

IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP IN IMPROVING COMPETITIVENESS

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the implementation of strategic leadership by madrasa principals in enhancing the competitiveness of MAN 1 Bandar Lampung, MAN 2 Bandar Lampung, and MAN 1 Pesawaran, focusing on the formulation of strategic vision, the management and development of resources, and the implementation of learning innovations and flagship programs. The study employed a qualitative approach with a multisite case study design. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and documentation, and were analyzed using interactive and cross-site analysis. The findings indicate that the formulation of a strategic vision serves as the direction for madrasa development; resource management is carried out through strengthening human resource competencies, optimizing facilities and infrastructure, developing partnerships, and strengthening organizational culture; while learning innovations and flagship programs are developed as strategies to improve quality and institutional differentiation. MAN 1 Bandar Lampung demonstrates a competitive-transformational model oriented toward excellence, achievement, and institutional reputation; MAN 2 Bandar Lampung demonstrates a stabilitative-conservative model emphasizing organizational stability, sustainability, effectiveness, and regulatory compliance; while MAN 1 Pesawaran demonstrates a progressive-collaborative model based on Islamic values, emphasizing quality improvement, resource empowerment, sustainable innovation, partnerships, and the strengthening of Islamic organizational culture. These three models demonstrate that the implementation of strategic leadership is contextual, depending on the characteristics and developmental level of each madrasah. The novelty of this study lies in formulating these three strategic leadership models as contextual patterns for enhancing madrasah competitiveness.

Keywords

Madrasah Competitiveness, Resources, Learning Innovation, Strategic Leadership, Strategic Vision.



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INTRODUCTION

The implementation of strategic leadership is an important process in directing the potential of madrasahs to achieve sustainable excellence (Nirmayanthi et al., 2024). Pre-survey results at MAN 1 Bandar Lampung, MAN 2 Bandar Lampung, and MAN 1 Pesawaran indicate that madrasah principals have implemented various leadership functions to improve quality and competitiveness, although their approaches differ. At MAN 1 Bandar Lampung, strategic leadership is reflected in the development of the Madrasah Digital Center (MDC), which supports science clubs, robotics, cyber, journalism, and technology-based activities, along with English language development through guest teachers from English Village Pare. These programs are supported by superior classes and student achievements in state university selection. At MAN 2 Bandar Lampung, leadership is demonstrated through vocational programs in automotive engineering, refrigeration and air conditioning, and fashion design, supported by student achievements through the SNBP and SPAN-PTKIN pathways. Meanwhile, MAN 1 Pesawaran has a superior and Islamic vision, an accreditation, more than 700 students, and various academic and non-academic programs. Although these madrasahs have undertaken various strategic efforts, questions remain regarding the systematic process of leadership, particularly in vision formulation, resource management, implementation, evaluation, and adaptation. Thus, MDC, vocational programs, superior classes, achievements, and accreditation do not fully explain how strategic leadership contributes to competitiveness. Therefore, further study is needed to examine how strategic leadership transforms madrasah potential into competitive advantage.

The success of increasing madrasah competitiveness is largely determined by the accuracy of the strategy chosen and the ability of the madrasah principal to integrate it with institutional potential (Supriono, 2023). Pre-survey data show that each principal has developed different strategies according to the characteristics of their institution. MAN 1 Bandar Lampung tends to apply a differentiation strategy based on technology, achievement, and global competencies through the development of MDC, robotics, cyber, science, journalism, superior classes, and English programs. MAN 2 Bandar Lampung focuses on strengthening graduate skills and relevance through vocational programs in automotive engineering, refrigeration and air conditioning, and fashion design, while supporting access to higher education through SNBP and SPAN-PTKIN. Meanwhile, MAN 1 Pesawaran emphasizes institutional quality, Islamic character, and academic and non-academic programs, while still requiring improvements in superior programs, teacher

professionalism, technology utilization, and partnerships. These differences show that leadership strategies involve not only program development but also human resources, innovation, technology, achievement, quality culture, and partnership networks. However, it remains unclear how these strategies are formulated, implemented, and contribute to madrasah competitiveness. Therefore, this research is important to identify leadership strategies that can strengthen the position of state Islamic senior high schools in the competitive educational landscape.

