

Teachers' Collaborative Leadership and the Enhancement of Professional Performance through Professional Learning Community (PLC) Practices

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Abstract

Although collaborative leadership and Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) have been widely discussed in teacher professional development, limited understanding remains regarding how teachers enact collaborative leadership through PLCs to enhance professional performance, particularly in Islamic secondary schools. This study aims to examine teachers' collaborative leadership practices, the implementation of PLCs as platforms for professional learning, and the role of collaborative leadership through PLCs in improving teachers' professional performance. This study employed a qualitative case study design at SMA IT Dhiaul Fikri, involving 24 participants comprising school leaders, teachers, and students selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis and were analyzed using an interactive model consisting of data condensation, data display, conclusion drawing, and verification. The findings reveal that collaborative leadership is manifested through teacher participation in academic decision-making, collaborative reflection, mentoring, and the distribution of responsibilities based on professional expertise. PLCs function as structured platforms for collective professional learning through instructional discussions, knowledge sharing, reflective dialogue, and collaborative problem-solving. The findings further indicate that PLC practices mediate the relationship between collaborative leadership and professional performance by improving instructional planning, classroom implementation, reflective practice,

pedagogical competence, and instructional innovation. This study concludes that collaborative leadership enacted through PLCs promotes sustainable professional learning and enhances educational quality in Islamic secondary school contexts. Its contribution lies in extending the literature on distributed leadership and PLCs while offering practical insights for strengthening collaborative school cultures and teacher professional development. Future research should examine these relationships across diverse educational contexts using comparative and longitudinal designs.

Keywords: Collaborative Leadership; Professional Learning Community; Teacher Professional Performance; Teacher Professional Development; Distributed Leadership

INTRODUCTION

The quality of education in the twenty-first century is increasingly determined by schools' capacity to foster continuous professional learning among teachers. In response to rapid educational transformation, technological advancement, and the growing complexity of teaching practices, educational systems worldwide have shifted from individualistic models of teacher development toward collaborative and community-based professional learning approaches. Within this context, the Professional Learning Community (PLC) has emerged as one of the most influential frameworks for strengthening teachers' professional capacity, enhancing instructional quality, and improving student outcomes. PLC emphasizes collective inquiry, shared responsibility, collaborative problem-solving, and continuous professional reflection among educators. Consequently, teachers are no longer viewed merely as classroom practitioners but also as active contributors to organizational learning and school improvement.

At the international level, a growing body of research demonstrates that collaborative leadership and PLC practices play a significant role in promoting teacher professionalism and organizational effectiveness. Studies indicate that teacher leadership within virtual communities enables collaboration and distributed leadership practices that enhance teacher agency and expand opportunities for professional development. Similarly, the effectiveness of PLCs is strongly influenced by organizational support, mutual trust among members, and collective commitment to shared learning goals (Oppi & Eisenschmidt, 2022). Research conducted in Taiwan further reveals that positive teacher perceptions of PLCs are closely

associated with collaborative curriculum governance and supportive working environments that encourage teachers' participation in school decision-making processes. Likewise, evidence from the Philippines shows that innovative leadership practices implemented within PLCs positively contribute to teamwork, teacher effectiveness, and the sharing of professional knowledge and best practices (Valenzuela & Callo, 2024). In addition, PLC implementation tends to be more effective when supported by collaborative and distributed leadership models, as PLCs facilitate professional growth through shared vision, collective learning, and knowledge exchange (Ziliwu & Tung, 2022).

Recent international scholarship also highlights the growing importance of PLCs in addressing post-pandemic educational challenges. Educational transformation following the COVID-19 pandemic has encouraged schools to strengthen teacher collaboration through PLCs as a sustainable mechanism for maintaining professional development when conventional professional interactions are disrupted. PLCs have evolved beyond simple forums for sharing teaching strategies and have become critical spaces for professional reflection, collaborative inquiry, and instructional improvement (Peng & Dervin, 2022). Nevertheless, several studies reveal persistent challenges in maximizing the effectiveness of PLCs. Structural barriers, including limited collaboration time, bureaucratic school cultures, and insufficient policy support, often prevent PLCs from functioning as transformative professional learning environments (Ghratafeh et al., 2022).

Within the Indonesian educational context, teacher professional performance is no longer understood merely as the ability to deliver classroom instruction. Rather, it encompasses the capacity to plan, implement, evaluate, and continuously improve learning processes through reflective and collaborative professional practices. Consequently, improving teacher quality requires organizational environments that support collective learning, critical reflection, and continuous professional development (Werdiningsih et al., 2022). In recent years, PLCs have increasingly been recognized as a strategic approach to enhancing teacher professionalism through collaborative culture. PLC implementation provides opportunities for teachers to engage in professional discussions, reflective practices, collaborative lesson planning, and instructional innovation. However, its implementation remains constrained by limitations in time allocation, collaborative competencies, and institutional support systems (Mulyani et al, 2024).

National studies further demonstrate that leadership practices encouraging teacher collaboration contribute significantly to professional performance enhancement. Participatory leadership involving teachers in reflection, knowledge sharing, and decision-making processes strengthens collaborative learning cultures and positively influences teacher performance. Collaborative leadership contributes to the development of collaborative school cultures that foster professional growth and improve teacher effectiveness (Kurniasih et al., 2026). Moreover, PLC practices supported by school leadership enable teachers to engage in continuous instructional reflection and improve learning effectiveness. Teacher collaboration within PLCs has also been found to promote professional growth while contributing to improved student academic achievement (Jadallah et al., 2023). Similarly, collaborative and participatory leadership practices enhance teacher professionalism through active involvement in school decision-making and program development (Abidin & Qusairi, 2025). Professional competence development becomes more effective when PLC activities are integrated with structured reflective and collaborative learning processes. Furthermore, instructional leadership and PLC practices directly influence teacher performance, while teacher self-efficacy acts as a mediating mechanism that strengthens professional capacity (Azizah et al., 2024).

Other studies in Indonesia have consistently demonstrated the positive relationship between collaborative leadership and teacher performance. Open and participatory work environments encourage teachers to become more actively engaged in fulfilling professional responsibilities. Collaborative supervision approaches significantly improve teachers' professional competencies by providing opportunities for discussion, reflection, and ongoing feedback (Ziadah, 2023). Likewise, periodic collaborative supervision has been shown to improve teacher performance and instructional quality across successive implementation cycles (Fahmi, 2020).

Despite these advances, previous studies reveal several limitations. Grimm, (2024). found that PLCs do not automatically improve instructional practices when professional discussions remain limited to sharing teaching methods. Meaningful instructional improvement requires teacher leaders capable of facilitating systematic, inquiry-oriented professional learning processes. Chen & Zhang, (2022).demonstrated that teacher leaders within PLCs are recognized primarily through professional expertise and subject-specific leadership roles. Yang and Chang, (2024) confirmed that distributed leadership and PLCs positively predict teacher professional development, with PLC functioning as a full mediator

between leadership and professional growth. Ardhi et al., (2024) identified multiple dimensions of supportive and shared leadership in PLC implementation, including teacher collaboration, leadership strategies, communication mechanisms, and professional responsibility. Furthermore, Fadlilah et al., (2025) reported that English teachers participating in PLCs demonstrated behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement in professional learning activities, including reflection, problem-solving, and technology integration.

Although these studies have enriched understanding of PLC implementation and teacher leadership, several important gaps remain. First, existing research predominantly focuses on principals' leadership, organizational structures, or formal teacher leadership roles, while relatively limited attention has been given to how collaborative leadership emerges informally among teachers within PLC settings. Second, many studies employ quantitative approaches that examine causal relationships among leadership, PLCs, and professional development, leaving limited understanding of the processes through which collaborative leadership is enacted in everyday school practices. Third, there remains a scarcity of qualitative investigations examining how teachers collectively exercise leadership, facilitate professional learning, and influence professional performance within Islamic secondary school contexts. Consequently, the mechanisms through which collaborative teacher leadership shapes PLC effectiveness and professional performance remain insufficiently understood.

The present study addresses these gaps by examining teachers' collaborative leadership within PLC practices at SMA IT Dhiaul Fikri. Preliminary observations indicate that the school has implemented several PLC-related activities, including pedagogical discussions, collaborative lesson planning, peer supervision, and collective reflection on instructional outcomes. Notably, certain teachers assume influential roles in initiating collaboration, facilitating knowledge exchange, and encouraging colleagues' participation in professional development activities (Observation, April 4, 2026). These practices suggest the emergence of informal collaborative leadership among teachers. However, the forms, processes, and implications of such leadership for PLC implementation and professional performance have not yet been systematically explored.

Theoretically, this study is grounded in Distributed Leadership Theory, which conceptualizes leadership as a collective practice distributed across multiple organizational

actors rather than confined to formal leadership positions (Spillane, 2006). This perspective is complemented by Wenger's (1998) Community of Practice Theory, which explains professional learning as participation in communities characterized by shared goals, practices, and identities. Bandura's (1977) Social Learning Theory further elucidates how teachers acquire knowledge and professional competencies through observation, interaction, and collaborative engagement. In addition, Senge's (1990) Learning Organization Theory highlights the importance of collective learning and shared vision in fostering organizational improvement, while Bass's (1985) Transformational Leadership Theory explains how individuals can inspire, motivate, and influence others toward professional growth and organizational change. Together, these theoretical perspectives provide a comprehensive framework for understanding how collaborative leadership practices within PLCs contribute to enhanced professional performance among teachers.

