

# The Dynamics of Authoritative and Participative Leadership Communication in Shaping the Academic Careers of Islamic Higher Education Lecturers

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## ABSTRACT

Leadership communication is a critical yet underexplored factor in shaping academic careers in Islamic higher education. This study investigates how authoritative and participative leadership communication influences lecturer development within Islamic universities in Jambi Province, Indonesia, amid increasing demands for professionalism and digital adaptation. Using a qualitative case study design, data were collected from 13 participants across three Islamic universities through semi-structured interviews, direct observations, and document analysis. Participants included lecturers and academic leaders, selected via purposive sampling. Data were analyzed thematically using Braun and Clarke's six-phase framework to identify patterns of leadership behavior and communication strategies. Findings reveal that authoritative and participative communication modes function synergistically. Authoritative communication offers clarity, direction, and institutional alignment, while participative communication fosters collaboration, trust, and shared governance. Digital transformation enhances opportunities for participatory communication but also presents challenges such as uneven digital literacy. Communication practices grounded in Islamic ethical values—such as *syura* (consultation), *amanah* (trust), and *musyawarah* (deliberation)—strengthen moral integrity and organizational cohesion. Six dimensions of communication were identified as key drivers of lecturer career development: clarity of direction, transparency, mentoring, feedback, policy evaluation, and involvement in decision-making. An integrative communication model is proposed, showing that effective leadership in Islamic higher education is not only managerial but also ethical and developmental. The study underscores the need for leadership development programs that combine Islamic ethics with digital communication competence to enhance institutional resilience and lecturer empowerment.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Islamic higher education plays a strategic role in producing competent, ethical, and globally competitive human resources who are capable of addressing the challenges of modernization and social transformation (Handrianto et al., 2025; Iqbal et al., 2021). In Indonesia, particularly in Jambi Province, Islamic higher education institutions are expected not only to disseminate religious knowledge but also to develop professionals who integrate intellectual capacity with Islamic moral values (Hanif et al., 2024). These institutions act as transformative agents that nurture graduates capable of contributing to both national development and the preservation of Islamic values in professional and community life (Wahyudin et al., 2024).

The quality of lecturers represents a fundamental pillar of institutional excellence (Bahri, 2022; Mulyasa et al., 2020). Lecturers function not merely as transmitters of knowledge but as mentors who guide students toward intellectual maturity, ethical awareness, and professional competence (Fathani et al., 2022). Their responsibilities extend beyond teaching to include research and community service, where their leadership and communication skills influence student outcomes, institutional credibility, and innovation capacity (Hakiem et al., 2023). Consequently, effective leadership communication becomes a determining factor in fostering lecturers' academic growth and professional engagement (Piliz et al., 2024; Sabaté-Dalmau & Moncada-Comas, 2023).

Previous studies on higher education leadership have primarily focused on structural and managerial aspects rather than the communicative dimension (Riza et al., 2024; Winoto, 2022). While prior studies have addressed structural leadership in Islamic institutions, little is known about the communicative processes underpinning different leadership styles and how they impact lecturer development. This limitation underscores the need to explore the interaction between leadership communication patterns, especially authoritative and participative styles, and their implications for academic motivation and institutional performance in Islamic higher education settings.

The context of Jambi Province offers a particularly relevant case, as its Islamic universities are undergoing rapid transformation marked by digitalization, diversification of academic programs, and efforts to improve lecturer professionalism (Aldjufri et al., 2024; Taufik & Taufik, 2023). Despite these advances, communication challenges persist in balancing hierarchical authority with participative governance, especially as digital platforms reshape the nature of leader-lecturer interaction. Understanding how these dynamics operate within the socio-religious framework of Islamic higher education becomes crucial for strengthening institutional resilience and lecturer empowerment.

This study is grounded in organizational communication theory and participative leadership theory, both of which emphasize that effective communication builds trust, coherence, and shared purpose within institutions (Brahmasari & Ratih, 2024; Xhomara, 2021; Notosudjono & Sunaryo, 2024). From this theoretical foundation, the study integrates the view that leadership communication operates as both a managerial and ethical process bridging clarity and collaboration to promote academic and organizational excellence. By combining these perspectives, the study aims to understand how authoritative and participative leadership communication jointly influence lecturers' professional growth and institutional engagement in Islamic higher education institutions in Jambi Province.

