
Islamic Leadership and Organizational Culture in Muhammadiyah Higher Education: The Relationship Between Values and Academic Performance

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how Islamic leadership shapes organizational culture and influences academic performance at Muhammadiyah Universities, taking *Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta (UMY)*, *Universitas Ahmad Dahlan (UAD)*, and *Universitas Siber Muhammadiyah (Sibermu)* as research subjects. Using a qualitative approach, this study explores the life experiences of lecturers in interpreting values, leadership practices, and relational dynamics that develop in the institutional environment. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, direct observation, and review of institutional documents at the three universities. The findings show that Islamic leadership is understood not only as structural authority but also as a moral example that strengthens work ethic, trust, collaboration, and professionalism oriented towards *da'wah*. This leadership pattern shapes an organizational culture rooted in Muhammadiyah's reformist values such as *wasatiyyah*, intellectual integrity, and social responsibility, which collectively encourage collaboration, academic productivity, and commitment to community empowerment, including in the context of digital education at Sibermu. However, this study also identifies several challenges, such as communication gaps between managerial and academic units, inconsistencies in the implementation of values, and the need for stronger alignment between Islamic idealism and the process of development.

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INTRODUCTION

Perguruan Tinggi Muhammadiyah (PTM) constitutes one of the major actors in the ecosystem of Islamic higher education in Indonesia. As part of Muhammadiyah's charitable enterprise (*amal usaha*), PTM bears not only academic responsibilities but also moral and cultural obligations to preserve and promote the values of progressive Islam. The transformation of higher education in the digital era demands adaptive leadership models and organizational cultures capable of responding to rapidly changing academic environments (Akour & Alenezi, 2022). Within the context of PTM, these demands become increasingly complex, as they must be balanced with Muhammadiyah's ideological commitment to modernity, professionalism, and Islamic ethics.

This complexity is reflected in the institutional characteristics of *Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta* (UMY), which is oriented toward internationalization and modern governance; *Universitas Ahmad Dahlan* (UAD), which emphasizes the integration of scientific knowledge and Islamic values within an urban academic tradition; and *Universitas Siber Muhammadiyah* (Sibermu), which represents the digital transformation of Muhammadiyah higher education grounded in Islamic values.

Changes in the global higher education system have positioned university leadership as a crucial factor. Numerous studies indicate that academic leaders play a strategic role in directing institutional quality, building competitive advantage, and developing innovation ecosystems (Alfawaire & Atan, 2021). In higher education, organizational culture not only shapes patterns of work but also influences faculty well-being, creativity, and academic effectiveness (Kim & Jung, 2022; Martínez-Falcó et al., 2024). Within PTM, organizational culture is enriched by progressive Islamic values, making the institution's moral and ideological identity an integral part of faculty behavior and work orientation.

Organizational communication constitutes a vital element in strengthening culture and facilitating leadership functions. Recent studies demonstrate that effective internal communication enhances job satisfaction, employee engagement, and the quality of relationships between leaders and organizational members (Lee et al., 2022). Symmetrical and trust-based communication fosters a collaborative environment that supports improvements in academic performance (Meng & Berger, 2022). In the context of PTM, organizational communication is closely intertwined with deliberative values (*musyawarah*), scientific ethics, and collegial culture (Banker & Bhal, 2020; de Boer & Maassen, 2020). During crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic, leadership competence becomes even more essential, as leaders are required to safeguard organizational stability, faculty mental health, and the continuity of learning processes (Hammoudi Halat et al., 2023). These findings underscore that leadership quality is measured not only by managerial capacity but also by emotional, moral, and relational competence.

Within PTM, Islamic leadership offers a distinctive moral framework for academic leadership practices. Values such as trust (*amanah*), justice (*'adl*), deliberation (*musyawarah*), exemplary conduct (*uswah*), and commitment to service constitute the ethical foundations of leadership. Research on servant leadership in higher education shows that the moral and spiritual values of leaders enhance faculty job satisfaction and improve academic outcomes (Aboramadan et al., 2022). Likewise, credible leadership competence has been shown to strengthen organizational culture and increase work engagement (Srimulyani & Hermanto, 2022).

Organizational culture exerts a substantial influence on work dynamics and academic performance. Alawite and Atan highlight that strong organizational culture, supported by strategic human resource management, contributes significantly to institutional harmony and effectiveness. Moreover, faculty performance dynamics are shaped by multiple factors, including professional competence, motivation, job satisfaction, and organizational conditions. Studies across global

contexts reveal that transformational leadership and organizational communication significantly affect performance, both directly and indirectly through job satisfaction as a mediating variable (Hilton et al., 2023). In the digital era, leaders' capacity to build trust and manage technological innovation has also become increasingly crucial in enhancing motivation and academic performance (Laufer et al., 2025).

Nevertheless, most existing studies on leadership, organizational communication, and faculty performance continue to rely predominantly on quantitative approaches. While such approaches have contributed significantly to mapping relationships among variables, they also present important limitations. First, previous research tends to emphasize statistical models and thus fails to capture the subjective experiences of faculty members, particularly how they interpret leadership and organizational culture in their everyday lives (Almutairi, 2020). Second, many studies focus primarily on structural characteristics and outcome variables such as job satisfaction or performance, without sufficiently exploring relational dynamics, communication processes, and the accompanying moral-spiritual dimensions of leader-faculty interactions. Third, several studies examine higher education institutions within global or secular contexts, thereby overlooking the distinctiveness of Islamic institutions that embody more complex ideological and cultural values. Islamic educational institutions such as those under Muhammadiyah possess theological identities, organizational traditions, and a *da'wah* ethos that cannot be adequately explained through statistical models alone. These limitations highlight the urgency of qualitative research to comprehend the depth of meaning, value dynamics, and socio-religious realities within PTM organizational life.

