principles of servant leadership in their daily lives. The value of empathy, care, mentoring, and support for the development of students' potential can be seen in the interaction between leaders and school residents. Teachers are not only teachers, but also spiritual and emotional guides. Collegial leadership is also seen in participatory decision-making. Students admitted that they felt valued and motivated to contribute to various school activities.

Table 1: Servant Leadership Practice at SMA Darul Ulum 2

| Servant Leadership Dimension | Implementation in Schools |
|------------------------------|--|
| Empathy | Teachers accompany students personally and emotionally |
| Listening | The principal held a forum on student aspirations |
| Commitment to Growth | Regular teacher training and development |
| Stewardship | Leaders act as servants and movers |
| Building Community | Moral development and teamwork activities |

A Combination of Islamic Values and Internationalization of Education

The school successfully blends distinctive Islamic values with the demands of the international curriculum (Cambridge). Science and math learning is carried out in English, but is accompanied by the integration of spiritual values. Tadarus activities, congregational prayers, and moral development are carried out regularly. This combination creates harmony between global academic achievement and the strengthening of Islamic character. This is a strength in itself in answering the challenges of modern value-based education.

Table 2: Integration of Islamic Values and International Curriculum

| Educational Aspects | Islamic Values | Internationalisation |
|---------------------------------|--|---|
| Curriculum | Manners in learning Arabic for the Qur'an and Hadith | Cambridge curriculum |
| Language | | English in science & math Student conference with global peers |
| Habituation Character education | Dhuha Prayer & Jamaah Honesty, Responsibility. | Leadership training & public speaking |
| Evaluation | Moral report card value | Assessment Cambridge |

Implementation Challenges

Although the practice of servant leadership and value integration is going well, some challenges are still encountered. The main challenge stems from the paradigm difference between the values-based pesantren curriculum and the competitive Cambridge approach. Some new teachers also have difficulty implementing a service-based leadership approach due to different training backgrounds. In addition, the busy time makes some students less optimal to participate in non-academic coaching. Grade adaptation also faces initial resistance from some parents who are more familiar with the conventional education system.

Table 3: Challenges of Implementing Servant Leadership and Curriculum Integration

| Challenge Type | Main Causes | Impact | Handling Efforts |
|----------------------------|------------------------------------|---|-----------------------------|
| Value vs academic paradigm | Local vs Cambridge value system | Difficulty synchronizing learning methods | Curriculum discussion forum |
| Teacher competence | Background training is not uniform | Uneven implementation of grades | Regular workshops |

| | | | |
|-----------------------|--|---|---|
| Time limitations | Academically hectic schedule | Students are tired and lack of social participation | Rescheduling of non-academic activities |
| Students' Perceptions | Expectations on instant academic results | Distrust in the construction model | Intensive communication and seminars |

Adaptation Strategy

To overcome these challenges, schools implement several adaptive strategies that are collaborative. One of them is to organize internal training and mentoring for new teachers regarding the concept of servant leadership. Schools also form a dialogue forum between students, teachers, and parents as a means of communication and mutual understanding. The schedule of academic and non-academic activities was rearranged to be more proportional. All of these adaptation policies involve all parties democratically and transparently.

Table 4: Adaptation Strategy for Servant Leadership Implementation

| Adaptation Strategy | Goal | Form of Activity | Expected Results |
|--|------------------------------|--|---|
| Servant Leadership | New and old teachers | Workshop, mentoring, best practice | Understanding and application evenly |
| Teacher Training | The entire school | Aspiration, deliberation forum | Mutual understanding and mutual support |
| Student-teacher-parent communication forum | community | | |
| Scheduling revisions | Students and time management | Academic and spiritual balance | Balance of student development |
| Tiered evaluation | School management | Monthly reflection & policy evaluation | Continuous improvement |

Discussion

Servant Leadership Practice at SMA Darul Ulum 2

Table 1 illustrates that the core dimensions of servant leadership – such as empathy, active listening, commitment to individual growth, leadership as service, and community building – have been consistently implemented at SMA Darul Ulum 2. These principles are reflected in various school activities, ranging from student mentoring to teacher training programs.

The implementation of servant leadership at SMA Darul Ulum 2 reflects a leadership approach centered on service and individual development. The principal and teachers act as servants who support the holistic growth of students. This approach aligns with the fundamental concept of servant leadership, which emphasizes that a leader must serve first before leading others (Eva et al., 2019). Supporting this, Ali and colleagues demonstrated that servant leadership improves organizational performance by enhancing members' satisfaction and engagement. In the educational context, this approach contributes to building a more inclusive and supportive learning environment (Ali et al., 2023).