The implementation of strategic leadership cannot be separated from internal and external conditions, which can be strengths or obstacles in achieving madrasa competitiveness (May, 2023). The pre-survey results show that the three madrasahs have supporting capital in the form of principal leadership, excellent programs, quality human resources, facilities, academic and non-academic achievements, accreditation, student numbers, and a commitment to quality improvement. MAN 1 Bandar Lampung excels in its digital ecosystem, achievement clubs, superior classes, and student achievements; MAN 2 Bandar Lampung in vocational programs and access to higher education; while MAN 1 Pesawaran has an A accreditation, more than 700 students, a superior and Islamic vision, and various academic and non-academic programs. However, challenges remain, including limited external partnerships, the need to improve teacher professionalism and technology use, develop more competitive programs, and respond to competition from leading schools and innovative madrasahs. MAN 1 Bandar Lampung needs to expand partnerships with universities, industry, professional institutions, and the community; MAN 2 Bandar Lampung needs to strengthen its networks and long-term orientation; while MAN 1 Pesawaran needs to improve human resources, technology, superior programs, and partnerships. These conditions indicate that strategic leadership depends not only on strategy formulation but also on the principal's ability to optimize supporting factors and address challenges. Therefore, this study examines how internal and external factors influence strategic leadership in increasing the competitiveness of MAN 1 Bandar Lampung, MAN 2 Bandar Lampung, and MAN 1 Pesawaran.

A number of previous studies have shown that strategic leadership is related to improving the quality and competitiveness of educational institutions (Abdulloh, 2024) found that visionary leadership is realized through determining the direction of the institution, the role of the madrasah principal as an agent of change, human resource development, technology-based learning innovation, flagship programs, and partnerships that contribute to increasing the competitiveness of madrasahs (Muhyidin, 2023) shows that the strategic leadership of the madrasah principal as a

change leader is a source of institutional change through the vision and ideas for change developed by the madrasah principal (Rochaendi et al., 2022) found that strategic leadership had a significant influence on the quality of education by 43.5%, while the combination of strategic leadership and financial management had an influence of 60.4%, which shows the importance of strategic leadership in improving the quality of educational institutions. (Firman, 2024) found that innovative learning management through superior classes can improve graduate quality, institutional popularity, bargaining position, and competitiveness of madrasahs. Meanwhile, (Dinarwati, 2021) Research on leadership and capacity development in madrasah organizations indicates that improving the quality of an institution is related to the ability to optimize human resources, infrastructure, technology, strategic leadership, program management, and collaborative networks. These five studies generally demonstrate that leadership, innovation, human resource development, technology, flagship programs, financing, and partnerships are important components in improving the quality and competitiveness of educational institutions.

However, these five studies still leave research gaps that become the focus of this research. First, conceptually, previous studies tend to discuss strategic or visionary leadership through specific aspects, such as change, innovation, financing, or flagship programs, but have not comprehensively integrated strategic vision, human resource development, innovation, resource optimization, organizational culture, partnership networks, and competitiveness within a single strategic leadership implementation framework. Second, empirically, previous studies have not fully explained why madrasahs with relatively similar characteristics and regulatory environments can have different strategies and levels of competitiveness. Third, contextually, the study of strategic leadership is still relatively limited to the context of specific educational institutions or units, while the implementation of strategic leadership in State Madrasah Aliyah in Lampung Province, with different characteristics, has not been studied in depth and comparatively. Fourth, practically, previous studies have mostly shown the contribution of leadership to quality and competitiveness, but have not detailed the implementation of strategies, the strategies used, and the factors that support and hinder their success.

Based on this gap, the novelty of this research lies in revealing the strategic leadership implementation model in improving the competitiveness of State Islamic Senior High Schools through a multi-site study at MAN 1 Bandar Lampung, MAN 2 Bandar Lampung, and MAN 1 Pesawaran. This research not only identifies the role of the madrasah principal but also analyzes the

complete process of strategic leadership implementation, the leadership strategies used, and the supporting and inhibiting factors in building competitiveness. The novelty of this research also lies in the effort to find strategic patterns that suit the characteristics of each madrasah, such as digital and technology-based competitiveness at MAN 1 Bandar Lampung, vocational skills-based competitiveness at MAN 2 Bandar Lampung, and strengthening institutional quality and student development programs at MAN 1 Pesawaran. Thus, this research is expected to provide an understanding of the role of the madrasah principal as a strategic leader in optimizing the potential of madrasahs to become sustainable competitive advantages.