The distinctive character of PTM as a modernist Islamic institution requires a research approach capable of capturing how faculty members interpret Islamic leadership, how organizational values are translated into institutional practices, and how everyday social interaction and communication shape their work experiences. A qualitative approach is particularly relevant for exploring these dimensions, as it places lived experience, interpretation, and social reality at the core of analysis.

The theoretical framework of this study is built upon three pillars: Islamic leadership, organizational culture, and organizational communication, which collectively shape faculty academic performance in Muhammadiyah higher education institutions. Islamic leadership emphasizes moral integrity, exemplary conduct, and healthy social relations (Dirani et al., 2020), while servant and authentic leadership models have been shown to enhance motivation and job satisfaction. Within PTM, values of trust, justice, and deliberation reinforce leadership character that is not merely administrative but also ethical and spiritual. Organizational culture, constructed through values of professionalism, collegial collectivism, discipline, and commitment to *da'wah*, plays a key role in strengthening faculty engagement and performance. Organizational communication serves as the primary bridge connecting values, policies, and daily work interactions; symmetrical communication reinforces trust and fosters a positive emotional climate. These three dimensions jointly shape academic performance, which in the PTM perspective encompasses not only the *tridharma* of higher education but also moral and spiritual contributions as part of scholarly *da'wah* (Muhdar et al., 2022).

Based on this conceptualization, the present study aims to explore the relationships among Islamic leadership, organizational culture, and academic performance in Muhammadiyah higher education institutions through an in-depth understanding of faculty lived experiences. This study is expected to contribute conceptually to the development of Islamic leadership and organizational culture scholarship within the context of Islamic higher education in Indonesia, while also offering practical recommendations to strengthen PTM governance so that it remains relevant and competitive amid ongoing societal and technological transformation.

METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative approach to explore in depth the experiences, meanings, and social constructions of faculty members regarding Islamic leadership, organizational culture, and communication practices within Muhammadiyah higher education institutions. The research was conducted at *Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta* (UMY), *Universitas Ahmad Dahlan* (UAD), and *Universitas Siber Muhammadiyah* (Sibermu). This approach was selected because the phenomena under investigation are contextual, complex, and value-laden, and therefore cannot be adequately explained through quantitative measurement models.

The research design is interpretive qualitative, focusing on how Islamic values, organizational ethos, and leadership dynamics are understood and enacted by faculty members in their everyday academic lives across the three universities, including both conventional offline campuses and a fully cyber-based campus. Research participants consisted of permanent lecturers, heads of study programs, and structural administrators at the faculty level. They were selected through purposive sampling, based on their involvement in decision-making processes, academic interactions, and their understanding of Muhammadiyah organizational culture at UMY, UAD, and Sibermu.

Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and institutional document analysis, including organizational guidelines, quality assurance documents, and university-specific regulations. Data analysis employed a thematic analysis model, involving data familiarization, coding, theme development, and interpretative meaning-making, while maintaining alignment between empirical findings and the theoretical framework of Islamic leadership, organizational culture, and organizational communication. Data validity was strengthened through source and method triangulation, member checking, and verification with official institutional documents to ensure that the findings accurately reflect organizational realities. The entire analytical process was directed toward understanding how Islamic values and Muhammadiyah culture operate within leadership practices and influence faculty academic performance at UMY, UAD, and Sibermu.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Meaning of Islamic Leadership in Muhammadiyah Higher Education

Islamic leadership within Muhammadiyah Higher Education Institutions (*Perguruan Tinggi Muhammadiyah*/PTM) is understood as a moral, spiritual, and managerial construct that is inseparable from the progressive Islamic tradition underpinning the Muhammadiyah movement. This is reflected in leadership practices at *Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta* (UMY), *Universitas Ahmad Dahlan* (UAD), and *Universitas Siber Muhammadiyah* (Sibermu). In the context of higher education, leadership is not merely interpreted as the management of academic bureaucracy, but as an ethical mandate to safeguard institutional integrity, guide the academic community, and ensure the quality of the *tridharma* within the framework of progressive Islam. At UMY, this paradigm is manifested through the integration of modern governance and value-based internationalization; at UAD, through the strengthening of the integration between scientific knowledge and Islamic values within an urban academic culture; and at Sibermu, through the management of digital higher education grounded in the principles of trustworthiness (*amanah*), transparency, and service. This paradigm aligns with the view that 21st-century higher education leadership requires moral integrity, adaptive capacity, and strategic agility amid rapid global change and massive technological disruption (Dirani et al., 2020). Within this landscape, PTM leaders are required to bridge the demands of academic modernity with firmly rooted religious values.

The moral dimension constitutes the primary foundation of Islamic leadership. PTM faculty members perceive integrity, honesty, and consistency between leaders' words and actions as critical

determinants of leadership credibility and trust. Numerous studies have demonstrated that integrity is a key predictor of organizational stability and academic staff satisfaction (Banker & Bhal, 2020). When leaders consistently align policies with ethical behavior, they create a positive psychological climate that encourages higher faculty productivity. In the context of global higher education's accelerating digital transformation, leaders' moral integrity is increasingly essential in addressing challenges related to technology, governance, and change management (Akour & Alenezi, 2022). PTM faculty regard exemplary conduct not as an auxiliary trait, but as the very core of Islamic leadership.