Specifically, this research seeks to answer two key questions: how do authoritative and participative communication practices interact to shape lecturers' academic career development, and in what ways does digital transformation alter the patterns of communication between leaders and lecturers in fostering participatory governance? These questions align with the findings that both leadership styles contribute synergistically to institutional development, while digital adaptation introduces new expectations for transparency, collaboration, and technological literacy.

Ultimately, this study aims to fill the empirical and theoretical gap in the literature by offering a nuanced understanding of how communication-centred leadership rooted in Islamic ethical values such as *syura* (consultation), *amanah* (trust), and *musyawarah* (deliberation) enhances lecturer development and institutional sustainability. The study is expected to contribute to the refinement of leadership policies

and the advancement of communication-based governance strategies that integrate Islamic ethics with digital competence in higher education.

## 2. METHODS

This study employed a qualitative approach with a case study design to explore the dynamics of authoritative and participative leadership communication in shaping the academic careers of lecturers in Islamic Higher Education Institutions in Jambi Province (Y. R. Effendi et al., 2020; Ibrahim et al., 2024). A qualitative case study approach was considered appropriate to capture the depth, complexity, and contextual nature of communication practices within academic organizations (Setiawati et al., 2020). This design allowed the researchers to understand how leaders and lecturers interact, communicate, and influence one another within institutional structures.

### 2.1 Research Setting and Participants

The research was conducted at three Islamic Higher Education Institutions in Jambi Province, representing both public and private universities that reflect the diversity of the local Islamic higher education landscape. The selection of Jambi as the case study site was based on its position as a developing academic region with active efforts to improve lecturer professionalism and institutional quality. Participants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure diversity in experience, academic rank, and leadership roles. A total of 13 participants took part in this study, including 10 lecturers and 3 university leaders (rectors and heads of departments) representing disciplines in Islamic studies, education, and management.

Participants ranged in age from 30 to 56 years, with 6 male and 7 female respondents. Their academic experience varied between 5 and 25 years, reflecting both early-career and senior faculty perspectives. All participants were involved directly or indirectly in academic leadership and institutional communication processes. A summary of participant characteristics is presented in Table 1 to illustrate demographic diversity and role distribution.

**Table 1.** Illustrate demographic diversity and role distribution

Participant Code	Gender	Position	Years of Experience	Institution Type
L1–L10	6 M / 4 F	Lecturers	5–25 years	Public & Private
R1–R3	1 M / 2 F	Rector / Head of Dept.	10–28 years	Public & Private

### 2.2 Technical Data Collection

Data were collected over three months (January–March 2024) through semi-structured interviews, direct observations, and document analysis.

- 1) Semi-structured interviews were conducted as the primary data source. Each session lasted between 45 and 60 minutes and was audio-recorded with participants' consent. The interview guide covered themes such as leadership communication practices, participation in decision-making, motivation, mentoring, and institutional support for career advancement.
- 2) Direct observation was carried out during academic meetings, teaching sessions, and informal interactions between lecturers and leaders. Observations focused on patterns of communication, decision-making styles, and responses to institutional challenges.

To ensure data credibility, triangulation was employed by cross-validating information from interviews, observations, and documents. Consistencies and discrepancies were analyzed to confirm emerging themes and strengthen the validity of interpretations.

## 2.3 Data Analysis Procedures

Data was analyzed using thematic analysis based on Braun and Clarke's in Majumdar, (2022) framework, which includes six systematic steps: (1) familiarization with data, (2) generating initial codes, (3) searching for themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) producing the report. All transcripts and field notes were coded manually, and recurrent patterns were identified across interviews and observations to build overarching themes such as authoritative direction, participative engagement, trust-building communication, and mentoring culture.

This study was conducted in accordance with institutional ethical guidelines, and informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to data collection. Participants were assured of confidentiality, anonymity, and voluntary participation. Pseudonyms were used in all records to protect participant identities, and all data were securely stored and used exclusively for research purposes.

