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Prophetic Leadership, Spiritual Bonding, and Teacher Loyalty in an Indonesian State Madrasah: A Qualitative Case Study

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Abstract:
Principal leadership is central to teacher loyalty in Islamic educational institutions, where organizational commitment is shaped by both professional and spiritual values. However, research has largely emphasized transformational and transactional approaches, leaving the enactment of prophetic leadership in madrasahs under-explored. This qualitative case study examined how a principal's enactment of *Shiddiq, amanah, tabligh,* and *fathanah* was associated with teacher loyalty at MTsN Gresik, Indonesia. Data were generated through in-depth interviews with 15 participants, observation sessions, and selected institutional documents. Data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña through data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. The findings show that prophetic values were enacted through transparent communication, consistent responsibility, participatory deliberation, personal example, and context-sensitive decision-making. Participants linked these practices with trust, recognition, shared moral meaning, and a sense of belonging. These relational and spiritual processes were conceptualized as spiritual bonding, an interpretive mechanism connecting prophetic leadership with affective, normative, and behavioral loyalty. The study contributes a context-sensitive account of value-based leadership in a state madrasah while recognizing that the findings reflect a single institutional case rather than a test of causal mediation.

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Introduction

Teacher loyalty is a practical and organizational concern in educational institutions facing increasing administrative demands, professional expectations, and continuous change. Heavy workloads, bureaucratic pressure, and limited professional recognition may weaken teachers' attachment to their institutions and reduce their willingness to support programs beyond minimum formal requirements (Ekowati & Sa'adah, 2025). When loyalty is fragile, institutional initiatives can be implemented unevenly, and long-term development becomes more difficult to sustain.

Madrasahs occupy a distinctive position because they combine academic instruction with the cultivation of moral and spiritual values. Leadership in these institutions is, therefore, expected to provide administrative direction while also embodying ethical and religious principles that teachers can recognize in everyday organizational practice (Anwar et

al., 2025). This dual expectation makes the relationship between leadership and teacher loyalty especially relevant in the madrasah context.

Indonesian madrasahs are responsible for general education and Islamic value formation in an increasingly competitive and rapidly changing educational environment (Kulsum & Muhid, 2022; Apriyani et al., 2025). Their capacity to respond to policy changes, public expectations, and institutional reforms depends not only on formal structures but also on coordination among leaders, teachers, and administrative staff (Haddade et al., 2024). Internal cohesion is therefore central to the continuity of madrasah programs.

Teachers are central actors in this process because their roles extend beyond classroom instruction to mentoring, modeling, and supporting students' intellectual and moral development (Amalia & Maknun, 2022; Julismawati & Eliana, 2024). In this study, teacher loyalty is understood as more than attendance or compliance. It includes emotional attachment, a moral sense of responsibility, and a willingness to contribute beyond formally assigned duties. Such loyalty can help translate institutional plans into sustained educational practice (Sunardi & Sihab, 2023).

Maintaining this form of loyalty is not straightforward. Administrative overload, limited recognition, work stress, and organizational routines may distance teachers from the institutional mission (Ekowati & Sa'adah, 2025; Özdemir et al., 2024). Leadership approaches that emphasize technical control while neglecting human and spiritual dimensions may further weaken teachers' sense of meaning and belonging (Mohzana et al., 2023). These conditions point to the need for leadership that connects organizational responsibility with ethical and relational practice.

The madrasah principal plays a central role in shaping the organizational climate, distributing responsibilities, communicating policy, and supporting teachers' professional work (Syihabuddin, 2019; Hartono et al., 2025). Formal authority or material incentives alone may not be sufficient to develop durable commitment in a religious educational institution (Ramdhan & Suklani, 2024). A more integrated approach is required, one that brings together intellectual judgment, emotional sensitivity, ethical example, and spiritual meaning (Purwanto et al., 2020).

Prophetic leadership offers such an approach by drawing on four values associated with the exemplary qualities of the prophets: *Shiddiq* (truthfulness and integrity), *amanah* (trustworthiness and responsibility), *tabligh* (open and responsible communication), and *fathanah* (wisdom and intelligence) (Hakim & Zahra, 2024). These values provide a moral framework for decision-making and for interpersonal relationships. In organizational practice, they can be expressed through transparency, accountability, deliberation, personal examples, and context-sensitive problem-solving (Yusuf, 2022; Anwar et al., 2025).