Despite the growing body of literature on collaborative leadership and Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), limited attention has been given to understanding how collaborative leadership is enacted by teachers within PLC settings and how such practices influence teachers' professional performance, particularly in Islamic secondary schools. Therefore, this study is guided by the following research questions: (1) How do teachers practice collaborative leadership in supporting professional development? (2) How is the Professional Learning Community (PLC) implemented as a medium for collaboration and professional learning among teachers? and (3) What role does teachers' collaborative leadership through PLC practices play in enhancing teachers' professional performance? Addressing these questions is expected to contribute to the expanding discourse on distributed leadership, teacher professional learning, and school improvement by providing contextual insights from an Islamic senior high school setting.

METHODS

1. Research Approach

This study employed a qualitative research approach to gain an in-depth understanding of teachers' collaborative leadership and its role in enhancing professional performance through Professional Learning Community (PLC) practices at SMA IT Dhiaul Fikri. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because the study focused on exploring participants' experiences, perceptions, interactions, and interpretations regarding

collaborative leadership and professional learning processes within the natural context of the school.

Qualitative research is particularly suitable for investigating complex social phenomena by emphasizing participants' meanings and interpretations of their lived experiences. Creswell and Guetterman (2023) argued that qualitative inquiry enables researchers to explore how individuals make sense of specific social situations and construct meaning within particular contexts. Similarly, Merriam and Tisdell (2025) emphasized that qualitative research seeks to understand how people interpret their experiences and how those interpretations shape social realities. Therefore, this approach provided a comprehensive framework for examining the dynamics of collaborative leadership and PLC implementation in a real educational setting.

2. Research Design

This study adopted a qualitative case study design. The case study approach was selected because the research focused on a bounded system, namely the implementation of teachers' collaborative leadership and Professional Learning Community (PLC) practices at SMA IT Dhiaul Fikri.

According to Yin (2024), a case study design is appropriate when researchers seek to investigate a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, particularly when the boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not clearly evident. Likewise, Stake (2023) explained that case studies enable researchers to obtain a holistic understanding of a particular case by examining its complexity, uniqueness, and contextual characteristics. In the present study, the case study design facilitated an in-depth exploration of leadership practices, teacher interactions, collaborative learning processes, and professional development activities occurring within the school environment.

Unlike many previous studies on PLCs that primarily relied on quantitative survey methods to examine relationships among variables, this study explored the lived experiences and meanings constructed by educational actors regarding collaborative leadership and PLC implementation. Consequently, the case study design allowed for a richer and more contextualized understanding of how collaborative leadership operated within a specific Islamic secondary school setting.

3. Research Site and Period

The study was conducted at SMA IT Dhiaul Fikri. The school was selected because it had consistently implemented Professional Learning Community (PLC) practices as part of its educational quality improvement initiatives and teacher professional development programs.

Data collection was carried out from April to May 2026. During this period, the researcher conducted classroom and school observations, in-depth interviews, document analysis, and data verification procedures. The selected timeframe allowed sufficient opportunities to observe PLC activities, collaborative meetings, professional learning sessions, and teacher interactions in their natural settings.

4. Participants and Sampling Technique

The study employed purposive sampling to identify participants who possessed relevant knowledge and experience regarding collaborative leadership and PLC implementation. In qualitative research, participant selection is based on information richness rather than representativeness, enabling researchers to obtain detailed and meaningful insights into the phenomenon under investigation.

Patton (2025) stated that purposive sampling allows researchers to intentionally select information-rich participants who can provide deep insights into the research problem. Similarly, Tracy (2024) noted that qualitative participant selection should prioritize depth, relevance, and contextual understanding rather than statistical generalization.

A total of 24 participants were involved in this study. They consisted of one principal, one vice principal for curriculum affairs, one PLC coordinator, one school development team leader, six senior teachers, five mid-career teachers, four novice teachers, and five students. These participants were selected based on their involvement in collaborative leadership activities and Professional Learning Community practices within the school.

The inclusion of multiple stakeholder groups enabled the researcher to obtain diverse perspectives regarding collaborative leadership practices, PLC implementation, and their influence on teachers' professional performance.

5. Research Instruments and Data Collection Procedures

The primary research instrument was the researcher as a human instrument. In qualitative inquiry, the researcher plays a central role in collecting, interpreting, and analyzing data throughout the research process.

According to Ravitch and Carl (2021), qualitative researchers function as the primary instruments of data collection because they directly engage with participants, contexts, and emerging meanings during the research process. Likewise, Creswell and Guetterman (2023) emphasized that researchers are responsible for interpreting participants' experiences through continuous interaction with the field setting.

To obtain comprehensive data, four data collection techniques were employed.

a In-Depth Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the principal, vice principal, PLC coordinator, school development team leader, teachers, and students. The interviews explored participants' experiences, perceptions, strategies, and challenges related to collaborative leadership and PLC practices. An interview guide was developed to ensure consistency while allowing flexibility for probing and follow-up questions.

b Participant Observation

Participant observation was undertaken during PLC meetings, collaborative teacher discussions, professional development activities, peer supervision sessions, and instructional planning meetings. This technique enabled the researcher to gather firsthand information regarding collaborative interactions, leadership practices, and professional learning activities occurring within the school.

c Document Analysis

Various institutional documents were examined to support and validate the interview and observation data. These documents included PLC work plans, meeting minutes, activity reports, instructional planning documents, academic supervision reports, teacher evaluation records, and other relevant materials related to professional development and collaborative leadership practices.

d Data Triangulation

To strengthen data credibility, source triangulation, methodological triangulation, and time triangulation were applied. Information obtained from interviews, observations, and documents was continuously compared and cross-checked to ensure consistency and accuracy.

6. Trustworthiness of the Data

The trustworthiness of the findings was established through the four criteria proposed by Lincoln and Guba and further elaborated in contemporary qualitative research literature: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Credibility was enhanced through prolonged engagement, triangulation, member checking, and continuous interaction with participants. Transferability was addressed by providing rich and detailed descriptions of the research context, participants, and procedures. Dependability was ensured through systematic documentation of all research activities, allowing the research process to be audited. Confirmability was established by maintaining an audit trail and preserving all interview transcripts, observation notes, field records, and analytical memos to ensure that findings were grounded in the collected data rather than researcher bias.

Korstjens and Moser (2023) argued that trustworthiness is fundamental to qualitative rigor because it demonstrates the consistency, transparency, and authenticity of the research process. Similarly, Nowell and Albrecht (2024) emphasized that credibility and confirmability are achieved when researchers systematically document analytical decisions and provide clear evidence linking interpretations to empirical data.

7. Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using the interactive model developed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2020), which consists of three interconnected stages: data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification.

a. Data Condensation

During this stage, interview transcripts, observation notes, and documentary evidence were reviewed, coded, categorized, and reduced to focus on information relevant to the research objectives. Data condensation enabled the researcher to identify emerging themes and meaningful patterns related to collaborative leadership and PLC practices.

b. Data Display

The condensed data were subsequently organized into matrices, thematic charts, conceptual diagrams, and descriptive narratives. Data displays facilitated systematic comparison across participants and helped reveal relationships among categories and themes.

c. Conclusion Drawing and Verification

The final stage involved identifying recurring themes, patterns, and meanings emerging from the data. Conclusions were continuously verified through triangulation, member checking, and repeated examination of data sources until data saturation was achieved. Through this iterative process, the researcher developed an in-depth understanding of how collaborative leadership practices operated within PLC activities and how they contributed to the enhancement of teachers' professional performance.

Throughout the analytical process, data collection and analysis occurred simultaneously, allowing emerging findings to guide subsequent observations, interviews, and document reviews. This iterative procedure enhanced the depth, credibility, and contextual richness of the study findings.

RESULTS

1. Teachers' Collaborative Leadership Practices in Supporting Professional Development

a. Forms of Collaborative Leadership Practices

(1) Teacher Involvement in Academic Decision-Making

The findings revealed that collaborative leadership practices at SMA IT Dhiaul Fikri were manifested through teachers' active involvement in academic decision-making processes. Teachers were not merely policy implementers but were also engaged in planning, formulating, and determining school programs. Policies related to teaching and learning, curriculum development, and teacher professional development were discussed through deliberative forums involving various school stakeholders.

Interview data consistently revealed that academic decision-making was conducted through participatory and collaborative processes involving teachers at different levels of responsibility within the school. Participants representing school leadership, teacher

leadership, senior teachers, and mid-career teachers emphasized that school policies were generally formulated through coordination meetings and collective discussions that enabled teachers to contribute ideas, suggestions, and professional considerations before decisions were finalized (P01, Principal, Interview, April 9, 2026; P03, PLC Coordinator, Interview, April 17, 2026; P05, Senior Teacher, Interview, April 17, 2026; P11, Mid-Career Teacher, Interview, April 25, 2026).

Several participants further noted that teachers were provided opportunities to express opinions, propose ideas, and provide considerations before programs were mutually agreed upon. Decisions were commonly reached through deliberation and consensus while taking into account school priorities, instructional needs, and students' characteristics (P02, Vice Principal for Curriculum Affairs, Interview, April 9, 2026; P04, School Development Team Leader, Interview, May 18, 2026; P06, Senior Teacher, Interview, April 18, 2026; P12, Mid-Career Teacher, Interview, April 26, 2026).

Observational data further demonstrated that teachers actively participated in academic coordination meetings by sharing perspectives related to instructional planning and school program evaluation (Observation, April 12, 2026). Documentary evidence from school meeting minutes also confirmed teachers' involvement in planning and evaluating academic programs (School Work Program Document Analysis, 2025).

(2) Collaborative Discussion and Reflection on Teaching Practices

The findings indicated that collaborative discussion and reflection were systematically conducted through Professional Learning Community (PLC) activities. These forums functioned as spaces where teachers shared experiences, discussed instructional challenges, and reflected on their teaching practices.

