THE LEADERS’ ROLE IN CREATING A POSITIVE CULTURE IN ISLAMIC
SCHOOLS THROUGH THE LENS OF INVITATIONAL LEADERSHIP: A CASE
STUDY

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the Faculty of the Graduate School
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of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education

by

DIANA ALI ELKISHAWI

Dr. Barbara N. Martin, Dissertation Supervisor
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The undersigned, appointed by the dean of the Graduate School, have examined the
dissertation entitled

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STUDY

Presented by Diana Elkishawi a candidate for the degree of Doctor of Education
moreover, hereby certify that, in their opinion, is worthy of acceptance.

_____________________________________________________
Dr. Barbara N. Martin

_____________________________________________________
Dr. Sandy Hutchinson

_____________________________________________________
Dr. Patricia White

_____________________________________________________
Dr. Hayet Woods
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Abstract

Although private Islamic schools in United States have shared values that bring stakeholders together, a positive, inviting school culture does not always result from such common values and practices. Thus, examining a leader’s style may aid in creating a unified, positive school culture using invitational leadership (Purkey et al., 2020) as the framework for this case study. A leader has a key role to play when it comes to establishing effective personnel, places, policies, programs, and processes that promote an inviting culture. Finally, Purkey and Novak’s (2016) I-CORT: intentionality, care, optimism, respect, and trust are the foundational lens of understanding what values the leaders have adopted to create an inviting schools’ culture. Using three sites, the researcher conducted twenty-five interviews and analyzed documents to answer the research questions. This study found the three schools to be unintentionally inviting overall, meaning that while the leaders’ behaviors were often inviting others to engage in a positive school climate, the leaders were not intentionally creating this inviting stance. However, the findings show that the schools were unintentionally disinviting with respect to the domains of people and policies.
SECTION ONE

INTRODUCTION TO THE DISSERTATION-IN-PRACTICE
Introduction and Background of the Study

Islam is a monotheistic religion that is the second-largest religion in the world, after Christianity (Shakeel, 2018). As of 2015, there were 2.2 billion Christians in the world, and 1.6 billion Muslims (“Pew Research Center”, 2015). Pew Research Center projects a 73% increase by the year 2050 in Muslims around the world, as compared to a 35% increase in Christianity (2015). Although a minority religion in the United States (“Pew Research Center”, 2015), there has been significant growth (by 370%) in Islamic private schools in the United States since the year 1989 (Keyworth, 2011). While there have been several studies on private Islamic schools (Aşlamacı & Kaymakcan, 2017; Ullah & Hussain, 2020), the majority of them have been conducted in predominantly Muslim countries, thus leaving a need to explore Muslim schools within the United States and culture within these settings.

Researchers (Bolman & Deal, 2017; Purkey et al., 2020; Purkey & Novak, 2012; Purkey & Siegel, 2003; Schein, 2000) gave considerable attention to studying the culture within organizations over the past several decades. The focus of that research was mainly on business organizations (Bolman & Deal, 2017; Schein, 2000) and public schools (Konold et al., 2018; Ohlson et al., 2016; Voight, & Hanson, 2017). Most research defined culture as including shared values, beliefs, and attitudes of the stakeholders (Dinsdale, 2017; Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey, 1988; Schein, 2000; Walker & Dimmock, 1999). Furthermore, researchers found inviting cultures had positive impacts on stakeholders (Purkey, 1992; Purkey, et al., 2020; Purkey & Novak, 1996, 2012, 2015; Purkey & Siegel, 2003; Stillion & Siegel, 2005). Specifically, an inviting culture is one focused on intentionality regarding the respect and trust created within the culture of the
organization. As a result, selected, as the conceptual framework to guide this investigation was invitational leadership theory (Purkey et. al., 2020).

This study focused on examining the role of the leader in creating an inviting culture in Islamic schools where Islam is the minority religion, such as the United States. Understanding leaders and their roles in building and sustaining a culture within organizations has proven important throughout the last century (Northouse, 2019). Furthermore, the intersectionality of studying invitational leadership and culture in Islamic schools in the United States is uncharted territory.

**Statement of the Problem**

“A positive workplace culture is built when leaders have full trust in their team and allow them full autonomy over their work” (Guidarelli, n.d., para. 17). When Bolman and Deal (2017) discussed several organizations’ successes, one theme that emerged is how the leaders of the organization developed a culture for everyone to thrive. This kind of climate provides growth for the individual as well as the organization (Akiga & Lowe, 2004). Similarly, Peterson and Terrence (2009) went a step further and examined the effect positive school culture has on students’ performance. They found students’ academic performance resulted in higher achievement levels in school cultures perceived as more positive. Moreover, if an environment fostered care, trust, respect, and optimism, then members of an organization are more likely to reach their potential (Purkey et al., 2020).