The dimensions of empathy and listening skills demonstrated by the leaders at SMA Darul Ulum 2 allow students to feel respected and heard. This is essential in strengthening teacher-student relationships, which in turn fosters student motivation. Gultekin and Kara emphasize that empathy in leadership increases organizational trust and commitment, while effective listening helps leaders understand students' needs and aspirations more deeply (Gultekin & Kara, 2022). Therefore, this approach helps create a more responsive and adaptive learning environment.

Commitment to individual growth is evident in the school's efforts to provide ongoing professional development for teachers. This reflects one of the servant leadership dimensions that emphasizes the development of organizational members. According to Subhaktiyasa et al., servant leadership fosters career advancement and increases job satisfaction among employees (Subhaktiyasa et al., 2023). In the educational context, this means teachers feel supported in their professional development, which ultimately improves the quality of teaching and contributes to the overall enhancement of education.

Leadership as service is demonstrated by the principal and teachers prioritizing students' needs over personal interests. This aligns with the servant leadership principle that leaders must serve their organization members. Research by Thai' Atun et al. found that servant leadership positively influences the well-being and performance of organizational members (Thai' Atun et al., 2024). At SMA Darul Ulum 2, this leadership approach fosters a school culture grounded in service and collaboration, which strengthens students' sense of belonging and engagement in school activities.

Community building, as a key dimension of servant leadership, is evident in the school's efforts to create an inclusive and supportive learning environment. Programs such as character development and team-building activities foster solidarity among students. Suyanto and colleagues assert that community building is a critical aspect of servant leadership, enhancing cohesion and

collaboration within an organization (Suyanto et al., 2024). In the educational setting, this translates into a learning atmosphere that supports students' social and emotional growth, thereby improving their well-being and academic achievement.

The implementation of servant leadership at SMA Darul Ulum 2 also reflects core Islamic values such as sincerity (*ikhlas*), patience (*sabr*), and compassion (*rahmah*) toward others. This demonstrates that servant leadership can be integrated with both local and religious values. Ricky (2025) argues that servant leadership is highly compatible with spiritual and religious values, making it particularly relevant in Islamic educational contexts (Ricky, 2025).

Therefore, this leadership model helps strengthen students' religious identity and values while remaining effective in achieving educational goals. In summary, the practice of servant leadership at SMA Darul Ulum 2 indicates that this approach can improve the quality of education through service, individual development, and community building. The integration of Islamic values into leadership practices demonstrates the flexibility and local relevance of the servant leadership model. Moreover, servant leadership can enhance organizational performance by increasing member engagement and satisfaction. Thus, the successful implementation of servant leadership at SMA Darul Ulum 2 serves as a model for other schools seeking to improve educational quality through value-oriented leadership. It also fosters an inclusive, supportive, and value-driven learning environment.

A Combination of Islamic Values and Internationalization of Education

Table 2 shows that SMA Darul Ulum 2 has successfully integrated Islamic values with international education standards. This is reflected in a curriculum that combines Islamic religious education with international-standard programs, such as the Cambridge International Curriculum. This integration fosters a holistic learning environment, simultaneously nurturing both the spiritual and intellectual development of students. The approach underscores the significance of incorporating Islamic values into educational leadership practices in order to build a superior and competitive academic culture. As a result, SMA Darul Ulum 2 has developed an educational model that bridges local religious values with global educational demands.

The integration of Islamic values into international education at SMA Darul Ulum 2 reflects a holistic approach to student development. The school's curriculum targets not only academic success but also character formation and spiritual growth. Research by Shofiyyah et al. highlights that leadership which integrates Islamic values helps create an ethical and competitive learning

environment. Similarly, Purwaningtyas et al. emphasize that Islamic value-based leadership can enhance teacher performance and improve the overall quality of educational institutions (Purwaningtyas et al., 2023; Shofiyyah et al., 2023). Therefore, this approach produces graduates who are not only intellectually capable but also morally grounded.

The implementation of an international curriculum tailored to Islamic values enables students to compete globally without losing their Islamic identity. In a globalized world, it is crucial for students to develop global competence while preserving their cultural and religious roots. Zakiyyah et al. argue that Islamic educational leadership in a multicultural context contributes to shaping inclusive and resilient student character. Muhammad and Sari further demonstrate that synergy between transformational leadership and servant leadership in pesantren-based education results in an adaptive and responsive leadership model (Muhammad & Sari, 2021; Zakiyyah et al., 2024). Thus, such integration prepares students to face global challenges while remaining deeply rooted in Islamic values.