Interview data revealed that PLC meetings served as an important forum for professional dialogue, collaborative reflection, and the development of more effective instructional strategies. Participants consistently reported that PLC activities facilitated discussions regarding teaching modules, curriculum implementation, instructional challenges, and analyses of student learning outcomes (P02, Vice Principal for Curriculum Affairs, Interview, May 15, 2026; P03, PLC Coordinator, Interview, May 12, 2026; P05, Senior Teacher, Interview, April 17, 2026; P11, Mid-Career Teacher, Interview, April 25, 2026).

Several participants also highlighted that PLC activities encouraged teachers to evaluate instructional materials, review classroom practices, and exchange best practices with colleagues. Such discussions enabled teachers to identify instructional strengths and weaknesses while improving alignment between instructional implementation and learning objectives (P07, Senior Teacher, Interview, April 19, 2026; P13, Mid-Career Teacher, Interview, April 27, 2026; P16, Novice Teacher, Interview, April 28, 2026; P17, Novice Teacher, Interview, April 29, 2026).

Observational evidence showed that teachers actively discussed instructional difficulties and provided constructive feedback on colleagues' lesson plans during PLC sessions (Observation, May 8, 2026). Furthermore, PLC activity reports documented reflection and evaluation sessions as recurring agenda items in each meeting (PLC Activity Report Document Analysis, 2026).

(3) Distribution of Roles and Responsibilities in School Programs

The study found that roles and responsibilities within school programs were distributed collaboratively according to teachers' expertise and professional competencies. School initiatives involved multiple stakeholders whose responsibilities had been collectively agreed upon.

Interview data indicated that responsibilities within school programs were assigned according to participants' professional expertise and organizational roles. School leaders and teacher leaders emphasized that such distribution of responsibilities promoted effective coordination and strengthened collective ownership of school initiatives (P01, Principal, Interview, April 9, 2026; P03, PLC Coordinator, Interview, May 12, 2026; P04, School Development Team Leader, Interview, May 18, 2026; P06, Senior Teacher, Interview, April 18, 2026).

Participants further explained that PLC activities also involved differentiated responsibilities, including preparing instructional materials, facilitating discussions, documenting activities, and providing feedback on colleagues' work. Such arrangements enabled teachers to contribute according to their expertise while fostering collaborative engagement in professional learning activities (P08, Senior Teacher, Interview, April 20, 2026; P14, Mid-Career Teacher, Interview, April 28, 2026; P18, Novice Teacher, Interview, April 30, 2026).

b. Collaborative Leadership Strategies

(1) Building a Culture of Mutual Trust Among Teachers

The findings demonstrated that mutual trust constituted a fundamental element of collaborative leadership implementation at SMA IT' Dhiaul Fikri. This culture was reflected in teachers' willingness to share experiences, discuss instructional difficulties, and accept feedback from colleagues.

Interview data consistently showed that PLC activities fostered an atmosphere characterized by openness, collegiality, and professional support. Participants reported that teachers felt comfortable sharing instructional challenges without concerns about criticism or unhealthy competition (P03, PLC Coordinator, Interview, May 12, 2026; P05, Senior Teacher, Interview, April 17, 2026; P11, Mid-Career Teacher, Interview, April 25, 2026; P16, Novice Teacher, Interview, April 28, 2026).

Several participants also emphasized that mutual trust strengthened teachers' willingness to collaborate, exchange knowledge, and support one another in addressing instructional challenges and improving professional competencies (P07, Senior Teacher, Interview, April 19, 2026; P15, Mid-Career Teacher, Interview, April 29, 2026).

Observational findings revealed open, respectful, and constructive interactions among teachers when discussing instructional issues during PLC meetings (Observation, May 8, 2026).

(2) Open and Participatory Communication

The findings indicated that open communication represented an essential strategy for fostering collaboration within the school. Teachers were encouraged to express ideas, criticisms, and suggestions through various institutional forums.

Interview data revealed that communication within the school organization was developed through collaborative coordination involving multiple stakeholders. Participants consistently reported that teachers were encouraged to express opinions and engage in discussions concerning school programs and instructional improvement initiatives (P01, Principal, Interview, April 9, 2026; P02, Vice Principal for Curriculum Affairs, Interview, April 9, 2026; P04, School Development Team Leader, Interview, May 18, 2026; P12, Mid-Career Teacher, Interview, April 26, 2026).

Participants further noted that differing opinions were generally addressed through additional dialogue and consultation until mutual understanding and agreement were achieved. This communication pattern contributed to the development of a collaborative professional culture within the school (P13, Mid-Career Teacher, Interview, April 27, 2026; P17, Novice Teacher, Interview, April 29, 2026).

Observational evidence showed that all participants were provided equal opportunities to express their views during meetings and PLC activities, with no indication of dominance by any particular individual or group (Observation, April 26, 2026).

(3) Mentoring and Experience Sharing Among Teachers

The study found that mentoring and experience sharing constituted key strategies for enhancing teachers' professional capacities. More experienced teachers actively assisted colleagues in preparing instructional materials and addressing classroom challenges.

Interview data demonstrated that mentoring relationships and peer support were widely recognized as important mechanisms for professional learning. Participants reported that experienced teachers regularly shared instructional strategies, classroom management approaches, and practical solutions to instructional problems with their colleagues (P03, PLC Coordinator, Interview, May 12, 2026; P05, Senior Teacher, Interview, April 17, 2026; P06, Senior Teacher, Interview, April 18, 2026; P11, Mid-Career Teacher, Interview, April 25, 2026).

Several participants further emphasized that feedback exchanges and the sharing of best practices during PLC activities helped teachers generate new ideas and strengthen their instructional competencies. Novice teachers particularly acknowledged the value of support received from more experienced colleagues (P09, Senior Teacher, Interview, April 21, 2026; P16, Novice Teacher, Interview, April 28, 2026).

PLC reports also documented regular sessions dedicated to sharing best practices and presenting instructional experiences among teachers during PLC meetings (PLC Semester Activity Report Document Analysis, 2026).

c. Supporting and Inhibiting Factors

(1) School Policy Support and Principal Leadership

The findings revealed that supportive school policies constituted a major factor contributing to the successful implementation of collaborative leadership and PLC practices.

The school provided opportunities for teacher participation and offered facilities that supported professional development activities.

Interview data consistently indicated that leadership support and school policies played important roles in sustaining collaborative leadership and PLC implementation. Participants reported that school leaders actively encouraged teacher participation, facilitated coordination activities, and provided resources necessary for professional development initiatives (P01, Principal, Interview, May 28, 2026; P02, Vice Principal for Curriculum Affairs, Interview, May 21, 2026; P03, PLC Coordinator, Interview, May 12, 2026; P04, School Development Team Leader, Interview, May 18, 2026).

Several senior teachers also acknowledged that school leadership created favorable conditions for collaboration by supporting PLC activities and promoting teacher involvement in school improvement efforts (P05, Senior Teacher, Interview, April 17, 2026).

(2) Teachers' Commitment to Professional Collaboration

Teachers' commitment to continuous learning and collaboration emerged as another significant supporting factor. Most teachers demonstrated strong enthusiasm for participating in discussions, sharing experiences, and enhancing their professional competencies.

Interview data revealed that teachers' willingness to engage in continuous learning significantly contributed to the sustainability of PLC implementation. Participants reported strong motivation to participate in professional discussions, improve instructional quality, and strengthen professional competencies through collaborative learning activities (P05, Senior Teacher, Interview, April 17, 2026; P06, Senior Teacher, Interview, April 18, 2026; P10, Senior Teacher, Interview, April 22, 2026; P11, Mid-Career Teacher, Interview, April 25, 2026).

Similar views were expressed by other participants who emphasized that PLC participation provided valuable opportunities for professional growth and instructional improvement (P12, Mid-Career Teacher, Interview, April 26, 2026; P14, Mid-Career Teacher, Interview, April 28, 2026; P16, Novice Teacher, Interview, April 28, 2026).

(3) Time Constraints and Teacher Workload

Although collaborative leadership and PLC implementation were generally successful, the findings identified several challenges affecting their effectiveness. The primary

barriers included limited time availability, intensive school schedules, and teachers' heavy workloads.

Interview data indicated that time constraints remained the most frequently reported challenge in implementing collaborative leadership and PLC activities. Participants explained that busy instructional schedules, administrative responsibilities, and overlapping school programs occasionally limited opportunities for sustained collaboration and regular PLC participation (P02, Vice Principal for Curriculum Affairs, Interview, May 15, 2026; P05, Senior Teacher, Interview, April 17, 2026; P08, Senior Teacher, Interview, April 20, 2026; P11, Mid-Career Teacher, Interview, April 25, 2026).

Several participants further noted that inconsistent attendance and competing institutional commitments sometimes affected the continuity and effectiveness of PLC activities (P15, Mid-Career Teacher, Interview, April 29, 2026; P18, Novice Teacher, Interview, April 30, 2026).

Document analysis of the school academic calendar indicated that several school programs were scheduled within close timeframes, potentially reducing the frequency and consistency of PLC implementation (School Academic Calendar Document Analysis, 2025–2026).

Figure 1 presents an integrated model illustrating how collaborative leadership practices support the implementation of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and contribute to teacher professional development. The model synthesizes the empirical findings derived from interviews, observations, and document analysis conducted at SMA IT Dhiaul Fikri.