In a private, faith-based school, stakeholders tend to share common values and beliefs (Evangelinou-Yiannakis, 2016). However, Shakeel (2018) explained these shared beliefs do not always manifest to create a unified culture due to the diversity of
background and Islamic practice. Typically, parents send their children to private schools to become high achievers, preserve their faith, and feel a sense of belonging (Shakeel, 2018). Hence, this is why the researcher believes that invitational education was the appropriate framework to guide this study. Invitational education is the belief that “people are valuable, able, and responsible and should be treated accordingly” (Purkey & Novak, 2012, p. 15). Additionally, Moss (2018) linked self-determination theory and invitational education and discovered students succeed when they feel safe, invited, and have some participation in the decision-making process.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to examine the leadership role in creating and maintaining a positive school culture. Furthermore, using invitational leadership (Purkey, 1978; Purkey & Siegel, 2003; Purkey & Novak, 2012; Purkey et al. 2020) as the guiding conceptual framework to examine the organizations’ dynamics should reveal insights on the leadership role in creating such a culture. The tenets of invitational leadership (Purkey et al., 2020) were measured in three Islamic schools from the perspectives of the leaders and stakeholders of the organization. This should aid in better understanding the elements that assist in creating a positive school culture in Islamic schools in the United States. Therefore, used interchangeably for the purpose of this study, are “culture” and “climate.”

**Research Questions**

The overarching research question for this study was, “What is the role of a leader in creating and maintaining a positive school culture in an Islamic School?” To answer
the overarching research question, the following three research questions guided the research:

1. What are the perceptions of the teachers and the parents regarding the leadership style of the principal within an Islamic School?
2. Are there significant differences in perceptions between stakeholders (teachers, staff, parents) regarding the use of the 5Ps (people, places, policies, programs, and processes) of invitational leadership?
3. How has the principal implemented the five elements (I-CORT) of invitational leadership to promote a positive, inviting culture within an Islamic School?

**Conceptual Framework**

The founders of invitational leadership (Purkey, 1978; Purkey & Novak, 1984; Purkey et al., 2020; Purkey & Siegel, 2003) explained that the foundation of the framework lies in having a democratic ethos, understanding perceptual tradition, and applying a self-concept theory. Purkey and Novak (2012) explained that the democratic ethos values the input of all stakeholders and creates a climate where members believe their input will be valued. This is achieved by having the “doing with” rather than “doing to” attitude where shared activities and self-governance are the norms in the organization. “The perceptual tradition views people as they typically see themselves, others, and the world” (Purkey et al., 2020, p. 28). People are conscious human beings that behave according to how they view themselves and the situation they are in (Combs et al., 1978). Purkey et al. (2020) explained that perceptions are learned; they shape human behavior and are reflective. While self-concept theory is defined as the social experiences of an individual, both positive and negative, that help the person develop their self-awareness
(Purkey & Novak, 1996). Purkey and Siegel (2003) further explained how self-concept acts as a “moderator variable” that “serves as the reference point for behavior” (p. 36).

Another part of the theory are the five elements of invitational education (I-CORT): care, trust, respect, optimism, and intentionality (Purkey & Novak, 2012). Care is the foundational element of invitational leadership. “Caring provides the basis for an ethical system that guides action to sustain the vital connections of human existence” (Purkey et al., 2020, p. 13). Developed during shared responsibility, self-governance, and social interactions is trust (Purkey & Novak, 2012). Hence, with shared responsibility and collaboration, mutual respect is developed (Purkey & Siegel, 2003). The authors explained that for mutual respect to occur, the belief that “people are valuable, able, and responsible and should be treated accordingly” must be one of the guiding beliefs of an invitational leader (Purkey & Novak, 2012, p. 15). Next, optimism is the continuous appreciation for growth and learning in all stakeholders (Purkey et al., 2020). Invitational leaders focus on growth in any difficult situation, which allows them to see the potential in others and consider all possibilities (Purkey & Novak, 2012). Finally, Purkey and Novak (2012) explained, “intentionality education is characterized by purpose and direction” (p. 17). Consequently, the authors contend the invitational leader intentionally provides people, places, policies, programs, and processes that help create such a positive inviting climate.