Theoretically, a strong conceptual foundation in analyzing research problems, and it is based on several theoretical perspectives relevant to strategic leadership and madrasa competitiveness. According to strategic leadership theory (Volberda et al., 2011), and (Hoskisson et al., 2017) in *Strategic Management: Competitiveness and Globalization*, which views strategic leadership as the leader's ability to anticipate the future, set strategic direction, maintain flexibility, develop resources, empower organizational members, and manage change to achieve organizational excellence. Furthermore, the theory of competitive advantage (Huang et al., 2015) and (Porter, 2008) explains that organizational excellence is built through the ability to create superior value compared to competitors through differentiation strategies and effective management of organizational activities. This theory is relevant for analyzing the strategies of madrasah principals in developing flagship programs, digitalization, vocational skills, academic and non-academic achievements, educational services, and partnerships as differentiators for madrasahs. (Barney et al., 2021) And (Wibowo et al., 2025), which explains that sustainable competitiveness stems from an organization's ability to manage valuable, rare, difficult-to-imitate, and difficult-to-substitute resources and capabilities. This perspective is used to analyze leadership, human resource competencies, technology, facilities, organizational culture, flagship programs, reputation, and networks as sources of excellence. All three theories demonstrate that strategic leadership and resource optimization can generate competitive advantage and enhance the competitiveness of madrasahs sustainably.

Based on the background and research gaps, this study aims to analyze and describe the implementation of strategic leadership of madrasah principals in improving the competitiveness of State Madrasah Aliyah in Lampung Province, including vision formulation, human resource development, innovation, resource management, flagship programs, and partnership networks. Academically, this study is expected to enrich the study of strategic leadership in Islamic education,

while practically it can be an evaluation material for madrasah principals, strengthening competitiveness for madrasahs, and input for policy makers in improving the quality of State Madrasah Aliyah.

This study uses a qualitative approach with a multi-site and descriptive-interpretive design to examine the implementation of strategic leadership in improving the competitiveness of State Islamic Senior High Schools in Lampung Province, focusing on MAN 1 Bandar Lampung, MAN 2 Bandar Lampung, and MAN 1 Pesawaran. The data cover vision and strategy formulation, human resource development, organizational culture, innovation and digital transformation, resource and superior program management, partnerships, and madrasah competitiveness. Primary data were obtained from madrasah principals, teachers, education staff, and students, while secondary data included policy documents, work programs, achievement data, accreditation, and institutional documents. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation during January–June 2026. Interviews explored leadership strategies and their implementation, observations examined leadership practices and strategic programs, and documentation supported and confirmed the findings.

Data analysis was conducted interactively through the stages of data reduction/condensation, data presentation, and drawing and verifying conclusions. Analysis was conducted first at each site to identify the characteristics of strategic leadership implementation in each madrasah, followed by cross-site analysis to identify similarities, differences, and patterns of leadership strategies in increasing competitiveness. Next, researchers conducted a critical analysis of the research findings by comparing them with theories of strategic leadership, competitive advantage, and the Resource-Based View (RBV), and comparing them with the results of relevant previous studies. Data validity was carried out through triangulation of sources and techniques by comparing information between informants and matching the results of interviews, observations, and documentation to obtain credible and academically accountable findings.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

The results of the study on the Implementation of Strategic Leadership in Increasing the Competitiveness of State Islamic Senior High Schools in Lampung Province were obtained through an in-depth data collection and analysis process at three research sites, namely MAN 1 Bandar

Lampung, MAN 2 Bandar Lampung, and MAN 1 Pesawaran. Data were obtained through interviews, observations, and documentation, which were then analyzed to identify strategic leadership patterns, competitiveness enhancement strategies, and supporting and inhibiting factors in each madrasah. The following presentation of research results is arranged based on three main research focuses, namely the implementation of strategic leadership, leadership strategies in increasing competitiveness, and supporting and inhibiting factors for its implementation, then compared across sites to find similarities, differences, and patterns that emerge in the three madrasahs.

Table 1. Implementation of Strategic Leadership in Increasing the Competitiveness of State Islamic Senior High Schools in Lampung Province

No	Research Location	Formulating a Strategic Vision	Human Resources Development	Innovation Implementation
1	MAN 1 Bandar Lampung	Technology, achievement, digitalization, and global competence through superior classes and the Madrasah Digital Center (MDC).	Technology, achievement, digitalization, and global competence through superior classes and the Madrasah Digital Center (MDC).	Technology, achievement, digitalization, and global competence through superior classes and the Madrasah Digital Center (MDC).
2	MAN 2 Bandar Lampung	Focused on quality, student skills, vocational programs, and higher education readiness.	Focused on quality, student skills, vocational programs, and higher education readiness.	Focused on quality, student skills, vocational programs, and higher education readiness.
3	MAN 1 Pesawaran	Oriented toward excellence and Islamic values through academic and non-academic programs.	Oriented toward excellence and Islamic values through academic and non-academic programs.	Oriented toward excellence and Islamic values through academic and non-academic programs.

