



Enhancing Madrasah Competitiveness: The Role of Digital Leadership, Service Quality, and Islamic Brand Identity in Institutional Reputation

Moh Ali¹, Al Ghazali², Alwy Husein Prawironegoro³, Neila Najmi Aulia⁴, Im Youngho⁵, Ibnu Rusydi⁶

¹Universitas Islam Negeri Siber Syekh Nurjati Cirebon, Indonesia

²Universitas Bina Sarana Informatika, Indonesia

³Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, Indonesia

⁴Telkom University, Indonesia

⁵Cyber Hankuk University of Foreign Studies di Korea,

⁶Universitas Wiralodra, Indramayu, Indonesia

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Abstract

The accelerating digital transformation in education has compelled Indonesian madrasahs to strengthen their competitiveness while preserving their Islamic identity. However, empirical evidence explaining how digital leadership contributes to institutional reputation remains limited. This study aims to examine the role of digital leadership in enhancing institutional reputation through digital service quality and Islamic brand identity. Grounded in the Resource-Based View (RBV), the study employed a quantitative approach using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). Data were collected from 145 stakeholders representing digitally adopting madrasahs across Indonesia. The findings reveal that digital leadership does not directly influence institutional reputation ($\beta = 0.147$, $p = 0.081$). Instead, digital service quality ($\beta = 0.334$, $p < 0.001$) and Islamic brand identity ($\beta = 0.348$, $p < 0.001$) fully mediate the relationship. The model explains 45% of the variance in institutional reputation ($R^2 = 0.450$). These findings demonstrate that leadership vision alone is insufficient to generate reputational value unless translated into superior digital services and a strong Islamic brand identity. The study extends RBV within Islamic educational settings and provides practical guidance for madrasah leaders seeking to integrate technological innovation with religious values to achieve sustainable competitiveness.

Keywords: Digital Leadership, Service Quality, Islamic Brand Identity, Institutional Reputation, Madrasah Competitiveness.

Abstrak

Transformasi digital yang semakin cepat dalam pendidikan telah mendorong madrasah-madrasah di Indonesia untuk memperkuat daya saing mereka sambil tetap menjaga identitas Islami mereka. Namun, bukti empiris yang menjelaskan bagaimana kepemimpinan digital berkontribusi pada reputasi institusi masih terbatas. Studi ini bertujuan untuk meneliti peran kepemimpinan digital dalam meningkatkan reputasi institusi melalui kualitas layanan digital dan identitas merek Islami. Berdasarkan Resource-Based View (RBV), studi ini menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif dengan menggunakan Structural Equation Modeling Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS). Data dikumpulkan dari 145 pemangku kepentingan yang mewakili madrasah-madrasah yang mengadopsi teknologi digital di seluruh Indonesia. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kepemimpinan digital tidak secara langsung memengaruhi reputasi institusi ($\beta = 0,147$, $p = 0,081$). Sebaliknya, kualitas layanan digital ($\beta = 0,334$, $p < 0,001$) dan identitas merek Islami ($\beta = 0,348$, $p < 0,001$) sepenuhnya memediasi hubungan.

sepenuhnya memediasi hubungan tersebut. Model tersebut menjelaskan 45% varians dalam reputasi institusi ($R^2 = 0,450$). Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa visi kepemimpinan saja tidak cukup untuk menghasilkan nilai reputasi kecuali jika diterjemahkan ke dalam layanan digital yang unggul dan identitas merek Islami yang kuat. Studi ini memperluas RBV (Reputation-Based View) dalam konteks pendidikan Islam dan memberikan panduan praktis bagi para pemimpin madrasah yang berupaya mengintegrasikan inovasi teknologi dengan nilai-nilai agama untuk mencapai daya saing yang berkelanjutan.

