



Learning Organization Leadership and Competitive Advantage in Madrasahs: A Conceptual Business Strategy Approach

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Abstract

This study examines the role of learning organization leadership in creating the competitive advantage of madrasahs through a business strategy approach. The study is grounded in the assumption that madrasahs, as Islamic educational institutions, must respond to globalization, intensifying competition, and rising public expectations by strengthening both organizational learning and strategic management. A qualitative design with an exploratory case study approach was employed to investigate madrasahs that had implemented learning organization leadership and demonstrated competitive advantage. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and document analysis, and analyzed using qualitative data analysis with triangulation to ensure trustworthiness. The findings reveal that learning organization leadership is characterized by a clear and measurable vision, a strong commitment to continuous learning and professional development, the cultivation of a collaborative learning culture, effective teamwork, openness to change, and encouragement of innovation. These leadership characteristics enable madrasahs to formulate adaptive business strategies to improve learning quality, strengthen service quality, enhance institutional competitiveness, attract prospective students, and increase public trust. The study also shows a functional relationship in which learning organization leadership serves as the enabling force, business strategy acts as the value-creation mechanism, and competitive advantage emerges as the organizational outcome. In conclusion, the study highlights that visionary, adaptive, and stakeholder-oriented leadership is essential for sustaining the relevance, legitimacy, and competitiveness of madrasahs in a rapidly changing educational environment.

Keywords: business strategy; competitive advantage; Islamic educational institutions; learning organization leadership; madrasahs strategy

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A. Introduction

The effectiveness of educational institutions in responding to global challenges is influenced by the extent to which they possess both comparative and competitive advantages (Famiola & Wulansari, 2019). To achieve excellence, educational organizations must be willing to transform, and such transformation cannot be separated from the optimization of technology through learning processes. Learning and change management reinforce one another, as Levine (2012) argues that the most intelligent way to manage change is through a learning organization.

Educational institutions, including madrasahs, require a development model that emphasizes specific competencies aligned with the needs of industry and the business sector (Zamroni, 2019). In this regard, madrasahs need to adapt to evolving systems and demands. One model that has been widely tested and implemented is the learning school or learning organization model (Gil et al., 2018; Sidiq, 2017).

The differentiation between schools and madrasahs indicates that educational management in Indonesia remains influenced by a dichotomous view of knowledge. Despite this reality, the Ministry of Religious Affairs has developed excellent Islamic educational institutions through the Madrasah Insan Cendekia (MAN IC) system, which currently comprises 23 institutions across Indonesia. In principle, the quality of madrasahs is not inferior to that of general schools. This is evidenced by the fact that 17 out of the 23 MAN ICs were ranked among the top 1,000 schools based on UTBK scores (kampus.republika.co.id, 2022). Public interest in madrasahs has also continued to rise, as reflected in the 21,858 applicants recorded in the selection process for MAN Insan Cendekia, Religious, and Vocational schools (kemenag.go.id, 2022).

The concept of a learning organization serves as a primary foundation for improving quality in MAN IC, where learning is regarded as an essential activity carried out both individually and collectively by madrasah administrators. By strengthening organizational capacity and capability to adapt and innovate in the face of complex resistance to change, MAN IC, as a leading madrasah, is expected to survive and sustain its excellence over time (Ridhwan, 2021).

Challenges in competitive organizational environments are increasingly difficult to predict, leading inter-organizational relationships toward more collaborative forms of cooperation (Frederick W. Gluck, 2020). Such circumstances require a shift in institutional management paradigms, from a purely service-oriented approach toward a quality-oriented approach that gradually generates benefits. Conversely, when an organization is oriented solely toward profit, it becomes more vulnerable to conflict and competing interests (Mukhtar et al., 2020).

A learning organization is a model of organizational development in which its members, both individually and collectively, consciously create a learning environment to improve organizational performance (Davis & Daley, 2008). Institutionally, awareness of learning creates a competitive advantage and facilitates continuous self-development. Critical factors required for an organization to become a learning organization include innovation, facilitative leadership, self-development, empowerment, information sharing, and collective collaboration (Easterby-Smith et al., 1999).

Strengthening the conceptualization of madrasah management is fundamental because it shapes the organizational culture of an educational institution. Previous studies have shown that learning organizations in educational contexts contribute significantly to leadership quality, school culture, and overall school quality (Prasetyo

et al., 2021). Leadership, therefore, plays a central role in strategy implementation, making the identification of leadership in learning organizations an important area of study.

This study seeks to identify and analyze a competitive learning organization model through a business strategy approach, thereby contributing contingency-based insights that can influence dynamic, functional experiences in preparing sustainable Islamic educational institutions (Clegg et al., 2013). Leadership characteristics significantly affect both individual and organizational performance. Educational institutions can transform themselves into learning organizations with more effective performance, enhanced knowledge, greater creativity, and stronger competitiveness.

The central role of leaders as policy makers requires an effective leadership style. In the context of educational organizations, studies by Salabi, Baruch, and Marquardt generally address the effectiveness of leadership in achieving organizational goals (Bui & Baruch, 2010; Marquardt, 2000; Salabi & Prasetyo, 2022). Meanwhile, Sahaya (2012) aimed to identify a learning organization leadership model that can ensure organizational sustainability.

