
Authoritative vs. Participative leadership communication: Shaping academic careers in Islamic higher education

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Abstract

This study explores the role of leadership communication patterns—authoritative and participative—in shaping the academic career development of lecturers at Islamic higher education institutions in Jambi Province, Indonesia. Using a qualitative case study approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews and document analysis involving lecturers from multiple institutions. The findings reveal that participative leadership communication fosters motivation, job satisfaction, and career progression through open dialogue, mutual respect, and collaborative decision-making. In contrast, authoritative communication tends to limit professional growth and reduce engagement. The study emphasizes that leadership style significantly influences lecturers' loyalty, innovation, and academic productivity. These findings highlight the importance of adopting inclusive communication strategies to support human resource development in Islamic universities. The study contributes to the discourse on leadership in faith-based education settings. It offers practical recommendations for institutional leaders to enhance career pathways through more responsive and participative leadership practices.

Keywords

Academic career, Islamic higher education, leadership communication, lecturer development, participative leadership

Article History

Received 07 March 2024
Accepted 11 January 2026

How to Cite

Kompri, K., Nadiyah, N., Rohim, F., Kaharuddin, K., & Maulana, M. (2026).

Authoritative vs. Participative leadership communication: Shaping academic careers in Islamic higher education.

Indonesian Research Journal in Education | IRJE |, 10(1), 293-306. <https://doi.org/10.22437/irje.v10i1.32009>

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Introduction

Islamic higher education institutions in Jambi Province play a central strategic role in developing competent, character-driven human resources. In the context of globalization and rapid socio-technological changes, higher education serves not only as a transmitter of knowledge but also as a transformative force in shaping future leaders with ethical integrity, professional competence, and adaptability (Latchem, 2021; Zahrah & Siraj, 2023). Given the province's rich cultural and religious diversity, the presence of strong Islamic higher education institutions is critical for promoting inclusive development and social cohesion.

These institutions are tasked not only with imparting religious knowledge but also with nurturing individuals who possess both academic expertise and high moral standards. Islamic universities in Jambi act as key pillars in producing graduates who can navigate global challenges while remaining grounded in local wisdom and Islamic values (Nawaz & Khalil, 2022). Their mission extends beyond curriculum delivery to shaping values, character, and life skills that align with national development goals and the region's cultural fabric.

The significance of Islamic higher education lies in its ability to develop intellectual capacity, foster character formation, and build practical competencies aligned with labor market demands. Recent studies have shown that schools that teach ethics, professionalism, and how to apply what they learn in the real world produce graduates who are more likely to get jobs and be responsible members of society (Abdullah et al., 2021; Fitriani & Nasir, 2022). Consequently, Islamic universities in Jambi must continuously evolve as agents of transformation, guiding students to become agents of positive change in society.

Beyond intellectual development, Islamic higher education in this region reflects and preserves the community's cultural and religious diversity. These institutions foster an inclusive academic environment that enables students to deepen their understanding of Islamic principles while appreciating pluralism. This integration of tradition and modernity is essential to shaping holistic learners who contribute meaningfully to both local and global contexts (Hashim & Mahpuz, 2023).

Furthermore, Islamic higher education plays an essential role in strengthening the region's economic competitiveness by producing work-ready graduates equipped with both theoretical knowledge and practical skills. Graduates from these institutions enhance local economic empowerment through entrepreneurship, community involvement, and innovations grounded in Islamic ethics (Farida et al., 2023). Thus, investing in Islamic higher education is not only a religious and cultural imperative but also a strategic approach to sustainable development.

To realize these goals, strong institutional leadership is indispensable—especially in shaping academic staff's careers. Quality lecturers are foundational to academic excellence. They serve not only as knowledge facilitators but also as mentors, researchers, and agents of change. Competent lecturers foster critical thinking, research productivity, and moral development among students (Aydin et al., 2023). Institutional leadership models and communication practices heavily influence their ability to deliver relevant and responsive education.

Effective leadership in higher education determines how academic environments respond to dynamic challenges. Credible leadership—characterized by decisiveness and

accountability—offers structure and clarity in academic governance. Conversely, participative leadership emphasizes shared decision-making, collaboration, and innovation, thereby enhancing institutional ownership and academic creativity (Putri et al., 2022). However, both models come with trade-offs: credible leadership may marginalize individual voices, while participative leadership can slow decision-making processes.