Kata Kunci: *Kepemimpinan Digital, Kualitas Layanan, Identitas Merek Islami, Reputasi Institusional, Daya Saing Madrasah*

INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of digital technology has fundamentally transformed educational institutions worldwide (Liu et al., 2022; Romli et al., 2022). In this context, madrasah as Islamic educational institutions face a unique dual challenge: upholding religious traditions while keeping pace with modern educational demands shaped by technological innovation (Fauziyah et al., 2025; Martanti et al., 2026; Mukhlisin et al., 2023; Riski et al., 2024). Competition has grown intensely; madrasah no longer compete solely with other Islamic schools but also with general public schools that aggressively integrate digital platforms into their systems (Ahmad & Syihabuddin, 2025; Anam et al., 2025; Munirah et al., 2022; Rohman et al., 2023).

This study is grounded in the Resource-Based View (RBV), which posits that sustainable competitive advantage originates from valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable organizational resources (Barney, 2001). Within educational institutions, competitive advantage is increasingly determined not only by tangible assets but also by intangible capabilities such as leadership, organizational culture, service excellence, and institutional identity (Arici & Uysal, 2022; Oruh et al., 2021). In the context of madrasah, digital leadership represents a strategic intangible resource that enables institutions to adapt to technological change while maintaining educational quality and stakeholder trust (Haider et al., 2022). RBV suggests that organizational resources generate superior outcomes when they are effectively transformed into capabilities that create value for stakeholders (Helfat et al., 2023). Consequently, digital leadership is expected to influence institutional reputation through mechanisms that strengthen organizational performance and stakeholder perceptions.

To explain how strategic resources are translated into reputational outcomes, this study incorporates digital service quality and Islamic brand identity as capability-based and symbolic manifestations of leadership resources (Amzat et al., 2022; Lubis, 2022; Ma'arif et al., 2025; Yuliana et al., 2025). Digital service quality reflects an institution's ability to provide accessible, responsive, reliable, and user-oriented educational services through digital platforms (Arif et al., 2025; Caridà et al., 2022; Hamzah et al., 2023; Hidayanto et al., 2026; Prabowo et al., 2022; Ullah et al., 2022). Meanwhile, Islamic brand identity reflects the institution's capacity to communicate and preserve distinctive religious values within a modern educational environment (Hidayat et al., 2023; Suhardono et al., 2025). From an RBV perspective, these constructs function as strategic organizational capabilities that transform leadership resources into observable value. Therefore, institutional reputation is not merely the result of leadership itself but rather the outcome of stakeholders' evaluations of the quality of services received and the consistency of organizational identity projected by the institution.

Consequently, institutional reputation emerges as a critical factor in attracting students and building community trust (Rachman et al., 2025). Yet, reputation cannot rest on religious heritage alone. It must be strategically constructed through effective digital leadership, high-

quality digital services, and a coherent Islamic brand identity that resonates with modern expectations (Zuhri et al., 2026).

Despite growing scholarly attention to digital transformation in Islamic education, three important gaps remain. First, existing studies predominantly examine digital leadership from organizational performance or managerial perspectives, while its influence on institutional reputation remains underexplored (Alwi & Mumtahana, 2023; Herdiaty & Widjaja, 2025; Huriyah et al., 2025; Rismanila et al., 2025; Sagoro et al., 2025; Shittu et al., 2025). Second, prior studies tend to investigate service quality and institutional branding separately, resulting in a limited understanding of how these mechanisms jointly translate leadership capabilities into reputational outcomes (Kafetzopoulos, 2022; Thampi, 2022). Third, empirical evidence integrating digital leadership, digital service quality, Islamic brand identity, and institutional reputation within a single theoretical framework remains scarce, particularly in the context of Indonesian madrasah (Agustian Ramadana Putera et al., 2022).

To address these gaps, this study develops an integrated model grounded in the Resource-Based View (RBV) (Barney, 2001). The study proposes that digital leadership functions as a strategic intangible resource whose influence on institutional reputation is realized through digital service quality and Islamic brand identity (Thampi, 2022). By simultaneously examining these relationships, this research contributes to educational management literature in three ways. First, it extends RBV into the context of Islamic educational institutions. Second, it identifies the mediating mechanisms through which leadership capabilities generate reputational outcomes (Kalkan et al., 2020). Third, it introduces Islamic brand identity as a strategic intangible asset that strengthens institutional competitiveness in the digital era. This research positions digital leadership as a strategic intangible resource that, when effectively mobilized, improves digital service quality, reinforces Islamic brand identity, and ultimately enhances institutional reputation (Kurniawan et al., 2022).