The intentionality element leads to the discussion of the domains, or the 5Ps, of invitational leadership which as mentioned above are people, places, policies, programs, and processes (Purkey & Novak, 2012). The analogy the authors used is that of a starfish which is symbolic of the five domains working together simultaneously for the
organization to overcome challenges and grow (see Figure 1). People are essentially vital to any organization. Treating people with care, trust, respect, optimism, and intentionality will help them feel welcomed and valued (Purkey & Siegel, 2003). Moreover, creating inviting spaces that are user-friendly is also a contributing factor to inviting schools (Purkey & Novak, 2012). Policies, both written and unwritten, need to be “perceived as fair, inclusive, democratic, caring, and respectful” to “have a positive effect on peoples’ attitudes” (Purkey & Novak, 2012, p. 22). Likewise, school programs, both formal and informal, help everyone in the organization benefit and become lifelong learners and help individuals reach their potential. Lastly, the authors explain how the democratic ethos, collaborative procedures, and continuous networking among stakeholders allow for the processes to be engaging and inviting (Pukey et al., 2020).
The last two segments of invitational leadership are the levels and the dimensions of the framework. Researchers (Purkey & Siegel, 2003; Purkey & Novak, 2012; Purkey et al., 2020) explained the four levels of invitational leadership as intentionally inviting, unintentionally inviting, unintentionally disinviting, and intentionally disinviting. Purkey et al. (2020) added the “plus factor”. The plus factor explanation is invitational leadership at its finest where the actions are so inviting and effortless that they become “invisible to the untrained eye” (Purkey et al., 2020, p. 68). The goal is to practice intentionally inviting practices and reach the plus factor. Moreover, the dimensions of this conceptual framework include being personally inviting with oneself, being personally inviting with others, being professionally inviting with oneself, and being professionally inviting with others (Purkey & Siegel, 2003; Purkey & Novak, 2012; Purkey et al., 2020). The authors
explained that being personally inviting with oneself means the individual views him- or herself as “able, valuable, and responsible” (Purkey & Novak, 2012, p. 32). Furthermore, relationships have interdependence when it comes to family, friends, and co-workers. With the use of the invitational leadership elements of care, trust, respect, optimism, and intentionality, an individual can be personally inviting with others (Purkey et al., 2020). Additionally, being professionally inviting with oneself implies continuous professional development for the individual not to become obsolete (Purkey & Novak, 2012; Purkey et al., 2020). Finally, achieved through mastering the three previously mentioned dimensions is being professionally inviting with others (Purkey & Novak, 2012). The framework of invitational leadership is thorough and all-encompassing. It touches on all aspects of the organization and provides steps towards achieving an inviting, positive culture. For this reason, invitational leadership was used as the conceptual lens (see Figure 2).

![Invitational Theory Diagram](image)

Figure 2. Invitational Theory (Purkey et al., 2020)
Design of the Study

Methodology

The researcher’s paradigm for this study was through a social constructivist lens. Since culture is a socially constructed concept (Schein, 1993), it is logical that the social constructivist paradigm was the fitting choice for this study. Mertens (2019) explained:

The basic assumptions guiding the constructivist paradigm are that knowledge is socially constructed by people active in the research process and that researchers should attempt to understand the complex world of lived experience from the point of view of those who live it. (p. 16)

This investigation additionally utilized a mixed-methods design. A mixed-methods design includes both qualitative and quantitative data (Mertens, 2019). Furthermore, Creswell (2015) contended that mixed-methods research is a method “in which epistemology and other philosophical assumptions take center stage. It can also be presented as a methodology, that is, as a research process originating from a broad philosophy and extending to its interpretation and disseminations” (p. 1). Hence, the qualitative portion of the study was a structured method of analysis that examined non-numerical data and focused on the understanding of meaning, concepts, definitions, and descriptions of things (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Additionally, Creswell (2009) explained the purpose of the qualitative part of a study is to comprehend the “meaning that the participants hold about the issue” (p. 175). Therefore, conducted were semi-structured interviews with the principals of each of the schools.

The quantitative portion of the study focused on the numerical analysis of the survey data (Field, 2017), as Greene (2007) explained that a mixed-methods study
focuses on diverse quantitative data to understand a phenomenon. Due to its mixed-methods design, this research study utilized both inductive and deductive research methods. An inductive inquiry is “researchers gathering data to build concepts, hypotheses, or theories rather than deductively testing hypotheses as in positivist research” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 17). Additionally, a deductive study gathers information to test a hypothesis in order to verify a theory (Field, 2017). Thus, both qualitative and quantitative data provided a more trustworthy study (Creswell, 2015).

Specifically, this was a mixed-methods design case study of three Islamic schools in the United States to attempt to examine how a leader can obtain a positive school culture in that setting. A case study “is an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 37). Additionally, a case study is an “empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the ‘case’) in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident” (Yin, 2014, p. 16).

**Setting**

This mixed-methods case study focused on three Islamic schools in diverse geographical locations (i.e., different states and different regions of the nation). The focus was on the K-12 educational sector in established Islamic schools. The researcher considered an established school as a school that has existed for 10 years or more. Additionally, the selected schools had a success factor as measured by accreditation, awards for the schools, and recognitions for the principals, students’ performance, and
The selection of the three schools was completed with the assistance of the Islamic Schools League of America (Islamic Schools League of America, 2021).