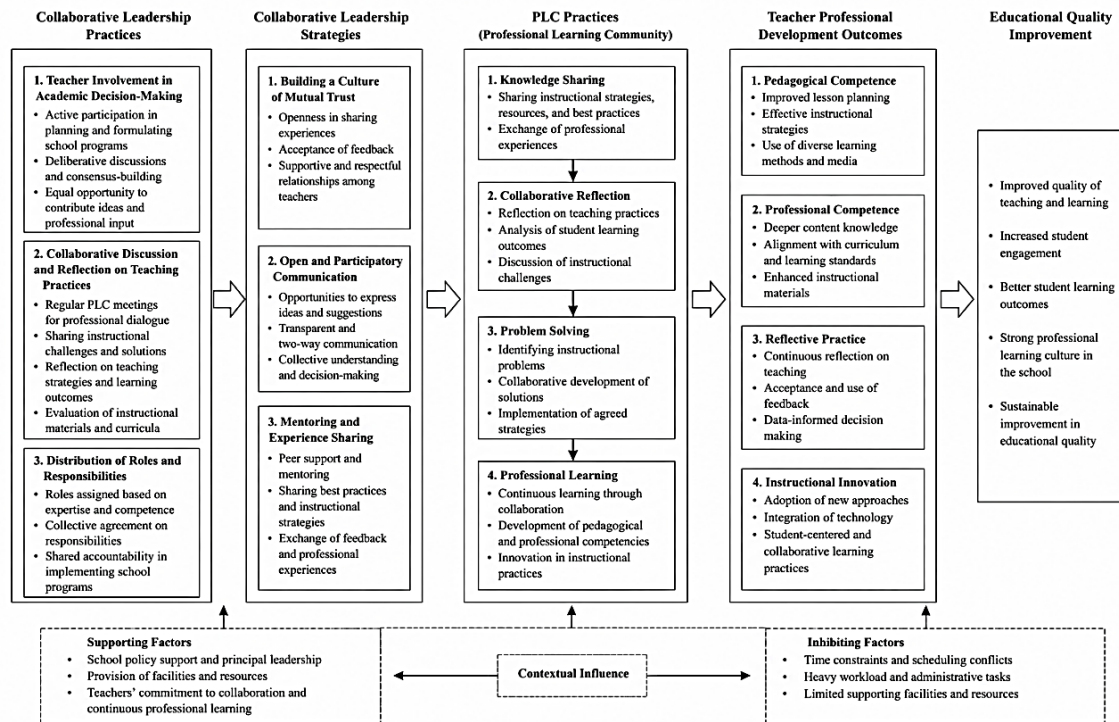


Figure 1. Integrated Model of Collaborative Leadership, PLC Practices, and Teacher Professional Development

Source: Developed from interview, observation, and document analysis data (2026).

Figure 1 illustrates that collaborative leadership serves as the foundation for teacher professional development through PLC practices. Teacher involvement in decision-making, collaborative reflection, and shared responsibilities are supported by mutual trust, open communication, and mentoring. These elements facilitate PLC activities such as knowledge sharing, collective problem-solving, and professional learning, which enhance teachers' pedagogical competence, reflective capacity, and instructional innovation. The process is strengthened by principal leadership, supportive school policies, and teachers' commitment to collaboration, while time constraints and workload act as challenges. Overall, the interaction between collaborative leadership and PLC practices contributes to improved instructional quality and school improvement.

2. Implementation of the Professional Learning Community (PLC) as a Platform for Teacher Collaboration and Professional Learning

a. Implementation of PLC Activities

(1) Regular Meetings and Instructional Discussions

The findings revealed that the Professional Learning Community (PLC) at SMA IT Dhiaul Fikri was implemented as a collaborative forum that brought teachers together to

discuss various aspects of teaching and learning. Although its implementation had not always been fully consistent with the planned schedule, the PLC remained the primary platform through which teachers engaged in collective professional discussions.

Interview data consistently revealed that PLC activities were designed as regular professional learning forums involving teachers from different subject areas and levels of experience. Participants reported that PLC meetings provided opportunities to discuss instructional strategies, curriculum implementation, lesson planning, and various challenges encountered during classroom instruction (P01, Principal, Interview, May 15, 2026; P02, Vice Principal for Curriculum Affairs, Interview, May 21, 2026; P03, PLC Coordinator, Interview, May 12, 2026; P05, Senior Teacher, Interview, April 17, 2026).

Several participants further noted that PLC meetings continued to be implemented despite teachers' instructional responsibilities and other school commitments. These meetings served as collaborative spaces where teachers collectively reviewed instructional practices and explored strategies for improving instructional quality (P11, Mid-Career Teacher, Interview, April 25, 2026; P16, Novice Teacher, Interview, April 28, 2026).

Observational data indicated that during PLC sessions, teachers actively discussed lesson planning, instructional module development, and the evaluation of classroom teaching practices (Observation, May 8, 2026). This finding was also supported by PLC scheduling documents, which demonstrated the existence of regular agendas focused on instructional discussions and academic evaluations (Document Analysis, PLC Program Schedule, 2026).

(2) Sharing Best Practices Among Teachers

The findings indicated that one of the primary PLC activities involved sharing best practices that teachers had successfully implemented in their classrooms. This activity enabled teachers to learn from colleagues' experiences and adopt instructional strategies perceived as effective.

Interview data revealed that teachers were consistently encouraged to share successful instructional experiences, innovative teaching approaches, and effective classroom management strategies during PLC meetings. Participants emphasized that such exchanges broadened professional perspectives and enabled teachers to adapt proven practices to their own instructional contexts (P03, PLC Coordinator, Interview, May 12, 2026; P05, Senior Teacher, Interview, April 17, 2026; P06, Senior Teacher, Interview, April 18, 2026; P11, Mid-Career Teacher, Interview, April 25, 2026).

Several participants also highlighted that constructive feedback from colleagues enriched the learning process and helped teachers critically evaluate both successful and challenging instructional experiences. Through these discussions, teachers gained new insights into improving classroom practices (P12, Mid-Career Teacher, Interview, April 26, 2026; P16, Novice Teacher, Interview, April 28, 2026).

Observations revealed that presentations of teaching experiences were conducted openly and followed by reflective discussions among teachers aimed at identifying instructional practices that could be replicated across different subject areas (Observation, April 22, 2026). Furthermore, PLC activity reports documented specific agenda items dedicated to sharing instructional experiences and teaching innovations implemented by teachers (Document Analysis, PLC Report, May 2026).

(3) Collaborative Analysis and Resolution of Instructional Problems

The findings demonstrated that the PLC functioned as a collaborative forum for analyzing and addressing various instructional challenges encountered by teachers. Different issues emerging during the teaching and learning process were discussed collectively to identify solutions that were both effective and responsive to students' needs.

Interview data consistently indicated that instructional challenges were addressed through collaborative evaluation and collective problem-solving processes. Participants reported that PLC discussions frequently focused on issues such as student learning difficulties, instructional methods, classroom management, and the development of teaching resources (P03, PLC Coordinator, Interview, May 12, 2026; P05, Senior Teacher, Interview, April 17, 2026; P07, Senior Teacher, Interview, April 19, 2026; P13, Mid-Career Teacher, Interview, April 27, 2026).

Several participants further emphasized that solutions developed through collaborative discussions were often more comprehensive than those developed individually because they incorporated diverse professional perspectives and experiences (P17, Novice Teacher, Interview, April 29, 2026).

Observations showed that teachers actively provided suggestions regarding challenges presented by colleagues and collaboratively formulated alternative instructional strategies for classroom implementation (Observation, May 8, 2026). This finding was reinforced by PLC meeting minutes documenting discussion outcomes and follow-up

recommendations for various instructional issues addressed during the meetings (Document Analysis, PLC Meeting Minutes, May 2026).

b. Characteristics of the PLC at SMA IT Dhiaul Fikri

(1) Shared Vision and Learning Goals

The findings indicated that the implementation of the PLC at SMA IT Dhiaul Fikri was grounded in a shared vision of improving instructional quality and teacher professionalism. All PLC activities were directed toward enhancing teaching practices and improving student learning outcomes.

Interview data revealed that participants shared a common understanding regarding the objectives of PLC implementation. School leaders, teacher leaders, and classroom teachers consistently emphasized that PLC activities were designed to strengthen teacher competencies, improve instructional effectiveness, and support the achievement of educational goals (P01, Principal, Interview, May 15, 2026; P02, Vice Principal for Curriculum Affairs, Interview, May 21, 2026; P03, PLC Coordinator, Interview, May 12, 2026; P04, School Development Team Leader, Interview, May 18, 2026).

Several teachers further noted that the collective commitment to improving instructional quality helped sustain active participation in PLC activities and encouraged continuous professional learning (P05, Senior Teacher, Interview, April 17, 2026).

Document analysis of the school work plan indicated that improving instructional quality and fostering teacher professional development were among the primary goals targeted through PLC implementation (Document Analysis, School Work Plan, 2025).

(2) A Culture of Collective and Continuous Learning

The findings revealed that the PLC had fostered a culture of collective learning among teachers. Rather than learning individually, teachers engaged in professional growth through collaborative discussions, reflective practices, experience sharing, and instructional evaluations.

Interview data consistently showed that PLC activities promoted continuous learning and professional growth among teachers. Participants reported that interactions with colleagues provided valuable opportunities to acquire new knowledge, adapt to curriculum developments, and improve instructional competencies (P03, PLC Coordinator, Interview,

May 12, 2026; P05, Senior Teacher, Interview, April 17, 2026; P11, Mid-Career Teacher, Interview, April 25, 2026; P14, Mid-Career Teacher, Interview, April 28, 2026).

Several novice teachers also emphasized that PLC participation accelerated their professional adaptation and strengthened their confidence in carrying out instructional responsibilities (P16, Novice Teacher, Interview, April 28, 2026).