The high cost of education has become one indicator of the transformation of educational institutions from service-oriented organizations into profit-oriented ones. For such a transformation to be effective, a business strategy is needed to achieve the intended goals. This study proposes a model in which effective leadership can make madrasahs more competitive and valuable. The analysis indicates a consistent relationship between indicators of competitive advantage and market orientation, particularly reflected in public interest. Therefore, a business strategy is necessary.

The discussion of leadership within the concept of a learning organization is inherently visionary, particularly in its focus on connecting and developing ethical and strategic capabilities in management and organizational practices. Accordingly, this study is entitled "Learning Organization Leadership in Creating Madrasah Competitive Advantage: A Business Strategy Approach."

In the era of globalization, madrasahs as Islamic educational institutions face various challenges and demands. Competition among educational institutions is intensifying, requiring madrasahs to continually improve their quality. One of the key factors in improving madrasah quality is leadership capable of fostering a learning organization. A learning organization is one that demonstrates a strong commitment to learning and continuous development. Senge (1990) defines a learning organization as an organization that continually expands its capacity to create the future it seeks.

Learning organization leadership plays an important role in creating a madrasah's competitive advantage through the development of effective business strategies. Business strategy refers to a plan formulated by a madrasah to achieve its goals. Effective business strategies can help madrasahs improve the quality of graduates, enhance competitiveness, attract new students, and strengthen public trust. Learning organization leadership can develop effective business strategies through several steps. First, leaders conduct an environmental analysis to understand the opportunities and threats faced by the madrasah. Second, they determine the goals to be achieved. Third, they formulate strategies to accomplish these goals. Fourth, they lead the implementation of the strategies. Finally, they evaluate the strategies to ensure their effectiveness.

More specifically, this article discusses learning organization leadership and its role in creating madrasah competitive advantage through a conceptual business strategy approach. It begins by explaining the concept and characteristics of learning organization leadership. It then discusses business strategy and the ways in which learning organization leadership can develop effective business strategies for madrasahs. In conclusion, this article argues that learning organization leadership is highly important in creating madrasah competitive advantage in the era of globalization.

B. Literature Review

1. Conceptualizing Learning Leadership

Leadership may be understood as the capacity to influence others, while the effectiveness of leadership style lies in its ability to align institutional interests with those of stakeholders in order to achieve organizational goals (Bel, 2010; Sharman, 2005). The involvement of all organizational components in institutional programs is essential for strengthening the core functions of a competitive educational institution. In this context, learning leadership catalyzes a shift in mindsets from fragmented, conventional patterns toward more systematic, reflective ways of thinking. The contribution of leaders is therefore highly significant in shaping organizational systems and encouraging individuals to move from conservative orientations toward a learning-centered paradigm.

The role of leaders in recruiting, selecting, and placing the right individuals in appropriate positions is equally important. This issue becomes increasingly relevant in Indonesia, where Generation Z now represents a dominant demographic group. As this generation enters the productive stage of life, the challenge of enabling effective collaboration across different generations has become a strategic priority. Through educational modalities embedded in the learning organization model, individuals are expected to develop the competitiveness needed to participate effectively in dynamic, demanding environments.

Leaders of educational institutions are also expected to master three essential leadership skills, namely technical, human, and conceptual skills (Rumsey, 2013; Young & Crow, 2016). Technical skills refer to the leader's knowledge and ability to understand and manage particular processes or techniques. These skills are operationally important in carrying out institutional tasks. Human skills are the ability to collaborate effectively with others and build constructive interpersonal relationships. Conceptual skills, meanwhile, refer to the ability to think strategically and in the long term, including the capacity to formulate frameworks, models, and future-oriented plans. In other words, conceptual skills relate to ideas, human skills concern people, and technical skills concern methods and tools.

Through these three forms of competence, the leadership capacity of school and madrasah principals may be more clearly identified. Within the context of the madrasah as a learning organization, leadership is expected not only to provide direction but also to create a supportive environment that enables members to consciously improve their competence and performance (Kalman & Arslan, 2016; Murphy & Torre, 2015).

2. Conceptualizing the Learning Organization

A learning organization is commonly characterized through the framework of The Fifth Discipline. This conceptual model is built upon five interrelated dimensions: personal mastery, shared vision, mental models, systems thinking, and team learning. Together, these dimensions provide a conceptual basis for policy perspectives that may be formally institutionalized and enacted by educational stakeholders at different levels (Rosén et al., 2020).

According to The Oxford Handbook of the Learning Organization, a learning school is an educational institution that facilitates learning for all of its members, including teachers, educational staff, and students, while continuously transforming itself (Boak, 2020; Senge, 2014). Marquardt describes a learning organization as one in which individuals possess a strong motivation to learn and a collective commitment to continuously improving institutional performance. Similarly, a learning organization may be understood as an institution that proactively transfers knowledge through systems thinking and transforms individual behavior based on new insights and understanding (Virgana & Kasyadi, 2020). Field (2019) further defines a learning organization as an institution that builds organizational capacity in response to ongoing change.