This exemplary dimension is closely connected to Muhammadiyah's organizational values, which place morality at the center of leadership character formation. Field interviews revealed a recurring emphasis that "leaders must serve as role models, not merely give orders." This finding is reinforced by the literature showing that morally grounded leadership promotes a healthy organizational culture, enhances academic performance, and reduces internal conflict (de Boer & Maassen, 2020). Within the PTM tradition, exemplary leadership is not merely a managerial style but is rooted in the *da'wah* ethos of *amar ma'ruf nahi munkar*.

Beyond integrity, deliberation (*musyawarah*) is one of the most highly valued characteristics of Islamic leadership among PTM faculty. Deliberation is perceived as an ethical mechanism of decision-making in which faculty voices are respected and meaningfully involved. Such participation has a significant impact on affective commitment and trust in leadership (Almutairi, 2020). In complex university settings, purely top-down decision-making often creates distance between leaders and faculty. Therefore, authentic deliberation strengthens collegiality and institutional belonging. Research by Lee et al. (2022) confirms that participation and symmetrical communication enhance employee engagement principles that strongly resonate with Muhammadiyah's organizational culture of collegiality and togetherness.

Nevertheless, deliberative practices within PTM also face challenges, particularly when familial culture becomes overly dominant. Some faculty members noted that "skepticism" often inhibits openness during meetings. While such a culture fosters harmony, it may simultaneously weaken evaluative rigor. The literature suggests that organizational cultures excessively oriented toward harmony can undermine innovation capacity and professional effectiveness (Srimulyani & Hermanto, 2022). Consequently, Islamic leadership must continuously balance deliberative inclusiveness with objective performance evaluation.

Another prominent dimension of PTM leadership is emotional intelligence. In many cases, the emotional relationship between leaders and faculty emerges as a determining factor for workplace comfort and academic productivity. Winton (2022) emphasizes that alignment between leaders' and followers' emotional intelligence increases job satisfaction and reduces emotional exhaustion. Similarly, Alwali and Alwali (2022) demonstrate that transformational leadership supported by high emotional intelligence significantly enhances employees' intrinsic motivation. In the PTM context where social structures intersect with religious values and local culture emotional intelligence becomes a vital component in maintaining harmony, fairness, and psychological well-being in professional relationships.

A further defining dimension of Islamic leadership is service orientation (*kesungguhan*). PTM leaders are expected to provide substantial academic support, ranging from research facilities and publication access to continuous faculty development. The servant leadership model has been empirically shown to improve faculty job satisfaction and academic performance by positioning employee well-being as a strategic priority. Interviews indicate that faculty perceive leaders' support for research and publication as a concrete manifestation of Islamic leadership rather than mere religious rhetoric. This perspective is corroborated by Hilton et al., who assert that leadership support

for academic needs significantly enhances overall institutional performance.

Organizational communication constitutes another critical pillar shaping the effectiveness of Islamic leadership. Faculty testimonies frequently indicate that “information often arrives late” or that “not all policies are explained openly.” These constraints demonstrate that internal communication remains a persistent organizational challenge. The literature confirms that inconsistent communication undermines trust, weakens organizational cohesion, and diminishes faculty performance (Meng & Berger, 2022). Conversely, transparent and symmetrical communication fosters a positive emotional culture and strengthens organizational commitment (Ghorbanzadeh et al., 2023). Within PTM, communication functions not only as a managerial instrument but also as a medium for internalizing Islamic values, organizational ethics, and institutional goals.

Islamic leadership within PTM rests upon four principal pillars: moral integrity, participatory deliberation, emotional intelligence, and service orientation. Both theoretical and empirical studies affirm that these four dimensions significantly enhance organizational performance, faculty satisfaction, and the quality of the tridharma (Park et al., 2022). Within the PTM framework, Islamic leadership is not merely a symbolic expression of religious identity, but a comprehensive governance model that must be systematically and consistently implemented to respond effectively to contemporary higher education challenges while maintaining steadfast commitment to Islamic values and the Muhammadiyah organizational ethos.

Internalization of Organizational Values in the Organizational Culture of Muhammadiyah Higher Education

The internalization of organizational values in Muhammadiyah Higher Education Institutions (*Perguruan Tinggi Muhammadiyah/PTM*) is a long-term and multidimensional process that connects Muhammadiyah’s ideological discourse with everyday institutional practices, as reflected in the organizational dynamics of *Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta (UMY)*, *Universitas Ahmad Dahlan (UAD)*, and *Universitas Siber Muhammadiyah (Sibermu)*. Values such as trustworthiness, commitment to service, deliberation (*musyawarah*), professionalism, and a collective orientation are not sufficiently embedded merely through institutional vision and mission statements; rather, they must be operationalized through human resource policies, remuneration mechanisms, curriculum development, teaching practices, and evaluation cultures in order to genuinely shape the behavior of the academic community (Alfawaire & Atan, 2021). At UMY and UAD, this process unfolds within the context of physical campuses under the pressures of internationalization and academic competition, whereas at Sibermu these values are tested within a digital higher education ecosystem that demands greater flexibility, transparency, and accountability. In the era of digital transformation and global quality standards, the capacity of higher education leaders (non-chief executives/NCEs) at these three institutions to translate organizational values into adaptive and ethical practices has become a decisive factor in sustaining institutional competitiveness (Akour & Alenezi, 2022).