In this context, leadership communication becomes a critical factor in shaping faculty members' professional growth and institutional engagement. Communication practices influence how policies are interpreted, how expectations are conveyed, and how collaboration is fostered among academic staff. Research shows that open, respectful, and two-way communication enhances job satisfaction, motivation, and commitment among lecturers (Sulaiman et al., 2022; Agustian & Kurniawati, 2021).

Despite its strategic importance, the role of leadership communication in shaping academic careers in Islamic higher education remains underexplored—especially in provincial settings such as Jambi. Faculty members face increasing pressure to balance teaching, research, community service, and religious responsibilities. How they perceive leadership and communication practices can influence their commitment, innovation, and career progression.

This study aims to examine how leadership communication—both in credible and participative forms—impacts the career development of lecturers in Islamic higher education institutions in Jambi Province. Using a qualitative approach, it explores how communication dynamics between institutional leaders and lecturers shape faculty engagement, motivation, and growth. By capturing these dynamics, the study offers policymakers, administrators, and educational leaders valuable insights to improve institutional effectiveness, faculty satisfaction, and the quality of Islamic higher education in Indonesia.

Literature Review

Leadership communication in higher education

Leadership communication plays a pivotal role in shaping the dynamics of higher education institutions. Effective communication enables leaders to articulate vision, establish trust, and foster collaboration within academic environments (Northouse, 2021). In higher education, communication is not merely about transmitting information—it involves facilitating dialogue, recognizing faculty contributions, and creating spaces for innovation. According to Aydin et al. (2023), transformational leadership styles that emphasize open, constructive communication enhance faculty motivation and institutional loyalty. These styles not only increase academic productivity but also build psychological safety and resilience among lecturers.

Participative leadership—which promotes inclusive dialogue and shared decision-making—has been associated with enhanced faculty engagement, job satisfaction, and performance outcomes (Putri et al., 2022). Leaders who encourage two-way communication foster environments where lecturers feel heard, valued, and empowered to contribute to academic and strategic planning. Conversely, authoritarian leadership, while beneficial for quick decision-making, can hinder autonomy and stifle academic innovation. In top-down, rigid contexts, faculty may disengage or feel disempowered.

Sulaiman et al. (2022) emphasize that communication climate strongly influences job satisfaction and institutional commitment among academic staff. Their study revealed that faculty members working in institutions with open communication practices reported higher morale and greater retention. Similarly, Agustian and Kurniawati (2021) found that trust and clarity in leadership communication directly impact lecturers' willingness to engage in research, curriculum innovation, and community service.

In Islamic higher education institutions, where religious, academic, and cultural expectations intersect, leadership communication becomes even more complex. Leaders must be adept at balancing respect for Islamic traditions with the academic need for critical inquiry and scholarly independence. Zahrah and Siraj (2023) stress that effective communication in Islamic universities involves not only administrative clarity but also spiritual empathy and cultural sensitivity.

In sum, communication serves both technical and symbolic functions in academic leadership. It establishes the norms, values, and operational tempo of an institution, shaping how decisions are made, how roles are understood, and how innovation is pursued. Effective communication practices are essential not only for academic excellence but also for faculty well-being and institutional resilience.

Authoritarian vs. Participative leadership and career development

Authoritarian and participative leadership represent two contrasting but influential models in academic leadership, particularly with respect to faculty career development. Authoritarian leadership is characterized by hierarchical decision-making, clear top-down directives, and rigid structures. It can be effective in achieving immediate institutional goals, maintaining discipline, and clarifying roles. However, its drawbacks include reduced innovation, limited faculty input, and a potential decline in motivation (Bradberry et al., 2019).

Conversely, participative leadership encourages shared governance, collaborative planning, and inclusive decision-making processes. This model aligns well with contemporary views on higher education governance, which value academic freedom, co-creation of knowledge, and faculty empowerment (Putri et al., 2022). In the context of Islamic universities, participative leadership resonates with the Islamic value of *shura* (consultation), which promotes decision-making through collective reasoning and shared wisdom (Farida et al., 2023).