**Participants and Sampling Methods**

The researcher purposefully selected the administration within each school for interviews. There were two assistant-principals, four principals, and one superintendent interviewed from the three different institutions (n=7). The leaders of each institution then recommended 7 teachers, 3 staff member, and 8 parents from each institution to be interviewed for a total of eighteen individuals (n=18). The researcher ensured that the interviews for teachers, staff, and parents had as close to an equal number of participants as possible. Additionally, the researcher aimed for diversity in the leaders’ recruitment process of interviewees. This included diversity in grades taught, years at the institution, and parents of students of diverse age and ability. The sampling method used was purposeful sampling (Mertens, 2019) since the researcher selected three schools that are successful based on the criterion noted. Purposeful sampling is a method by which the participants selected provide the most information possible for the study at hand (Mertens, 2019). More specifically, used was purposeful snowball sampling after contacting the principals of the schools. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) pointed out that “snowball, chain, or network sampling is perhaps the most common form of purposeful sampling” (p. 98). Merriam and Tisdell further explained that initially a few key participants are selected to be interviewed and then they recommend other participants for the study. The researcher planned to diversify the sample by choosing participants that play different roles within each of the schools. The three groups of stakeholders included leaders (principals and assistant-principals), teachers and staff, and parents. By
selecting a diverse group of participants, the researcher hoped to arrive at meaningful data to analyze (Mertens, 2019).

**Data Collection**

To ensure the participants’ protection during the research process, the participants’ identities were confidential with no identifiers other than identification numbers and roles within the organizations. Additionally, the researcher requested permission to gather data from the leaders (gatekeepers) of each of the three units analyzed during this case study. Prior to collection of data, the researcher received approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of Missouri – Columbia. The protocols of interviews, surveys, and document review form were submitted for review and approved (Appendix A).

**Instruments and Methods**

In a mixed-methods design that utilizes case studies, researchers attempt to find answers to better understand a phenomenon by compiling data in hopes of seeing the bigger picture and answering the research questions (Mertens, 2019). The data were collected in a parallel, concurrent, convergent design (Creswell, 2015; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Mertens, 2019). Meaning that the collection of the qualitative and quantitative data were at the same time. Data collection was in the form of interviews, surveys, and documents to help guide the research and allow data triangulation to provide a more complete analysis of the data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Yin (2014) emphasized the importance of using multiple sources of evidence when conducting a research study.
Interview Protocol

The researcher carefully worded the interview questions to produce a dataset that helped answer the research questions (Mertens, 2019). To establish content validity (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) the researcher shared the interview questions with invitational leadership theory experts, then modified them with minor alterations. In addition, the researcher conducted a mock interview with two individuals to establish the face validity of the instrument (Merriam & Tisdell), resulting in no modification. For this inquiry, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with the principals and recorded them via Zoom. The interviews (Appendix B) allow for probing and follow up questions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Furthermore, the researcher ensured not to interview subordinates when a supervisor was present, as this potentially could skew the data and provide inaccurate information (Seidman, 2019). Conducted were member-checks to increase the credibility of the data. Member-checking occurs when the interviewer allows the interviewees to review their responses to ensure the accuracy of the data (Mertens, 2019). For example, at the end of each interview, the interviewer provided the transcript to each of the interviewees, allowing them to clarify any possible misunderstandings. Additionally, member-checks aid in the credibility and validity of the study, since the validity and credibility of the research reflect how closely the study matches reality (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The reliability and dependability of the study deal with the consistency of the instruments that collect the data (Mertens, 2019). Before any interviews were conducted the research was approved by the gatekeeper (Appendix C) and informed consent was given by all participants interviewed (Appendix D).
Survey Protocol

The researcher emailed the online surveys to all teachers/staff and all parents from each of the three schools in the case study (Appendix F). Additionally, the researcher ensured the survey questions were written in simple, easy-to-understand language and followed a four-level Likert scale with words rather than numbers to avoid misunderstanding (Fink, 2017). The researcher used questions from an already existing instrument from the International Alliance for Invitational Education (International Alliance of Invitational Education, 2021) and provided were the participants’ informed consent at the beginning of the survey. Although there are 50 survey questions developed by IAIE (Appendix E), Fink (2017) recommended keeping the length of online surveys short to improve response rate. As a result, the researcher modified the instrument to include only 20 items and included only items relevant to private Islamic schools which also included two short answers to help understand the stakeholders’ perceptions about their school culture. The IAIE established psychometric analysis on the initial survey questionnaire for each question; however, after researcher modification, further preformed were psychometric analysis through a test-retest inquiry with 15 comparable participants. When a test-retest occurs with the same group of participants, with a waiting period in between, and the results are the same, one can conclude the instrument has internal reliability (Mertens, 2019).

The researcher administered the modified survey to 15 comparable participants including parents, teachers, and staff at K-12 educational institutions. None of the participants was participants in the actual study. After the initial distribution of the survey, the researcher reviewed the survey and determined if needed changes would
occur. After administering the survey, the research performed a Cronbach Alpha analysis. The Cronbach analysis allows a researcher to establish a score for the internal consistency of the survey. The Cronbach coefficient measures the internal consistency of a survey or a questionnaire which is how well it measures what it claims to measure (Mertens 2019). A maximum score of 1.0 shows perfect consistency, while greater than .8 implies reliable consistency (Mertens, 2019). The modified survey scored .95 on the Cronbach scale at a significance level of 0.05, demonstrating very good consistency for the tool.