Structurally, the internalization of organizational values in PTM begins with formal governance arrangements through the formulation of codes of conduct, recruitment criteria, and career development systems that are consistent with Muhammadiyah’s core values, as implemented at UMY, UAD, and Sibermu. The integration of values as indicators in promotion and performance evaluation motivates faculty members to embody these values within the tridharma of higher education. Findings from strategic human resource management studies indicate that embedding institutional values within HRM practices and knowledge management enhances sustainable competitive advantage an insight that is particularly relevant for PTM institutions seeking to preserve

their Islamic identity while simultaneously improving academic quality (Alfawaire & Atan, 2021). Value-based recruitment, mentoring that prioritizes scientific ethics, and mission-driven research scholarship policies at UMY, UAD, and Sibermu serve as concrete examples of formal instruments that strengthen the internalization process.

Beyond formal structures, the socialization of values occurs through everyday leadership practices. Leaders who consistently demonstrate moral role modeling function as effective agents of socialization, as reflected in the collegial leadership relations at UMY and UAD, as well as in the digitally based transformational leadership model at Sibermu. Servant leadership has been shown to enhance academic commitment when combined with structural support, such as allocated research time and publication facilitation (Hilton et al., 2023). Within the PTM context particularly across these three campuses tangible leadership support for faculty professional development ensures that values are not merely symbolic but become lived realities that cultivate intrinsic motivation to contribute to the mission of scholarly *da'wah*.

Organizational communication constitutes a crucial component to prevent value internalization from becoming merely ceremonial. Symmetrical, open, and participatory communication patterns at UMY and UAD enable faculty members to understand the rationale behind institutional policies and to feel included in processes of change, while at Sibermu digital communication serves as the primary medium for building participation and accountability. Conversely, stagnant and top-down communication tends to detach values from practice. Meng and Berger (2022) emphasize that trust-building communicative environments reinforce the internalization of professional culture. For leaders at UMY, UAD, and Sibermu, this requires deliberative forums supported by effective follow-up mechanisms, transparent documentation of decisions, and functional feedback channels.

Training and values-based education serve as the bridge between theory and professional practice. At PTM particularly at UMY, UAD, and Sibermu leadership training programs, scientific ethics workshops, academic writing training, and intergenerational mentoring schemes function as strategic platforms for internalizing values within daily academic work. These programs not only strengthen managerial capacity but also cultivate ethical and spiritual sensitivity among both faculty members and leaders in institutional decision-making.

Nevertheless, the internalization process also encounters cultural paradoxes. At UMY and UAD, strong familial cultures foster cohesion but risk obscuring meritocratic mechanisms if not balanced by objective evaluation systems. At Sibermu, the primary challenge lies in the social distance created by digital interactions, which may weaken direct social control and value formation. Srimulyani and Hermanto (2022) demonstrate that excessive interpersonal caution can hinder critical openness and academic innovation. Therefore, internal governance at all three institutions must develop evaluation systems that are sensitive to values yet firm in performance assessment, such as transparent peer review, performance indicators integrating academic quality and scholarly *da'wah*, and non-financial rewards based on institutional contribution.

External pressures in the form of digitalization, artificial intelligence literacy, and accreditation demands increasingly influence the process of value internalization. In this context, Sibermu represents a laboratory for PTM's digital transformation, while UMY and UAD integrate digitalization more gradually within learning systems and institutional governance. Leadership is thus required to integrate ethical values with the capacity to lead technological change, including ensuring ethical digital education practices, equitable access, and the enhancement of faculty competencies in learning technologies (Chatterjee et al., 2023). Without adequate infrastructure and policy support, value internalization risks being reduced to a mere administrative formality.

Reward systems also function as significant leverage mechanisms. At UMY, UAD, and

Sibermu, strengthening incentives for activities that reflect organizational values such as community engagement, character-based curriculum development, and the management of scholarly *da'wah* programs have been shown to enhance cultural participation and intrinsic motivation among faculty members (Riyanto et al., 2021a). Conversely, when rewards are oriented solely toward quantitative indicators, the internalization process tends to become superficial and number driven.

Overall, the internalization of organizational values in PTM as reflected in UMY, UAD, and Sibermu constitutes a dynamic process that requires synchronization between formal structures, leadership practices, participatory communication, capacity development, and fair reward systems. The integration of Muhammadiyah cultural values with modern managerial practices enables PTM leaders not only to preserve Islamic identity but also to enhance academic quality and institutional competitiveness. Through such a comprehensive approach, organizational values can be transformed from normative statements into sustainable practices with tangible impacts on faculty performance and the broader social contribution of higher education institutions.

Organizational Communication Dynamics in Faculty Leadership Relationships at PTM

Organizational communication constitutes the core mechanism that drives the relationship between leaders and faculty members in Muhammadiyah Higher Education Institutions (*Perguruan Tinggi Muhammadiyah/PTM*). This communication pattern operates within a value-laden environment that integrates organizational ethics, academic norms, and the demands of modern administration. Based on empirical research and field findings, the quality of internal communication determines the extent to which Islamic leadership can be effectively implemented in everyday practice, thereby influencing job satisfaction, institutional engagement, and ultimately faculty academic performance. From the perspective of modern organizational theory, effective communication is symmetrical, continuous, and participatory; both corporate and academic studies demonstrate that when internal communication is two-way and transparent, the emotional and professional bonds of staff members are strengthened (Meng & Berger, 2022).