The value system of a learning organization can be traced to the five core elements of Peter Senge's The Fifth Discipline. First, systems thinking refers to methods, tools, and principles directed toward achieving shared goals. Second, personal mastery concerns individual competence and commitment to continuous learning; in the educational context, teachers are expected to develop their potential to the fullest as members of the organization. Third, mental models refer to the assumptions and perspectives that shape how individuals understand reality and make judgments. Fourth, shared vision reflects the collective commitment of organizational members to a common future. Fifth, team learning refers to the development of collective thinking capacities, enabling groups to generate intelligence and performance that exceeds the sum of individual talents (Hsu & Lamb, 2020).

Beyond fostering innovative behavior, learning organizations also contribute to employee well-being, particularly through work engagement, which in turn can strengthen individual innovativeness. Because of this central role, the learning organization has strong potential to shape management innovation and support the long-term sustainability of educational institutions. In operational terms, the implementation of a learning organization evolves naturally alongside the development of individual learning capacities and may be understood through the integration of three key orientations: internal productivity, exploratory capability, and resource recombination (Santa & Nurcan, 2016).

Referring again to The Oxford Handbook of the Learning Organization, the learning organization represents a model of organizational development in which institutions continuously mobilize and develop their resources in order to create a competitive future (Boak, 2020). Conceptually, the fundamental stages in implementing a competitive learning organization can be summarized as leadership, development, and cadre formation.

Leadership emphasizes considering individual capability derived from personal motivation, as well as establishing a recruitment system that selects individuals who understand the values of a learning organization. Development focuses on applying principles related to performance improvement, institutional

advancement, and professional service orientation. Cadre formation refers to the transformation of teachers and educational staff into expert, highly competent individuals, including strengthening their capacity to serve as trainers or mentors for their peers.

Organizational competitiveness can therefore be built by operationalizing learning leadership in several ways. First, leaders may implement a learning organization approach that enables teachers to develop autonomously. Second, they may design career development programs intended to strengthen teachers' capacities and address their weaknesses. Third, they may establish collaborative work teams in order to align organizational and individual performance. Fourth, they may revise compensation policies or redesign reward systems to better respond to the needs of the institutional community. Fifth, leaders may evaluate the impact of revitalization efforts as part of a broader strategy for supporting continuous improvement and development. In this regard, learning leadership may also adopt an organizational development approach to explore long-term institutional opportunities and sustainability (Rebelo et al., 2019; Senge, 2006).

3. Learning Organization from a Business Strategy Perspective

Educational reform in Islamic educational institutions can be understood through several waves of movement toward excellence, particularly through the adoption of effective school and learning school models. The concept of excellence may be viewed from the perspective of educational services, namely, when institutions provide services that exceed established standards. The realization of a competitive school cannot be separated from the role of technology. Its fulfillment depends not only on the availability of human resources as the primary institutional capital, but also on the support of technological infrastructure as a key enabling instrument. To remain competitive, schools as organizational systems require the support of all institutional elements, including teamwork, formalized structures, leadership policies, development models, work systems, and organizational culture (Cox & Blake, 1991).

A business strategy approach has therefore become increasingly necessary for educational institutions seeking continuous progress, though it should not lead to excessive commercialization. The relationship between educational institutions and the communities they serve must remain healthy, balanced, and ethically grounded. In this regard, external institutional support, particularly from the government, is essential through the provision of clear and appropriate regulations that ensure fair competition among institutions (Anwar & Niode, 2017). At present, competitive advantage is closely associated with institutional improvement in areas such as technology, information, and communication.

One of the major challenges leaders face in implementing the learning organization model is managing change, which often requires flexible, varied strategies. Among all components of the educational system, human resources remain the most valuable factor in the development of a learning organization model (Kumpikaite, 2010).

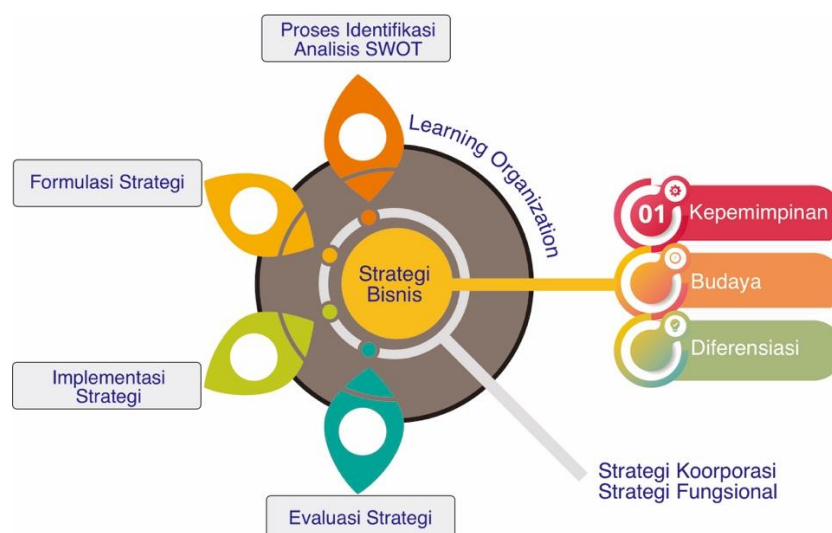


Figure 1. Business Strategy in the Context of a Learning Organization

Figure 1 illustrates that business strategy proceeds through several stages, beginning with identification and analysis, followed by strategy formulation, implementation, and evaluation. The key determinants of success in this process include leadership effectiveness, cultural reinforcement, and the formation of a distinctive institutional character. Snihur analyzes an organization's inability to learn and adapt from the perspective of organizational identity as an internal dimension, whereas Becker examines non-learning organizations from an external perspective by assessing the effects of professional identity (Becker, 2018; Snihur, 2018).