## 3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### 3.1 Findings

#### 3.1.1 The Development and Structural Challenges of Islamic Higher Education in Jambi Province

Since the 1980s, Islamic higher education in Indonesia has undergone a profound transformation that mirrors the government's effort to expand access for Muslim communities while embedding Islamic values within the national education framework (Niam & Lukens-Bull, 2025). In Jambi Province, this transformation reflects both a local aspiration to strengthen Islamic scholarship and a national agenda to cultivate ethically grounded human resources. Public and private Islamic institutions that once functioned as *madrasah* or *pesantren* have matured into universities emphasizing professionalism, research competence, and competitiveness within the global academic arena.

The evolution of these institutions is evident in the diversification of academic programs, the gradual improvement of teaching quality, and the growth of research capacity (Muthohirin et al., 2025). Collaborations with national and international partners have enriched curricula and facilitated faculty exchanges, strengthening the regional academic ecosystem. Progress, however, remains uneven. Institutions with stronger leadership and external networks advance more rapidly, while others struggle to meet accreditation standards and sustain innovation. The expansion of programs in Islamic education, management, and social sciences demonstrates responsiveness to societal needs while maintaining a distinct Islamic identity.

Structural challenges continue to define the landscape of Islamic higher education in Jambi. Lecturer qualifications vary widely, research resources remain limited, and institutional support for academic advancement is often inconsistent. Many lecturers encounter difficulties in accessing postgraduate education, publishing research, and securing grants constraints that directly shape their professional trajectories (Muthohirin, 2025). Inadequate infrastructure further limits pedagogical innovation and research productivity, reflecting the broader gap between institutional vision and operational capacity.

Lecturer well-being emerges as a persistent concern. Modest remuneration, disproportionate workloads, and limited involvement in governance processes weaken morale and erode professional commitment. The findings confirm earlier observations by Sabagh et al., (2022), who identified leadership effectiveness and resource sufficiency as the strongest predictors of institutional quality in Islamic higher education. Lecturers' restricted participation in decision-making also reduces their sense of belonging, indicating that empowerment remains an underdeveloped dimension of academic governance (M. S. Effendi et al., 2025).

At a deeper conceptual level, the most intricate challenge lies in integrating Islamic epistemology with contemporary scientific and technological paradigms. Lecturers are expected to merge classical Islamic scholarship with modern methodologies, demanding intellectual adaptability and institutional backing. This dual mandate to uphold moral integrity while attaining global relevance encapsulates

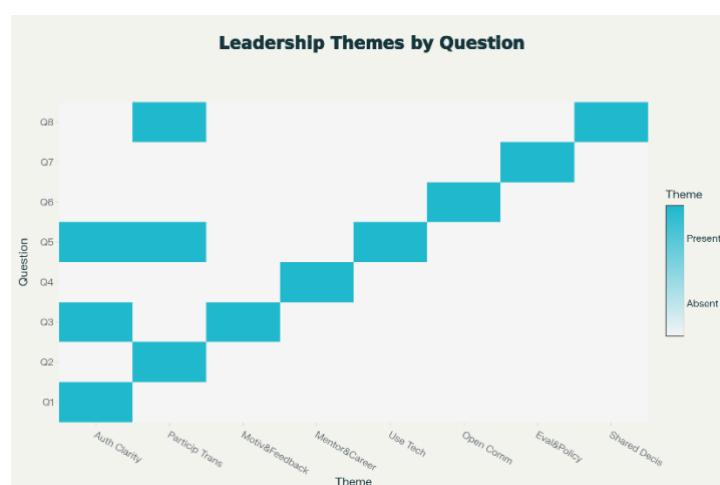
the enduring tension within Islamic universities. As Wilmot, (2025) observe, the future of Islamic higher education depends on its ability to balance ethical authenticity with academic innovation.

### 3.1.2 Communication Dynamics of Authoritative and Participative Leadership in Shaping Academic Careers

The findings of this study reveal that communication plays a pivotal role in shaping the leadership dynamics of Islamic higher education institutions in Jambi Province. Leadership communication operates along two complementary dimensions: authoritative and participative. Authoritative communication focuses on providing clear direction, structure, and vision, while participative communication emphasizes openness, collaboration, and involvement in institutional decision-making. Together, these modes of communication form a synergistic framework that supports both organizational stability and lecturer empowerment. Table 2 shows a list of questions given to find out about Authoritative and Participative Leadership Communication

**Table 2.** Interview questions on Authoritative and Participative Leadership Communication

No	Interview Questions
1.	How do you view the role of communication in authoritative leadership?
2.	How do you ensure transparency in participative decision-making?
3.	What strategies do you employ to motivate the team through authoritative communication?
4.	How do you build mentor-mentee relationships through communication?
5.	How do you use communication technology to support authoritative and participative leadership?
6.	What concrete steps have you taken to create an organizational culture that supports open communication?
7.	How do you evaluate leadership policies and make adjustments based on feedback?