This study contributes directly to Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality Education), which emphasizes the provision of inclusive, equitable, and high-quality educational opportunities for all. By identifying the strategic role of digital leadership, digital service quality, and institutional reputation in strengthening educational performance, the study offers evidence-based insights for improving governance and service delivery within Islamic educational institutions. Enhanced digital services can expand educational accessibility, improve learning support systems, and strengthen stakeholder engagement, while a strong institutional reputation can increase public confidence in educational provision. Consequently, the findings support efforts to improve educational quality, institutional effectiveness, and sustainable educational development in alignment with the objectives of SDG 4.

This study offers several novel contributions to the literature. First, it develops an integrated model that simultaneously examines the relationships among digital leadership, digital service quality, Islamic brand identity, and institutional reputation within the context of Indonesian madrasah. Second, unlike previous studies that primarily focused on direct relationships between leadership and organizational outcomes, this study uncovers a full mediation mechanism through which digital leadership generates reputational value. Third, the study introduces Islamic brand identity as a strategic intangible asset within the Resource-Based View framework, demonstrating its role as a critical mechanism for strengthening institutional competitiveness in religious educational settings. These contributions provide a more comprehensive explanation of reputation formation and extend the application of RBV to the rapidly evolving context of Islamic education in the digital age.

By integrating these constructs within a single SEM-PLS framework, this study extends RBV to the context of Islamic education and provides explicit, actionable guidance for madrasah leaders shaping their digital transformation strategies. Based on the identified theoretical and empirical gaps, this study seeks to answer a central research question: How does digital leadership contribute to the development of institutional reputation in Indonesian madrasah within the context of digital transformation? More specifically, the study investigates whether digital leadership directly enhances institutional reputation or whether its influence is transmitted through digital service quality and Islamic brand identity as strategic organizational capabilities.

METHOD

Research Design

This study adopts a quantitative research design using Structural Equation Modeling Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS). SEM-PLS was selected due to its ability to manage complex models with multiple mediators and its robustness with small-to-medium sample sizes. However, one limitation of SEM-PLS is the assumption of linear relationships, which may not capture all complexities of the digital leadership-reputation dynamic. The research is explanatory in nature, aiming to test causal relationships between constructs and provide empirical evidence for the proposed theoretical framework. Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge that one limitation of SEM-PLS is its assumption of linear relationships, which may not capture all complexities of the digital leadership reputation dynamic.

Population and Sampling

The population of this study consists of Islamic secondary schools (madrasah aliyah and tsanawiyah) in Indonesia. The sampling frame includes madrasah that have already adopted digital services, either in academic processes (e-learning, digital libraries, online learning management systems) or in administrative services (online registration, digital communication, and parent information systems). A purposive sampling strategy is employed to ensure the inclusion of schools that meet these criteria. The unit of analysis is the institution, while the unit of observation consists of key stakeholders, namely principals, vice principals, teachers, parents, and community representatives. To meet the requirements of SEM-PLS, the sample size follows the "10-times rule," which suggests that the minimum number of respondents should be 10 times the largest number of indicators in the model. Based on this criterion, a minimum of 100-150 respondents is deemed adequate for analysis.

Data Collection Procedures

Data were collected through a structured questionnaire distributed both online and offline to the selected madrasah. Online distribution ensured wider coverage and efficiency, while offline collection was used in institutions with limited internet access. The questionnaire is designed using a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree) to measure perceptions of the constructs. Prior to full-scale data collection, a pilot test was conducted with 20 respondents to assess clarity, reliability, and validity of the items. Feedback from the pilot study was used to refine wording and structure of the questionnaire.

