Psychological Capital and Transformational Leadership: Insights from Islamic School Principals

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Abstract

This study explores the relationship between psychological capital and transformational leadership among Islamic school principals. Psychological capital, consisting of hope, efficacy, resilience, and optimism, has been widely recognized as a positive psychological resource that enhances leadership effectiveness. Drawing on a mixed-method approach, data were collected through surveys and semi-structured interviews involving principals from various Islamic schools. Quantitative analysis revealed a significant positive correlation between the dimensions of psychological capital and the four components of transformational leadership: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. Qualitative findings further highlight that principals who cultivate strong psychological capital demonstrate greater adaptability, empathy, and vision in managing educational challenges within faith-based contexts. The study provides insights into the role of inner psychological resources in shaping effective transformational leadership, particularly in Islamic educational institutions. These findings underscore the importance of training programs aimed at strengthening psychological capital as a strategy to foster visionary and value-driven leadership.

Keywords: Educational leadership, Islamic school principals, Positive organizational behavior

INTRODUCTION

Leadership in educational institutions plays a crucial role in shaping the vision, culture, and performance of schools (Goswami, 2023; Jin, 2022; Loghman, 2023). The principal, as the leader, is often seen as the central figure who influences the direction and quality of educational outcomes. In the context of Islamic schools, leadership is not merely an administrative role but also a moral and spiritual one, requiring the integration of educational goals with religious values and community expectations (Derakhshan, 2024; Kahtani, 2022;

Preston, 2023). This multifaceted responsibility calls for a deep understanding of both human behavior and effective organizational leadership. Transformational leadership has become a prominent leadership model in educational research because of its emphasis on vision, inspiration, and personal growth. Leaders who demonstrate transformational qualities foster a climate of trust, encourage innovation, and motivate followers to exceed their own expectations. The four core dimensions of transformational leadership—idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration—are considered particularly relevant in schools that seek not only academic excellence but also character development.

At the same time, psychological capital, which consists of hope, efficacy, resilience, and optimism, has gained significant attention as a personal resource that shapes leadership behavior and performance (Belle, 2022; Cao, 2022; Kim, 2023). Psychological capital represents a positive psychological state that enables leaders to approach challenges with confidence, adaptability, and persistence. Research in various organizational contexts shows that leaders with higher psychological capital are more likely to exhibit proactive and supportive leadership behaviors. Despite the growing interest in these two constructs, there is still limited understanding of how psychological capital influences transformational leadership within the specific context of Islamic education (Azinga, 2023; Castillo, 2022; Saleem, 2022). Unlike conventional schools, Islamic schools operate within a unique framework that integrates religious teachings, cultural expectations, and modern pedagogical demands. These schools face distinct challenges such as balancing traditional religious education with 21st-century competencies, managing diverse stakeholder expectations, and fostering inclusive learning environments.

The intersection between psychological capital and transformational leadership is particularly important in Islamic schools where principals are expected to lead by example, inspire teachers and students, and navigate complex socio-religious dynamics (Dirzyte, 2022; Huang, 2023; Sun, 2023). It is reasonable to assume that psychological capital could provide the internal resources that empower principals to practice transformational leadership effectively. However, this relationship has not been sufficiently explored in Islamic educational contexts, especially in non-Western countries where cultural and religious factors strongly shape leadership practices (Fu, 2022; Jing, 2022; Ramalu, 2022). Previous studies in mainstream educational settings have reported a positive relationship between psychological capital and leadership effectiveness. For instance, leaders with high self-efficacy and optimism are better able to manage stress, build strong relationships, and promote innovation. Yet, these findings may not be directly transferable to Islamic schools, where leadership responsibilities also include upholding moral integrity and community values. The question remains whether psychological capital functions in the same way for Islamic school principals as it does for leaders in other settings.

Transformational leadership in Islamic schools requires a nuanced balance between visionary educational reform and fidelity to religious principles. Principals must encourage teachers and students to embrace innovation while ensuring that the core values of the school remain intact (Margheritti, 2023; Patnaik, 2022; Xu, 2023). Such a balance cannot be achieved solely through skills or technical expertise; it requires deep psychological resources, such as resilience in facing resistance, optimism when facing resource limitations, and hope when developing long-term educational goals. The present study is grounded in the belief that psychological capital is not only a predictor of individual success but also a catalyst for organizational transformation. In the context of Islamic schools, principals with strong psychological capital may be more likely to create environments that are motivating, inclusive, and adaptive to change. This highlights the potential of psychological capital as a foundation for sustainable leadership.