**Figure 1.** Leadership Themes by Question

As shown in Figure 1, Leadership Themes by Question, seven interrelated themes emerged from the interviews: *authoritative clarity, participative transparency, motivation and feedback, mentoring and guidance, use of technology, open communication, evaluation of policy, and shared decision-making*. The

visualization demonstrates that leadership communication in Islamic higher education follows a continuum from directive authority to participative governance. Early-stage themes such as *authoritative clarity* (Q1) and *participative transparency* (Q2) appear as foundational elements that ensure leaders communicate expectations clearly while encouraging inclusive dialogue. This duality reflects the importance of balance between clarity and collaboration in fostering institutional alignment and trust.

Mid-level themes (Q3–Q5) focus on the operational aspects of leadership communication, namely, the use of digital tools, mentoring relationships, and feedback mechanisms. Leaders frequently employ communication technology to disseminate information efficiently while maintaining accessibility for staff input. Mentoring emerges as a relational process that blends authoritative guidance with participative dialogue, enabling lecturers to receive structured support while also expressing professional aspirations. Motivation and feedback mechanisms serve as the connective tissue between these approaches, ensuring continuous engagement and performance improvement. This aligns with the view of successful leadership communication requires both directive precision and relational sensitivity to sustain motivation and organizational trust.

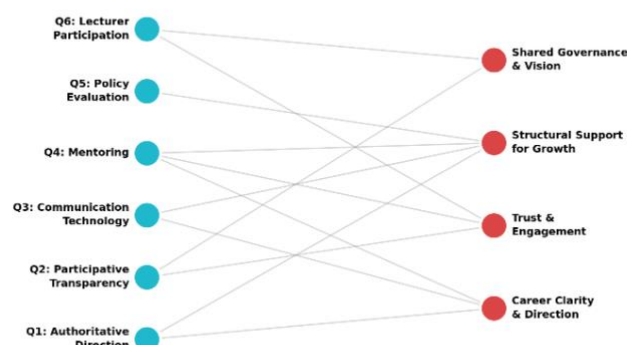
Upper-level themes (Q6–Q8) highlight communication practices linked to strategic governance policy evaluation, open communication culture, and shared decision-making. Leaders demonstrated awareness of the importance of transparency and inclusiveness in maintaining institutional accountability. Policy evaluation processes are not solely administrative but communicative, allowing for reflection and adaptation based on collective feedback. Open communication channels promote a sense of ownership among lecturers, while shared decision-making reinforces participatory governance. These practices collectively strengthen organizational learning and institutional resilience in the evolving landscape of Islamic higher education.

Furthermore, questions were given to lecturers about how the communication dynamics faced in shaping the career of lecturers in Jambi. The questions can be seen in table 3 below

**Table 3.** Questions on the Dynamics of Leadership Communication in Shaping the Lecturer's Career

No.	Interview Questions
1.	How does authoritative leadership communication influence the careers of lecturers in Islamic Higher Education in the Jambi Province?
2.	How important is transparency in participative leadership communication for the careers of lecturers in the context of Islamic Higher Education?
3.	How does communication technology support the dynamics of authoritative leadership communication in the context of Islamic Higher Education in the Jambi Province?
4.	What is the role of mentoring in developing lecturers' careers, and how does authoritative and participative leadership communication facilitate mentor-mentee relationships?
5.	How can regular leadership policy evaluations affect lecturers' careers in the Islamic Higher Education environment in the Jambi Province?
6.	How can lecturer involvement in decision-making shape the direction and goals of Islamic Higher Education institutions in the Jambi Province?