Observational findings showed that teachers demonstrated strong enthusiasm during discussions and actively exchanged information regarding their instructional practices (Observation, April 22, 2026). These conditions reflected the development of a collective and sustainable learning culture within the school environment.

(3) Collaboration Based on Islamic Values

The findings demonstrated that collaboration within the PLC was not solely oriented toward enhancing professional competence but was also grounded in Islamic values that characterized the school. Values such as togetherness, consultation (*shūrā*), mutual respect, and mutual assistance served as foundational principles guiding collaborative activities.

Interview data revealed that Islamic values significantly influenced collaborative interactions within the school community. Participants consistently reported that consultation, mutual respect, collective responsibility, and professional solidarity were emphasized throughout PLC activities and broader school decision-making processes (P01, Principal, Interview, April 9, 2026; P02, Vice Principal for Curriculum Affairs, Interview, April 9, 2026; P04, School Development Team Leader, Interview, May 18, 2026; P05, Senior Teacher, Interview, April 17, 2026).

Students also observed positive relationships among teachers characterized by cooperation, respect, and supportive interactions, which contributed to a conducive learning environment (P20, Student, Interview, May 14, 2026; P21, Student, Interview, May 14, 2026).

Observations conducted during PLC activities revealed attitudes of mutual respect, support, and openness to feedback among colleagues (Observation, May 8, 2026). These values were also reflected in the school's vision and cultural documents, which emphasized the importance of collaboration and *ukhuwah* (Islamic brotherhood) in teacher professional development (Document Analysis, School Vision and Culture Documents, 2025).

c. The Impact of PLC on Teacher Professional Development

(1) Enhancement of Pedagogical and Professional Knowledge

The findings indicated that the PLC made a significant contribution to the enhancement of teachers' pedagogical and professional knowledge. Through discussions and exchanges of experience, teachers gained deeper understanding of instructional strategies, teaching resource development, and curriculum implementation.

Interview data consistently revealed that PLC participation expanded teachers' professional knowledge and strengthened their understanding of instructional planning, curriculum implementation, and effective teaching practices. Participants reported gaining practical insights and instructional strategies that could be adapted to their classroom contexts (P05, Senior Teacher, Interview, April 17, 2026; P06, Senior Teacher, Interview, April 18, 2026; P11, Mid-Career Teacher, Interview, April 25, 2026; P12, Mid-Career Teacher, Interview, April 26, 2026).

Several novice teachers also noted that PLC discussions contributed substantially to their professional learning by exposing them to diverse instructional approaches and experiences shared by more experienced colleagues (P16, Novice Teacher, Interview, April 28, 2026).

(2) Strengthening Teachers' Reflective Capacity

The findings revealed that the PLC supported the development of teachers' reflective abilities regarding their instructional practices. Each PLC meeting provided opportunities for teachers to evaluate both the successes and challenges they experienced during teaching.

Interview data indicated that reflective dialogue constituted an essential component of PLC activities. Participants reported that evaluation sessions and peer feedback enabled them to identify strengths and weaknesses in their instructional practices and formulate strategies for continuous improvement (P03, PLC Coordinator, Interview, May 12, 2026; P05, Senior Teacher, Interview, April 17, 2026; P11, Mid-Career Teacher, Interview, April 25, 2026; P15, Mid-Career Teacher, Interview, April 29, 2026).

Several novice teachers further explained that reflective discussions helped them develop greater awareness of classroom challenges and encouraged more thoughtful instructional decision-making (P16, Novice Teacher, Interview, April 28, 2026).

Observational findings demonstrated that teachers actively reflected on their instructional practices and discussed various alternatives for improvement during PLC meetings (Observation, April 22, 2026).

(3) Increased Innovation in the Teaching and Learning Process

The findings showed that PLC participation encouraged the emergence of various instructional innovations. Teachers became more receptive to implementing new teaching methods, student-centered approaches, and technology integration in classroom instruction.

Interview data consistently revealed that PLC activities stimulated instructional innovation by exposing teachers to diverse teaching methods, digital learning resources, and collaborative instructional approaches. Participants reported becoming more confident in adopting innovative practices and integrating technology into classroom instruction (P05, Senior Teacher, Interview, April 17, 2026; P07, Senior Teacher, Interview, April 19, 2026; P12, Mid-Career Teacher, Interview, April 26, 2026; P14, Mid-Career Teacher, Interview, April 28, 2026).

Several novice teachers and students also observed noticeable improvements in instructional variety, classroom engagement, and the use of digital learning media following teachers' participation in PLC activities (P17, Novice Teacher, Interview, April 29, 2026; P20, Student, Interview, May 14, 2026).

Observational findings revealed the use of diverse instructional methods, digital learning media, and collaborative student activities across several classrooms observed by the researcher (Observation, May 14, 2026). This finding was supported by instructional planning documents indicating the development of more innovative teaching strategies following teachers' participation in PLC activities (Document Analysis, Teachers' Instructional Modules, 2026).

Figure 2 presents an integrated model of Professional Learning Community (PLC) implementation and its contribution to teacher professional development at SMA IT Dhiraul Fikri. The model synthesizes the findings derived from interviews, observations, and document analysis to illustrate the relationships among PLC activities, PLC characteristics, learning processes, and professional development outcomes.

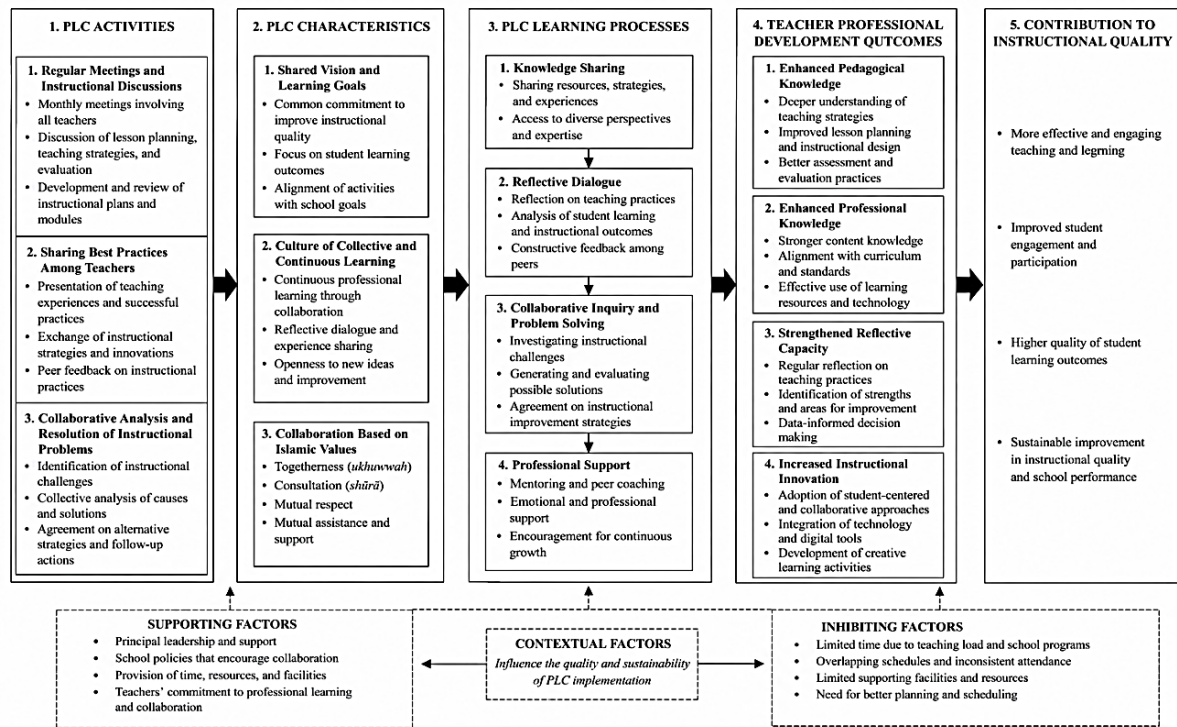


Figure 2. Integrated Model of Professional Learning Community Implementation and Its Contribution to Teacher Professional Development

Source: Developed from interview, observation, and document analysis data (2026).

Figure 2 illustrates that teacher professional development is fostered through PLC activities, including regular meetings, instructional discussions, the sharing of best practices, and collaborative problem-solving. Supported by a shared vision, continuous learning, and collaboration grounded in Islamic values, these activities promote knowledge sharing, reflective dialogue, and professional support among teachers. As a result, teachers strengthen their pedagogical and professional knowledge, reflective capacity, and instructional innovation, leading to improved instructional quality, more effective teaching practices, and greater integration of student-centered approaches and educational technology.

1. The Role of Teacher Collaborative Leadership Through Professional Learning Community (PLC) Practices in Enhancing Teachers' Professional Performance

a. The Role of Collaborative Leadership in Optimizing PLC Implementation

(1) Encouraging Teachers' Active Participation in PLC Activities

The findings revealed that the collaborative leadership practiced at SMA IT Dhiraul Fikri played a significant role in promoting teachers' active engagement in Professional Learning Community (PLC) activities. This participatory leadership approach provided

teachers with opportunities to contribute to every aspect of professional development activities, including the planning, implementation, and evaluation of PLC programs.

Interview data consistently revealed that collaborative leadership created an environment in which teachers felt encouraged to actively participate in PLC activities. Participants reported that teachers were involved in discussions, planning processes, and professional learning initiatives according to their respective roles and competencies. Such participation fostered a stronger sense of ownership and responsibility toward school improvement efforts (P01, Principal, Interview, May 15, 2026; P03, PLC Coordinator, Interview, May 12, 2026; P05, Senior Teacher, Interview, April 17, 2026; P11, Mid-Career Teacher, Interview, April 25, 2026).