Within the PTM environment, the ritual dimensions of politeness, social taboos, and respect for moral hierarchy shape communication styles, as reflected in the interactional dynamics of faculty members at *Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta (UMY)* and *Universitas Ahmad Dahlan (UAD)*, which remain strongly influenced by collegial and familial cultures. Many faculty members report a preference for courteous, non-confrontational, and measured modes of expression as manifestations of Muhammadiyah ethical values. Although this culture strengthens social cohesion, it also creates an ambivalent dynamic; hesitation to articulate criticism may inhibit honest scholarly feedback and academic openness, resulting in strategic information being filtered or delayed before reaching those who need it. The literature documents similar risks in collectivist organizations, where excessive interpersonal caution can reduce the effectiveness of formal communication and hinder innovation unless balanced by open organizational learning mechanisms (Srimulyani & Hermanto, 2022).

Structural components such as communication channels, frequency, and media also emerged as significant issues in field findings at UMY, UAD, and Sibermu. At UMY and UAD, some work units continue to rely on traditional channels such as face-to-face meetings and written memoranda which, in the era of digital transformation, are vulnerable to information delays and weak documentation. In contrast, Sibermu faces the opposite challenge, namely the dominance of digital communication, which requires strong documentation discipline, message clarity, and high levels of technological literacy. Research on digital transformation indicates that educational institutions that successfully modernize internal communication through digital collaboration platforms, centralized document management, and asynchronous communication gain advantages in responsiveness and

operational efficiency (Chatterjee et al., 2023). Therefore, PTM must align its traditional deliberative culture with adaptive digital communication infrastructures.

The relationship between communication quality and job satisfaction is also confirmed in the contexts of UMY, UAD, and Sibermu. When faculty members receive policy information in a complete, clear, and timely manner, their levels of job satisfaction and institutional engagement increase, directly affecting academic productivity (Hilton et al., 2023). Conversely, weak communication trigger's role ambiguity, inter-unit friction, and feelings of marginalization, both on physical campuses and within Sibermu's digital ecosystem. Numerous studies in human resource management and organizational communication identify role ambiguity as a major predictor of work-related stress and declining performance; consequently, investment in internal communication systems constitutes a strategic investment in faculty well-being and productivity (Riyanto et al., 2021).

Beyond technical aspects, the quality of communication in PTM is also shaped by the interpersonal capacities of leaders at UMY, UAD, and Sibermu particularly emotional intelligence, the ability to articulate vision (*tablīgh*), and decisiveness in policy implementation. Leaders who communicate empathetically and clearly are proven to be more effective in reducing resistance to change and accelerating faculty adaptation to new policies (Winton, 2022). In the PTM context, communication styles that integrate scientific ethics with persuasive approaches are more consistent with Muhammadiyah's deliberative culture than those that rely on instructive-authoritarian methods.

Communication functions also play a central role in the internalization of organizational values at UMY, UAD, and Sibermu. The reproduction of value narratives through internal forums, written policies, institutional religious gatherings, and daily practices serves as a mechanism of socialization to maintain consistency between discourse and action (Lee et al., 2022). However, when value communication is not accompanied by structural support such as research funding allocation, proportional workload distribution, and adequate academic facilities internalization becomes weak, and faculty members begin to perceive values as merely rhetorical symbols (Alfawaire & Atan, 2021). Thus, the credibility of organizational values is largely determined by the congruence between communicative messages and policy realities.

Communication dynamics at these three PTM institutions are also shaped by external pressures such as accreditation demands, digitalization of learning, and publication obligations, all of which increase the intensity of information flows. During periods of digital transition particularly at Sibermu the need for rapid, accurate, and empathetic communication becomes especially critical. Human resource development literature emphasizes that communicative leadership plays a crucial role in sustaining educational continuity and safeguarding faculty mental health during times of crisis (Dirani et al., 2020). The experiences of UMY, UAD, and Sibermu during phases of accelerated digitalization demonstrate that the readiness of communication systems contributes significantly to academic stability and faculty resilience.

Nevertheless, there are also risks of information distortion transmitted through informal channels or multilayered bureaucratic chains, particularly when source competence is low or personal interests influence the message (Jun et al., 2023). In the environments of UMY and UAD, distortion often emerges through inter-unit oral communication, while at Sibermu it may occur through fragmented digital information. Ironically, informal channels are indeed effective in strengthening solidarity, yet they also serve as vehicles for misinformation if not accompanied by rapid clarification mechanisms. Therefore, communication management at UMY, UAD, and Sibermu must integrate responsive formal channels with informal channels that continue to preserve the organization's familial character.

Table 1

Organizational Communication Best Practices for NCDs

NNo	Best Practices	Explanation	Source
1	Building a hybrid communication ecosystem	Combine face-to-face deliberative forums with documented digital platforms to ensure openness, accessibility, and continuity of information.	Akour & Alenezi (2022)
2	Increase the communication capacity of leaders	Strengthen public speaking, crisis communication, and organizational empathy skills to increase the effectiveness of interactions and trust between members of the organization.	Chatterjee dkk. (2023)
3	Establish transparent and time-bound policy communication protocols	Preparation of communication SOPs that ensure strategic information is delivered in a timely, clear, and accountable manner.	Ghorbanzadeh dkk. (2023)
4	Enable feedback and communication evaluation mechanisms	Build a two-way feedback channel so that lecturers feel heard, engaged, and can participate in the development of the organization.	Akour & Alenezi (2022); Ghorbanzadeh dkk. (2023)