Super's career development theory posits that career growth follows progressive stages: self-assessment, exploration, establishment, and advancement (Latchem, 2021). In authoritarian systems, institutional support may be available through formalized pathways and top-down mentorship, which could benefit early-career faculty. However, such systems may also restrict lateral mobility or limit initiatives that deviate from institutional priorities. On the other hand, participative systems encourage autonomy, enabling faculty to shape their own trajectories, engage in interdisciplinary work, and align their career goals with their personal values. Yet, these systems can also lead to ambiguity in expectations and slower decision-making.

Nawaz and Khalil (2022) argue that institutional support and leadership engagement are among the most significant predictors of career satisfaction in academia. When leadership

actively facilitates mentorship programs, encourages professional development, and recognizes faculty achievements, career advancement becomes a shared institutional goal rather than an individual burden.

Moreover, career development in Islamic higher education must account for broader responsibilities beyond teaching and research. Faculty are often involved in community engagement, religious leadership, and the transmission of values. As such, leadership communication that accommodates these multifaceted roles can enable more meaningful and holistic career pathways.

Ultimately, a binary view of authoritarian versus participative leadership may be limiting. Many effective academic leaders adopt a hybrid approach—providing clear guidance while encouraging collaborative planning. The effectiveness of either model depends on contextual factors, including institutional culture, faculty diversity, and the nature of academic tasks.

Integrative communication strategies for faculty excellence

To foster academic excellence and professional growth among lecturers, integrative communication strategies that draw from both authoritarian and participative models are essential. These strategies balance directive clarity with inclusive engagement—providing structure while enabling innovation. This approach is especially critical in Islamic higher education institutions, where leaders must simultaneously uphold religious integrity, promote academic freedom, and ensure operational effectiveness (Hashim & Mahpuz, 2023).

Integrative leadership communication blends the top-down clarity of authoritarian leadership with the bottom-up collaboration of participative leadership. Leaders articulate institutional goals and expectations clearly while maintaining open channels for faculty input and shared governance. Fitriani and Nasir (2022) highlight that such hybrid communication models improve institutional coherence and elevate faculty commitment. For example, regularly scheduled consultative meetings, transparent evaluation systems, and inclusive policy design are practices that operationalize integrative communication.

In addition to structural strategies, psychological dimensions of communication play a crucial role. Aydin et al. (2023) emphasize the importance of psychological safety—where faculty feel secure to share opinions, admit mistakes, and propose new ideas. Leadership that communicates with empathy, active listening, and respect fosters trust and encourages faculty to take academic risks, which is essential for innovation and research productivity.

Institutional communication practices also shape academic identity. When leaders consistently affirm the value of faculty contributions, communicate clear career pathways, and provide feedback, they reinforce a sense of belonging and purpose. Conversely, inconsistent or opaque communication can lead to confusion, disengagement, and attrition. According to Sulaiman et al. (2022), institutions that practice open and timely communication experience higher levels of collaboration and lower lecturer turnover.

Moreover, integrative communication supports the alignment between individual career aspirations and institutional missions. This alignment is critical in Islamic higher education, where lecturers often balance scholarly pursuits with religious and community roles. Effective communication ensures that these dual roles are acknowledged, supported, and resourced appropriately.

In conclusion, integrative leadership communication is not simply a management technique—it is a strategic framework for building resilient, innovative, and values-driven academic communities. It ensures that lecturers not only perform their roles effectively but also grow professionally and contribute to national development. By fostering clear, inclusive, and responsive communication, Islamic higher education institutions in Indonesia can cultivate a new generation of educators who are both globally competent and spiritually grounded.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative case study design to explore the communication dynamics of authoritarian and participative leadership in shaping the career development of lecturers in Islamic Higher Education Institutions (IHEIs) in Jambi Province, Indonesia. A qualitative case study design was chosen to allow for an in-depth, contextualized examination of complex leadership phenomena in real-life academic settings. According to [Uhl-Bien and Arena \(2018\)](#), qualitative methods are particularly effective for capturing relational and communicative processes that shape leadership practices. Case study methodology, as [Stake \(1995\)](#) and [Yin \(2018\)](#) suggest, offers a systematic framework for understanding the dynamics of a particular phenomenon within a bounded system.