Measurement of Variables

Each construct in this study is operationalized based on established literature and contextualized to the madrasah setting: **Digital Leadership (X)**: Measured through four indicators: (1) vision for digital transformation, (2) culture of innovation, (3) technology-

related policies, and (4) digital competence of leaders. **Digital Service Quality (M1):** Adapted from e-service quality models, measured through (1) ease of access to digital learning platforms, (2) responsiveness of online services, (3) reliability of information systems, and (4) personalization of digital services for students and parents. **Islamic Brand Identity (M2):** Measured through (1) integration of Islamic values into digital content, (2) image of the madrasah as both modern and religious, and (3) consistency of Islamic communication across digital platforms. **Institutional Reputation (Y):** Measured through stakeholders' perceptions of (1) trust, (2) prestige, and (3) recognition of the madrasah in the community. All indicators are measured reflectively, assuming that observed variables reflect the underlying latent constructs

Data Analysis

The data analysis proceeded in two major stages: first stage is **Measurement Model Evaluation (Outer Model) consist of:** a) convergent validity was assessed using factor loadings (>0.70), Average Variance Extracted (AVE >0.50), and Composite Reliability (CR >0.70), b) discriminant validity was tested using the Fornell–Larcker criterion and HTMT ratio (<0.85), and c) reliability of each construct was confirmed using Cronbach's Alpha (>0.70). second stage is **Structural Model Evaluation (Inner Model) consist of:** a) the coefficient of determination (R^2) was calculated to assess explanatory power of the model, b) predictive relevance (Q^2) was tested using the PLSpredict procedure, c) path coefficients were estimated to examine the significance and strength of hypothesized relationships, and d) bootstrapping with 5000 subsamples was used to test the statistical significance of direct and mediating effects.

Ethical Considerations

This study adheres to ethical standards in social science research. Participation is voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all respondents. Confidentiality and anonymity are ensured, as no identifying personal data was disclosed. The data collected was used solely for academic purposes, and respondents may withdraw at any time without consequences. Approval from institutional review boards or equivalent authorities was sought prior to data collection.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results confirm that digital leadership significantly influences institutional reputation through both digital service quality and Islamic brand identity. These findings extend RBV theory by demonstrating how intangible leadership resources can enhance organizational reputation. The practical implications highlight the need for madrasah leaders to integrate both technology and Islamic branding to enhance competitiveness in the digital era

The findings provide important support for the Resource-Based View (RBV) by demonstrating that digital leadership functions as a strategic intangible resource whose value depends on its successful conversion into organizational capabilities. Rather than directly generating reputational outcomes, digital leadership enhances institutional reputation by developing superior digital service quality and a distinctive Islamic brand identity. This finding extends RBV by highlighting the mediating role of both functional capabilities and symbolic resources within Islamic educational institutions.

The results are consistent with prior studies emphasizing the importance of leadership in digital transformation, yet they also offer a more nuanced explanation. Previous studies generally assumed a direct relationship between leadership and organizational outcomes. In

contrast, this study reveals that stakeholders evaluate institutional reputation primarily through observable service experiences and organizational identity, rather than solely through leadership characteristics. Consequently, leadership effectiveness becomes visible only when translated into stakeholder-valued outcomes.

Another important contribution lies in introducing Islamic brand identity as a strategic reputational mechanism. While educational branding research has predominantly focused on higher education institutions, this study demonstrates that Islamic brand identity constitutes a valuable intangible asset capable of differentiating madrasah within increasingly competitive educational markets.