### Leadership Communication Concept Map



**Figure 2.** Dynamics of Leadership Communication in shaping the Lecturer's career

Further analysis, as visualized in Figure 2 Leadership Communication Concept Map, demonstrates how leadership communication mechanisms translate into measurable career development outcomes. The map links six major dimensions *authoritative direction, participative transparency, communication technology, mentoring, policy evaluation, and lecturer participation* to four core outcomes: *career clarity and direction, trust and engagement, structural support for growth, and shared governance and vision*. The findings indicate that authoritative direction and participative transparency are the most influential drivers of career clarity and trust, suggesting that structured communication enhances motivation when accompanied by openness and collective participation. Mentoring and policy evaluation act as bridging mechanisms that connect communication practices to institutional learning and professional growth, while lecturer participation reinforces shared governance and the co-creation of institutional vision.

Overall, the results present an integrative communication model in which top-down (authoritative) and bottom-up (participative) processes coexist and mutually reinforce one another. Leaders not only direct and coordinate but also listen, mentor, and adapt through feedback-driven policy evaluation. The interplay of these communication dimensions creates a cohesive and trust-based academic environment that supports lecturers' career advancement. This pattern supports participative leadership theory (Tillotson, 2025) multichannel communication competence framework of which emphasize that sustainable leadership in higher education depends on the interplay between clarity, inclusiveness, and adaptive communication. Thus, in the context of Islamic higher education in Jambi, effective leadership communication emerges not as a unilateral command system but as a collaborative, iterative, and developmental process that drives both institutional excellence and individual empowerment.

#### 3.1.3 Opportunities and Challenges of Authoritative and Participative Leadership Communication.

The digital transformation of higher education has significantly reshaped leadership communication within Islamic higher education institutions in Jambi Province. Interviews with university leaders and lecturers revealed that digitalization creates both opportunities and challenges for authoritative and participative leadership communication. From the Rector's perspective, authoritative leadership remains a critical foundation for ensuring institutional stability and lecturer guidance during this transition. The Rector emphasized that in the digital era, authoritative communication serves as a strategic instrument to provide clear direction, discipline, and alignment

amid rapid technological shifts. This reinforces the notion of leadership as a communicative anchor, ensuring that academic staff remain focused and motivated despite the evolving digital landscape.

The empirical data summarizing these perspectives are presented in Table 4 Opportunities and Challenges of Leadership Communication. The table categorizes the findings from both the Rector and the lecturers into four thematic areas *authoritative opportunities*, *authoritative challenges*, *participative opportunities*, and *participative challenges*. These categories offer a comparative view of how leadership communication functions differently across hierarchical levels. The Rector's responses highlight authoritative opportunities such as the ability to offer clear career direction and moral guidance through digital channels, whereas lecturers perceive the same authoritative approach as a motivational force that helps them clarify expectations and plan their professional development. This alignment between institutional direction and individual purpose illustrates how authoritative communication continues to play a stabilizing role in digital academic environments.

**Table 4.** Opportunities and Challenges of Leadership Communication

Category	Rector's	Lecturers'
Authoritative Opportunities	Provide clear direction and career guidance in the digital era.	Be a motivation and guideline to understand expectations and develop a career.
Authoritative Challenges	-	Adaptation to digital demands and technology.
Participative Opportunities	Strengthening digital infrastructure and collaborative platforms.	Access resources, collaboration, and participation in policy.
Participatory Challenges	-	Low digital engagement, technical barriers, need training.

In contrast, the participative dimensions of leadership communication show the transformative potential of technology in fostering inclusivity and collaboration. The Rector identified participative opportunities in the expansion of digital infrastructure and online collaboration platforms that facilitate open dialogue between leaders and lecturers. These tools enable shared decision-making and enhance access to institutional resources. Lecturers supported this view, noting that digital media provide new opportunities for involvement in policy discussions and collaborative research. However, as indicated in the participative challenges section of Table 3, both groups recognized several constraints, including low digital engagement, technical difficulties, and the need for targeted digital literacy training to ensure effective participation. Such challenges demonstrate that while technology widens access, it also requires new competencies and adaptive communication strategies from academic leaders and staff alike.

### 3.2 Discussion

Islamic higher education in Indonesia has undergone a significant transformation since the 1980s. The evolution from traditional *madrasah* and *pesantren* to modern universities represents the state's commitment to integrating Islamic values with national education policy. In Jambi Province, Islamic higher education has grown as both a response to local religious aspirations and a national effort to produce ethical and competent human resources (Khoir et al., 2025). Institutions in the region have expanded academic programs, strengthened research initiatives, and established collaborations with other universities. Despite this progress, disparities remain in terms of lecturer qualifications, institutional capacity, and resource distribution, revealing an uneven pace of development across institutions (Sibawaihi et al., 2024).