Several participants further noted that the open and participatory atmosphere of PLC meetings increased teachers' motivation to share ideas, discuss instructional challenges, and contribute actively to collective professional learning. Teachers perceived their voices as valued and respected within the decision-making and learning processes (P16, Novice Teacher, Interview, April 28, 2026).

Observational findings indicated that most teachers actively participated in discussions, responded to topics under consideration, and engaged collaboratively in the development of instructional materials and lesson plans (Observation, May 8, 2026).

(2) Facilitating the Exchange of Knowledge and Experience

The findings indicated that collaborative leadership played an important role in creating a professional learning environment that facilitated the exchange of knowledge and experiences among teachers. Through PLC activities, teachers were provided opportunities to share instructional practices, teaching strategies, and solutions to challenges encountered in classroom settings.

Interview data demonstrated that collaborative leadership encouraged professional dialogue and knowledge sharing among teachers. Participants reported that PLC activities provided valuable opportunities to exchange instructional experiences, discuss classroom challenges, and disseminate effective teaching practices that could be adopted by colleagues (P03, PLC Coordinator, Interview, May 12, 2026; P05, Senior Teacher, Interview, April 17, 2026; P06, Senior Teacher, Interview, April 18, 2026; P11, Mid-Career Teacher, Interview, April 25, 2026).

Several participants emphasized that the sharing of experiences broadened teachers' professional perspectives and enabled them to identify instructional approaches that were more responsive to students' learning needs. The collaborative learning process also promoted continuous professional growth and strengthened collective expertise within the school (P16, Novice Teacher, Interview, April 28, 2026).

Observations further revealed that teachers actively exchanged information regarding instructional materials, teaching methods, and the use of educational media and technology during PLC meetings (Observation, April 22, 2026). Document analysis of PLC activity reports also demonstrated that the sharing of experiences and best practices constituted one of the primary activities consistently implemented during PLC meetings (Document Analysis, PLC Activity Report, 2026).

(3) Strengthening a Culture of Professional Collaboration

The findings demonstrated that collaborative leadership contributed significantly to the development of a culture of professional collaboration within the school. Teachers no longer worked in isolation but became actively involved in collaborative activities that supported the improvement of instructional quality.

Interview data consistently indicated that collaborative leadership strengthened professional relationships among teachers by promoting communication, consultation, and collective responsibility. Participants reported that collaborative practices enabled teachers to work together more effectively in addressing instructional challenges and implementing school improvement initiatives (P03, PLC Coordinator, Interview, May 12, 2026; P05, Senior Teacher, Interview, April 17, 2026; P07, Senior Teacher, Interview, April 19, 2026; P11, Mid-Career Teacher, Interview, April 25, 2026).

Several participants further noted that support from colleagues enhanced motivation for continuous professional growth and encouraged teachers to engage more actively in collaborative professional learning. These interactions contributed to the establishment of stronger collegial relationships and a more collaborative professional culture (P16, Novice Teacher, Interview, April 28, 2026).

Observational findings revealed strong collaboration among teachers in developing instructional materials, discussing teaching strategies, and providing feedback on colleagues' work (Observation, May 8, 2026). This finding was further supported by PLC program documents emphasizing the importance of collaboration and collective learning as integral

components of the school's professional culture (Document Analysis, Second Semester PLC Program, 2026).

b. The Contribution of PLC to Teachers' Professional Performance

(1) Improving the Quality of Instructional Planning

The findings indicated that PLC activities made a significant contribution to improving the quality of teachers' instructional planning. Through collaborative discussions and professional interactions, teachers were able to develop instructional plans that were more systematic, relevant, and responsive to students' learning needs.

Interview data revealed that collaborative discussions within PLC activities strengthened teachers' abilities to prepare instructional modules, develop learning resources, and design more effective learning experiences. Participants reported that instructional plans became more comprehensive because they were developed through collective reflection and peer feedback processes (P02, Vice Principal for Curriculum Affairs, Interview, May 21, 2026; P05, Senior Teacher, Interview, April 17, 2026; P11, Mid-Career Teacher, Interview, April 25, 2026; P12, Mid-Career Teacher, Interview, April 26, 2026).

Several participants further emphasized that PLC participation enabled teachers to evaluate instructional plans prior to implementation, thereby improving instructional preparedness and increasing confidence in conducting classroom instruction (P16, Novice Teacher, Interview, April 28, 2026).

Document analysis revealed evidence of revisions and improvements to instructional modules that had been collaboratively developed following teachers' participation in PLC activities (Document Analysis, Teachers' Instructional Modules, 2026).

(2) Improving the Quality of Instructional Implementation

The findings demonstrated that PLC activities contributed to improving the quality of classroom instruction. Teachers became better prepared to conduct lessons because they had gained insights, strategies, and alternative teaching methods through PLC discussions.

Interview data consistently indicated that PLC participation enhanced teachers' instructional effectiveness by providing access to new teaching strategies, collaborative learning approaches, and innovative classroom practices. Participants reported that classroom instruction became more structured, engaging, and responsive to students' learning needs following involvement in PLC activities (P05, Senior Teacher, Interview, April

17, 2026; P06, Senior Teacher, Interview, April 18, 2026; P11, Mid-Career Teacher, Interview, April 25, 2026; P14, Mid-Career Teacher, Interview, April 28, 2026).

Several novice teachers also reported increased confidence in implementing instruction because teaching materials, instructional strategies, and lesson plans had been collaboratively discussed and refined through PLC activities (P16, Novice Teacher, Interview, April 28, 2026).

Students similarly observed improvements in classroom learning processes, particularly in relation to instructional variety, classroom interaction, and student participation during learning activities (P20, Student, Interview, May 14, 2026).

Classroom observations revealed greater variation in instructional methods, increased use of digital learning media, and higher levels of student engagement during learning activities (Observation, May 14, 2026).

(3) Enhancing Teachers' Evaluation and Reflective Practices

The findings indicated that PLC activities contributed significantly to improving teachers' abilities to evaluate and reflect upon their instructional practices. PLC meetings provided opportunities for teachers to collectively analyze both the successes and challenges encountered during instruction.

Interview data revealed that evaluation and reflection constituted essential components of PLC activities. Participants reported that discussions and peer feedback enabled teachers to identify aspects of instruction that required improvement while also recognizing successful practices that should be maintained and further developed (P03, PLC Coordinator, Interview, May 12, 2026; P05, Senior Teacher, Interview, April 17, 2026; P11, Mid-Career Teacher, Interview, April 25, 2026; P15, Mid-Career Teacher, Interview, April 29, 2026).

Several novice teachers further explained that reflective discussions helped them develop greater awareness of instructional strengths and weaknesses and encouraged continuous improvement in classroom practice (P16, Novice Teacher, Interview, April 28, 2026).

Observational findings demonstrated that teachers actively reflected on their instructional practices and discussed alternative solutions to various challenges encountered during classroom implementation (Observation, April 22, 2026). This finding was supported

by PLC meeting minutes documenting evaluation results and follow-up actions related to instructional implementation (Document Analysis, PLC Meeting Minutes, May 2026).

c. Implications for Educational Quality Improvement

(1) Sustained Enhancement of Teacher Professionalism

The findings revealed that collaborative leadership through PLC implementation contributed to the continuous enhancement of teacher professionalism. Teachers were provided with opportunities to develop pedagogical, professional, social, and personal competencies through ongoing collaborative learning processes.

Interview data consistently demonstrated that PLC participation supported continuous professional growth by encouraging teachers to engage in reflective learning, collaborative inquiry, and professional knowledge sharing. Participants reported that PLC activities strengthened their professional competencies and sustained motivation for lifelong learning and instructional improvement (P01, Principal, Interview, May 15, 2026; P03, PLC Coordinator, Interview, May 12, 2026; P05, Senior Teacher, Interview, April 17, 2026; P11, Mid-Career Teacher, Interview, April 25, 2026).

Several novice teachers also highlighted that participation in PLC activities accelerated professional adaptation and enhanced confidence in fulfilling instructional responsibilities (P16, Novice Teacher, Interview, April 28, 2026).

(2) Establishing a Productive Learning Community

The findings indicated that PLC implementation facilitated the establishment of a productive learning community within the school. Teachers regularly engaged in discussions, shared experiences, and collaborated to address instructional challenges.

Interview data revealed that PLC activities contributed to the formation of a sustainable professional learning culture characterized by collaboration, collegiality, and continuous improvement. Participants emphasized that professional interactions among teachers had become stronger as a result of regular discussions, collaborative problem-solving, and collective reflection activities (P03, PLC Coordinator, Interview, May 12, 2026; P05, Senior Teacher, Interview, April 17, 2026; P06, Senior Teacher, Interview, April 18, 2026; P11, Mid-Career Teacher, Interview, April 25, 2026).

Several participants further noted that professional collaboration extended beyond formal PLC meetings and became integrated into daily school activities through informal

consultations and ongoing instructional discussions (P16, Novice Teacher, Interview, April 28, 2026).

Students also observed positive professional interactions among teachers that contributed to a supportive and productive learning environment within the school (P20, Student, Interview, May 14, 2026).

Observational findings demonstrated that interactions among teachers extended beyond formal PLC meetings and continued through informal discussions regarding instructional practices and professional development in daily school activities (Observation, May 14, 2026).