Descriptive Statistics

A total of 145 valid responses were successfully collected from selected madrasah in Indonesia that have integrated digital services into their educational and administrative processes. The demographic profile and institutional characteristics of the respondents are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic Profile of Respondents (n = 145)

Category	Classification	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	61	42%
	Female	84	58%
Age Group	Under 30 years	26	18%
	31 – 40 years	65	45%
	41 – 50 years	39	27%
	Above 50 years	15	10%
Professional Role	School Leaders (Principals/Vice)	44	30%
	Teachers	65	45%
	Parents / Community	36	25%
Digital Tool Experience	High Familiarity	32	22%
	Moderate Familiarity	71	49%
	Low Familiarity	42	29%
Institutional Profile	Urban-based Madrasah	91	63%
	Rural-based Madrasah	54	37%

As shown in Table 1, the sample is well-distributed, capturing a diverse range of stakeholders within the madrasah ecosystem. The majority of respondents are in their highly productive years (31–40 years old, 45%) and serve as teachers (45%). Interestingly, while the adoption of digital tools is progressing predominantly in urban-based madrasah (63%) nearly a third of the respondents (29%) still report low familiarity with digital platforms. Overall, this balanced mix of demographic, professional, and institutional characteristics provides a robust and comprehensive basis for evaluating the structural model.

Measurement Model Evaluation

The measurement model (outer model) evaluation was conducted to ensure that the indicators used are valid and reliable in measuring their latent variables. Based on the data processing results, all loading factor values have met the minimum criterion of 0.70. For detail explanation we will show in table 2 below.

Table 2. Outer Loadings

Construct	Indicator	Loading	Status
Digital Leadership (DL)	DL1	0.825	Valid
	DL2	0.840	Valid
	DL3	0.871	Valid
	DL4	0.803	Valid
Digital Service Quality (DSQ)	DSQ1	0.814	Valid
	DSQ2	0.872	Valid
	DSQ3	0.793	Valid
	DSQ4	0.835	Valid
Islamic Brand Identity (IBI)	IBI1	0.844	Valid
	IBI2	0.887	Valid
	IBI3	0.821	Valid
Institutional Reputation (IR)	IR1	0.851	Valid
	IR2	0.896	Valid
	IR3	0.838	Valid

Furthermore, reliability and convergent validity were tested by examining the values of Cronbach's Alpha, Composite Reliability (CR), and Average Variance Extracted (AVE). The results in Table 2 demonstrate that all constructs possess Alpha and CR values above 0.70, and AVE values above 0.50. This confirms that the research instrument is reliable and meets the convergent validity requirements (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). Moreover we will describe the reliability in table 3

Table 3. Reliability and Convergent Validity

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability (CR)	AVE	Status
Digital Leadership	0.858	0.904	0.692	Reliable
Digital Service Quality	0.850	0.899	0.690	Reliable
Islamic Brand Identity	0.812	0.889	0.728	Reliable
Institutional Reputation	0.830	0.898	0.747	Reliable

For discriminant validity, this study employed the Fornell-Larcker criterion, where the square root of the AVE for each construct must be higher than its correlation with other constructs. As shown in Table 3, all diagonal values (square root of AVE) are greater than the correlation values in the corresponding columns, thus satisfying the discriminant validity requirement (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

Table 4. Discriminant Validity (Fornell–Larcker Criterion)

Construct	DL	DSQ	IBI	IR
DL	0.832			
DSQ	0.569	0.831		
IBI	0.536	0.485	0.853	
IR	0.493	0.551	0.589	0.864