C. Method

This study employed a qualitative research design using a case study approach. A case study was considered appropriate because it enabled an in-depth exploration of one or more cases in order to understand complex phenomena within their real-life context. More specifically, this study adopted an exploratory case study approach to examine how learning organization leadership created competitive advantage in madrasahs through a conceptual business strategy perspective.

The subjects of this study were madrasahs that had implemented learning organization leadership and had demonstrated competitive advantage. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and document analysis. Interviews were conducted with madrasah leaders, teachers, and administrative staff. Observations focused on teaching and learning activities within the madrasah environment. Document analysis was carried out by reviewing institutional documents related to learning organization leadership and business strategy.

The data were analyzed using qualitative data analysis. This process involved organizing, categorizing, and interpreting the collected data in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, data validity was established through triangulation. Triangulation referred to the use of multiple data sources and data collection methods to enhance the credibility and consistency of the research findings.

This study was conducted with careful attention to research ethics. Several ethical principles were observed, including informed consent, confidentiality, and objectivity. In terms of informed consent, the researcher explained the purpose of the study to the participants and obtained their voluntary agreement to participate. Confidentiality was maintained by protecting participants' data and ensuring that personal information was not disclosed. In addition, the researcher upheld objectivity throughout the entire research process.

D. Results and Discussion

1. Synthesis of the Main Findings

The findings of this study indicate that madrasah leadership oriented toward the learning organization paradigm was manifested through: (i) a clear and measurable vision and goals in the practice of educational provision, (ii) a strong commitment to learning and continuous professional development, (iii) the establishment of a learning culture and effective teamwork, and (iv) encouragement of innovation. These findings are consistent with the literature identifying strong leadership, a consistent vision and mission, well-planned programs, continuous evaluation, and the active involvement of stakeholders as characteristics of effective schools and prerequisites for the systematic management of educational innovation (Wahyudi, 2021). In the madrasah context, the strengthening of vision, including the "vision principle," has also been associated with the reinforcement of the psychosocial and emotional dimensions of educators that contribute to professional learning practices (Budiningsih et al., 2021), while value-based leadership, such as spiritual leadership, emphasizes vision, altruistic love, and hope/faith as drivers of organizational commitment (Zarkasyi et al., 2021).

The findings also show that an effective madrasah business strategy, or strategic management orientation, was directed toward improving the quality of learning and services, strengthening competitiveness, increasing prospective students' interest, and enhancing public trust. This strategic direction aligns with studies on madrasah service quality that emphasize quality planning, the implementation of integrated services, including digital services, and periodic evaluation by the madrasah principal as mechanisms for service improvement (Nissa, 2023). Conceptually, academic service quality has also been linked to the managerial and entrepreneurial competencies of school principals, which influence service quality improvement and are relevant to the demands of global competitiveness (Samadi, 2021). In addition, perceptions of service quality in MAN institutions, both in Java and outside Java, indicate the importance of improving particular dimensions, such as assurance and tangibles, as part of the service improvement agenda (Tanriverdi & Taştan, 2022). This indirectly reinforces the argument that service strategy constitutes an important component of the "business strategy" of madrasahs as public service organizations.

A third major finding of this study confirms a functional relationship: effective learning organization leadership facilitates the emergence of adaptive business and service strategies, and these strategies, in turn, contribute to the madrasah's competitive advantage, for example, through reputation, user satisfaction, and value-added outcomes. This pattern is coherent with the literature on effective schools, which places leadership, organizational culture, evaluation, and resource utilization as key instruments for ensuring educational

effectiveness and innovation (Wahyudi, 2021), as well as with studies on madrasah leadership that highlight the principal's role in creating a conducive learning climate, providing space for teacher innovation, and building organizational communication (Fanani & Aziz, 2023; Susanto & Winata, 2023).

2. Characteristics of Learning Organization Leadership in Madrasahs

a. Clear Vision and Goals Operationalized in Educational Provision

Empirically, the findings position the measurability of vision and goals as the foundation of leadership in learning organizations. This is consistent with the literature on educational innovation, which states that effective schools possess a clear vision and mission that serve as reference points for programs, curriculum, and continuous evaluation (Wahyudi, 2021). Within a value-based leadership framework, the dimension of vision is also regarded as a core element of spiritual leadership, promoting commitment and organizational productivity in educational institutions (Zarkasyi et al., 2021). In the madrasah context, the psychosocial construct of Islamic educators includes the "vision principle" and the "well-organized principle" as elements that strengthen professionalism in instruction and assessment (Budiningsih et al., 2021). Accordingly, the findings may be understood as a form of bridging between normative vision and operational mechanisms such as programs, policies, and evaluation.