The dynamics of organizational communication in the relationship between faculty members and leaders in Muhammadiyah Higher Education Institutions (*Perguruan Tinggi Muhammadiyah/PTM*) reveal a complex interaction among organizational culture, digital capacity, and the interpersonal competencies of leadership. At *Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta* (UMY), *Universitas Ahmad Dahlan* (UAD), and *Universitas Siber Muhammadiyah* (SiberMu), effective, symmetrical, and transparent communication has proven to be a strategic instrument for strengthening the internalization of Islamic values, enhancing faculty satisfaction, and promoting the performance of the tridharma. At UMY and UAD, face-to-face communication combined with digital systems reinforces academic coordination, whereas at SiberMu, platform-based digital communication constitutes the primary backbone of institutional management. Nevertheless, across all three institutions, the effectiveness of communication remains highly dependent on communication ethics, leadership openness, and the vitality of deliberative (*musyawarah*) culture within organizational structures.

Conversely, slow, symbolic, or distorted communication has the potential to weaken the transformative capacity of Islamic leadership in driving institutional change. Misalignment between value-based messages and structural support can erode faculty trust and hinder academic innovation, both in conventional campuses such as UMY and UAD and in digital campuses such as SiberMu. Therefore, strengthening hybrid-based communication systems, enhancing leaders' communicative capacities, and developing communication governance aligned with Muhammadiyah's deliberative ethos constitute strategic priorities for PTM to sustain academic quality while realizing a progressive Islamic identity in contemporary institutional practice.

Lecturers' Work Experience and Its Impact on Academic Achievement at PTM

Faculty work experience is shaped by the interaction of motivation, job satisfaction, workload, and organizational context, all of which determine academics' capacity to fulfill the tridharma of higher education (teaching, research, and community service). In the context of Muhammadiyah Higher Education Institutions (*Perguruan Tinggi Muhammadiyah/PTM*), particularly at *Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta* (UMY), *Universitas Ahmad Dahlan* (UAD), and *Universitas Siber Muhammadiyah* (SiberMu), faculty work experience is strongly influenced by the internalization of

values such as trust, the sanctity of work, and collective deliberation, alongside modern professional pressures such as international publication requirements, institutional accreditation, and the digitalization of learning. Faculty members' understanding of motivation and job satisfaction in these three PTMs is not merely instrumental (e.g., financial incentives or career advancement), but also value-oriented; intrinsic motivation related to contributions to scientific da'wah, the development of Islamic scholarship, and public service serves as a significant driving force for many lecturers, both in conventional campuses such as UMY and UAD and within the digital learning ecosystem of SiberMu.

Faculty motivation in PTM is rooted in two primary sources: intrinsic motivation (scientific achievement, value-based service aligned with Muhammadiyah principles, and the fulfillment of professional calling) and extrinsic motivation (performance incentives, proportional workload distribution, and opportunities for career promotion). Research in higher education management demonstrates that supportive and servant-oriented leadership enhances intrinsic motivation and job satisfaction, which in turn positively affects academic outcomes such as publication productivity and teaching innovation (Aboramadan et al., 2021). Within the environments of UMY, UAD, and SiberMu, when faculty and university leaders provide concrete support in the form of research time allocation, access to internal research funding, facilitation of reputable publications, and the reduction of administrative burdens, lecturers report higher productive energy, stronger institutional loyalty, and deeper commitment to improving the quality of the tridharma.

Job satisfaction serves as a critical mediator between work experience and academic performance. It is influenced by working conditions, role clarity, reward systems, and interpersonal relationships with leaders and colleagues (Riyanto et al., 2021). Empirical studies indicate that job satisfaction enhances employee engagement, which subsequently mediates improvements in task performance. In the context of UMY, UAD, and SiberMu, job satisfaction is also closely associated with congruence between lecturers' personal values and the institutional values of Muhammadiyah; when ideological and professional values are aligned, affective commitment and dedication to community service tend to increase, particularly in community engagement programs, collaborative research, and the development of value-based Islamic learning.

Faculty workload including administrative responsibilities, teaching obligations, research demands, and service and organizational activities represents a key determinant of academic productivity. Excessive administrative workload, complex bureaucratic procedures, and dual roles as academics and institutional managers frequently reduce the time available for research and publication preparation. Studies in educational management indicate that heavy working conditions without adequate time compensation or administrative support can reduce academic output and increase the risk of occupational stress (Muhdar et al., 2022). In several units at UMY, UAD, and SiberMu, lecturers report that accreditation processes, performance reporting, and the management of grant programs often absorb substantial research time, resulting in suboptimal scientific publication productivity.

The relationship between Islamic leadership and academic productivity can be understood through a mediating mechanism: servant-oriented and exemplary leadership creates psychological and structural conditions conducive to high-quality research and teaching. Leadership that supports the provision of resources (research funding, access to international journals, and protected research time), offers academic recognition, and restructures administrative workloads has been shown to enhance academic output among faculty at UMY, UAD, and SiberMu, both in the form of publications, intellectual property, and learning innovations. However, this influence is conditional; without clear policy communication and a merit- and quality-based human resource management system, Islamic leadership risks remaining at the level of normative symbolism and may not be

sufficiently effective in driving tangible academic productivity.