Structural Model Evaluation

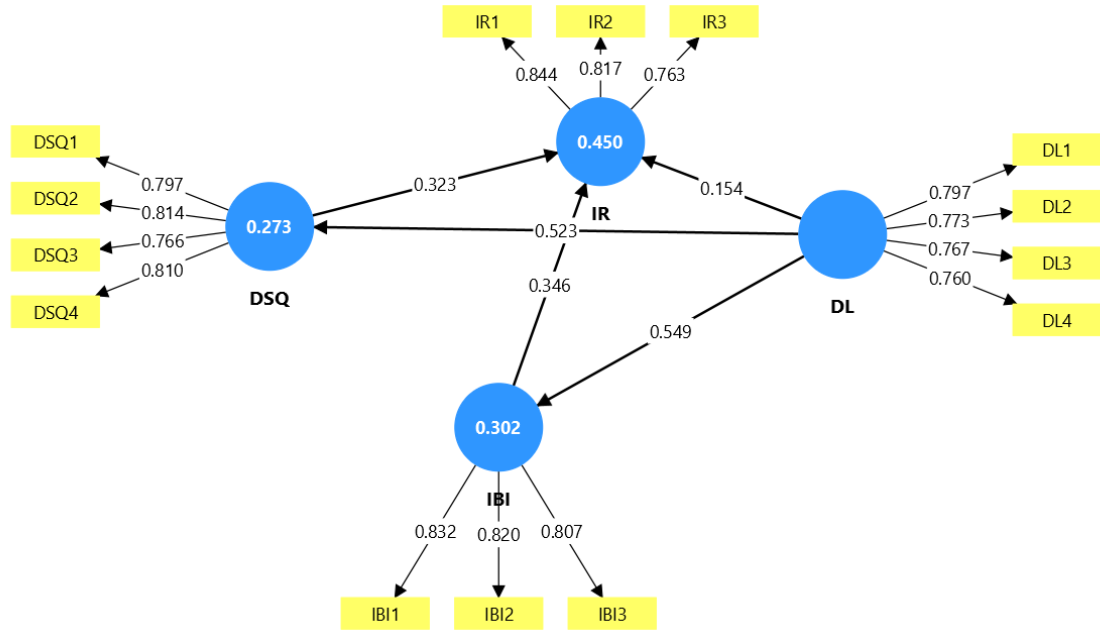


Figure 1 Output PLS SEM

Following the validation of the measurement model, the structural model (inner model) was evaluated to assess its explanatory and predictive capabilities. The primary metrics used were the coefficient of determination (R^2) and the predictive relevance (Q^2).

Table 5. R^2 and Q^2 Values

Endogenous Variable	R^2	Q^2	Interpretation
Digital Service Quality	0.273	0.259	Weak-Moderate
Islamic Brand Identity	0.302	0.287	Weak-Moderate
Institutional Reputation	0.450	0.246	Moderate

The structural analysis yields an R^2 value of 0.450 for Institutional Reputation. This indicates that digital leadership, digital service quality, and Islamic brand identity collectively account for 45% of the variance in institutional reputation, representing moderate explanatory power. Furthermore, the out-of-sample predictive relevance was assessed using the PLSpredict procedure. The results generated Q^2 values strictly greater than zero for all endogenous constructs (Table 5), confirming that the model possesses adequate predictive relevance (Shmueli et al., 2019).

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis testing was conducted using the bootstrapping method with 5,000 subsamples to evaluate the significance of the path coefficients. A hypothesis is supported if the t-value exceeds 1.96 and the p-value is less than 0.05 (Hair et al., 2019). The complete results of the direct and indirect effects are summarized in Table 6.

Table 6. Path Coefficients and Bootstrapping Results

Hypothesis	Path	Coefficient (β)	t-value	p-value	Result
H1	DL $\rightarrow$ IR	0.147	1.745	0.081	Not Supported
H2	DL $\rightarrow$ DSQ	0.569	10.327	0.000	Supported
H3	DSQ $\rightarrow$ IR	0.334	4.148	0.000	Supported
H4	DL $\rightarrow$ IBI	0.536	7.632	0.000	Supported
H5	IBI $\rightarrow$ IR	0.348	4.417	0.000	Supported
H6	DL $\rightarrow$ DSQ $\rightarrow$ IR (Mediation)	0.190	3.931	0.000	Supported
H7	DL $\rightarrow$ IBI $\rightarrow$ IR (Mediation)	0.186	3.398	0.001	Supported

As presented in Table 6, the direct effect of Digital Leadership on Institutional Reputation (H1) is not statistically significant ($p = 0.081$). Conversely, Digital Leadership significantly drives both Digital Service Quality (H2) and Islamic Brand Identity (H4). These two constructs, in turn, exert a strong positive influence on Institutional Reputation, supporting H3 and H5.