The selection of Islamic Higher Education Institutions in Jambi was purposive, reflecting the region's cultural and religious specificity and its strategic role in preparing graduates who embody Islamic values and professional competencies. These institutions also represent a rich site for examining diverse leadership practices in faith-based academic environments. Participant selection followed a purposive sampling strategy, which is commonly used in qualitative inquiry to ensure depth and relevance of data ([Palinkas et al., 2015](#)). The study involved lecturers from various faculties and study programs within selected IHEIs, particularly those who have held or currently hold leadership roles, such as department heads, program coordinators, or committee leaders. This selection ensured diversity in perspectives and enabled the researcher to capture nuanced understandings of how leadership communication influences academic career trajectories.

Data collection utilized multiple sources to strengthen the validity and richness of the findings, including in-depth interviews, non-participant observation, and document analysis. In-depth semi-structured interviews served as the primary method of data collection. These interviews were guided by open-ended questions designed to explore participants' experiences and perceptions of leadership communication, its influence on their motivation and performance, and its role in shaping their academic progression. As [Creswell and Poth \(2018\)](#) argue, interviews in qualitative research allow for deep engagement with participants' lived experiences and the meanings they assign to them.

In addition to interviews, the researcher conducted direct observation of academic settings, including faculty meetings, public seminars, and classroom activities. Observations focused on communication patterns between academic leaders and lecturers, as well as the enactment of leadership decisions in daily interactions. According to [Merriam and Tisdell \(2016\)](#), observations enrich qualitative data by capturing non-verbal cues, contextual factors, and power dynamics that may not be fully articulated in interviews.

Document analysis was also conducted to complement interview and observational data. Institutional documents, including career development policies, promotion guidelines, lecturer performance assessments, and strategic plans, were examined to understand the formal mechanisms that influence academic careers. This triangulation approach—combining interviews, observation, and documents—enhances the credibility and trustworthiness of the research findings (Patton, 2015).

For data analysis, this study employed thematic analysis, which is well-suited to identifying recurring patterns, meanings, and categories across qualitative datasets (Braun & Clarke, 2021). All interview transcripts, observation notes, and documents were carefully reviewed and coded using an inductive approach. Initial codes were then grouped into broader themes: leadership communication styles, motivational influences, structural supports, and perceived barriers to career advancement. Thematic analysis allowed the researcher to construct a comprehensive narrative about how different leadership communication strategies—authoritarian and participative—affect lecturers' career development in the context of Islamic higher education.

Ethical considerations were observed throughout the research process. Participants were informed about the study's purpose and provided voluntary consent. Confidentiality was maintained by anonymizing identities and securing data storage. Ethical approval was obtained in accordance with institutional guidelines to ensure responsible conduct of research.

In conclusion, this methodological approach enables a nuanced and contextually grounded understanding of how leadership communication styles impact faculty career development in Islamic higher education institutions. The insights gained are expected to inform institutional policy and contribute to broader discourses on academic leadership in faith-based education systems, particularly in culturally diverse and religiously grounded regions like Jambi.

Findings

Since the 1980s, Islamic Higher Education in Indonesia has undergone notable progress, with the Indonesian government supporting the expansion of institutions aligned with Islamic values to meet community demands. In Jambi Province, the establishment of Islamic Higher Education Institutions (IHEIs) has provided local communities with access to quality education. Many of these institutions evolved from pre-existing Islamic educational foundations or were newly formed to address regional educational needs. Over the years, these IHEIs have seen improvements in infrastructure, program diversity, academic quality, and local-international partnerships.

Despite these developments, lecturers at Islamic higher education institutions in Jambi face multiple challenges. These include limited access to professional development, inadequate infrastructure, and underwhelming remuneration—factors that directly impact motivation and performance. Additionally, heavy workloads in teaching, research, and community service, as well as limited involvement in decision-making, have created barriers to career satisfaction and advancement. The need to harmonize Islamic values with modern scientific and technological approaches further complicates lecturers' roles.

Leadership communication in lecturer career development

Two major leadership styles—authoritative and participative—have a significant influence on a lecturer's career development. Authoritative leadership emphasizes structured communication, clarity, and top-down direction. In contrast, participative leadership involves transparent, inclusive communication and collaborative decision-making. Interviews with academic leaders reveal how both styles manifest in practice and impact lecturer motivation, performance, and growth.