The measurability of vision and goals in educational provision is also closely related to the madrasah organizational culture. Madrasah organizational culture, in terms of values, attitudes, and habits, has been positioned as a construct that influences the dynamics of teacher performance (Huda, 2022). The effective school literature emphasizes that leadership and organizational culture operate simultaneously through well-planned programs and continuous evaluation (Wahyudi, 2021). Therefore, the present findings reinforce the argument that a clear vision is not sufficient as a formal statement alone; it must be institutionalized through culture, governance, and a concrete evaluation cycle.

b. Commitment to Learning and a Culture of Continuous Learning

The commitment of madrasah leaders to learning, as reflected in the findings, was evident in their support for teacher professionalism and the strengthening of instructional practices. This is consistent with studies on teachers' perceptions of madrasah principal leadership, which emphasize the creation of a conducive learning climate, appreciation for educators' performance, and the provision of creative and innovative space for teachers (Fanani & Aziz, 2023). Multi-site studies on the management of teacher professional development in MAN institutions also show that professional development is managed through planning, implementation, supervision, and evaluation, and is supported by collaboration with government and relevant authorities (Susanto & Winata, 2023). Within the framework of service quality, a focus on meeting learning needs and improving educational service quality is managed through planning, implementation, improvement, and evaluation (Nissa, 2023).

In an increasingly digitalized learning context, commitment to learning also entails strengthening capacity for e-learning and blended learning. Analyses of teachers' e-learning skill needs indicate that successful online learning requires more appropriate methods and content, a sound teacher mindset, and adequate materials and devices (Tuncer et al., 2021). Similarly, strategies for developing teacher professionalism in MI in the era of the Fourth Industrial Revolution

emphasize the importance of IT-based training, digital learning workshops, and principal supervision (Putri et al., 2023). Thus, the findings are consistent with the literature in showing that a culture of continuous learning in contemporary madrasahs cannot be separated from teacher development governance and digital ecosystem readiness (Putri et al., 2023; Tuncer et al., 2021).

c. Effective Teams: Collaboration, Communication, and Empathy as Mechanisms of Organizational Learning

The findings highlight effective teams as a defining characteristic of learning organization leadership. In madrasah leadership practice, the development of a collaborative culture through team meetings, collaborative projects, and resource-sharing forums has been identified as a mechanism for enhancing staff creativity and innovation (Setyaningsih et al., 2021). In line with this, the management of teacher professional development in MAN institutions involves multiple actors, including vice principals, teachers, administrative personnel, laboratory assistants, and librarians. It emphasizes teamwork as a work culture (Susanto & Winata, 2023). Studies on the human skills of madrasah principals in managing human resources also identify cooperation, cohesive teams, and smooth communication as important indicators of leadership capability (Mauliya & Wulandari, 2021). Taken together, these findings support the view that an effective team is not merely a work structure, but a social infrastructure that enables knowledge transfer, coordination, and collective learning (Setyaningsih et al., 2021; Mauliya & Wulandari, 2021; Susanto & Winata, 2023).

The quality of leadership communication also becomes a prerequisite for teams to function effectively as learning units. Studies of academic supervision in MTs show that effective communication by the madrasah principal as supervisor encompasses respect, empathy, audibility, clarity, and humility, which help guide improvements in teacher performance (Mulyati & Meiningdias, 2022). The emphasis on empathy also appears in value-based leadership frameworks, where compassion is included in the value of altruistic love in spiritual leadership (Zarkasyi et al., 2021). Therefore, the findings can be interpreted to mean that team effectiveness in the madrasah learning organization depends upon leadership that is both communicative and empathetic (Zarkasyi et al., 2021; Mulyati & Meiningdias, 2022).

d. Encouragement of Innovation, Including Instructional and Service Innovation, as an Adaptive Organizational Capacity

The results position innovation as an output systematically encouraged by learning organization leadership. This is consistent with the educational innovation management literature, which emphasizes innovation as a systematic process involving planning, implementation, evaluation, and follow-up, based on available school resources, to achieve goals effectively and efficiently (Wahyudi, 2021). Opportunities for teacher innovation also form part of the leadership experience that teachers in MAN institutions perceive positively, for instance, through the provision of creative and innovative educational spaces (Fanani & Aziz, 2023). In addition, servant leadership practices in madrasahs show that teacher collaboration can create opportunities to share ideas and innovations to improve student learning experiences (Setyaningsih et al., 2021).

At a more technical level, design thinking-based innovation demonstrates the empathy stage's relevance as the basis for formulating human-centered solutions.

The reconstruction of STEAM learning models through a design thinking approach confirms that the process begins with empathy in order to understand human needs and problems in depth (Putra et al., 2024). At the systems level, the use of design thinking in developing knowledge management systems for school learning demonstrates that empathizing with user needs can lead to UI/UX designs that are well received, as indicated by high usability scores (Sukenti et al., 2021). These studies strengthen the argument that madrasah innovation, both in learning and in services, requires mechanisms for identifying the needs of users, including teachers, students, and parents, and for testing solutions iteratively (Sukenti et al., 2021; Putra et al., 2024).

e. Empowering Organizational Members to Embrace Change: Participation, Delegation, and Capacity Building

The empowerment of organizational members to accept change, as shown in the findings, can be understood as a practice of participatory leadership and capacity development. Studies on participatory leadership emphasize that educational leaders need to involve members in organizational processes, including decision-making, through principles of acceptance, delegation, and participation, particularly in crisis situations such as the pandemic (Doğanay et al., 2022). In the context of learning management in private MI during the pandemic, female madrasah principals also demonstrated leadership through open communication, active involvement of madrasah members, and strengthening an inclusive, collaborative work culture (Amrulloh & Ahmadi, 2022). These findings strengthen the argument that acceptance of change becomes easier when members feel a sense of ownership and are given real opportunities for participation (Amrulloh & Ahmadi, 2022; Doğanay et al., 2022).