Regarding the mediation pathways, the indirect effects of Digital Leadership on Institutional Reputation through Digital Service Quality (H6) and Islamic Brand Identity (H7) are both highly significant. The combination of a non-significant direct effect (H1) and significant indirect effects (H6 and H7) indicates a full mediation mechanism. This reveals that digital leadership alone cannot directly enhance institutional reputation; it must be fully translated into functional service quality and a strong religious brand identity.

Discussion

The findings of this study provide important insights into how digital leadership contributes to institutional reputation within Indonesian madrasah (Haddade et al., 2024). Contrary to the initial expectation, digital leadership does not exert a significant direct influence on institutional reputation (Haleem et al., 2024; Tjeldvoll, 2011). This result suggests that stakeholders do not automatically associate leadership competence with organizational reputation. Rather, they evaluate the institution through the quality of services they experience and the identity projected by the institution. Consequently, leadership functions as an enabling capability whose effectiveness depends on its ability to generate observable organizational outcomes (Lim et al., 2022; Yela Aránega et al., 2023).

This finding enriches the Resource-Based View (RBV), which argues that competitive advantage originates from valuable organizational resources and capabilities (Agustian Ramadana Putera et al., 2022; Patnaik et al., 2022). While digital leadership constitutes an important intangible resource, the present study demonstrates that its value does not emerge automatically (Larson & DeChurch, 2020). Instead, leadership must first be translated into operational capabilities that stakeholders can directly experience (Amalia, 2026; Annabil & Hanif, 2025). In the context of madrasah, these capabilities primarily take the form of digital service quality and Islamic brand identity (Elihami et al., 2025; Haqqi et al., 2025; Hidayah et al., 2024; Husnaeni & Burga, 2024; Marcy & Mumford, 2010). Therefore, leadership alone is insufficient to create reputational advantages unless it is transformed into functional and symbolic organizational assets.

The significant relationship between digital leadership and digital service quality confirms that effective leaders play a crucial role in shaping digital transformation processes. Leaders establish technological visions, allocate resources, formulate digital policies, and create organizational cultures that support innovation (Backman et al., 2022; Ghafar, 2023; Humaida et al., 2026). These leadership practices facilitate the development of accessible, responsive, reliable, and user-oriented digital services. As a result, stakeholders perceive the institution as more professional and trustworthy (Byrne et al., 2018). This finding supports previous research emphasizing the importance of leadership in managing educational digitalization. However, the present study extends existing knowledge by demonstrating that leadership effectiveness becomes meaningful when stakeholders experience tangible improvements in service delivery.

The positive effect of digital service quality on institutional reputation further highlights the strategic importance of service experiences in educational settings (Alawiyah et al., 2023; Elihami et al., 2025; Mukhammad & Bon, 2026; Nurdi & Ahmad, 2025; Shal et al., 2024). Reputation is not constructed solely through promotional activities or symbolic communication. Instead, it develops through repeated interactions between institutions and stakeholders (Peterson & Deal, 2011). When students, parents, and community members encounter efficient digital platforms, responsive communication systems, and reliable educational services, they develop positive perceptions regarding institutional credibility and professionalism (Lickona & Davidson, 2005). These experiences gradually strengthen organizational reputation and enhance stakeholder trust. Therefore, digital service quality serves as a critical bridge connecting leadership capabilities with reputational outcomes (Saif et al., 2024).

The findings also reveal a significant relationship between digital leadership and Islamic brand identity. This result indicates that digital transformation does not necessarily weaken religious values or institutional distinctiveness. On the contrary, effective digital leaders can strategically integrate Islamic principles into digital communication, learning platforms, institutional narratives, and stakeholder engagement activities. Through this process, technology becomes a vehicle for strengthening rather than diminishing religious identity. This finding is particularly relevant because many Islamic educational institutions continue to face concerns regarding the potential tension between modernization and religious authenticity. The results suggest that both objectives can be pursued simultaneously when supported by appropriate leadership strategies.