Within a madrasah, prophetic leadership may foster trust and respectful working relationships when values are consistently enacted (Aprilia & Munifah, 2022; Yusuf, 2022). Teachers who experience a leader as honest, responsible, communicative, and wise may feel safer expressing concerns and more willing to identify with institutional goals. The relationship may consequently shift from a rigid hierarchy toward a value-based partnership grounded in example and moral responsibility.

MTsN Gresik was selected as a case because it is a state Islamic junior secondary school operating within both public-sector administrative requirements and an explicitly Islamic institutional mission. Its academic and nonacademic activities require close coordination among the principal, teachers, and administrative staff. This setting provides a relevant context for examining how prophetic values are translated into daily leadership practices and how participants associate those practices with teacher loyalty.

Previous educational leadership research has commonly examined transformational, servant, transactional, and instructional models, emphasizing motivation, empowerment, organizational climate, and performance. While these perspectives are useful, they do not fully explain how explicitly religious values shape the meaning of leadership relationships in Islamic educational institutions. Therefore, the moral and spiritual dimensions of loyalty may remain underdeveloped when leadership is interpreted primarily through secular organizational frameworks (Bush & Glover, 2014; Mohzana et al., 2023; Purwanto et al., 2020).

A growing body of scholarship has discussed prophetic leadership as a value-based Islamic model; however, much of this work remains conceptual or focuses on general employee motivation. Empirical evidence is still limited regarding how *Shiddiq, amanah, tabligh,* and *fathanah* are enacted in a state madrasah and how teachers interpret their connection with affective, normative, and behavioral loyalty (Hakim & Zahra, 2024; Yusuf, 2022). The process linking leadership values with loyalty also requires a closer qualitative explanation.

This study addresses this gap by examining prophetic leadership as an everyday relational practice rather than an abstract set of ideals. It also develops spiritual bonding as an interpretive concept to explain how trust, shared values, meaningful work, and a sense of belonging connect leadership practices with teacher loyalty. The study does not test statistical mediation; instead, it traces a context-specific mechanism from participants' accounts, observations, and institutional documents.

Accordingly, this study addressed three questions: (1) How are *Shiddiq, amanah, tabligh,* and *fathanah* enacted in the principal's daily leadership practices? (2) How do participants describe affective, normative, and behavioral forms of teacher loyalty? and (3) How does spiritual bonding emerge as an interpretive mechanism connecting prophetic leadership with teacher loyalty?

Methods

This study employed a qualitative case study design to examine prophetic leadership and teacher loyalty within the real-life institutional context of MTsN Gresik, Indonesia (Assyakurrohim et al., 2023; Gunawan 2013). The case study approach was appropriate because the inquiry focused on how leadership values were enacted, experienced, and interpreted in daily organizational relationships. The principal research focus was the enactment of *Shiddiq, amanah, tabligh,* and *fathanah*, and the ways participants associated these practices with affective, normative, and behavioral loyalty. The researchers served as the primary instruments for data generation and interpretation (Haki & Prahastiwi 2024).

Data were generated through in-depth interviews, non-participant observations, and document analysis. The 15 purposively selected participants comprised one madrasah principal, ten teachers, and four administrative staff members. The selection criteria were active involvement in daily madrasah activities, at least three years of institutional experience, and direct experience of the principal's leadership practices. Interviews were conducted in May 2025 and lasted 42–74 minutes. Four observation sessions, totaling approximately 10 hours, covered evaluation meetings, daily interactions, morning activities, and conflict-resolution practices. Documentary sources included the madrasah profile, the 2021–2025 strategic plan, meeting minutes, teacher workload and performance records, and activity documentation. Table 1 summarizes the data sources and analytical focus; detailed participant characteristics and protocols are provided in Supplementary Tables S1–S2 and Supplementary Appendices S1–S3.