The development of a curriculum that integrates Islamic values with international standards demands visionary and adaptive leadership. School principals and teachers must possess broad insight and a deep understanding of both domains to effectively harmonize the two. Arifandi et al. state that servant leadership practices in Islamic education can enhance teacher well-being and school performance. Additionally, Ramadhan et al. stress the importance of servant leadership principles in fostering productive classroom culture within Islamic institutions (Arifandi et al., 2024 and Ramadhan et al., 2024). Therefore, value-based and service-oriented leadership supports the success of curriculum integration.

This integration also positively impacts character development in students. Learners are encouraged to embrace universal values such as honesty, responsibility, and tolerance—values that align closely with Islamic teachings. Sailin et al. found that combining situational leadership with traditional values can improve student discipline and character in pesantren settings. In the same vein, Jamaluddin and Manda argue that strengthening school culture through a combination of local wisdom, religious ethics, and universal values creates a positive and inclusive educational environment (Jamaluddin & Manda, 2023; Sailin et al., 2024). This approach contributes to shaping student identities that are resilient, ethical, and ready to face the demands of contemporary life.

The implementation of Islamic-global curriculum integration also necessitates capacity building for teachers through training and continuous professional development. Educators must be equipped to deliver international

curricula without neglecting Islamic principles. Lutfia et al. point out that effective leadership in dynamic educational contexts requires traits such as wisdom, humility, and a service mindset. Arifandi et al. further emphasize that servant leadership development is key to improving the quality of Islamic education in Indonesia (Arifandi et al., 2024; Lutfia et al., 2021). Therefore, teacher training that emphasizes the intersection of Islamic values and global education is essential.

Furthermore, this integration strengthens the relationship between the school and the broader community. SMA Darul Ulum 2 acts as a center of learning that not only prioritizes academic excellence but also nurtures the social and spiritual values of its students. Walid et al. assert that Islamic educational leadership in multicultural settings can create inclusive environments that support holistic student development. Likewise, Aisyah argues that the collaboration between transformational leadership and servant leadership fosters adaptive and value-oriented leadership within Islamic educational settings (Aisyah, 2024; Walid et al., 2024). This integration, therefore, reinforces the school's role as a driver of moral and social transformation in the community.

In conclusion, the integration of Islamic values and international education at SMA Darul Ulum 2 has resulted in a holistic and adaptive educational model. This approach not only enhances students' academic performance but also builds their character and spiritual resilience. Educational leadership grounded in Islamic values fosters an ethical and competitive learning atmosphere. It also promotes teacher development and institutional excellence. As such, SMA Darul Ulum 2 stands as a compelling model for harmoniously blending local religious values with global educational standards.

Implementation Challenges

Table 3 reveals the various challenges faced by SMA Darul Ulum 2 in implementing the servant leadership model and integrating Islamic values with the international curriculum. These challenges include cultural resistance to change, limited teacher competence in utilizing technology, insufficient professional training, and tensions between local values and global standards. These findings highlight the complexity of combining values-based leadership with the demands of international education. Salleh emphasized the need for innovative approaches in curriculum development and teacher training to address the challenges of globalization in Islamic education (Salleh, 2018). Therefore, a deep understanding of these challenges is essential to designing effective implementation strategies.

One of the main challenges is cultural resistance to change. Leadership models based on service and humility often conflict with traditional hierarchical structures deeply embedded in Islamic educational institutions. Habibi et al. revealed that the modernization of Islamic education curricula faces significant cultural barriers, particularly in reconciling traditional values with technological innovation. Rajesha et al. added that the lack of institutional support and weak stakeholder collaboration further hinder the adoption of inclusive and adaptive leadership approaches (Habibi et al., 2024; Rajesha et al., 2024). Thus, open and sustained communication strategies are needed to reduce resistance and foster collective understanding.

Another critical challenge is the limited digital competence among teachers. Many educators are not yet proficient in the use of technology required to support technology-integrated learning. Suhid et al. stated that Islamic education teachers face persistent obstacles in adopting digital teaching strategies. This gap is exacerbated by the lack of continuous professional training and support (Suhid et al., 2021). Therefore, investment in digital literacy training and teacher capacity development has become a pressing priority.