Lecturers occupy a central role in shaping academic quality and institutional credibility. Their teaching, research, and community engagement directly reflect the effectiveness of leadership communication in guiding academic culture (Ngalomba et al., 2025). The study highlights that lecturers in Jambi still face systemic barriers such as limited research funding, insufficient mentoring, and restricted access to postgraduate education. Heavy workloads and modest welfare further constrain their motivation and innovation capacity (Sumanti, 2024). These issues mirror findings from previous studies that associate lecturer performance with leadership support, organizational culture, and institutional infrastructure (Asy'Ari et al., 2025). Leadership quality, therefore, becomes the critical factor in transforming these challenges into developmental opportunities.

Leadership communication emerges as a defining element in this transformation. Authoritative communication functions as a framework that delivers direction, coherence, and accountability, while participative communication nurtures engagement, trust, and intellectual ownership (Malla et al., 2020; Walid et al., 2025). The interplay between these two modes produces an integrated system of influence rather than a dichotomy. Evidence from interviews indicates that leaders who combine firmness with openness foster a more committed and innovative academic climate. This finding reinforces organizational communication theory, which emphasizes message clarity, feedback reciprocity, and relational sensitivity as essential elements of institutional (Morgül & Findikli, 2023).

The study also situates these communication patterns within the moral foundation of Islamic leadership (Walid et al., 2025). The coexistence of authoritative and participative communication reflects the principle of *syura* a consultative process rooted in justice and accountability. Leadership in Islamic higher education thus transcends managerial authority, embodying moral guidance and collective responsibility (Hadiati et al., 2025). Leaders who uphold *trust* and encourage *deliberations* tend to build academic environments characterized by mutual trust and respect. This ethical dimension reinforces the argument that effective communication in Islamic institutions operates simultaneously as a managerial strategy and a moral act that shapes both institutional and individual integrity (Nawi et al., 2020).

Digitalization introduces new layers of complexity to leadership communication. The integration of digital tools facilitates faster information exchange, virtual mentoring, and participative governance, yet it also exposes gaps in digital competence and engagement (Höddinghaus & Hertel, 2021). Leaders increasingly rely on technology to provide clear direction and monitor academic performance, while lecturers perceive digital platforms as spaces for collaboration and self-expression. The study reveals that successful adaptation to this digital shift depends on multichannel communication competence and ethical leadership capable of balancing efficiency with empathy (Al-Habsi et al., 2022). When effectively managed, digital participation strengthens inclusivity and transparency within academic institutions, supporting sustainable leadership models in the era of transformation.

The findings construct an integrative model of leadership communication in Islamic higher education. Authoritative clarity ensures institutional stability; participative inclusiveness sustains engagement and innovation. Together, they create a dynamic feedback system that promotes organizational learning and professional growth. Leadership communication, therefore, is not merely a managerial process but a cultural and ethical mechanism that aligns institutional objectives with individual aspirations. In the context of Jambi Province, this integrative framework offers a practical and moral foundation for building resilient, adaptive, and value-driven Islamic universities.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

This study finds that communication embedded within authoritative and participative leadership frameworks plays a decisive role in shaping the academic careers of lecturers in Islamic higher education institutions in Jambi Province. Authoritative leadership contributes clarity, direction, and institutional stability, while participative leadership promotes openness, collaboration, and shared responsibility; together, these approaches form a dynamic and balanced model that enhances lecturer

motivation, trust, and engagement while reinforcing institutional coherence and adaptability in the context of digital transformation. Importantly, the study affirms that leadership communication grounded in Islamic ethical principles—such as *syura*, *amanah*, and *musyawarah*—functions not merely as a managerial instrument but as a moral framework aligning institutional vision with professional development. However, the research is limited to three Islamic universities in Jambi Province, thereby restricting the generalizability of its findings across broader higher education contexts. Future research should therefore undertake comparative and multi-site studies, including cross-provincial and inter-institutional analyses between Islamic and non-Islamic universities, to refine and validate the proposed communication model. Overall, effective leadership communication characterized by clarity, inclusivity, and ethical adaptability emerges as a central pillar of institutional resilience and academic excellence in Islamic higher education.

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