Table 1. Overview of Participants and Data Collection

Data Source	Participants or Materials	Number or Scope	Main Analytical Focus
Principal interview	Madrasah principal	1 participant; 74 minutes	Leadership values, policies, decision-making, and teacher commitment
Teacher interviews	Teachers with at least three years of institutional experience	10 participants; 44–61 minutes per interview	Leadership experiences, spiritual bonding, and affective, normative, and behavioral loyalty
Administrative staff interviews	Administrative staff members	4 participants; 42–50 minutes per interview	Administrative transparency, coordination, resource management, and observed teacher commitment
Observation	Evaluation meetings, daily interactions, morning activities, and conflict-resolution practices	4 sessions; approximately 10 hours	Leadership example, communication, participation, conflict management, and spiritual climate
Document analysis	Madrasah profile, 2021–2025 strategic plan, meeting minutes, workload records, performance reports, and activity documentation	Selected institutional documents	Institutional context and verification of interview and observation findings

Note. Detailed participant characteristics, interview protocols, data sources, and collection procedures are provided in Supplementary Tables S1 and S2 and Supplementary Appendix S1.

Data trustworthiness was supported through source triangulation, method triangulation, member checking, an analytical audit trail, researcher reflexivity, and attention to divergent evidence (Fitrah & Luthfiyah, 2017). Accounts from the principal, teachers, and administrative staff were compared with observational notes and institutional documents. Preliminary themes were discussed with the selected participants to assess interpretive accuracy. The analysis also retained evidence that qualified the dominant positive pattern, including one participant's view that workload distribution had not always been equally balanced during particular periods. Further documentation of these procedures is provided in Supplementary Table S5 and in Supplementary Appendix S4.

Data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), which comprises data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. Interview transcripts and field notes were read repeatedly before meaningful segments were assigned descriptive code. Related codes were organized into categories representing prophetic leadership practices, relational trust, shared spiritual meaning, and forms of teacher loyalty. Categories were compared across participant groups and checked against observations and documentary evidence. The first researcher conducted the primary coding, while the second researcher reviewed the code structure and interpretive decisions. Differences were resolved through rereading and discussion. Microsoft Excel and manual coding were used to manage the analyses. The codebook, theme development process, and analytical pathway are documented in Supplementary Tables S3-S6.

Results

1. Prophetic Leadership Practices at MTsN Gresik

The findings were organized around four prophetic values and three forms of teachers' loyalty. Across interviews, four observation sessions, meeting minutes, workload records, performance reports, and activity documentation, prophetic values appeared not as abstract religious labels but as recurring organizational practices. *Shiddiq* was associated with transparent explanations and consistency between speech and conduct; *amanah* with follow-through, fair stewardship, and responsibility; *tabligh* with deliberative communication; and *fathanah* with context-sensitive judgment. These patterns converged around trust, recognition, shared moral meaning, and belonging, which informed the interpretation of spiritual bonding.

a) Shiddiq: Integrity and Leadership Example

Participants described *Shiddiq* through two closely related practices: openness in institutional affairs and congruence between the principal's expectations and conduct. KM-01 explained that programs, constraints, and policy changes were communicated through deliberative forums, while teachers emphasized that the principal followed the same standards of discipline and honesty as expected of them. Administrative staff likewise associated *Shiddiq* with accessible information and the absence of hidden manipulation in administrative decision-making.

This interpretation was supported by observations and documentary evidence. During the program evaluation meeting on May 14, 2025, the principal explained the causes of program delays, resource limitations, and the rationale for schedule changes before inviting responses. The meeting minutes recorded both the reasoning behind the decision and the agreed-upon follow-up actions. Table 2 summarizes how transparency, integrity, personal example, and administrative openness appeared across the participant groups.