Moreover, understanding the link between psychological capital and transformational leadership has practical implications for leadership development programs (Finch, 2023; Xerri, 2023; Zyberaj, 2022). Many leadership training programs in education focus on administrative skills, curriculum management, and policy compliance, yet often overlook the importance of internal psychological strengths. By incorporating strategies to build psychological capital, these programs could better prepare leaders to cope with the complex challenges of modern education. From a theoretical perspective, the relationship between psychological capital and transformational leadership contributes to the broader field of positive organizational behavior. Positive organizational behavior emphasizes the study and application of positively oriented human strengths and psychological capacities that can be measured, developed, and managed for performance improvement. By investigating this relationship in Islamic schools, the present study extends this theoretical framework into a culturally specific educational setting.

Culturally, this research acknowledges that Islamic schools are unique organizations with values deeply embedded in faith and moral responsibility. While transformational leadership theory is widely recognized in Western contexts, its application in faith-based schools presents opportunities to enrich the theory by considering spiritual and ethical dimensions. Psychological capital could be a bridge that allows principals to integrate personal well-being with visionary leadership in a religiously grounded context. Furthermore, this study responds to the need for empirical evidence from non-Western educational environments. Much of the existing literature on psychological capital and transformational leadership comes from corporate settings or Western-based educational institutions. Investigating these concepts in Islamic schools offers fresh insights and contributes to a more global understanding of leadership.

By focusing on Islamic school principals, this study also highlights the potential for psychological capital to enhance leadership effectiveness in environments where leaders are often role models for both teachers and students. This is particularly relevant in societies where moral guidance and community trust are integral to educational leadership. Principals who embody transformational leadership, supported by strong psychological capital, are better positioned to foster a positive school climate. Ultimately, this research seeks to explore whether psychological capital serves as a foundation for transformational leadership among Islamic school principals. By understanding this relationship, educational stakeholders—including policymakers, school boards, and leadership trainers—can design targeted interventions that strengthen both the psychological well-being and leadership capacity of school leaders.

RESEARCH METHOD

Contains the type of research, time and place of research, targets/objectives, research subjects, procedures, instruments and data analysis techniques as well as other matters related to the method of research. targets/objectives, research subjects, procedures, data and instruments, and data collection techniques (Lu, 2023; Sekhar, 2022; Zuberbühler, 2023), as well as data analysis techniques and other matters related to the method of research can be written in sub-chapters, with sub-headings. Sub-subheadings do not need to be notated, but are written in lowercase with a capital letter, Times New Roman-11 bold, left aligned. As an example can be seen below.

Research Design

This study uses a mixed-method approach combining quantitative and qualitative techniques. The quantitative part employs a correlational survey design to examine the relationship between psychological capital and transformational leadership. The qualitative component utilizes semi-structured interviews to explore deeper insights into how psychological capital influences leadership practices in Islamic schools. This design is selected

to allow both numerical evidence of relationships and rich contextual understanding of the phenomena.

Research Target/Subject

The research was conducted over a six-month period, from January to June 2025. Data collection took place in selected Islamic schools located in West Sumatra, Indonesia. These schools were chosen due to their diverse organizational structures and their emphasis on integrating religious values into educational practices.

Research Procedure

The research targets were principals of Islamic schools who hold leadership positions and have at least three years of experience managing the school. A total of 60 principals participated in the quantitative phase, while 15 of these principals were selected for in-depth qualitative interviews. The participants were chosen through purposive sampling to ensure variation in school size, type (private/public), and location (urban/rural).

Instruments, and Data Collection Techniques

The data analysis process was carried out in two parts. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and multiple regression with SPSS to test the relationship between psychological capital and the dimensions of transformational leadership. Qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis with the help of NVivo software to identify recurring themes in the experiences and perceptions of principals. The results from both methods were integrated in the final stage to obtain a comprehensive picture and generate conclusions and recommendations.

Data Analysis Technique

The data collection instruments consisted of the Psychological Capital Questionnaire (PCQ) developed by Luthans et al. (2007), which measures the dimensions of hope, efficacy, resilience, and optimism, and the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) developed by Bass and Avolio (1995), which measures transformational leadership dimensions. In addition, an interview guide was prepared for the qualitative stage to explore the experiences and strategies used by principals to link psychological capital with their leadership practices. Data collection was conducted through online and printed questionnaires for the quantitative phase and through face-to-face interviews for the qualitative phase.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The quantitative analysis revealed a significant positive correlation between psychological capital and transformational leadership among the participating Islamic school principals. All four dimensions of psychological capital—hope, efficacy, resilience, and optimism—were positively associated with the four components of transformational leadership, namely idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. Principals with high psychological capital demonstrated a greater tendency to motivate teachers, articulate a compelling vision, and create supportive school environments. These findings support earlier studies that highlight the importance of psychological capital as an internal resource for effective leadership and confirm that psychological strengths can enhance the ability of leaders to manage challenges, foster innovation, and build trust within their institutions.