Table 1. *Authoritative and participative leadership communication in shaping lecturer careers*

Interview questions	Answers
How do you view the role of communication in authoritative leadership?	I believe communication in authoritative leadership is crucial for conveying a clear vision and goals to team members. Clear communication helps create structure and a clear direction.
How do you ensure transparency in participative decision-making?	I ensure that the decision-making process is done openly and involves input from the entire team. I provide a platform to express ideas and opinions, as well as explain the reasons behind each decision.
What strategies do you employ to motivate the team through authoritative communication?	I use communication that provides direction and confidence, explaining the importance of each individual's contribution and identifying achievements worthy of appreciation. I also listen to input and provide positive feedback regularly.
How do you build mentor-mentee relationships through communication?	I approach mentor-mentee relationships by opening up channels of communication. I provide guidance, listen to career aspirations, and offer constructive feedback. Open communication helps build trust in the relationship.
How do you use communication technology to support authoritative and participative leadership?	I ensure the efficient use of communication technology, such as online collaboration platforms and instant messaging apps. This helps facilitate real-time team communication and accelerates participative workflow.
What concrete steps have you taken to create an organizational culture that supports open communication?	I promote open communication through regular forums, providing anonymous feedback channels, and setting an example by always being open to questions or criticism. I also emphasize the importance of collaboration and idea-sharing among team members.
How do you evaluate leadership policies and make adjustments based on feedback?	I conduct regular evaluations through feedback sessions, surveys, and team performance analysis. Every feedback is taken seriously, and if there are contextual or need-based changes, I am willing to make adjustments in leadership policies.
How do you provide opportunities for team members to participate in decision-making?	I actively invite team members to participate in decision-making meetings, providing a platform to express ideas and suggestions. I believe decisions that involve contributions from all parties have a positive impact and enhance team engagement.

This table presents summarized responses from academic leaders in Islamic higher education institutions regarding their practices in both leadership styles. Key highlights include that

authoritative communication is valued for providing structure and motivation; participative communication supports transparency, team engagement, and policy co-creation; communication technologies enhance both leadership styles; and mentorship and regular feedback mechanisms are critical for fostering career development.

Table 2. *Dynamics of authoritative and participative leadership communication in shaping lecturers' careers*

Interview Questions	Answers
How does authoritative leadership communication influence the careers of lecturers in Islamic Higher Education in Jambi Province?	Authoritative communication plays a key role in providing clear direction and expectations, helping lecturers better understand their roles. This creates a stable framework for career growth.
How important is transparency in participative leadership communication for the careers of lecturers in the context of Islamic Higher Education?	Transparency in participative leadership enhances lecturer involvement in decision-making, builds trust, and provides opportunities for active contributions, positively impacting their career development.
How does communication technology support the dynamics of authoritative leadership communication in the context of Islamic Higher Education in the Jambi Province?	The use of communication technology accelerates information dissemination, enabling leaders to convey messages quickly and efficiently and to strengthen authoritative communication in directing and coordinating academic activities.
What is the role of mentoring in developing lecturers' careers, and how does authoritative and participative leadership communication facilitate mentor-mentee relationships?	Mentoring provides guidance and support, while authoritative communication provides clear direction. Participative communication strengthens relationships, allowing mentees to contribute to decision-making and career growth.
How can regular leadership policy evaluations affect lecturers' careers in the Islamic Higher Education environment in Jambi Province?	Regular evaluations ensure leadership policies are responsive to changing needs, creating an environment that supports career growth and provides lecturers with the flexibility to develop in line with the changing context.
How can lecturer involvement in decision-making shape the direction and goals of Islamic Higher Education institutions in the Jambi Province?	Lecturer participation in decision-making creates direct involvement, ensuring that institutional policies and goals reflect academic needs and, thus, motivating and guiding lecturer careers in line with a shared vision.

This table reflects how leadership communication affects the career trajectories of lecturers: authoritative communication offers clarity in roles and institutional expectations, transparency through participative leadership encourages trust and proactive involvement, technology use accelerates communication, making leadership outreach more effective, mentoring, policy evaluation, and lecturer involvement in governance create meaningful career pathways.