Source: Interviews and observations at MAN 1 Bandar Lampung, MAN 2 Bandar Lampung, and MAN 1 Pesawaran in 2026

Formulation of the Principal's Strategic Vision

Based on the results of research at MAN 1 Bandar Lampung, MAN 2 Bandar Lampung, and MAN 1 Pesawaran, the formulation of the strategic vision of the madrasah principal shows different characteristics according to the institutional context. MAN 1 Bandar Lampung interprets the vision to maintain excellence and public trust, MAN 2 Bandar Lampung as an instrument of stabilization and sustainability, while MAN 1 Pesawaran as a means of transformation, quality improvement, and strengthening Islamic identity. These findings indicate that the strategic vision is not just a

formal document, but is realized through policies, programs, work culture, and activities of madrasah residents to direct the institution towards the desired goals.

Table 2. Formulating the Strategic Vision of Madrasah Principals

No	Vision Aspects	MAN 1 Bandar Lampung	MAN 2 Bandar Lampung	MAN 1 Pesawaran
1	Vision orientation	Excellence and competitiveness	Stability and sustainability	Transformation and quality
2	Head's role	Vision director and architect	Direction and stability guardian	Transformation driver
3	Participation	Guided dialogue	Limited to core leadership	Participatory
4	Vision character	Realistic, ambitious, competitive	Realistic and gradual	Realistic, measurable, developmental
5	Islamic values	Moral identity and differentiation	Values and discipline	Identity and character foundation
6	Competitiveness	Maintaining superiority	Maintaining quality	Building excellence
7	Reputation	Part of the vision	Not a main focus	Building public trust
8	Time orientation	Long-term and sustainable	Medium-term and gradual	Long-term and sustainable
9	Vision function	Identity and positioning	Stability control	Change and resource integration
10	Leadership character	Strategic-competitive	Administrative-conservative	Strategic-transformational

Source: Interviews and observations at MAN 1 Bandar Lampung, MAN 2 Bandar Lampung, and MAN 1 Pesawaran in 2026

At MAN 1 Bandar Lampung, the principal's strategic vision serves as an institutional identity and a narrative for the future. Terms such as "excellence," "reference," and "community trust" demonstrate that the vision is not merely an administrative formula but a symbol of the school's position in the competitive educational landscape. Its formulation involves teachers and other school personnel, although the principal remains the primary determinant of the school's direction, thus fostering a guided dialogue. The vision is formulated realistically yet ambitiously, taking into account internal capacity and Islamic values, so that excellence is understood not only through academic achievement but also through character and religious identity. This vision serves as an anchor for the institution's direction and the basis for building reputation and public trust.

In contrast to MAN 1 Bandar Lampung, MAN 2 Bandar Lampung exhibits a more normative, administrative, and stability-oriented vision formulation. The vision is interpreted as a guideline for maintaining order, continuity, and compliance with regulations, with relatively limited teacher participation. This condition indicates that the vision is understood more as a structural mandate than the result of a cultural consensus. The principal plays a role in maintaining the organization's

direction through changes implemented gradually and carefully. Competitiveness is more directed at maintaining quality and sustainability, while Islamic values serve as a reinforcement of discipline and order. Thus, MAN 2 Bandar Lampung's vision primarily functions as a stabilization mechanism, although its transformational driving force and competitive differentiation are relatively limited.

Meanwhile, MAN 1 Pesawaran demonstrated a more transformative, participatory, competitive, and long-term vision. The principal used the vision as a foundation for integrating resources and guiding institutional change. The involvement of the vice principal, teachers, education staff, committees, and stakeholders demonstrated that the vision was built through dialogue and shared understanding. The vision is understood as a picture of the future that provides hope and direction for the madrasa community, with an orientation toward improving graduate quality, achievement, and public trust. However, the vision is still formulated based on the condition of resources, organizational culture, infrastructure, and environmental opportunities and challenges. Islamic values serve as the foundation, so that competitiveness is directed toward achieving success while developing Islamic character.