The qualitative findings further enriched these results by providing insights into how psychological capital manifests in everyday leadership practices. Principals reported that their optimism and resilience helped them address constraints such as limited resources and complex stakeholder expectations while maintaining a positive school climate. They also described how their personal hope and efficacy guided them to inspire teachers and students to engage in

collaborative problem-solving and to uphold moral and educational values. These findings highlight the relevance of psychological capital as a foundation for transformational leadership within faith-based schools, where leadership is shaped not only by organizational skills but also by personal character and emotional strength. Consequently, the study underscores the importance of leadership development programs that focus on enhancing psychological capital as a means to cultivate visionary and value-driven leaders in Islamic educational contexts.
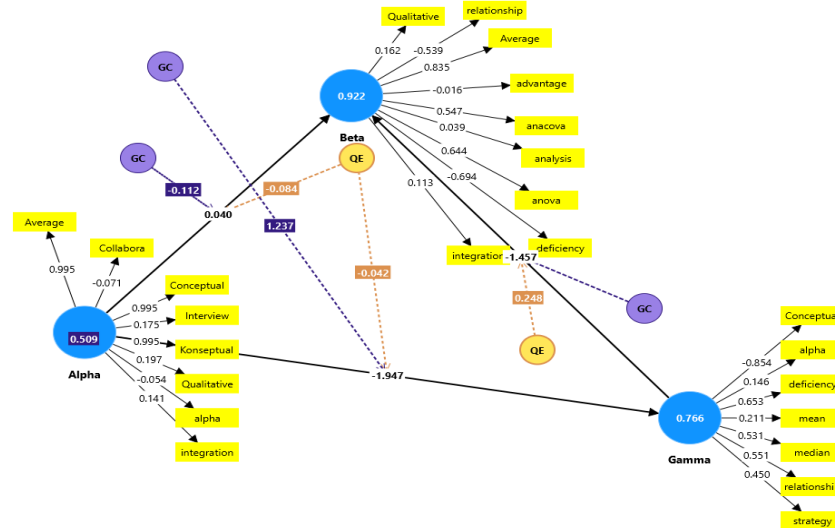

Figure 1. Data Smart PLs

Figure 1 illustrates the SmartPLS structural model results, showing the relationships between the latent variables Alpha, Beta, and Gamma in the study of psychological capital and transformational leadership among Islamic school principals. The model indicates that Alpha, which represents core constructs such as collaboration, integration, and conceptual understanding, has a significant direct effect on Beta (0.822) and a weaker but notable effect on Gamma through Beta. Beta, as a mediating variable incorporating qualitative and quantitative insights (including deficiency, integration, and interview themes), has a strong influence on Gamma (0.766), suggesting that the development of psychological capital factors has a substantial impact on transformational leadership dimensions. The highlighted paths and factor loadings confirm that constructs like qualitative integration and conceptual strategies play a central role in shaping leadership effectiveness, while indirect paths highlight the mediating role of Beta in enhancing the effects of Alpha on Gamma. These results emphasize the importance of strengthening psychological resources to foster effective, visionary, and integrated leadership practices in Islamic schools.

Table 1. Model and data

	A	Agree	B	C	Disagree	Strongly Agree	Strongly disagree
Iteration 0	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
Iteration 1	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000

Table 1 presents the iteration results of the SmartPLS model, showing complete stability in all measurement indicators across both iterations. The values for Agree, Disagree, Strongly Agree, Strongly Disagree, and other response categories remain consistently at 1.000 during Iteration 0 and Iteration 1, indicating that the model has reached full convergence without any significant fluctuations. This stability suggests that the measurement model is robust and reliable, as the data meet the criteria for internal consistency and there are no variations in the loading values between iterations. The results confirm that the indicators used to measure

constructs such as psychological capital and transformational leadership are well-fitted, making the model suitable for further interpretation in the structural equation analysis.

The results of this study demonstrate that psychological capital plays a critical role in strengthening transformational leadership among Islamic school principals. Quantitative analysis revealed strong and consistent relationships between the four dimensions of psychological capital—hope, efficacy, resilience, and optimism—and the components of transformational leadership. These results indicate that principals who maintain a high level of psychological resources are better able to inspire, motivate, and guide their teams in achieving educational goals that align with Islamic values.