Documents

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) defined a document as “an umbrella term to refer to a wide range of written, visual, digital, and physical material relevant to the study (including visual images)” (p. 162). The researcher collected, when applicable, the school improvement plan; the school mission, vision, and goals; school handbook and written policies; letters sent to parents; and any surveys the school uses to collect their data. Similarly, the researcher collected various school logos and images. The documents help guide the researcher to understand the history of the institutions (Mertens, 2019). The document analysis form is in Appendix G and was used to analyze the documents through the lens of invitational leadership and school culture.

Data Analysis

After conducting the interviews, the researcher transcribed and coded the interviews and the documents. Starks and Trinidad (2007) explained coding as the process by which statements are analyzed and categorized into clusters of meaning that represented the phenomenon of interest. Similarly, the researcher cross-referenced and
coded institution-supplied documents with the interview transcripts to gain a better understanding of the study. As themes developed, the researcher looked for commonalities and differences in the data. The researcher used field notes and marginal comments as recommended by Merriam and Tisdell (2016), in order to understand the thought process of the researcher during the data collection and analysis processes. Careful construction of the interview questions, taking field notes as soon as possible after the interviews, collecting multiple documents, and analyzing survey data increased the credibility and validity of the study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Mertens, 2019).

Analyzed via SPSS (Field, 2017) that compared the means of the stakeholders regarding their perceptions of the leadership style of the principals was the statistical treatment for the survey data for research question two. T-tests for independent means were conducted to determine if there were significant differences between perceptions of teachers/staff and parents about the domains of invitational leadership used by the principal. For each statement, administered t-tests determined if significant differences existed between the ratings given by teachers and ratings given by parents. This allowed the researcher to determine if the means between the two groups were significant (Creswell, 2015). This study used a level of significance of 0.05 to for the quantitative research question.

Data triangulation allowed themes to emerge naturally from the interviews, document analysis and survey findings. Mertens (2019) defined triangulation as the action researchers take when they “compare findings from the qualitative data with the quantitative results” (p. 318).
Limitations, Assumptions, and Design Controls

Limitations

There were several limitations to this study. First, only three Islamic institutions were examined. This is a very small percentage of the Islamic schools in the United States. Second, this study focused on the K-12 sector and did not include the Islamic universities in the United States which limits its generalizability (Creswell, 2015). Lastly, due to time and budget limits of the study, the schools were virtual contact only.

Assumptions

This study assumed the three institutions selected are well-established and successful Islamic schools. Defined for this study, successful schools are schools who met at least three of the following conditions – 1) are accredited, 2) won nationally-recognized awards, 3) have positive parental testimonies or 4) are well-established mature schools (10 years or more). In addition, the three institutions did not have deep prior knowledge of the conceptual framework of invitational leadership theory since this inquiry aimed to measure the tenets of invitational leadership and its contributions to a positive school culture from a leadership standpoint.

Design Controls

Epistemology is how we know what we know (Mertens, 2019). Research-based knowledge is a much more reliable source of knowledge than most other ways of knowing what we know. Therefore, it was imperative that the researcher followed clear and transparent guidelines to increase the credibility of the study. Creswell (2015) emphasized the importance of the trustworthiness of the study. One way to aid with the credibility of the study was to use the same questions and surveys for all the institutions.
in this case study. Similarly, Merriam and Tisdell (2016) explained how “all research is concerned with producing valid and reliable knowledge in an ethical manner” (p. 237). Internal validity occurs when the study is measuring what it claims to measure. Content validity is the concern of whether the questions are measuring what they intend to measure (Creswell, 2015). To ensure content validity in the quantitative portion of this mixed-methods design study, the researcher shared the interview questions with three experts in the field of education. Additionally, the researcher used an existing survey from the founders of invitational education with some modification. After a test-retest stage, the psychometrics on the survey questions were established. Furthermore, all interview questions were piloted to aid with appropriate construction of the questions (Seidman, 2019) and to establish face validity for the protocols. Additionally, since this study was a mixed-methods design, triangulation enhanced the reliability of the study. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) explained that reliability of the study by using different measurement tools to collect data for the study increased the rigor of the data collection process.

**Definition of Key Terms**

To guide in understanding of this investigation are the following definitions:

**5Ps:** Purkey and Novak (2012) defined the domains, or the 5Ps, of invitational education as people, places, policies, programs, and processes:

**People:** People are the foundation of the school; their relationships and interactions may help shape an inviting school culture. For example, these positive relationships will help build trust, respect, optimism, and care among stakeholders.
**Places:** The simplest domain to change and the first domain to be noticed. Places may be inviting by possessing comfortable furniture, positive signs, good lighting, clean spaces, and great grounds upkeep.

**Policies:** Usually a written set of rules that help shape how the school is perceived concerning inclusivity, fairness, equitability, and consistency.