When compared hermeneutically-phenomenologically, strategic visions show three spectrums, namely positioning excellence, institutional stabilization, and organizational transformation. MAN 1 Bandar Lampung is oriented towards strengthening its image and superior position, MAN 2 is oriented towards regularity and continuity, while MAN 1 Pesawaran is oriented towards gradually improving quality and competitiveness. This difference shows that the vision needs to be formulated according to capacity, community needs, student character, work culture, and level of competition. Overall, strategic vision is the foundation of competitiveness because it functions as a direction, identity, resource integration, and strengthening community trust, so it must be clear, realistic, participatory, based on Islamic values, and translated into concrete programs.

Management and Development of Madrasah Resources

The results of research at MAN 1 Bandar Lampung City, MAN 2 Bandar Lampung City, and MAN 1 Pesawaran show that the madrasah principal plays a central role in managing resources to increase competitiveness. Although they have the same orientation towards quality, there are differences in their management: MAN 1 places resources as capital for competitive advantage, MAN 2 emphasizes stability, compliance, and sustainability, while MAN 1 Pesawaran is more progressive through empowering human resources, facilities, networks, organizational culture, and

Islamic values. This finding confirms that the madrasah principal is not just an administrator, but a strategic actor who integrates internal and external resources to achieve the institution's goals.

Table 3. Comparison of Madrasah Resource Management

No	Resource Management Aspects	MAN 1 Bandar Lampung	MAN 2 Bandar Lampung	MAN 1 Pesawaran	Strategic Meaning
1	Human Resources	Target, achievement, and competence-oriented	Gradual development	Empowerment, training, MGMP, and supervision	HR as key capital for quality
2	Leadership	Strategic actor and performance driver	Stability guard and facilitator	Change and resource driver	Principal as architect of excellence
3	Facilities	Support quality and madrasah image	Focus on sufficiency and function	Based on needs and service quality	Facilities support quality and attractiveness
4	Finance	Strategic, effective, transparent, accountable	Procedural and compliance-oriented	Transparent, effective, and priority-based	Finance supports goal achievement
5	Networking	Expansive and strategic	Selective and supportive	Involves committees, parents, alumni, government, universities, and the community	Networks as social capital
6	Work Culture	Competitive, disciplined, achievement-oriented	Orderly and procedural	Professional, collaborative, disciplined, religious	Culture as an intangible resource
7	Time/Programs	Selective and impact-oriented	Routine and sustainability-oriented	Priority and development-oriented	Time as a strategic resource
8	Islamic Values	Integrated with professionalism and performance	Normative moral foundation	Trust, honesty, discipline, and deliberation	Foundation of ethics and identity
9	Competitiveness	Excellence and performance acceleration	Stability and sustainability	Continuous quality and excellence	

Source: Interviews and observations at MAN 1 Bandar Lampung, MAN 2 Bandar Lampung, and MAN 1 Pesawaran in 2026

Human resource management is an important dimension in building the competitiveness of the three madrasahs. At MAN 1 Bandar Lampung City, teachers are positioned as strategic resources to achieve targets and achievements; MAN 2 Bandar Lampung City positions the madrasah principal as a facilitator who maintains work balance and comfort; while MAN 1 Pesawaran

implements development through training, workshops, MGMP, academic supervision, and ongoing coaching. These differences indicate that human resource development not only improves skills, but also commitment, professionalism, loyalty, and adaptation to change, in line with Human Capital Theory, which views human quality as an investment for organizational productivity and competitiveness.

In terms of infrastructure and finance, the three madrasas exhibit different management patterns. MAN 1 Bandar Lampung City utilizes facilities to support learning and branding, MAN 2 Bandar Lampung City emphasizes the adequacy and functionality of facilities, while MAN 1 Pesawaran develops facilities based on a priority scale. In financial management, all three implement transparency and accountability, with MAN 1 and MAN 1 Pesawaran being more strategic in supporting development programs, while MAN 2 emphasizes procedural compliance. This indicates that material resources will support competitiveness if allocated according to the strategic needs of the madrasah.

Furthermore, partnership networks, work culture, and time management are important non-material resources in increasing the competitiveness of madrasahs. MAN 1 Bandar Lampung City proactively builds networks to expand academic access and reputation, MAN 2 is more selective with partnerships as support, while MAN 1 Pesawaran develops networks with various parties as social capital to strengthen madrasah capacity. MAN 1's work culture is competitive and achievement-oriented, MAN 2 emphasizes order and harmony, while MAN 1 Pesawaran develops a professional, collaborative, disciplined, and religious culture. Time management also differs according to each individual's priorities. These findings indicate that competitiveness depends not only on tangible resources but also on the ability of madrasah principals to build a culture, network, and work patterns that support organizational goals.