Opportunities and challenges in the digital era

In the digital age, both opportunities and challenges arise in applying leadership communication for career development. A rector from one of the IHEIs in Jambi emphasized the importance of authoritative leadership in guiding lecturers with clarity and purpose, particularly in adapting to rapid technological change. Digital platforms were viewed as tools to strengthen participative leadership by facilitating real-time feedback and inclusive dialogue.

Lecturers noted that authoritative communication helps provide focus and aligns academic duties with institutional goals. However, challenges such as digital literacy gaps and inconsistent participation on online platforms affect the success of participative models. Despite this, lecturers remain optimistic that with appropriate training and infrastructure, digital communication tools can enhance their engagement in institutional development and career planning.

Discussion

The evolution and strategic role of Islamic higher education in Jambi

Islamic Higher Education Institutions (IHEIs) in Indonesia, particularly in Jambi province, have undergone transformative development since the 1980s. These institutions were established to meet the educational needs of Muslim communities seeking higher education within a framework that integrates Islamic teachings with modern academic disciplines (Esposito, 2018). In Jambi—a region with deep-rooted religious and cultural traditions—IHEIs serve not only as educational centers but also as instruments for socio-religious empowerment and human resource development.

The strategic relevance of IHEIs lies in their dual mandate: providing access to tertiary education and cultivating ethical, professional graduates who uphold Islamic values. Their contribution is especially significant in rural and semi-urban areas where access to quality education remains uneven. By bridging the gap between spiritual development and professional capacity, these institutions offer a unique model of education rooted in community identity and religious heritage (Zahrah & Siraj, 2023).

Over the past two decades, the government has supported IHEI expansion through curriculum reform, capacity-building grants, and increased autonomy in governance. As a result, many institutions in Jambi have diversified their academic programs, improved their infrastructure, and obtained national accreditation. These developments indicate institutional maturity and enhanced competitiveness in Indonesia's higher education landscape (Fitriani & Nasir, 2022).

However, growth has not come without challenges. Many IHEIs still struggle with financial limitations, an aging faculty population, and insufficient collaboration with international academic bodies. Access to research grants, publication opportunities, and professional development remains limited. Without systemic reforms and investment in faculty capacity, these limitations could hinder further progress (Sulaiman et al., 2022).

Additionally, these institutions are under pressure to adapt to global educational standards while maintaining their Islamic ethos.

Balancing tradition and innovation are an ongoing dilemma. On one hand, IHEIs are expected to uphold Islamic scholarship; on the other hand, they must prepare students for participation in an increasingly digital, globalized job market. This dual demand calls for visionary leadership, inclusive governance, and adaptive learning models. Leaders must embed forward-thinking strategies while retaining institutional identity, cultivating graduates who are both morally grounded and professionally agile.

In summary, Islamic higher education in Jambi plays a strategic role in both preserving religious values and advancing educational equity. Continued support from policymakers, increased resource allocation, and adaptive leadership are crucial for ensuring that IHEIs remain relevant, competitive, and impactful.

Leadership communication and faculty development in Islamic higher education

Leadership communication serves as a cornerstone for faculty development and institutional transformation in higher education. In the context of Islamic Higher Education Institutions, leadership practices often reflect a blend of religious tradition, academic professionalism, and organizational hierarchy. This study highlights how two dominant leadership styles—authoritative and participative—shape faculty growth, motivation, and institutional culture.

Authoritative leadership provides direction and consistency through top-down communication. In contexts such as IHEIs, where administrative systems may still be evolving, this approach can ensure discipline, speed decision-making, and organizational alignment (Bradberry et al., 2019). Leaders using this model typically set clear expectations for teaching, research, and community service. Faculty members often appreciate the structure, especially when institutional goals are ambitious and resources are scarce.

However, the study also reveals the risks of relying solely on authoritative methods. These include decreased autonomy, limited innovation, and communication breakdowns. Faculty members may feel disengaged or undervalued, particularly if their input is excluded from strategic discussions. In academic environments that depend on intellectual freedom, such top-heavy leadership may dampen initiative and long-term commitment.

Conversely, participative leadership emphasizes open communication, collaborative decision-making, and inclusive planning. This model aligns with Islamic principles of *shura* (consultation), which stress collective wisdom and moral accountability (Zahrah & Siraj, 2023). The findings show that participative communication fosters stronger trust, loyalty, and a sense of ownership among faculty members. When lecturers are consulted on matters such as curriculum development or research priorities, they exhibit greater engagement and productivity.