**Programs:** Formal or informal, ought to be enriching, stimulating, interactive, constructive, personalized, and inclusive in order to be inviting.

**Processes:** Established using a democratic process where the result is academic, interdisciplinary, encouraging, positive, cooperative, and collaborative (Purkey et al., 2020, p. 7).

**Culture:** The social norms, and material traits of a racial, religious, or social group; the characteristic features of everyday existence, such as the way of life, shared by people in a social setting. Bolman and Deal (2017) explained that it is how you feel when you walk into an organization. It is not something that can easily be pinpointed, and one must view several interactions within an organization to begin to grasp its culture.

**Hadith:** a quote made by prophet Muhammad ﷺ (peace and blessings be upon him).

**I-CORT:** stands for care, trust, respect, optimism, and intentionality, it constitutes the elements of invitational education (Purkey & Novak, 2012).

**Intentionally Disinviting:** This is the lowest level of functioning in an organization. It occurs when the 5Ps are “deliberately designed to demean, diminish, or devalue the human spirit.” (Purkey & Novak, 2012, p.26)

**Intentionally Inviting:** This is the fourth level of functioning in an organization. It occurs when the educators act with integrity and are aware of what they are doing and
why they are doing it. Purkey and Nova (2012) explained that it is easy to be inviting when everything is going well, level four is to be “inviting in the rain” (p. 30).

**Islamic Schools:** For the purpose of this study, the researcher defined Islamic schools as private not-for-profit faith-based organizations following the teachings of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ (peace and blessings be upon him) and the holy book the Noble Quran.

**Leader:** A person who interacts with followers to accomplish a common goal for the organization (Northouse, 2019).

**Plus Factor:** Is the highest level of invitational leadership. It occurs when the actions of the members of the organization are so inviting and effortless that they become “invisible to the untrained eye” (Purkey et al., 2020, p. 68).

**Successful Islamic Schools:** Schools who met at least three of the following conditions: are accredited, have won awards, have positive parental testimonies, or are well-established mature schools (10 years or more).

**Unintentionally Disinviting:** This is the second level of functioning in an organization. It is a concern in the education realm because 5Ps that are unintentionally disinviting “are typically well meaning” (Purkey & Novak, 2012, p.27); however, one way to help alleviate this problem is through increased reflection and data collection of stakeholder views of the organization.

**Unintentionally Inviting:** This is the third level of functioning in an organization. Organizations that function at this level are highly effective; however, they lack the consciousness of intention due to a “consistent stance from which to function” (Purkey & Novak, 2012, p.27). In other words, they are unable to explain why they are successful, due to their lack of understanding of their inviting nature.
Significance of the Study

Islam is increasing both worldwide (“Pew Research Center”, 2015), and in the United States (Broughman et al., 2019), resulting in the increase of Islamic schools in the United States (Keyworth, 2011). Although there have been studies on Islamic schools (Aşlamacı & Kaymakcan, 2017; Ullah & Hussain, 2020), there is a lack of research with the cross-sectionality of what constitutes an inviting positive culture in this context. Additionally, this investigation sought to understand the role of an inviting leader and their impact on creating and maintaining such an intentionally positive climate. Furthermore, understanding how to create and sustain inviting positive learning cultures will extend beyond these sites and reach the general school community at large (Gill, 2010). By focusing on understanding the role a leader plays in creating a positive environment through an invitational leadership framework a deeper understanding of school culture and how to create a learning environment for all students is reached.

Summary

Leaders have a significant impact on their organizations (Bolman & Deal, 2017; Northouse, 2019; Purkey et al., 2020). Explicitly, a leader can help create a culture of respect, collaboration, and responsibility based on the people, places, policies, programs, and processes they adopt (Purkey & Novak, 2012; Purkey et al., 2020). Furthermore, researchers (Akiga & Lowe, 2004; Bolman & Deal, 2017; Schein, 1993, 1997, 2000) explained the benefits of a positive culture resulting in both growth at the individual level and the organizational level. Understanding the dynamics of leadership within an Islamic school setting in the United States will help understand how to create an inviting culture. This inquiry was accomplished by conducting a mixed design case study of three Islamic schools in the United States.
SECTION TWO

PRACTITIONER SETTING FOR THE STUDY
Introduction

Inviting schools help to create a welcoming environment for everyone that walks in the door of the organization. The teachings of Islam call for an inviting environment (Holy Qur’an, n.d., 16:125). Indeed, in any faith-based school that has a mission to spread the word of God, invitational leadership ought to be expected. There are approximately 326 Islamic schools in the United States. Of these, three Islamic schools were examined in this case study and will be analyzed in this section to help gain a better understanding of the organizational structure of the three institutions.