Resource management in the three madrasas demonstrates that Islamic values differentiate strategic leadership. MAN 1 integrates Islamic values with professionalism and performance, MAN 2 emphasizes morality, integrity, and obedience, while MAN 1 Pesawaran fosters trustworthiness, responsibility, honesty, discipline, and deliberation as organizational culture. Thus, Islamic values become an intangible resource that shapes behavior and strengthens leadership. Overall, madrasah principals play a role in managing human resources, infrastructure, finances, networks, culture, and Islamic values to build competitiveness, with different approaches tailored to the context of each madrasah.

Implementation of Learning Innovations and Flagship Programs

The results of the study indicate that the principals of madrasahs at MAN 1 Bandar Lampung City, MAN 2 Bandar Lampung City, and MAN 1 Pesawaran play a strategic role in implementing learning innovations and flagship programs to increase competitiveness. Their orientations are different: MAN 1 emphasizes positioning and a superior image, MAN 2 on adaptation and equalization of quality, while MAN 1 Pesawaran on learning transformation and institutional development. Thus, the principal acts as a director of change who connects innovation with the vision, needs of students, organizational culture, and competitive demands, in line with Rogers' theory of innovation diffusion and strategic leadership.

Table 4. Comparison of Learning Innovation Implementation and Flagship Programs

No	Aspect	MAN 1 Bandar Lampung	MAN 2 Bandar Lampung	MAN 1 Pesawaran	Meaning of Competitiveness
1	Innovation	Positioning and advantage	Adaptation and problem-solving	Quality transformation	Innovation increases competitiveness
2	Principal's role	Innovation director and controller	Facilitator and companion	Change agent and innovation driver	Leadership directs innovation
3	Featured programs	Quality and branding	Literacy, numeracy, and character	Academics, skills, and identity	Programs differentiate institutions
4	Learning technology	Symbol of modernity	Practical and functional tool	Transformation and effectiveness	Technology strengthens quality and image
5	Teacher involvement	Directed and top-down	Participatory and deliberative	Creative and idea-driven	Teachers are key innovation actors
6	Innovation culture	Competitive and achievement-oriented	Collaborative and collegial	Innovative and quality-oriented	Culture strengthens adaptability
7	Islamic values	Innovation aligned with madrasah identity	Moral and substantive foundation	Innovation integrated with religious character	Islamic values as identity and differentiator

Source: Interviews and observations at MAN 1 Bandar Lampung, MAN 2 Bandar Lampung, and MAN 1 Pesawaran in 2026

At MAN 1 Bandar Lampung City, learning innovation and flagship programs are interpreted as a strategy to maintain the madrasa's position as a leading institution. The principal plays the role of the primary actor, directing innovation to align with the institution's vision, reputation, and targets. Teachers view innovation as a professional demand, while flagship programs serve as a showcase of quality, and technology as a symbol of modernity. This pattern demonstrates directed, selective, and relatively top-down innovation, capable of driving achievement and competitiveness,

despite the potential to increase teachers' professional burden. Thus, innovation at MAN 1 Bandar Lampung City serves as a positioning strategy to maintain and strengthen competitive advantage.

At MAN 2 Bandar Lampung City, innovation is implemented adaptively, inclusively, and collaboratively. The principal acts as a facilitator, providing space for teachers to develop innovations tailored to learning needs. Innovation is focused on problem-solving, equitable quality, strengthening literacy, numeracy, Islamic character, and learning effectiveness. Technology is utilized pragmatically, tailored to teacher capabilities, facilities, and student needs. The flagship program serves more to strengthen internal quality, while the innovation process is carried out in a participatory manner through deliberation and collaboration among teachers. Thus, MAN 2's competitiveness is built through adaptability, maintaining sustainable quality, and delivering relevant learning.

At MAN 1 Pesawaran, the implementation of learning innovations and flagship programs demonstrates a progressive character and is oriented towards quality transformation. The principal acts as a change agent, encouraging teachers to use creative, interactive, and student-centered methods and to utilize digital technology to improve learning effectiveness. Innovation is directed at developing critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication skills, while flagship programs serve as a means of developing potential and strengthening the madrasah's identity. All reforms remain grounded in Islamic values so that modernization does not eliminate the religious character. Thus, MAN 1 Pesawaran combines pedagogical innovation, technology, teacher professionalism, flagship programs, and Islamic values as capital for increasing competitiveness.