Table 2. Interview Findings on the Implementation of *Shiddiq* Values

Aspect	Indicator	Summary of Interview Evidence	Participant Code
Shiddiq	Policy transparency	The principal communicates programs, constraints, and policies openly in deliberative forums	KM-01
	Honesty and leadership example	The principal communicates openly and models the discipline expected of teachers	T-01
	Integrity	Participants perceived decisions as free from personal manipulation and generally fair	T-02
	Administrative transparency	Administrative information and procedures are communicated transparently	S-01

> *"The madrasah principal never asks us to do something that he does not do himself. This example motivated us to work sincerely." (T-05)*

The quotation shows that participants judged integrity through observable consistency rather than verbal claims alone. Leadership example gave policy instructions moral credibility and reduced the distance between formal authority and everyday practice. In this sense, *Shiddiq* established a basis for relational trust: teachers were more willing to accept direction when the principal was perceived as subject to the same ethical expectations.

b) Amanah: Responsibility and Consistency

Participants associated *amanah* with sustained responsibility after decisions were made. The principal was expected to announce programs, monitor their progress, respond when

teams encountered obstacles, and consider teachers' professional needs. Teachers and administrative staff also linked *amanah* to the proportional management of duties, budgets, and institutional resources.

Triangulation clarified both the dominant pattern and its limits. During the observed program follow-up, the principal reviewed implementation and offered support when a team reported difficulties. Assignment documents for the 2024/2025 academic year showed that duties were generally adjusted according to competence, experience, and existing workload. Table 3 presents the interview evidence underlying this theme.

Table 3. Interview Findings on the Implementation of *Amanah* Values

Aspect	Indicator	Summary of Interview Evidence	Participant Code
Amanah	Leadership responsibilities	The principal follows through on programs and attends to teachers' professional needs	KM-01
	Program consistency	Programs agreed through deliberation are implemented and reviewed consistently	T-03
	Fair workload allocation	Workloads are generally allocated according to competence and existing responsibilities	T-04
	Resource management	Budgets, duties, and resources are managed proportionately	S-02

"Assignments are discussed according to each person's abilities and existing workload, rather than simply on the basis of personal closeness." (T-04)

At the same time, the evidence was not entirely uniform. T-04 noted that workload distribution had not always been balanced during particular periods. This divergent account was retained because it qualifies an idealized reading of *amanah*: responsibility was experienced as a continuing organizational effort rather than a condition that had been perfectly achieved. The theme therefore reflects both confidence in the principal's reliability and an expectation that fairness should be continuously reviewed.

c) Tabligh: Open and Participatory Communication

Tabligh was most visible in the principal's use of explanation, consultation, and two-way communication. Participants reported that important policies were usually preceded by meetings, that the reasons behind decisions were made explicit, and that teachers could raise suggestions or objections without fear of personal retaliation. Administrative staff added that communication across academic and administrative units was generally direct and participatory.

The observed meetings supported these accounts. In the May 14 program evaluation meeting, several teachers raised concerns and proposed alternatives; the principal responded to each point and revised part of the decision after the discussion. The minutes also documented teacher suggestions and the resulting changes. Table 4 summarizes the interview evidence for dialogic communication, deliberation, openness to criticism, and cross-unit coordination.

Table 4. Interview Findings on the Implementation of *Tabligh* Values

Aspect	Indicator	Summary of Interview Evidence	Participant Code
Tabligh	Communication patterns	Communication is open, dialogical, and persuasive in formal and informal settings	KM-01
	Musyawarah	Major policies are preceded by meetings and collective discussion	T-05

	Openness to criticism	Teachers can offer suggestions or criticism without immediate fear	T-06
	Cross-unit communication	Communication across academic and administrative units is participatory	S-03

"The madrasah principal always explains the reasons behind every policy. As a result, we feel respected and involved in the decision-making process." (T-03)

Formal deliberation was complemented by informal accessibility. Teachers described the principal as willing to listen outside scheduled meetings and as avoiding unnecessary hierarchical distance. This openness did not eliminate disagreement but made it organizationally discussable. *Tabligh* therefore contributed to recognition and psychological safety by allowing teachers to see themselves as participants in institutional decisions rather than merely as recipients of instructions.

d) Fathanah: Wisdom and Contextual Decision-Making

Participants understood *fathanah* as the capacity to read circumstances and select an appropriate response rather than technical intelligence alone. The principal was described as considering differences in workload, competence, and personal circumstances when making decisions, adapting institutional practices to policy changes, and favoring persuasive solutions when internal problems arose.