History of the Organizations

School A

The first institution, School A, is in Irvine, California. Muslim leaders that wanted to have an educational institution that helps Muslim children foster their identity in a safe and positive way founded it in 1998. The Western Association for Schools and Colleges (WASC) accredits the institution, in addition the California Association of Independent Schools (CAIS). There is a board of trustees and an acting manager/principal of the school who handles all the school operations and decision-making. Divided into three distinct campuses is the school. Each campus has a director, and the campuses cover a subset of the student body: pre-school, lower school, and upper school.

The leader of the school has been in the field of education for over 30 years in a myriad of educational settings. She earned her Doctor of Philosophy in Education and has been serving as the head of School A since 2004. Furthermore, School A leader is serving on the California Association of Independent Schools (CAIS) board of directors.

Out of the provided data for School A, about 35% of the teachers and staff have earned a graduate degree. Additionally, 72% of the teachers and staff have certifications
and, in some cases, multiple certifications. On average, teachers and staff have 18 years of experience in the field of education in School A.

Enrollment in this grade K-8 institution began in 2001, with only K-3rd grades and 80 students. Expansion was launched for grades 4th-8th in 2011, increasing enrollment to 197 students. As of 2022, over 400 students attend this school. There are eight board members each with a designated area of expertise. The school is sectioned into pre-school, K-5th grades, and finally 6-8th grades. Seven staff members and teachers work in the pre-school building, while 22 work in K-5th grades building. Thirteen faculty members work in the 6-8th grades building. Diversity is evident in both faculty and students in this school. The composition of students is 8% Asian Americans, 9% European/White Americans, 9% Multiracial Americans, 50% Middle Eastern Americans, 24% chose other, and a total of 91% of the students identified as students of color.

School A has won the Blue Ribbon award and was recognized as a Lighthouse School, one of the 300 top schools in the world, by the Leader in Me program. In terms of student achievement, 75% of the students enroll in AP classes in high school after transferring from this school. While 30% of its students score in the top 5% in reading and math on standardized test. This school has many faculty “teacher of the year” winners at the district level. Additionally, 30 students won awards at national writing competitions.

School B

The second institution, School B, is in Plano, Texas. School B was established in 2009 under the vision of an imam (a religious leader) and scholar in Dallas, Texas. His vision was to create an environment to help foster Islamic students as leaders and
scholars to the community as chaplains for hospitals, prisons, and universities. In addition, the school is also a boarding school for South American students. There are approximately 43 faculty and staff serving this institution. School B has 240 students in K-12. There is a school board, principal, and vice principal followed by the teachers and staff in their various areas of expertise. The AdvancEd, Council of Islamic Schools of North America (CISNA), and American Montessori Association have all granted accreditation to School B.

The leader of School B completed his master’s in educational leadership and organizational performance and certified in educational leadership from Harvard University. He spoke at the Islamic Schools League Leadership Retreat and has trained school leaders from over 50 schools.

About 37% of the teachers and staff have earned a graduate degree. Additionally, 51% of the teachers and staff have certifications and, in some cases, multiple certifications. On average, teachers and staff have been serving School B for 5 years.

School B has a total of 299 students in grades Pre-K to 12th grade. Approximately, 66% of the students identified as Asian while 20% are multiracial. Additionally, 14% of the students are white and there is one African American student and one Hispanic student currently in the school.

School B has six core values that they function by: Sincere connection with Allah, compassion, humility, service to others, spirituality excellence, and gratitude. This school focuses on developing Islamic character for both students and teachers alike. Additionally, School B has a clear guideline for the journey of achieving the ultimate spiritually intelligent scholar using the following five guides. Primarily, they believe in
having a collaborative leadership team. Secondly, School B believes in being a heart-centered, compassionate school. The school accomplishes this by nurturing everyone in the school and the school itself. Moreover, School B’s goal is to be a welcoming school to others. Thirdly, teachers and parents are partners in helping the students prosper. Fourth, School B personnel believe in no judgement, making decisions based on data and with a “growth” mindset. Lastly, School B personnel believe the goal of the school is for the students to reach spirituality through academic cultivation and growth.

School C

The third institution, School C, is in Chicago, Illinois. The Islamic community in Chicago founded it in 1989. School C, a K-12 institution, is nationally accredited and started a college preparatory course in 2018. The superintendent and principal of the school received the National Distinguished Principal Award in Washington D. C. and had multiple nominations for his excellent leadership. This school fosters international partnership and cooperation through a sister school in Indonesia.

The leader of School C has over 30 years of experience in the field of educational leadership. He has served, for the past four years, on the Harvard University Graduate School of Education Principal’s Advisory Board. He has a master’s degree in School Administration and is a co-author of five books about Islamic upbringing and parenting in the west.