Comparatively, the three madrasas show different innovative leadership patterns according to their institutional context: MAN 1 Bandar Lampung City applies strategic-competitive innovation to strengthen differentiation and reputation, MAN 2 Bandar Lampung City develops adaptive-collaborative innovation based on teacher needs and involvement, while MAN 1 Pesawaran applies transformative-integrative innovation by combining technology, teacher professionalism, flagship programs, and Islamic values. This finding confirms that the success of innovation does not only depend on the newness of the program, but on the ability of the madrasah principal to direct, facilitate, integrate, and ensure its sustainability according to student needs, resource capacity, organizational culture, and strategic objectives. Thus, the competitiveness of Madrasah Aliyah can be strengthened through strategic, participatory, adaptive, technology-based, sustainable innovation, oriented to student needs, and still rooted in Islamic values.

Discussion

The results of the study indicate that madrasah principals formulate a vision as a strategic direction to improve quality, strengthen Islamic identity, and build competitiveness. MAN 1 Bandar Lampung is oriented towards excellence and reputation, MAN 2 Bandar Lampung towards stability and sustainability, while MAN 1 Pesawaran focuses on transformation and gradual quality improvement. These findings align with the theory of visionary and strategic leadership, which positions madrasah principals as the direction-setters and drivers of change. (Khaulah et al., 2025). This finding is also in line with research (Tri Utomo & Sumardjoko, 2022) The study shows that visionary leadership is realized through direction setting, change agents, spokespersons, and coaches to improve the quality and competitiveness of madrasas. (Sutikno & Susanto, 2025) also found that the madrasah's vision was internalized through role models, communication, and managerial transformation to improve quality. (Bakhtiar, 2022) shows that visionary leadership at MAN 2 Banyuwangi contributes to improving academic quality, student participation, and the sustainability of the learning environment. (Tanjung et al., 2021) emphasizes that the leadership of a madrasah principal oriented toward vision and institutional development is able to direct the madrasah community to work in a focused manner, improve the quality of educational services, and strengthen the institution's competitiveness. These four studies reinforce the finding that vision is the foundation for developing quality and competitiveness. However, this research shows that vision orientation is contextual and tailored to the characteristics, capacity, and environment of each madrasah.

The effectiveness of vision formulation is largely determined by its internalization process within the madrasa community. Research shows that some madrasas involve teachers, educational staff, committees, and stakeholders, fostering a sense of ownership toward shared goals. While MAN 2 Bandar Lampung tends to be more leadership-centered. This finding aligns with the theory (Kasanova, 2025), which emphasizes the alignment of vision, resources, policies, and programs. These results are also in accordance with the research (Wibawani et al., 2019), which shows that visionary leadership with a clear direction is able to improve quality, while (Muid & Firdausy, 2026) found that the vision was formulated together with the academic community, committees, and related agencies. (Kaligis et al., 2025) also shows that shared vision is built through teacher and staff involvement, socialization, role models, and evaluation (Salasiah, 2022). This study demonstrates that the success of an educational organization's vision is influenced by the leader's ability to

consistently communicate the vision and involve the institution's citizens in its implementation, so that the vision does not remain a formal document but becomes a guideline for program implementation and decision-making. These findings reinforce the findings of this study that clarity of direction and participation are important in building commitment, although the level of ownership and internalization of the vision varies according to the level of participation of each madrasah.

Human resource management and development demonstrate that teachers and educational staff are positioned as strategic assets in enhancing madrasah competitiveness. Madrasah principals provide competency development, training, supervision, motivation, and professional development, while also providing space for teacher innovation. This finding aligns with the theory (Candra & ST, 2026) which places HR competency as a source of organizational excellence. This is also in line with research (Andarbeni et al., 2024) shows that human resource development is carried out through training, improving learning methods, motivation, discipline, and incentives. (Sartika et al., 2023) also shows that human resource management through the development of teacher competency and professionalism plays a role in improving the quality of madrasa education. Meanwhile, research (Gumilar, 2023) found that teacher professional development through training and supervision supports improvements in the quality of learning. (Muttaqin et al., 2026) also shows that continuous competency development and teacher empowerment can strengthen organizational performance and support the improvement of educational institutions' quality. These findings align with this study, which states that developing teacher competency, professionalism, and motivation is a crucial part of quality improvement. However, this study places greater emphasis on human resource management as a strategy for building competitiveness through its linkage to the madrasah's vision and innovation.