From the perspective of change instrumentation, empowerment requires training, supervision, and support for technological mastery. Strategies employed by MI institutions to improve teacher professionalism in the era of Industry 4.0 emphasize IT training, digital learning workshops, and supervision by madrasah principals (Putri et al., 2023). Studies on teachers' e-learning skills during the pandemic also underscore the importance of the fit between methods and content, teacher mindset, and online learning devices (Tuncer et al., 2021). Meanwhile, strategies employed by madrasah principals to build value-added in the era of Society 5.0 include the use of e-learning and LMS as well as strengthened coordination across units, for instance, by opening communication channels to address coordination barriers in program implementation (Tortumlu, 2023). Therefore, the findings may be positioned as evidence of convergence: empowerment for change in madrasahs becomes effective when participation in governance is combined with capacity building (Tortumlu, 2023; Putri et al., 2023; Tuncer et al., 2021; Doğanay et al., 2022).

3. Effective Madrasah Business Strategy: Learning Quality, Service Quality, Differentiation, and Public Legitimacy

a. Strategies for Improving Learning Quality as Core Service Quality

Based on the findings, improving the quality of learning emerged as the madrasah's primary business strategy. This strategy aligns with studies on service quality in MTsN, which show that educational service quality is best achieved by meeting learning needs and providing supporting facilities so that the learning process can operate effectively and efficiently (Nissa, 2023). At the leadership

level, improving learning quality is also closely related to providing professional support to teachers through training, MGMP, and supervision, as shown in the management of teacher professional development in MAN institutions (Susanto & Winata, 2023) and in strategies for enhancing teacher professionalism in MI in the Industry 4.0 era (Putri et al., 2023). On the other hand, teachers' perceptions of madrasah principal leadership confirm that a conducive learning climate, appreciation, and space for innovation form part of the strategy for improving instructional quality (Fanani & Aziz, 2023).

Strategies for improving learning quality are also increasingly related to technology-based instructional innovation. Diagnoses of teachers' e-learning problems emphasize the need for appropriate methods, content, and online learning devices (Tuncer et al., 2021). Moreover, analyses of teachers' needs regarding interactive learning media for distance learning highlight the alignment of content with competencies, the clarity of learning objectives, and the inclusion of evaluation at the end of the learning media as part of instructional design (Febriansari et al., 2022). Therefore, the findings may be interpreted as an orientation toward learning quality that integrates teacher capacity strengthening with the structuring of learning systems, including devices and evaluation (Putri et al., 2023; Tuncer et al., 2021; Febriansari et al., 2022).

b. Strategies for Improving Service Quality and Stakeholder Experience

The findings also confirm that the madrasah business strategy is implemented by improving both administrative and academic service quality to increase satisfaction and public trust. The service quality framework commonly used in educational studies refers to the dimensions of tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy (Samadi, 2021; Adawiah et al., 2023). Studies on service quality in MTsN 1 Ponorogo show that service quality planning is followed by the implementation of integrated one-stop services, digital services, and routine evaluation, including personal evaluation, monthly staff meetings, and reward provision (Nissa, 2023). At the macro level, studies of the service quality gap in MAN institutions in Java and outside Java indicate that although service perceptions are generally good, certain dimensions still require strengthening, such as assurance and tangibles, and that staff training is needed to keep services up to date (Tanrıverdi & Taştan, 2022). These results are coherent with the present findings that madrasah business strategy is grounded in standardized, digitalized, and periodically audited service governance.

Satisfaction among users of educational services is also empirically associated with service quality. Studies on student satisfaction with learning quality measure satisfaction using the same dimensions, namely tangibles, responsiveness, reliability, empathy, and assurance, and conclude that quality improvement strategies include creating a conducive academic atmosphere, increasing public trust, improving the quality of human resources, and optimizing IT systems (Adawiah et al., 2023). At the school level, analyses of service quality and student satisfaction indicate that service gaps are primarily due to responsiveness and empathy variables that have not yet met students' expectations (Nikma et al., 2023). Thus, the service strategy emphasized in the findings has a strong theoretical and empirical foundation: strengthening responsiveness and empathy is not merely a matter of service ethics, but is directly related to satisfaction and institutional legitimacy (Tanrıverdi & Taştan, 2022; Adawiah et al., 2023).

c. Strategies for Strengthening Competitiveness through Value Added and Program Differentiation

The findings link the madrasah business strategy with improving competitiveness and attracting prospective students. The literature on academic service quality confirms that the managerial and entrepreneurial competence of school principals influences academic service quality and is important for meeting the demands of global competitiveness (Samadi, 2021). In the context of Society 5.0, strategies used by madrasah principals to increase student value added include the digitalization of learning through e-learning and LMS, community participation through school committees, and outcome-based programs, for example, UTBK achievement indicators and the percentage of students entering public universities as value-added outputs (Tortumlu, 2023). The present findings align with the argument that a single program does not determine the competitive advantage of educational institutions but rather the orchestration of multiple strategies, including digitalization, partnerships, and performance-enhancement programs, managed under madrasah leadership (Samadi, 2021; Tortumlu, 2023).