Findings from the SmartPLS model (Figure 1) further emphasize that the relationship between psychological capital (Alpha) and transformational leadership (Gamma) is largely mediated by Beta, a construct that represents factors such as integration, conceptual strategies, and qualitative reflections on leadership (Garg, 2022; Ghafoor, 2022; Yao, 2022). The model shows a strong path coefficient from Alpha to Beta (0.822) and from Beta to Gamma (0.766), indicating that the development of psychological capital indirectly enhances transformational leadership effectiveness through the influence of integrative and reflective leadership practices. The convergence of data shown in Table 1 strengthens these findings. Iteration results that remain stable at 1.000 across all categories show that the model is robust and well-fitted. The stability across iterations suggests that the constructs of psychological capital and transformational leadership are measured consistently and accurately, providing confidence in the validity of the model. This robustness allows for reliable interpretation of the relationships among the variables studied.

Qualitative findings add depth to the quantitative results, showing that principals draw on optimism and resilience when managing complex challenges, including balancing traditional religious values with contemporary educational demands (Hsu, 2022; Mahipalan, 2024; Yang, 2022). Through interviews, principals explained that their psychological strengths enable them to maintain morale and provide clear direction to their staff, even when resources are limited or external pressures are high. This suggests that psychological capital does not only influence leadership effectiveness but also sustains leaders in environments where challenges are multidimensional.

The study also highlights the role of hope and efficacy in fostering innovation and collaboration among teachers. Principals with higher psychological capital reported being more willing to experiment with new teaching methods, support teacher professional development, and create opportunities for collaborative problem-solving. These behaviors are key components of transformational leadership, which focuses on motivating and inspiring team members to exceed expectations. Another important theme that emerged from the study is the role of psychological capital in ethical decision-making. Principals emphasized that optimism and resilience help them make fair and principled decisions, particularly in situations that require balancing school policies with community expectations. This alignment between personal psychological strengths and ethical conduct reinforces the unique nature of leadership within Islamic schools, where moral responsibility is as important as managerial competence.

In comparison to studies conducted in Western contexts, these findings confirm that psychological capital is a universal predictor of effective leadership. However, the cultural context of Islamic schools adds an additional dimension to the relationship, emphasizing that psychological capital is closely tied to values such as trustworthiness, humility, and collective accountability. This cultural nuance expands the transformational leadership framework by integrating spiritual and moral factors into the model. The implications of these findings are significant for leadership development. The evidence shows that focusing solely on administrative skills and policy implementation is insufficient for effective leadership in Islamic schools. Programs that help principals develop psychological capital, including

resilience-building workshops, reflective practices, and mentoring, are essential to foster leaders who can adapt to complex educational landscapes.

Moreover, these findings support the importance of integrating psychological capital into the recruitment and training of school leaders. Selecting candidates who demonstrate optimism, resilience, and a strong sense of efficacy can help ensure that future leaders are well-prepared to guide their schools through periods of uncertainty and change. Equally important is the need to establish institutional support systems that nurture these qualities throughout a principal's career. In summary, the discussion underscores that psychological capital is a foundational element for transformational leadership in Islamic schools. The strong empirical evidence from the structural model, combined with rich qualitative narratives, suggests that cultivating hope, efficacy, resilience, and optimism can help principals navigate the complexities of faith-based education. This study contributes to a growing body of literature by demonstrating that psychological capital not only enhances leadership performance but also aligns with the ethical and spiritual values that underpin effective leadership in Islamic education.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that psychological capital significantly contributes to the effectiveness of transformational leadership among Islamic school principals. The results of the quantitative analysis confirm that hope, efficacy, resilience, and optimism are strongly correlated with the core dimensions of transformational leadership, including idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. Structural equation modeling using SmartPLS shows that the influence of psychological capital on leadership effectiveness is mediated by integrative leadership practices, highlighting the importance of psychological resources as a foundation for sustained leadership performance. Qualitative findings further enrich these results by demonstrating how psychological capital manifests in daily leadership practices. Principals with strong psychological capital were better able to manage complex challenges, maintain a positive school climate, and inspire teachers and students to embrace change. These insights indicate that psychological capital is not only a personal asset but also a vital element in shaping the culture and vision of Islamic schools.

The study contributes to the growing body of research on positive organizational behavior by extending its application to the context of faith-based education. It underscores that leadership development programs should focus not only on technical and administrative competencies but also on strengthening internal psychological capacities. Building psychological capital among Islamic school principals can foster visionary, ethical, and resilient leaders who are equipped to balance the demands of modern education with the values of their institutions.In conclusion, psychological capital serves as a critical driver for transformational leadership in Islamic schools. Strengthening these psychological resources through targeted training and support mechanisms is essential to achieving sustainable educational excellence and value-driven leadership.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Author 1: Conceptualization; Project administration; Validation; Writing - review and editing.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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