Human resource development is not only related to improving individual competencies, but also to establishing a work culture that supports innovation and the achievement of madrasah goals. Madrasah principals play a role in creating an environment that encourages collaboration, motivation, responsibility, and teacher professionalism. This finding aligns with the theory (Charli & SE, 2026), which places empowerment and HR competence as a source of organizational excellence. Research (Shobri, 2025) The research shows that transformational leadership, collaborative culture, motivation, and teacher professionalism play a role in building competitive educational institutions. (Rifa'i, 2020) Also found that the principal's transformational leadership

and organizational culture had an influence on teacher performance and professional development, while the research (Triyana, 2026) shows that collaborative culture and teacher empowerment support the creation of learning innovations. Research (Efrina, 2024) also shows that a positive organizational culture and participatory leadership can increase teacher engagement, performance, and commitment to achieving educational institution goals. These findings reinforce the findings of this study that leadership and a conducive work culture can enhance teacher professionalism and productivity. However, this study emphasizes that work culture should be directed further toward fostering an innovative culture that supports the strategic vision and competitive advantage of madrasas.

The implementation of learning innovations and flagship programs is a concrete way of translating the madrasah principal's vision into educational practice through creative learning, technology, achievement improvement, religious programs, and flagship programs. This finding aligns with the theory (Maharani et al., 2025), which places the suitability of innovation to organizational needs and differentiation as a source of excellence. (Sa'diyah & Noor, 2026) shows that enrichment of curriculum, technology, and academic-religious programs can improve the quality and competitiveness of madrasas. (Tamrin & Masykuri, 2024) also shows that technology-based learning innovation and creative approaches can improve the quality of the learning process, while research (Sirozi, 2025) found that madrasah flagship programs play a role in building a positive image and institutional competitiveness. These findings reinforce the research that innovation and flagship programs can improve quality and differentiate madrasas. However, this study views innovation more broadly as a strategic ecosystem that integrates leadership, human resources, technology, academic, non-academic, and religious programs.

Overall, the three research findings demonstrate an integrative relationship between vision formulation, human resource development, and the implementation of learning innovations and flagship programs in building madrasah competitiveness. Vision provides strategic direction, human resources provide implementation capacity, while innovation and flagship programs create distinctive value that strengthens the quality and reputation of madrasahs. These findings align with (Setiawan et al., 2024), which places the integration of valuable and difficult-to-imitate resources as the basis of organizational excellence. This finding is also in line with research (Maksum & Sujianto, 2026), which also demonstrates the relationship between visionary leadership, human resource development, learning innovation, and madrasa competitiveness. The similarity lies in the view that

competitiveness is built through the integration of various factors, while this study emphasizes the strategic pattern that vision provides direction, human resources provide capacity, and innovation produces differentiation that shapes the quality, reputation, and competitive advantage of madrasahs.

A closer look reveals that research on improving madrasah competitiveness tends to discuss leadership, human resource development, and learning innovation separately, leaving the interconnectedness of the three as a single strategy unexplained. This creates a research gap because competitiveness is not solely determined by the principal's ability to formulate a vision, but also by developing human resources and translating that vision into learning innovations and flagship programs. The novelty of this research lies in the discovery of a strategic leadership pattern that integrates vision, human resource development, and innovation as a series that mutually reinforces the competitiveness of Madrasah Aliyah. Its implementation is tailored to the characteristics, capacity, organizational culture, and competitive environment of each madrasah, allowing competitiveness to be built sustainably through vision as direction, human resources as drivers, and innovation as a differentiator that generates quality, reputation, and competitive advantage.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research results, it can be concluded that the strategic leadership of the madrasah principal plays an important role in increasing the competitiveness of MAN 1 Bandar Lampung, MAN 2 Bandar Lampung, and MAN 1 Pesawaran through three main aspects, namely strategic vision, resource management, and learning innovation and superior programs. The three madrasahs have the same goals, but implement strategies according to their respective characteristics: MAN 1 Bandar Lampung is competitively oriented and performance-based, MAN 2 Bandar Lampung is focused on stability and sustainability, while MAN 1 Pesawaran is focused on a progressive, collaborative, and empowerment approach. The implication is that increasing competitiveness cannot use a uniform model, but needs to be adjusted to the capacity, culture, resources, and environment of the madrasah. Therefore, the madrasah principal needs to strengthen the integration of vision, human resource development, and innovation in a sustainable manner to improve the quality, reputation, Islamic identity, and competitive advantage of the madrasah.

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