Furthermore, participative leadership supports mentoring—a critical dimension of faculty development. Leaders who adopt open-door policies and encourage mentorship foster learning communities where junior lecturers can receive guidance on teaching, research, and

career advancement. This approach aligns with Aydin et al. (2023), who argue that psychologically safe environments empower faculty to take risks and pursue innovation.

A hybrid leadership model—merging authoritative clarity with participative engagement—appears most effective. Leaders who communicate vision assertively while remaining receptive to feedback and co-creation can balance institutional structure with academic freedom. This balance is particularly necessary in IHEIs, where educational missions are rooted in both faith and academic excellence.

Ultimately, leadership communication affects not just individual careers but the very culture of the institution. Faculty members who feel heard and supported are more likely to stay, innovate, and contribute meaningfully to institutional goals. Hence, investing in leadership development, communication training, and feedback systems is essential for long-term institutional growth and academic quality.

Organizational adaptability, digitalization, and cultural integration

In an era defined by rapid technological change and global competition, Islamic Higher Education Institutions must demonstrate adaptability not only in pedagogy but also in communication and governance. One of the most transformative shifts in recent years has been the adoption of digital technologies to support leadership and organizational communication.

IHEIs in Jambi have begun using platforms such as Zoom, WhatsApp, and institutional learning management systems to facilitate remote instruction, meetings, and policy dissemination. These tools have improved access to information, allowed for real-time decision-making, and enabled more inclusive participation across departments. When implemented effectively, digital communication reinforces both authoritative and participative leadership styles—streamlining directives while encouraging collaborative input (Aydin et al., 2023).

However, the transition to digital systems is not without challenges. Many faculty members—especially those less digitally literate—struggle to keep up with changing platforms. This digital divide can create inequities in participation and reinforce hierarchical barriers. Institutions must therefore invest in ongoing training, technical support, and inclusive platform design to ensure all voices are heard.

Beyond tools, organizational adaptability also involves fostering a responsive and resilient institutional culture. Leaders must build systems that promote transparency, encourage innovation, and reward performance. These include structured feedback loops, faculty recognition programs, and inclusive strategic planning. As noted by Putri et al. (2022), adaptable organizations prioritize dialogue over directives and embrace diversity of thought.

Cultural integration remains another crucial area. IHEIs must navigate the intersection between traditional Islamic values and contemporary academic norms. This is particularly relevant in policy communication, where leaders must ensure that institutional messaging aligns with both religious ethics and professional standards. For instance, involving faculty in decisions around dress codes, curriculum content, or academic freedom requires cultural sensitivity and dialogic engagement.

The findings suggest that institutions that balance structure with flexibility, and tradition with progressiveness, are better equipped to thrive. Digitalization should not replace human connection but should enhance it. Communication strategies must evolve to suit the values and needs of a diverse academic community.

In conclusion, the adaptability of IHEIs in Jambi depends on visionary leadership, inclusive culture, and strategic integration of digital tools. Embracing change while honoring tradition offers a sustainable path for these institutions to remain relevant in an increasingly competitive educational landscape.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Communication within both authoritative and participative leadership frameworks plays a critical role in supporting lecturers' career development in Islamic Higher Education Institutions in Jambi. Authoritative leadership provides direction and organizational clarity, while participative leadership fosters trust, transparency, and engagement through shared decision-making. The effectiveness of both styles depends heavily on consistent, responsive communication, particularly in the context of digital transformation and rising institutional demands.

To strengthen the quality of Islamic higher education in Jambi, several strategic measures must be taken. Institutions need to prioritize faculty development through ongoing professional training and skill enhancement. Improving educational facilities and digital infrastructure is also essential to support teaching and research activities. Furthermore, addressing lecturer welfare by offering fair compensation and reducing excessive workloads can significantly improve motivation and performance. Expanding national and international collaborations will enhance academic networks, research opportunities, and institutional visibility. Most importantly, leadership communication must be strengthened to foster inclusive, adaptive, and accountable academic environments.

By focusing on these areas, Islamic higher education institutions in Jambi can better meet contemporary challenges, contribute meaningfully to national development, and position themselves as competitive and credible players within the broader higher education landscape.

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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