Differentiation may also be developed through distinctive culture and character-building ecosystems. Strategies for developing madrasah culture in MAN 3 Pekanbaru demonstrate the presence of unique cultural features, such as specific forms of address and interaction norms, as well as internal supervision and evaluation for continuous improvement (R et al., 2021). In boarding school models, the integration of academic and non-academic life within a controlled environment has been shown to align all aspects of students' lives with the madrasah vision and mission and to strengthen the internalization of character values in daily practice (Yanti & Tirtayani, 2023). Tahfidz Al-Qur'an programs in MAN institutions have also been reported to be integrated with character habituation, for example, through 5S culture, literacy, and social concern (Marwah et al., 2023). This synthesis strengthens the argument that madrasah competitiveness can grow from the combination of core quality in learning, service quality, and distinctive culture or programs (R et al., 2021; Marwah et al., 2023; Yanti & Tirtayani, 2023).

d. Strategies for Building Public Trust: Partnership, Communication, and Service Accountability

The findings emphasize the need to enhance public trust as a strategic objective. Conceptually and empirically, studies on satisfaction with learning services indicate that increasing public trust may be positioned as a quality strategy through the creation of a conducive academic atmosphere, the improvement of human resources, the optimization of IT systems, and the strengthening of infrastructure (Adawiah et al., 2023). In MAN services, staff training and service capacity updating are also considered relevant to maintaining excellent service quality (Tanriverdi & Taştan, 2022). From a governance perspective, the involvement of committees and parents as spaces of community participation represents one strategy for building synergy and social support for institutional programs (Tortumlu, 2023). Therefore, the findings broaden the meaning of public trust as an output that can be managed through service design, participatory governance, and performance accountability.

In addition, effective communication by madrasah leaders serves as a bridge between quality services and perceptions of trust. Studies on academic supervision show that communication grounded in respect and empathy facilitates teacher development processes (Mulyati & Meiningdias, 2022). In madrasah leadership,

open communication also appears as a strategy for overcoming coordination barriers in programs, for example, between school teachers and dormitory teachers (Tortumlu, 2023). Thus, public trust, which constitutes a target of madrasah business strategy, may be understood as the cumulative result of service quality, user experience, and consistent as well as empathetic organizational communication (Mulyati & Meiningdias, 2022; Tanriverdi & Taştan, 2022; Adawiah et al., 2023; Tortumlu, 2023).

4. Mechanism of Relationship: Learning Organization Leadership, Business Strategy, Competitive Advantage

a. Leadership as a Strategic Enabler: From Vision and Culture to Program Systems

The effective school literature positions strong leadership and consistent vision and mission as prerequisites for well-planned programs and continuous evaluation (Wahyudi, 2021). The findings are consistent with this pattern: when madrasah leadership operationalizes the vision and builds a learning culture, the institution gains a foundation for formulating coherent strategies for learning, services, and differentiation. At the implementation level, madrasah principals whom teachers perceive positively tend to foster a conducive learning climate, express appreciation, and provide space for teacher innovation (Fanani & Aziz, 2023), which other studies relate to collaborative culture and staff creativity and innovation (Setyaningsih et al., 2021). In other words, learning organization leadership functions as a dynamic capability that allows strategies to be continuously adjusted to stakeholder needs (Wahyudi, 2021; Setyaningsih et al., 2021; Fanani & Aziz, 2023).

b. Business Strategy as a Value-Creation Mechanism: Service Quality and Value Added as Differentiation

The relationship between business strategy and competitive advantage can be explained through two value pathways: improvement of service quality and creation of value added or differentiation. Service quality dimensions such as tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy are used in various studies to map satisfaction among users of educational services (Samadi, 2021; Adawiah et al., 2023), while findings from Islamic vocational schools show gaps particularly in responsiveness and empathy (Nikma et al., 2023). Studies of MAN institutions similarly indicate the need to improve particular service dimensions, such as assurance and tangibles, as part of quality improvement (Tanriverdi & Taştan, 2022). At the same time, Society 5.0 strategies indicate that value may be added through learning digitalization, strengthening committees and partnerships, and academic achievement indicators (Tortumlu, 2023). This synthesis supports the discussion that an effective madrasah business strategy is one that transforms leadership resources, including vision, culture, team capacity, and innovation, into service value and added value that are visible to the public (Samadi, 2021; Tortumlu, 2023).

c. Competitive Advantage as an Outcome: Reputation, Satisfaction, and Legitimacy

Within the educational innovation framework, competitive advantage may be understood as a consequence of school effectiveness, where programs are implemented efficiently and effectively, evaluation takes place, facilities are

supportive, and stakeholders are actively involved (Wahyudi, 2021). More specifically, studies on satisfaction with learning quality confirm that user satisfaction reflects the fulfillment of expectations and serves as the basis for quality improvement strategies and public trust (Adawiah et al., 2023). Service quality studies in MTsN institutions also emphasize the importance of evaluation and rewards as instruments for maintaining service quality (Nissa, 2023). Thus, the findings reinforce the argument that madrasah's competitive advantage is an organizational outcome shaped by a chain of learning leadership, learning and service strategy, satisfaction and trust, and ultimately, reputation and competitiveness (Wahyudi, 2021; Nissa, 2023; Adawiah et al., 2023).