The dilemma between preserving local religious identity and fulfilling global educational standards also arises in integrating Islamic values into international curricula. Shalihin emphasized the tensions that occur when integrating Islamic values into vocational education, where educators struggle to balance religious foundations with global competencies. Hajar stressed the need for contextual curriculum reform to maintain the relevance of Islamic education in the global era (Hajar, 2024; Shalihin, 2024). A flexible and culturally responsive curriculum, built through dialogue among stakeholders, is essential in resolving this tension.

Another significant obstacle is the lack of consistent curriculum standards. Nurhayati et al. and Shalihin identified the absence of standardized curricula as a key barrier in developing globally responsive Islamic education. Wahyuni et al. added that the misalignment between existing curricula and global labor market needs further complicates integration efforts (Nurhayati et al., 2024; Shalihin, 2023; Wahyuni et al., 2024). Therefore, collaborative efforts between the government, educational institutions, and the private sector are needed to design standardized curricula that bridge local values and global competencies.

Infrastructure and resource limitations also hinder the integration process. Restalia and Khasanah reported that limited access to technology and learning facilities restricts curriculum modernization efforts. Efendi et al. pointed out the disparity between urban and rural educational institutions, which further widens the quality gap (Efendi et al., 2024; Restalia & Khasanah, 2025). Equitable

investment in infrastructure and resource distribution must be prioritized, with strategic partnerships with the private sector and donor agencies serving as viable solutions.

A lack of continuous professional development also remains a substantial barrier. AbdulRab emphasized the need for ongoing, sustainable teacher training to prepare educators for the challenges of modern Islamic education. Mardhiah et al. supported this by demonstrating that structured, contextualized training is essential to support the transformation process in Islamic education (AbdulRab, 2023; Mardhiah et al., 2023). Therefore, collaborative training programs between universities and schools should be designed based on actual and evolving teacher needs.

Finally, limited community involvement undermines efforts to integrate Islamic values with global curricula. Munir and Aini, as well as Rusini et al., emphasized that community participation in education reform is crucial to ensuring the sustainability and relevance of Islamic education programs (Munir & Aini, 2021; Rusini et al., 2024). Active involvement of parents and local communities can increase support for value-based curriculum implementation. Therefore, building strong school–community partnerships is a key strategy for strengthening contextual and inclusive education.

Adaptation Strategy

Table 4 identifies four main adaptation strategies in the implementation of servant leadership in Islamic educational institutions: (1) servant leadership training for teachers, (2) communication forums between students, teachers, and parents, (3) scheduling revisions, and (4) tiered evaluations. These strategies aim to enhance the effectiveness of service-oriented leadership within Islamic educational contexts and to establish a learning environment that is inclusive, adaptive, and responsive to both student and societal needs.

Servant Leadership Training for Teachers

Servant leadership training for teachers serves as a strategic initiative to instill service-based leadership values in Islamic educational practices. Within pesantren environments, this training has proven effective in internalizing the "trilogy and five student awarenesses"—religious devotion, knowledge acquisition, and charitable action. Beyond improving professional competencies, such training also nurtures teachers' spiritual and social character. Rizal underscores that servant leadership contributes not only to teacher welfare but also to the overall performance of educational institutions (Rizal, 2019).

Furthermore, this leadership model enhances school climate and student academic outcomes. Teachers are encouraged to be more empathetic, collaborative, and responsive to students' individual needs. According to Saleha and Hina, servant leadership significantly improves teacher well-being, institutional engagement, and student learning experiences (Saleha & Hina, 2023). Kosasih et al. further note that integrating digital literacy and psychological support into training programs can mediate professional development effectively, provided the training remains contextual and sustainable (Kosasih et al., 2024).

Student-Teacher-Parent Communication Forum

Structured communication forums involving students, teachers, and parents are essential in building inclusive and collaborative school systems. These forums have been shown to improve student academic performance, particularly when supported by transparent and effective digital platforms (Rachman et al., 2024).

Beyond academic matters, communication forums also support students' emotional well-being. Pennington et al. explain that parent engagement positively shapes student perceptions of school and fosters healthier interpersonal relationships (Pennington et al., 2024). Therefore, these forums can act as early intervention mechanisms for addressing emerging student issues.