(3) Improving Instructional Quality and Student Learning Outcomes

The findings demonstrated that the implementation of collaborative leadership through PLC activities had a positive impact on improving instructional quality in the classroom. Improvements in instructional planning, implementation, evaluation, and reflection contributed to the development of more effective learning processes that were responsive to students' needs.

Interview data consistently indicated that collaborative leadership and PLC participation enhanced instructional quality by strengthening teachers' professional competencies and encouraging instructional innovation. Participants reported that classroom learning became more engaging, organized, and responsive to diverse student needs following active involvement in PLC activities (P05, Senior Teacher, Interview, April 17, 2026; P11, Mid-Career Teacher, Interview, April 25, 2026; P16, Novice Teacher, Interview, April 28, 2026).

Students further reported experiencing greater engagement in learning activities due to the increased use of active learning strategies, collaborative approaches, and technology-supported instruction implemented by teachers (P20, Student, Interview, May 14, 2026; P21, Student, Interview, May 14, 2026; P22, Student, Interview, May 15, 2026; P23, Student, Interview, May 15, 2026; P24, Student, Interview, May 15, 2026).

Observational findings revealed increased student engagement through the implementation of more active and collaborative instructional approaches (Observation, May 14, 2026). This finding was further supported by document analysis of instructional evaluation reports, which demonstrated improvements in the quality of instructional

materials and more systematic instructional implementation following PLC implementation (Document Analysis, School Academic Program Evaluation Report, 2026).

Figure 3 presents the emergent model derived from the study findings, illustrating how collaborative leadership strengthens teachers' professional performance through Professional Learning Community (PLC) practices. The model integrates evidence from interviews, observations, and document analysis to explain the pathways linking leadership, professional collaboration, teacher performance, and educational quality improvement.

Figure 3 presents the emergent model derived from the study findings, illustrating how collaborative leadership strengthens teachers' professional performance through Professional Learning Community (PLC) practices.

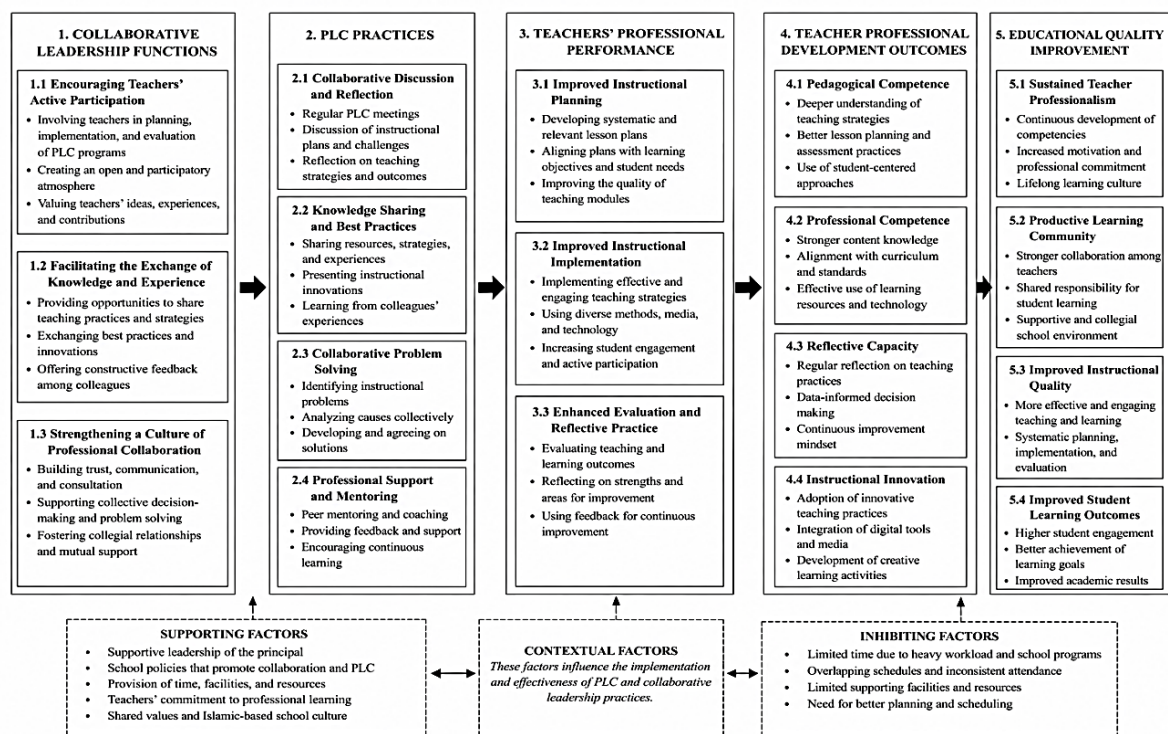


Figure 3. Emergent Model of Collaborative Leadership Through PLC Practices in Enhancing Teachers' Professional Performance

Source: Developed from interview, observation, and document analysis data (2026).

Figure 3 demonstrates that collaborative leadership drives the effective implementation of PLC practices and the enhancement of teachers' professional performance. By promoting active participation, knowledge sharing, and professional collaboration, collaborative leadership creates a supportive environment for reflective dialogue, collective problem-solving, and professional learning. These processes improve instructional planning, teaching practices, and reflective evaluation, leading to stronger

pedagogical competence, instructional innovation, and professional growth. Ultimately, PLC practices mediate the relationship between collaborative leadership and educational quality improvement, reflected in a productive learning community, improved instructional quality, greater student engagement, and better learning outcomes.

DISCUSSION

1. Analysis of Results

a Teachers' Collaborative Leadership Practices in Supporting Professional Development

The findings indicate that collaborative leadership at SMA IT Dhiaul Fikri is not primarily enacted through formal authority but through collective participation, shared responsibility, and professional interaction among teachers. This suggests that leadership is embedded within daily professional practices rather than confined to positional roles. Teachers actively participated in academic decision-making, collaborative reflection, mentoring activities, and the distribution of responsibilities according to their expertise. These practices demonstrate that leadership functions were dispersed across members of the school community, enabling teachers to become active contributors to organizational learning and professional development.

From a conceptual perspective, the findings reveal that collaborative leadership functions as a social process that creates opportunities for professional agency. Teachers were not merely recipients of school policies; instead, they became co-constructors of instructional decisions and professional learning agendas. Such participation strengthens teachers' sense of ownership over school improvement initiatives while simultaneously enhancing collective responsibility for educational outcomes.

The presence of mutual trust, open communication, and peer mentoring further indicates that collaborative leadership operates through relational mechanisms that facilitate knowledge exchange and collective problem-solving. Consequently, professional development becomes a continuous and shared endeavor rather than an isolated individual activity. This pattern can be understood through Distributed Leadership Theory, which views leadership as a practice emerging through interactions among multiple organizational actors rather than being restricted to formal leadership positions (Spillane, 2006).

The findings also demonstrate that collaborative leadership creates organizational conditions that support sustained professional learning. Teachers' involvement in reflective dialogue and collaborative discussions enabled them to critically examine instructional practices, identify challenges, and formulate solutions collectively. This previous research indicate that teacher performance improvement requires a professional environment that promotes reflection and collaborative professional development (Werdiningsih et al., 2022). In this context, leadership serves as a catalyst that mobilizes collective expertise and encourages professional participation across the school community.

Furthermore, the mentoring and experience-sharing activities identified in this study illustrate how professional learning is generated through participation in shared professional practices. From the perspective of Communities of Practice, knowledge development occurs when individuals engage in collaborative activities and negotiate meaning through continuous interaction with peers (Wenger, 1998).

The collaborative relationships observed among teachers also suggest that professional competence develops through observation, interaction, and reciprocal learning processes. Collaborative supervision enhances teachers' professional competence by providing opportunities for discussion, reflection, and continuous feedback (Ziadah, 2023; Fahmi, 2020).

b Implementation of the Professional Learning Community (PLC) as a Platform for Teacher Collaboration and Professional Learning

The findings demonstrate that the PLC at SMA IT Dhiaul Fikri functions as a structured platform through which teachers engage in collaborative learning, reflective practice, and professional dialogue. The implementation of regular meetings, instructional discussions, the sharing of best practices, and collaborative problem-solving indicates that the PLC serves as a mechanism for transforming individual experiences into collective professional knowledge. Rather than operating solely as an administrative forum, the PLC has become a professional learning environment that facilitates continuous teacher development.

Conceptually, the findings suggest that the effectiveness of PLC implementation is shaped not only by the frequency of meetings but also by the quality of collaborative interactions that occur within the learning community. The presence of a shared vision, collective learning goals, and professional dialogue created conditions that encouraged

teachers to engage in meaningful learning processes. Through reflective discussions and peer feedback, teachers were able to examine instructional challenges from multiple perspectives and develop more informed approaches to teaching and learning. As highlighted by Mulyani et al, (2024), PLC as a strategic approach for enhancing teacher professionalism through collaborative culture, reflective practice, and shared instructional planning.

This finding can be interpreted through Wenger's concept of Communities of Practice, which explains that professional learning emerges through participation in communities characterized by shared goals, common practices, and collective identities (Wenger, 1998). Within this framework, the PLC functions as a professional space where knowledge is continuously constructed, negotiated, and refined through social interaction.

An important aspect emerging from the findings is the integration of Islamic values into PLC practices. Principles such as consultation (*shūrā*), mutual respect, cooperation, and *ukhuwah* strengthened collaborative relationships among teachers and provided a moral foundation for professional learning. This suggests that PLC effectiveness is influenced not only by organizational structures but also by cultural and value-based dimensions that shape interpersonal relationships within the school community.