5. Practical Implications: Operational Indicators for Journal Writing and the Strengthening of the Conceptual Model

To meet the expectations of a reputable international journal, the results and discussion of this study may be sharpened through operational indicators derived from the findings and the supporting literature.

First, indicators of learning organization leadership include: clarity of vision and mission and program consistency, as emphasized in the effective school and educational innovation literature (Wahyudi, 2021); value-based leadership, including vision, care or empathy, altruistic love, and hope or faith, as emphasized in spiritual leadership (Zarkasyi et al., 2021); collaborative culture and teamwork mechanisms, such as collaborative forums and idea sharing (Setyaningsih et al., 2021); and teamwork culture in professional development (Susanto & Winata, 2023); effective and empathetic communication in academic supervision and teacher development (Mulyati & Meiningdias, 2022); human resource management capability, including cooperation, solid teamwork, communication, and empathy (Mauliya & Wulandari, 2021); and empowerment for change through participation, delegation, and organizational member involvement (Amrulloh & Ahmadi, 2022; Doğanay et al., 2022).

Second, indicators of madrasah business strategy include: service quality based on SERVQUAL dimensions, namely tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy (Samadi, 2021; Adawiah et al., 2023); integrated and digital service systems, such as one-stop services and digital services, accompanied by periodic evaluation (Nissa, 2023); strengthening weak service dimensions according to regional and madrasah contexts (Tanrıverdi & Taştan, 2022); , as well as closing gaps in responsiveness and empathy (Nikma et al., 2023); ; and creating value added in the Society 5.0 era through learning digitalization and school committee partnerships (Tortumlu, 2023).

Third, indicators of competitive advantage include: effective school performance characterized by planned programs, evaluation, facilities, and stakeholder involvement (Wahyudi, 2021); user satisfaction and strengthened public trust through quality and IT strategies (Adawiah et al., 2023); and differentiation based on distinctive culture and programs aligned with the madrasah vision and mission, including madrasah culture, boarding systems, and tahfidz programs (R et al., 2021; Marwah et al., 2023; Yanti & Tirtayani, 2023).

In addition, if this study seeks to emphasize the innovation dimension more strongly, the design thinking literature may be employed as a conceptual framework to explain why empathy, understood as the process of understanding user needs, constitutes the point of entry for learning innovation and school system

innovation (Sukenti et al., 2021; Putra et al., 2024). Integrating the effective school innovation framework (Wahyudi, 2021) with the empathy-innovation framework (Sukenti et al., 2021; Putra et al., 2024) may strengthen the article's theoretical contribution.

6. Limitations of the Discussion and Future Research Agenda

As is common in studies on madrasah leadership and management that use perception-based or thematic approaches, the discussion of the present findings requires further strengthening through more explicit measurement of indicators so that the relationship among the constructs of leadership, strategy, and competitive advantage can be tested more rigorously (Wahyudi, 2021; Fanani & Aziz, 2023; Susanto & Winata, 2023). The service quality literature shows that service dimension-based measurement can map areas of gaps more precisely (Tanriverdi & Taştan, 2022; Nikma et al., 2023; Adawiah et al., 2023). Therefore, future research is recommended to combine qualitative leadership findings, such as learning climate, innovation space, and collaboration (Setyaningsih et al., 2021; Fanani & Aziz, 2023), with quantitative measurement of service quality and user satisfaction (Tanriverdi & Taştan, 2022; Adawiah et al., 2023) in order to strengthen the claim regarding the mechanism of madrasah competitive advantage.

Furthermore, because digital transformation is becoming an increasingly decisive factor, future studies may examine in greater detail how the readiness of the e-learning ecosystem, including methods, content, devices, and mindset, moderates the relationship between leadership and learning quality (Putri et al., 2023; Tuncer et al., 2021). Future work may also investigate how digitalization strategies in emerging contexts, including discussions around the metaverse, require sustainable training policies for madrasah teachers and education personnel (Sari & Yaswinda, 2022). In this way, the contribution of research on learning organization leadership in madrasahs may be expanded from a managerial context to the broader context of digital transformation and innovation in educational services (Wahyudi, 2021; Tuncer et al., 2021; Sari & Yaswinda, 2022).

E. Conclusion

The conclusion of this study confirms that learning organization leadership plays a central role in creating madrasahs' competitive advantage through adaptive, quality-oriented business strategies. Such leadership is reflected in the clarity of vision and goals, commitment to continuous learning, the strengthening of a learning culture, the development of effective teams, and the encouragement of innovation. These characteristics enable madrasahs not only to improve the quality of learning and services but also to strengthen competitiveness, attract prospective students, and build public trust. Thus, the competitive advantage of madrasahs does not emerge immediately but rather results from the integration of visionary leadership, a learning-oriented organizational culture, systematic strategic management, and the institution's ability to continuously respond to stakeholder needs.

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