This pattern was visible during the schedule resolution meeting on May 28, 2025. Rather than imposing an immediate decision, the principal asked those involved to explain their existing responsibilities before a schedule exchange was agreed upon. Work plans and administrative records also showed adjustments to the actual institutional conditions. Table 5 summarizes the interview evidence for contextual decision-making, conflict resolution, policy adaptation, and timely administrative problem solving.

Table 5. Interview Findings on the Implementation of *Fathanah* Values

Aspect	Indicator	Summary of Interview Evidence	Participant Code
Fathanah	Decision-making	Policies are adjusted to teacher needs and institutional circumstances	KM-01
	Wisdom	Internal disagreements are addressed through persuasive dialogue	T-07
	Adaptability	The principal responds adaptively to changes in educational policy	T-08
	Problem solving	Administrative problems are addressed promptly and with attention to context	S-04

"When there was a disagreement over the schedule, he did not make an immediate decision. We were asked to explain our respective circumstances, and a middle ground was found." (T-07)

Participants regarded this process as wise because it combined decisiveness and contextual attention to the problem. The resulting confidence was both practical and emotional: teachers felt that difficult situations would be handled through explanations and proportionate judgments. *Fathanah* thus supported trust in the principal's competence and created a sense of protection without removing individual responsibility.

2. Forms of Teacher Loyalty

Teacher loyalty emerged as a multidimensional response rather than simple obedience or an intention to remain. Participants distinguished emotional identification with the madrasah, a moral obligation to support its mission, and visible contributions beyond assigned duties. These forms often overlapped in practice: pride encouraged participation,

moral responsibility sustained effort, and repeated contributions reinforced belonging. Table 6 summarizes the principal indicators and supporting participant accounts.

Table 6. Forms of Teacher Loyalty

Aspect	Indicator	Summary of Interview Evidence	Participant Code
Teacher Loyalty	Leadership impact	Participants connected loyalty with mutual trust and shared spiritual values	KM-01
Affective Loyalty	Institutional pride	Teachers expressed pride in belonging to MTsN Gresik	T-09
Normative Loyalty	Moral commitment	Teachers described a moral responsibility to support programs and protect the institution's reputation	T-03
Behavioral Loyalty	Voluntary contribution	Teachers reported voluntary contributions beyond formal working hours	T-10

Affective loyalty. Emotional attachment was expressed through pride in the institution and the quality of working relationships. T-09 stated, "I am proud to be part of this madrasah because our working relationships are built on mutual respect." This account was consistent with observations of collegial interaction and institutional documents emphasizing service and shared responsibility. Therefore, affective loyalty was rooted less in organizational prestige alone than in feeling respected and recognized within the madrasah.

Normative loyalty. Participants described a moral responsibility to support the agreed-upon programs and protect the institution's good name. T-03 stated, "When the madrasah has a program, I feel a moral responsibility to support it through to completion." The language of *amanah* and service also appeared during informal briefings, where task completion was connected to responsibilities toward students and colleagues. Thus, normative loyalty reflects an internalized obligation rather than compliance produced by sanctions.

Behavioral loyalty. Loyalty becomes observable when teachers contribute time and effort beyond formal requirements. T-10 stated, "On several occasions, we stayed after working hours to complete activities because the program was our shared responsibility." This account was corroborated during the preparations on May 30, 2025, when several teachers continued working after formal hours without additional instruction; performance and activity records also documented involvement beyond routine assignments. Therefore, behavioral loyalty represents the practical enactment of affective attachment and moral commitment.

3. Spiritual Bonding as a Connecting Mechanism

The findings suggest that prophetic leadership and teacher loyalty are connected through a recurring relational process. Transparent conduct and personal examples supported trust; responsible and generally fair stewardship supported moral confidence; participatory communication created recognition; and context-sensitive judgment strengthened confidence in the leader's competence. When these experiences were repeated, the participants described work relationships in terms of mutual respect, shared responsibility, and service rather than merely hierarchy.