The reflective dialogue and collaborative inquiry observed during PLC activities further illustrate how collective learning contributes to organizational improvement. From the perspective of Learning Organization Theory, sustainable improvement occurs when members continuously learn, share knowledge, and collectively reflect on their practices to address emerging challenges (Senge, 1990).

Moreover, the findings indicate that PLC activities facilitate the exchange of professional experiences and instructional innovations among teachers. Such interactions demonstrate that professional growth is enhanced when learning opportunities are embedded within collaborative environments that encourage active participation and mutual support among members. As reported by Azizah et al., (2024), PLC practices contribute to teacher performance improvement both directly and indirectly through strengthening teachers' self-efficacy and professional capacity

c The Role of Teacher Collaborative Leadership Through Professional Learning Community (PLC) Practices in Enhancing Teachers' Professional Performance

The findings reveal that collaborative leadership contributes to teacher professional performance primarily through its influence on PLC processes. Collaborative leadership encouraged active participation, facilitated knowledge sharing, and strengthened professional collaboration, thereby creating conditions that enabled PLC activities to function effectively. Consequently, professional learning became embedded within teachers' daily practices and contributed directly to improvements in instructional planning, classroom implementation, evaluation, and reflective practice. The findings suggest that collaborative leadership fosters a collaborative school culture that promotes professional growth and improved teacher performance (Kurantiasih, 2026).

From a conceptual standpoint, the findings suggest that PLC practices operate as a mediating mechanism through which collaborative leadership influences professional performance. Leadership practices alone do not automatically improve teacher effectiveness; rather, their impact becomes evident when they create opportunities for collective learning, reflective dialogue, and professional inquiry. Viewed conceptually, PLC and instructional leadership positively affect teacher performance, both directly and through the strengthening of teachers' self-efficacy (Azizah et al., 2024).

The process through which teachers learn from colleagues, observe alternative practices, and adopt new instructional approaches reflects the assumptions of Social Learning Theory. According to this perspective, professional competencies develop through observation, interaction, and collaborative engagement within a social environment (Bandura, 1977).

The findings further indicate that professional performance extends beyond technical instructional competence. Improvements were observed in teachers' reflective capacity, willingness to innovate, and commitment to continuous professional growth. These findings reinforce the notion that collaborative supervision and reflective professional interactions contribute significantly to teachers' professional competence and instructional improvement (Ziadah, 2023; Fahmi, 2020).

The emergence of continuous reflection and collective problem-solving within PLC activities can also be understood through Learning Organization Theory. This perspective emphasizes that organizational improvement depends on the capacity of members to engage

in shared learning processes and continuously refine professional practices through collective inquiry (Senge, 1990).

Furthermore, the findings demonstrate that collaborative leadership creates motivational conditions that encourage teachers to pursue professional growth and instructional innovation. This dynamic reflects the core assumptions of Transformational Leadership Theory, which explains how leadership can inspire individuals to exceed routine expectations and commit to continuous improvement and organizational development (Bass, 1985).

2. Comparison with Previous Studies

The findings indicate that collaborative leadership at SMA IT Dhiaul Fikri is characterized by teachers' active participation in decision-making, collaborative reflection, mentoring, and shared responsibilities. These results support previous studies showing that collaborative leadership strengthens teacher professionalism through collective participation and shared responsibility (Kurniasih et al., 2026). Likewise, participatory leadership has been shown to increase teacher involvement in school development and professional growth (Abidin & Qusairi, 2025). The findings further reinforce the importance of trust, open communication, and collegial support, which are recognized as essential conditions for effective professional collaboration (Oppi & Eisenschmidt, 2022). However, this study extends previous research by demonstrating that collaborative leadership emerges informally through daily interactions, mentoring, and collective problem-solving, rather than solely through formally assigned leadership roles Chen & Zhang, (2022). Additionally, the findings highlight the influence of Islamic values, including consultation, collective responsibility, and professional solidarity, in strengthening collaborative leadership practices.

The findings also confirm that PLCs function as effective platforms for collaborative learning, reflective dialogue, and professional inquiry. This is consistent with Peng and Dervin, (2022), who identified PLCs as important spaces for professional reflection and instructional improvement, and with Ziliwu and Tung, (2022), who emphasized the role of collaborative culture and distributed leadership in PLC effectiveness. Similarly, the active engagement of teachers in sharing experiences, reflecting on instructional practices, and collaboratively solving classroom problems supports the findings of Fadlilah et al., (2025) regarding teachers' behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement in PLC activities.

Nevertheless, this study contributes a contextual perspective by showing that Islamic values such as *shūrā*, *ukhuwah*, mutual respect, and cooperation provide an additional moral foundation for PLC effectiveness. Consistent with Ghratapeh et al., (2022), time constraints and workload also emerged as significant barriers to sustained PLC implementation.

Furthermore, the findings demonstrate that collaborative leadership enhances professional performance through PLC-mediated learning processes. This result supports Jadallah et al., (2023), who found that teacher collaboration within PLCs promotes professional growth and instructional effectiveness. It also aligns with Azizah et al., (2024), who reported that PLC practices positively influence teacher performance, and with Yang and Chang, (2024), who identified PLCs as a mediating mechanism between distributed leadership and professional development. At the same time, the findings address concerns raised by Grimm, (2024).by showing that PLCs become effective when they move beyond the simple exchange of teaching strategies toward reflective inquiry, collaborative problem-solving, and continuous professional learning. Overall, this study contributes a process-oriented understanding of how collaborative leadership, PLC practices, and teacher professional performance interact to support sustainable school improvement.

3. Implications of the Findings

The findings of this study contribute to the growing body of knowledge on collaborative leadership, Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), and teacher professional development by providing empirical evidence from an Islamic secondary school context. Theoretically, the study extends the application of Distributed Leadership Theory, Community of Practice Theory, and Social Learning Theory by demonstrating how collaborative leadership is enacted through informal teacher interactions, collective decision-making, and professional learning processes within PLCs. The findings further highlight the mediating role of PLC practices in translating collaborative leadership into enhanced professional performance, thereby enriching current understandings of the relationship between leadership and teacher development.

Practically, the findings suggest that schools seeking to strengthen teacher professionalism should move beyond leadership models centered solely on principals and promote collaborative leadership among teachers. Establishing PLCs characterized by shared vision, reflective dialogue, peer mentoring, and collective problem-solving can create sustainable mechanisms for continuous professional learning. In addition, the integration of

cultural and value-based principles, such as mutual trust, consultation, and professional solidarity, may strengthen collaborative engagement and enhance the effectiveness of professional learning initiatives. Therefore, educational leaders and policymakers should provide organizational support, adequate time allocation, and professional development structures that facilitate meaningful teacher collaboration.

4. Research Limitations

Several limitations should be acknowledged when interpreting the findings of this study. First, the research was conducted as a single-site qualitative case study at SMA IT Dhiaul Fikri; therefore, the findings are context-specific and may not be directly generalizable to other educational settings. Second, the study relied primarily on interviews, observations, and document analysis, which may be influenced by participant subjectivity and researcher interpretation despite the use of triangulation and member-checking procedures. Third, the study focused on teachers' perceptions and experiences of collaborative leadership and PLC implementation without incorporating longitudinal measures of teacher performance or student achievement outcomes. Future research may employ multi-site studies, mixed-methods designs, or longitudinal approaches to examine the sustainability of collaborative leadership practices and their long-term effects on teacher development and educational quality.

CONCLUSION

This study examined teachers' collaborative leadership and its role in enhancing professional performance through Professional Learning Community (PLC) practices at SMA IT Dhiaul Fikri. The findings demonstrate that collaborative leadership is enacted through teachers' active participation in academic decision-making, collaborative reflection, mentoring activities, and the shared distribution of responsibilities. Rather than being concentrated in formal leadership positions, leadership emerged as a collective professional practice characterized by mutual trust, open communication, and shared responsibility. These collaborative leadership practices created favorable conditions for continuous professional learning and strengthened teachers' engagement in school improvement initiatives.

The study further reveals that the PLC functions as an effective platform for teacher collaboration and professional learning. Through regular meetings, instructional discussions,

the sharing of best practices, and collaborative problem-solving, teachers engaged in reflective inquiry and collective knowledge construction. The effectiveness of the PLC was supported by a shared vision, a culture of continuous learning, and collaboration grounded in Islamic values such as *shūrā* (consultation), mutual respect, and *ukhuwah* (brotherhood). Most importantly, the findings indicate that PLC practices serve as a mediating mechanism through which collaborative leadership contributes to enhanced professional performance. Participation in PLC activities improved teachers' instructional planning, classroom implementation, evaluation and reflective practices, pedagogical competence, professional competence, and instructional innovation. Consequently, collaborative leadership and PLC practices collectively contributed to the development of a productive learning community and the improvement of educational quality within the school.

Despite these contributions, several limitations should be acknowledged. The study was conducted in a single Islamic secondary school using a qualitative case study design; therefore, the findings are context-specific and should not be generalized uncritically to other educational settings. In addition, the study relied primarily on participants' experiences, perceptions, and documented practices, which may be influenced by contextual and interpretive factors despite the application of triangulation and trustworthiness procedures. Furthermore, the research focused on professional learning processes and teacher performance without systematically examining long-term effects on student achievement or broader organizational outcomes.

Future research is recommended to investigate collaborative leadership and PLC implementation across diverse school contexts using comparative, mixed-methods, or longitudinal approaches. Further studies may also explore the relationships among collaborative leadership, teacher self-efficacy, instructional innovation, and student learning outcomes to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the mechanisms through which professional learning contributes to sustainable school improvement. Additionally, research examining the influence of cultural, religious, and organizational values on PLC effectiveness may further enrich the international discourse on collaborative leadership and teacher professional development.

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