Table.2
Factors that Hinder and Support Lecturers' Performance at PTM

Organizational Aspects	Performance Inhibiting Factors	Performance Supporting Factors
Administration & Systems	Excessive and disproportionate administrative burden	Simplification of administrative tasks & structural support (research facilities, access to funds)
Organizational Communication	Information is unclear, late, or distorted	Clear and transparent communication protocols and regular discussion forums
Work Culture	The work environment is less innovative, too harmonious, and suppresses constructive criticism	A values-based and spiritual environment that encourages meaningful work and loyalty
Roles & Workload	Confusion of roles and excessive and stressful task load	Workload balancing and quality-based reward systems
Leadership	Lack of direction and tangible support from leadership	Examples of leadership in building academic motivation and reputation
Professional Development	Lack of support for research, training, and collaboration	Mentorship, academic guidance, and lecturer capacity building programs

The recommended policy interventions based on the findings include: (a) redesigning workload arrangements to proportionally measure the commitments of the tridharma while freeing research time through administrative assistance; (b) strengthening values-based human resource management by integrating indicators of scholarly contribution into promotion and remuneration systems; (c) investing in research infrastructure, including access to academic journals, seed funding for research, and administrative services for grant applications; (d) developing hybrid communication systems that combine deliberative forums with well-documented digital platforms to accelerate the flow of information; and (e) implementing welfare programs that provide mental health support, academic mentoring, and flexible work arrangements to sustain faculty productivity (Chatterjee et al., 2023). These efforts are expected not only to increase the quantity of publications but also to enhance the quality of teaching and the relevance of community engagement.

Based on the foregoing discussion, it can be concluded that academic performance in Muhammadiyah Higher Education Institutions is not solely defined by measurable outputs such as publication counts, but also by value-based contributions, including student character formation, the social impact of community service, and the application of knowledge for public benefit. Accordingly, performance evaluation should adopt a multidimensional approach that captures social impact, pedagogical quality, and academic integrity in alignment with the institution's value orientation. In this regard, faculty work experience and institutional policies that support a balance between professional demands and organizational values are essential to achieving high-quality and sustainable academic productivity within Muhammadiyah universities.

Theoretical and Practical Implications for Muhammadiyah Universities

Research on Islamic leadership, organizational culture, and communication in Muhammadiyah Higher Education Institutions (*Perguruan Tinggi Muhammadiyah/PTM*) as reflected in the institutional practices of *Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta* (UMY), *Universitas Ahmad Dahlan* (UAD), and *Universitas Siber Muhammadiyah* (Sibermu) presents important theoretical implications that enrich the discourse on Islamic higher education leadership while also offering practical directions for institutional strengthening. Theoretically, the findings

underscore the need to integrate the Islamic leadership framework (*amanah*, role modeling, the sacredness of work, and deliberation) with contemporary leadership theories such as servant leadership, transformational leadership, and authentic leadership as a composite approach that is more relevant for PTM (Hilton et al., 2023). The dynamics observed at UMY, UAD, and Sibermu demonstrate that Islamic leadership does not operate automatically or merely at a normative level; its influence on academic performance is conditional and highly mediated by the quality of organizational communication, managerial capacity at the unit level, reward systems, and digital readiness. Accordingly, a more accurate theoretical model is an integrative one in which Islamic leadership influences academic performance through the mediation of organizational communication, organizational culture, digital capability, and human resource management.

The findings from the three PTMs also enrich the literature by emphasizing the importance of emotional culture and information integrity as variables that have been relatively underexplored in studies of Islamic leadership. At UMY and UAD, the emotional intelligence of faculty leaders plays a significant role in enhancing policy acceptance and the psychological stability of lecturers. Meanwhile, at Sibermu as a digital-native organization the dynamics of virtual communication reveal that emotional closeness and message clarity are critical in maintaining organizational cohesion without intensive physical presence. At the same time, the phenomenon of information distortion observed along bureaucratic chains across all three institutions reinforces the importance of incorporating the quality of information retransmission as a variable in organizational communication models (Jun et al., 2023). Cumulatively, these theoretical implications encourage the development of a new analytical framework for PTM, namely a model of Islamic leadership that is conditional, contextual, and grounded in mechanisms of mediation and moderation.

From a practical perspective, these findings provide an applied policy map for PTM, including UMY, UAD, and Sibermu, in implementing Islamic leadership so that it generates tangible impacts on academic quality enhancement. First, the development of integrated leadership is imperative: training programs for rectors, deans, and heads of study programs must combine value reinforcement (*adab*, *amanah*, *tabligh*) with modern managerial skills, strategic planning, digital change management, and crisis communication (Dirani et al., 2020). This need is particularly evident at UMY with its international orientation, at UAD with its large institutional complexity, and at Sibermu, which operates entirely within a fully digital ecosystem.

Second, organizational communication reform should be directed toward building hybrid information networks that combine conventional deliberative forums with well-documented digital infrastructure. The experiences of UMY and UAD demonstrate that digital collaboration platforms, centralized document management systems, and time-based communication protocols can enhance the speed of policy responsiveness. Conversely, Sibermu represents an extreme model of fully digital communication, which demands higher standards of message clarity, data archiving, and information control systems to prevent information overload. The implementation of structured feedback mechanisms, including anonymous channels, is essential to reduce information distortion and strengthen trust (Akour & Alenezi, 2022; Chatterjee et al., 2023).

Third, strengthening values-based human resource management systems serves as a strategic instrument. At UMY, UAD, and Sibermu, recruitment, promotion, and compensation systems need to increasingly balance academic performance indicators with contributions to the missions of *da'wah* and social service. At Sibermu, specific challenges arise in the management of geographically dispersed and remote-working faculty, requiring values-based HRM to be integrated with objective digital performance evaluation systems. Strategic HRM that integrates knowledge management, impact-based reward systems, and cross-generational mentoring programs will strengthen the transfer of values and competencies while ensuring the sustainability of organizational

culture.