Furthermore, Islamic brand identity significantly influences institutional reputation. This finding demonstrates that stakeholders value not only service efficiency but also organizational distinctiveness and value alignment. Parents increasingly seek educational institutions capable of balancing technological advancement with moral and religious development (Farooq et al., 2011). Consequently, a strong Islamic brand identity provides an important source of differentiation within increasingly competitive educational markets (Anshori et al., 2025). Madrasah that consistently communicate Islamic values while demonstrating technological competence are more likely to develop favorable reputational perceptions among stakeholders.

One of the most important findings of this study concerns the mediating role of digital service quality and Islamic brand identity (Kaiseroglou et al., 2023; Sallis, 2006). Both variables fully mediate the relationship between digital leadership and institutional reputation. This result provides a more nuanced explanation of how leadership generates organizational outcomes (Haleem et al., 2024). Rather than exerting a direct effect, leadership creates value indirectly through the development of operational and symbolic capabilities (Prabowo et al., 2022). From an RBV perspective, this finding suggests that intangible resources achieve

strategic value only when converted into organizational capabilities that stakeholders recognize and appreciate.

Theoretically, this study contributes to educational management literature by extending the application of RBV within Islamic educational contexts. Previous studies have generally conceptualized leadership as a direct determinant of organizational performance and reputation (Chatterjee et al., 2025). The present findings challenge this assumption by demonstrating that leadership influences reputation through specific mediating mechanisms. This contribution advances understanding of how intangible resources operate within educational organizations and provides a more comprehensive explanation of the reputation-building process.

Another important contribution lies in the incorporation of Islamic brand identity into the reputation framework. Existing educational branding literature has focused primarily on universities and commercial educational organizations. Comparatively limited attention has been devoted to understanding how religious identity functions as a strategic organizational asset within Islamic schools. The present findings demonstrate that Islamic brand identity constitutes a valuable intangible resource capable of enhancing stakeholder trust, institutional differentiation, and long-term competitiveness. Consequently, religious identity should not be viewed merely as a cultural characteristic but as a strategic asset that contributes directly to organizational sustainability.

The findings also carry implications for policymakers, particularly the Ministry of Religious Affairs and educational authorities responsible for leadership development programs. Training initiatives should not focus exclusively on technological competencies. Instead, they should incorporate strategic service management, stakeholder engagement, digital branding, and reputation-building capabilities. Such an integrated approach would enable educational leaders to maximize the benefits of digital transformation while maintaining strong institutional identities and reputations.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the role of digital leadership in strengthening the institutional reputation of Indonesian madrasah through digital service quality and Islamic brand identity. The findings demonstrate that digital leadership does not directly influence institutional reputation. Instead, its influence operates indirectly through digital service quality and Islamic brand identity, both of which serve as significant mediating mechanisms. These results indicate that leadership vision alone is insufficient to enhance reputation unless it is translated into high-quality stakeholder services and a distinctive institutional identity. Collectively, the proposed model explains 45% of the variance in institutional reputation, highlighting the importance of both functional and symbolic organizational capabilities.

This study contributes to the educational management literature by extending the Resource-Based View (RBV) into the context of Islamic educational institutions. The findings demonstrate that digital leadership functions as a strategic intangible resource whose value emerges through organizational capabilities rather than direct reputational effects. Furthermore, the study introduces Islamic brand identity as a critical strategic asset that strengthens institutional differentiation and competitiveness. By integrating digital leadership, digital service quality, Islamic brand identity, and institutional reputation into a single framework, this research offers a more comprehensive explanation of reputation formation within madrasah.

Several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the study employed a cross-sectional design, which restricts the ability to capture changes in stakeholder perceptions over time. Second, the sample was limited to digitally adopting madrasah in Indonesia, which may

affect the generalizability of the findings to other educational contexts. Third, the model explains 45% of institutional reputation, indicating that additional determinants remain unexplored. Future research may employ longitudinal designs, expand investigations to different educational sectors, and incorporate additional variables such as organizational culture, stakeholder engagement, innovation capability, trust, and digital readiness. Comparative studies across countries and educational systems would also provide deeper insights into how digital transformation and institutional identity jointly influence educational competitiveness.

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