Moreover, open communication enhances parental trust in schools. Post-pandemic developments have accelerated the adoption of digital platforms for school-family interaction, strengthening mutual trust. This aligns with the values of servant leadership, which emphasize empowerment and collaboration (Jones & Palikara, 2023). In Islamic education, such forums reflect values of *shura* (consultation) and *silaturahmi* (bonding), promoting both character and spiritual development (Tambunan et al., 2023).

Scheduling Revision

Revising academic schedules is a strategic move toward creating a flexible learning timetable that responds to teacher and student needs. Han and Zhang highlight that servant leadership enhances team learning orientation and agility, particularly in contexts where scheduling adjustments are needed for educational effectiveness (Han & Zhang, 2024).

Additionally, flexible scheduling supports the mental well-being of school stakeholders. Lever et al. emphasize the importance of inter-institutional collaboration in advancing school-based mental health programs, which benefit both teachers and students (Lever et al., 2021).

A revised schedule also increases trust from parents, especially when implemented using personalized, empathy-driven approaches. Although servant leadership was not explicitly referenced, Robertson et al. found that open communication, care, and responsiveness—values central to servant leadership—build stronger school-family relationships (Robertson et al., 2022). Within Islamic schools, scheduling revisions should also reflect the values of *ukhuwah* (brotherhood) and *shura* as part of culturally relevant and spiritually grounded pedagogy (Alfi & Syadzali, 2024; Zahro & Sutiah, 2024). Ultimately, flexible scheduling enables the integration of Islamic values into daily learning and supports the holistic development of student character and spirituality.

Tiered Evaluation

Tiered evaluation is a systematic approach to educational assessment that allows for staged and continuous monitoring of student development. In Islamic education, such evaluations are particularly relevant for integrating cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains, while also reinforcing character and spiritual formation.

Evaluation can begin at the classroom level by teachers and extend to broader assessments by school administrators. Fadlillah and Kusaeri, as well as Fajrin Haikal et al., affirm that multi-level evaluations support holistic character development and educational outcomes (Fadlillah & Kusaeri, 2024; Fajrin Haikal et al., 2025).

Additionally, tiered evaluations support differentiated instruction. Ihwanah et al. show that the use of digital platforms for customized assignments in Islamic Religious Education improves discipline, responsibility, and student collaboration—key indicators of strong character (Ihwanah et al., 2024).

When aligned with Islamic values and servant leadership principles, tiered evaluations serve not merely as academic assessment tools but as mechanisms to shape noble character and spiritual awareness. Thus, they enable Islamic education to realize its holistic mission: forming individuals who are intellectually capable and morally virtuous.

CONCLUSION

This study revealed a surprising and previously unanticipated finding: the successful and consistent application of servant leadership principles at SMA Darul Ulum 2 within a complex educational setting—namely, a pesantren-based flagship school operating under an international curriculum. The fact that core values such as empathy, commitment to individual development, and service-oriented leadership could be deeply embedded into the institutional culture of a

Cambridge International Curriculum school is both significant and unexpected. These findings challenge the conventional assumption that values-based and spiritual leadership approaches are difficult to align with globally standardized education systems, which typically emphasize academic performance and cognitive competence. On the contrary, this school has succeeded in developing a holistic educational model that harmoniously integrates local wisdom, Islamic spirituality, and international academic benchmarks.

In terms of scholarly contribution, this study offers a new perspective to the discourse on Islamic educational leadership. It presents servant leadership as a contextually relevant and adaptive leadership approach within pesantren-based institutions offering global curricula. While confirming previous findings on the effectiveness of servant leadership in enhancing engagement and well-being within school communities, this study goes further by offering an integrative framework that bridges Islamic values with global educational demands. In addition, the identification of practical adaptation strategies—including teacher training, communication forums, rescheduling, and tiered evaluations—constitutes a valuable contribution with real-world applicability for similar educational settings both in Indonesia and internationally.

However, this study is not without limitations. The case is limited to a single school—SMA Darul Ulum 2 Unggulan BPPT Jombang—without comparative analysis involving other institutions across different educational levels or regions. The range of research subjects was also constrained in terms of age, gender, and stakeholder diversity (e.g., alumni and external education partners were not included). Furthermore, although the qualitative case study approach allowed for in-depth insights, it inherently limits the generalizability of findings. Future studies are therefore recommended to adopt a broader scope, including multiple pesantren-based schools from various regions and education levels, and to utilize mixed-method approaches. A more comprehensive and representative understanding would allow for deeper, context-rich findings that can inform the formulation of value-driven, transformative Islamic education policies capable of responding to the evolving challenges of globalization.

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