The concept of spiritual bonding was developed from the convergence of relational and spiritual meanings. This was evident in participants' descriptions of work as *amanah* or worship, observations of shared moral language during briefings, and documents that emphasized integrity, service, quality improvement, and collective responsibility. Table 7

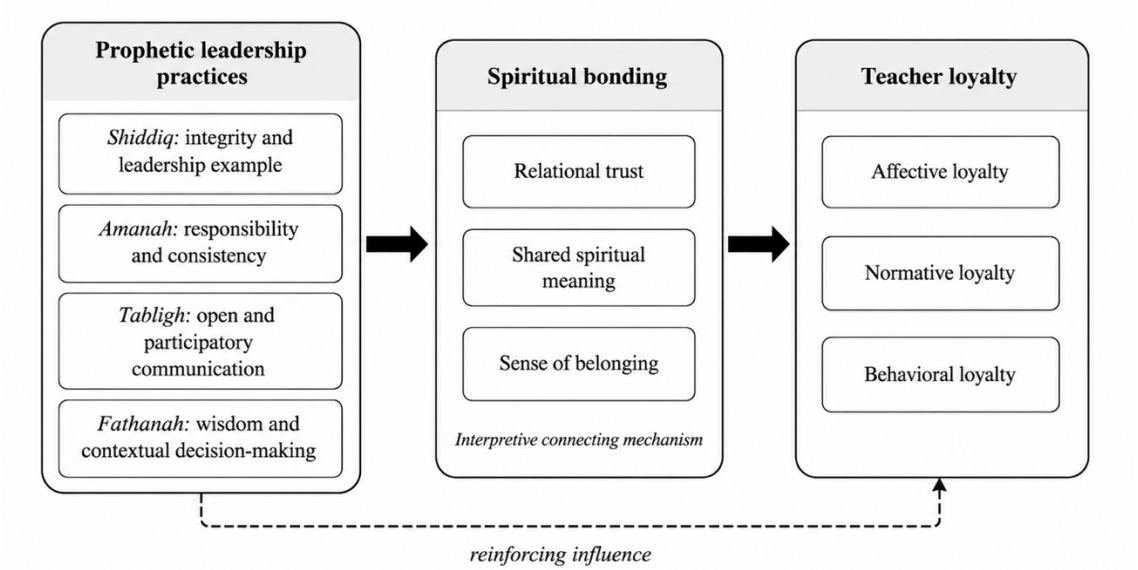
integrates leadership practices, relational mechanisms, teacher experiences, and forms of loyalty identified across the data.

Table 7. Integrated Pattern Linking Prophetic Leadership and Teacher Loyalty

Aspects of Prophetic Leadership	Indicators	Form of Implementation at MTsN Gresik	Impact on Teacher Loyalty
Shiddiq (Integrity and Example)	Transparency and congruence	Open explanation of policies and personal adherence to expected standards	Trust and affective attachment
Amanah (Responsibility)	Consistency and accountability	Follow-through on programs and generally competence-based task allocation	Moral confidence and normative commitment
Tabligh (Communication)	Dialogue and participation	Deliberation, openness to input, and accessible formal and informal communication	Recognition and organizational involvement
Fathanah (Wisdom)	Context-sensitive judgment	Adaptive decisions and persuasive resolution of disagreements	Psychological comfort and behavioral commitment
Affective Loyalty	Emotional attachment	Pride, mutual respect, and a sense of belonging	Willingness to remain identified with the madrasah
Normative Loyalty	Moral responsibility	Commitment to institutional programs and reputation	A felt obligation to support shared goals
Behavioral Loyalty	Voluntary contribution	Participation beyond formal hours and assigned responsibilities	Extra-role support for madrasah activities
Conceptual Contribution	Spiritual bonding	Trust, shared values, meaningful work, and relational recognition	An interpretive connection between prophetic leadership and multidimensional loyalty

Spiritual bonding was especially clear in T-09's statement: "We feel that our work is not merely about completing administrative tasks, but also about upholding the educational trust and protecting the good name of the madrasah." This account connects a routine organizational task to a broader moral purpose. It also helps explain why loyalty in this case included affective, normative, and behavioral dimensions: teachers remained attached because they felt respected, morally obligated because the work carried shared value, and willing to contribute because institutional tasks were interpreted as collective services.

Accordingly, spiritual bonding is presented here as an interpretive connecting mechanism rather than a statistically tested mediator. The data support a pathway in which repeated prophetic practices shape trust, recognition, shared meaning, and belonging, which, in turn, make sustained loyalty understandable within this case. Figure 1 illustrates this interpretive pathway.