Fourth, the application of value-sensitive accountability mechanisms is crucial to maintaining a balance between a familial organizational culture and professionalism. Practices such as peer-review-based evaluations, multidimensional performance indicators (tridharma plus da'wah values), and the involvement of external stakeholders have proven relevant in minimizing the risks of subjectivity and strengthening leadership legitimacy particularly in large institutions such as UAD and UMY, as well as in Sibermu, which operates under more open digital public scrutiny (Srimulyani & Hermanto, 2022).

Fifth, investment in research infrastructure and administrative support represents a concrete manifestation of servant-oriented Islamic leadership. At UMY and UAD, internal research funding support, facilitation of publications in reputable journals, and administrative assistance for grants and accreditation have been shown to enhance faculty scholarly productivity. At Sibermu, investment is more focused on strengthening digital-based research ecosystems, open data repositories, and technical support for cross-regional collaborative research. These differences indicate that Islamic leadership in service is contextual, shaped by each institution's characteristics (Muhdar et al., 2022).

Sixth, policies on faculty welfare and mental health must be positioned as an integral part of a humanistic Islamic leadership ethos. Counseling services, work flexibility, and proportional workload arrangements at UMY and UAD are correlated with work engagement, emotional stability, and teaching quality. At Sibermu, welfare issues manifest in the form of digital fatigue, social isolation, and blurred work-home boundaries, thus requiring welfare policies that are more adaptive to fully online work environments.

At the implementation level, PTM including UMY, UAD, and Sibermu need to prepare evidence-based medium-term action plans that encompass organizational communication audits, integrated leadership development programs, pilot projects for hybrid communication platforms at the faculty level, revisions of values- and performance-based HRM policies, and incentive schemes for high-quality publications and socially impactful services. Periodic evaluations using both quantitative and qualitative indicators will serve as organizational learning mechanisms to ensure policy sustainability.

Overall, the theoretical and practical implications of this study reaffirm that Islamic leadership in PTM including UMY, UAD, and Sibermu should not be understood merely as a normative symbol, but rather as an integrative managerial model that combines religious norms with modern organizational mechanisms: communication, human resources, digital capabilities, and accountability. The experiences of these three institutions demonstrate that the success of transformation is highly dependent on policy consistency, resource investment, and a culture of continuous learning, enabling PTM to sustain its Islamic identity while simultaneously enhancing academic quality and delivering tangible social contributions.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that Islamic leadership, organizational culture, and internal communication constitute an integrated framework that directly shapes the quality of lecturers' work experiences and academic performance at Muhammadiyah Universities, particularly at *Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta* (UMY), *Universitas Ahmad Dahlan* (UAD), and *Universitas Siber Muhammadiyah* (Sibermu). Using a qualitative approach, the study explains how progressive Islamic values such as moral role modeling, deliberation (*musyawarah*), emotional intelligence, and service orientation function not merely as normative slogans but are operationalized in campus governance through communication patterns that are symmetrical, participatory, and grounded in

ethical civility. The implementation of these values is shown to enhance lecturers' intrinsic motivation, strengthen institutional commitment, and foster academic productivity, both in conventional campuses and in fully digital higher education environments such as Sibermu.

The theoretical contribution of this study lies in its elucidation of the connecting mechanisms between religious values, organizational culture, and Islamic leadership practices within the context of PTM at UMY, UAD, and Sibermu. The findings indicate that Islamic leadership operates through three principal mechanisms: (1) normative formation, namely the internalization of values through moral role modeling and ethical regulation; (2) structural empowerment, in the form of campus policies that provide space for collaboration, innovation, and academic autonomy; and (3) relational reinforcement, reflected in leader-lecturer interactions characterized by mutual respect, openness, and dialogue. These findings address an important gap in the literature, which has been dominated by quantitative approaches and has yet to explore in depth the internal processes through which Islamic values shape organizational dynamics and academic performance.

From a practical perspective, this research offers strategic directions for strengthening PTM at UMY, UAD, and Sibermu, including the restructuring of workloads to align with lecturers' capacities and academic targets; the enhancement of research support through the provision of facilities, mentoring programs, and sustainable funding; the revitalization of hybrid communication based on transparency and responsiveness; and the development of middle-level leaders capable of translating associative values into everyday managerial decisions and practices. These recommendations provide an implementable foundation for PTM to strengthen its academic competitiveness without losing its Islamic character.

The implications of this study further indicate that Islamic values, when consistently institutionalized within policies, culture, and organizational communication at UMY, UAD, and Sibermu, can shape a healthy, productive, and ethical academic ecosystem. Accordingly, the agenda for strengthening PTM cannot rely solely on structural and administrative dimensions but must be supported by the integration of values and the enhancement of leadership competencies oriented toward sustainability (sustainable leadership).

Finally, this study contributes a novel perspective by emphasizing that Islamic leadership is not only a moral dimension but also an organizational capability that systematically influences culture, communication, and academic performance, as reflected in the leadership dynamics at UMY, UAD, and Sibermu. Through the proposed connecting-mechanism model, this article opens avenues for further research, including comparative studies among Islamic higher education institutions, longitudinal investigations, and quantitative model testing to deepen understanding of how Islamic values can function as drivers of improved governance quality and institutional productivity in Indonesian higher education.

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