Source: developed from the finding of the present stuy

Figure 1. Interpretive Pathway from Prophetic Leadership to Teacher Loyalty through Spiritual Bonding

Discussion

The findings indicate that prophetic leadership was associated with teacher loyalty through an interaction of ethical practice, relational trust, and shared spiritual meaning. The principal's authority mattered not simply because it was formally recognized but because participants assessed whether leadership behavior was transparent, responsible, communicative, and contextually wise. This interpretation shifts attention from prophetic leadership as a list of ideal traits to prophetic leadership as a pattern of everyday organizational practice.

This case also suggests that leadership in an Islamic educational institution operates simultaneously at managerial, relational, and spiritual levels. Managerial practices organize work, relational practices shape recognition and trust, and spiritual meanings connect professional responsibilities with service and *amanah*. Spiritual bonding captures the convergence of these levels, but it should be understood as an interpretive mechanism grounded in this case rather than as a statistically verified mediator.

This contribution complements organizational commitment perspectives by showing how affective, normative, and behavioral loyalty can acquire explicit moral and religious meanings in a madrasah. The findings do not imply that spiritual meaning replaces organizational fairness or competent management. Rather, spiritual bonding appeared credible when ethical language was supported by transparent policies, participatory communication, and observable leadership example.

1. Prophetic Leadership as a Relational Practice

Shiddiq and *Amanah* were experienced through congruence, transparency, responsibility, and follow-through. These findings align with Beekun and Badawi's (2005) view that moral integrity is central to Islamic leadership legitimacy and with Shiundu's (2024) emphasis on ethical judgment in organizational leadership. In the present case, moral legitimacy was not attributed to religious terminology alone; it was built through the visible consistency of decisions, conduct, and responsibility.

Tabligh and *fathanah* extended this pattern through dialogue and context-sensitive judgments. The principal's willingness to explain policies, receive criticism, and deliberate before decisions resembles the participatory leadership practices identified by Bush and Glover (2014). It also reflects the Islamic principle of musyawarah in conflict and organizational management (Hamzah 2025). *Fathanah* added an adaptive dimension: wisdom was expressed in the capacity to balance policy requirements, individual workloads, and practical institutional needs, rather than in unilateral decision-making.

This adaptive capacity was particularly relevant in a state madrasah, where administrative requirements coexist with a religious mission. The principal was expected to meet system demands while maintaining humane working relationships. Such balancing is consistent with the argument that effective leadership requires attention to both institutional structures and the needs of organizational members (Waedoloh et al., 2022). However, the divergent comments on workload distribution show that value-based leadership remains open to critical evaluation and requires ongoing procedural fairness.

Therefore, the findings support a contextual understanding of prophetic leadership. They resonate with authentic leadership scholarship on the role of consistency and trust (Avolio & Gardner, 2005) and with studies emphasizing religious values in educational organizational climates (Mansur et al., 2022). The distinctive contribution lies in showing how the four prophetic values were interpreted together as a relational configuration rather than isolated leadership characteristics.

2. Spiritual Bonding as an Interpretive Mechanism

Spiritual bonding emerged from the combination of leadership example, interpersonal trust, shared values, and interpreting work as service. This finding is consistent with Fry's (2003) theory of spiritual leadership, which links meaningful work and membership to intrinsic motivation and organizational commitment. The present study adds a specifically madrasah-based interpretation in which *amanah*, service to students, and protection of the institution's good name form part of the shared moral vocabulary.

Participants' accounts also support research suggesting that workplace spirituality can strengthen meaning and satisfaction when it is embedded in everyday relationships (Yogatama & Widyarini, 2015). In Islamic education, interpreting work as worship or service is consistent with the moral orientation described by Nata (2019). In this case, however, spiritual meaning was not presented as an individual feeling alone; it was reinforced through the collective practices of deliberation, mutual support, and responsibility.

Evidence suggests that spiritual bonding may function as relational and spiritual capital by encouraging solidarity during demanding activities. This interpretation is consistent with studies linking emotional and normative attachment to organizational loyalty (Zulqarnain et al., 2025) and a positive spiritual climate with reduced withdrawal intentions (Wu et al., 2020). Nevertheless, the present case cannot establish that spiritual bonding independently caused loyalty; the mechanism was inferred from converging qualitative evidence within an institution.

Therefore, the study's conceptual contribution is the specification of spiritual bonding as an interpretive bridge between prophetic leadership practices and multidimensional teacher loyalty. The concept explains how teachers move from observing ethical leadership behavior to experiencing trust, recognition, shared meaning, and belonging. Its value lies in organizing the qualitative pattern, while its transferability and measurement require examination in other institutional contexts.

3. Teacher Loyalty as a Multidimensional Outcome

Affective loyalty was evident in terms of institutional pride, mutual respect, and a sense of belonging. This pattern is consistent with the study identifying emotional attachment as the foundation of organizational commitment (Anifah & FoEh, 2024). In the madrasah context, the affective dimension also draws on togetherness and ukhuwah, giving institutional identification a relational and moral character (Nata, 2019).

Normative loyalty appeared as a felt responsibility to support programs, maintain the institution's reputation, and complete shared tasks. This finding corresponds with the view that loyalty is shaped by internalized organizational values and moral obligations (Ekowati & Sa'adah, 2025). The participants' language of *amanah* suggests that normative commitment was experienced not only as a professional duty but also as ethical accountability.

Behavioral loyalty is expressed through discipline, active participation, and voluntary contributions beyond formal hours. These practices resemble organizational citizenship behavior, in which individuals support organizational functioning beyond narrowly prescribed roles (Organ, 2018). The data indicate that such behavior was encouraged by shared responsibility and leadership examples, although the study did not measure its frequency or compare it with other institutions.

Taken together, the three dimensions show that teacher loyalty was not a single attitude. It combines emotional identification, moral obligation, and visible contributions. This pattern is compatible with Fry's (2003) argument that spiritual leadership can support durable commitment and with humanistic approaches emphasizing value-based relationships in education (Hayati et al., 2025). Claims of long-term sustainability should nevertheless remain cautious because the study captured participants' experiences within a bounded period rather than tracking loyalty longitudinally.

4. Practical Implications

For madrasah leadership practice, the findings emphasize four priorities: demonstrating the same standards expected of teachers, explaining the reasons behind policies, reviewing workload fairness rather than assuming it, and connecting institutional programs with a shared moral purpose. Spiritual language is most likely to support loyalty when accompanied by procedural transparency, accessible communication, and context-sensitive decision-making. Respectful disagreement should be preserved because critical feedback strengthens leadership.

5. Research Limitations

This study is limited by its focus on a single state madrasah and a purposively selected group of 15 participants in the study. Therefore, the findings are context-dependent and should not be generalized to all public or private madrasahs. Because the topic concerned the current principal's leadership, participants may have emphasized positive experiences despite the study's triangulation and retention of divergent evidence.

The fieldwork captured leadership and loyalty within a bounded period and did not trace changes over time. Accordingly, the study could not establish causal effects or confirm that spiritual bonding mediates the relationship between leadership and loyalty. Comparative case studies, longitudinal qualitative research, and mixed-method designs could examine whether the interpretive pathway identified here is evident across institutional types and can be operationalized for further testing.

Conclusion

This qualitative case study found that prophetic leadership at MTsN Gresik was enacted through integrity and personal example *(Shiddiq)*, responsibility and consistency

(amanah), open and participatory communication *(tabligh),* and context-sensitive judgment *(fathanah)*. Participants associated these practices with trust, recognition, shared moral meaning, and a sense of belonging. These experiences were conceptualized as spiritual bonding, an interpretive mechanism connecting prophetic leadership with affective, normative, and behavioral forms of teacher loyalty. The findings show that value-based leadership was credible when spiritual language was supported by transparent procedures, observable examples, accessible dialogue, and continued attention to fairness. For madrasah leaders, the central implication is that loyalty is more likely to develop through ethical and relational practice than through formal authority alone. Because the study represents one bounded case, future research should examine the transferability of spiritual bonding across public and private madrasahs and explore the concept through comparative, longitudinal, or mixed-method designs.

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