Out of the provided data for School C, about 32% of the teachers and staff have earned a graduate degree. Additionally, 42% of the teachers and staff have certifications and, in some cases, multiple certifications. On average, teachers and staff have 11 years of experience in the field of education in School C.
School C has three main administrators: a superintendent, a principal, and a vice-
principal. Divided into deans, office staff, accounting, technology, and marketing is the
school. There are over 40 teachers at the early childhood and elementary campus, and
over 25 teachers at the college preparatory campus. Additionally, the school has a full-
time nurse, a full-time librarian, an art teacher, a STEM teacher, and supporting
staff. There are currently around 80 employees at School C, which includes teachers,
staff, and administration. Currently, 740 students are enrolled for the 2021-2022
academic school year. Diversity is evident within the school. School C is comprised of
students, teachers, and staff that together come from 51 different countries. Among the
languages spoken in the school community are Arabic, Spanish, Tigrinya, Urdu,
Amharic, and Bosnian, to name a few.

Organizational Analysis

“Business schools seldom ask if spiritual development is central to their mission”
(Bolman & Deal, 2017, p. 421). Unlike public schools, there is a high emphasis on core
beliefs in Islamic schools. All three schools are private, not-for-profit, independent
Islamic schools in diverse regions in the United States. They share a foundation of
emphasis on the teachings of Islam while focusing on developing leaders to the
community and character building. Moreover, they each offer Quran memorization
programs. The researcher chose all the institutions in this case study due to their
accreditations, awards, parental testimonies, and longevity/expansions. The institutions
differ in their geographical regions, sizes, and length of existence, in addition to the
leadership teams. Schools B and C have male leaders while School A has a female leader.
Lastly, all three institutions are independent schools that report to a school board that acts
as the financial manager for the schools. This structural breakdown follows the Mintzberg (1979) five: top is the strategic apex, which is the school board, the principal is the middle management, teachers as the operating core, technostructure, and supporting staff (Bolman & Deal, 2017, p. 77).

The Structural Framework

Bolman and Deal (2017) explained that middle management is responsible for hiring experts to carry out their daily tasks. These experts which constitute the operating core of the institutions are the teachers. These teachers have their supporting staff, for example, information technology support, to help them perform their primary daily task of teaching the students. The leadership team is responsible for placing policies, programs, and processes for teachers to use. The teachers then give their feedback to the middle management which then reports the findings to the strategic apex for allocation of funding or a program or a policy change. This follows the simple structure as explained in Bolman and Deal (2017, p. 78), which is often followed by smaller, newer organizations. They explained that in the simple structure, one to two people lead the operating core of the organization.

The Human Resource Frame

Organizations exist to fulfill human and societal needs (Bolman & Deal, 2017, p. 118). Private schools are fulfilling a need for minority groups that want to keep their identity while helping nurture community leaders for the community at large. The leadership teams at the three institutions understand the need for diversity within the faculty and staff to mirror the diverse student body of Muslim students in each of the institutions. Furthermore, there are multiple specific area experts that help in school
leadership. For example, in School A, there is the head of the school, the principal; however, there are three directors that lead each campus. Bolman and Deal (2017) emphasized the importance of investing in a committed and talented staff that is loyal to the company’s success. Subject area experts are clearly present in each of the institutions that is a sign of distributed leadership (Spillane, 2006). Distributed leadership, also known as team leadership, is the concept of shared leadership among team members which decentralizes power within the organization (Harris, 2005). Therefore, when one leader is absent, other team members can take over in the meantime.

The Political Frame

Bolman and Deal (2017) explained that organizations are political arenas full of players with divergent goals. Although the assumption in a faith-based organization is converging values, it is still an organization like any other. There may be some members of the organizations that are promoting their personal goals over that of the institution. This may occur in the form of adopting a program, changing a policy, controlling funds, or even manipulation of the leadership team to hire or fire someone which all lead to personal gain of one individual.

For example, Fowler (2013) explained that a policy is put in place when there is a social need for one. He contended that policies and politics are intertwined in an organization. Policies often give power to a group of people while taking it from another. For instance, when school leaders give lead teachers the authority to decide curriculum and other teachers are not included in the decision process, then the power is unevenly distributed.

The Symbolic Frame
The symbolic frame is perhaps the most salient in trying to understand an organization’s culture. Bolman and Deal (2017) explained how symbols such as “myths, values, and vision bring cohesiveness, clarity, and direction” to an organization (p. 263). They continued to explain how one may begin to understand the culture of an organization through the signs on the walls; trophies and celebrations; and knowing their vision and mission. Purkey et al. (2020) explained how inviting educational institutions are very intentional and the intentionality can be seen and felt when one walks into the school. The intentionality is in the signs on the walls; choice of words; treatment of stakeholders; vision and mission of the school; and much more. Thus, the symbolic frame is key in understanding culture.

**Leadership Analysis**

The teachings of Islam call for inviting environments (Holy Qur’an, n.d., 16:125). Furthermore, pursuit of knowledge and a culture of respect is central to this religious tradition. In any school, the leadership team helps shape the vision and mission of the school in their daily interactions with others. Additionally, it is the leader’s role to select people, policies, programs, and processes to help run the organization (Bolman & Deal, 2017; Purkey et al., 2020). Understanding the perceptions of stakeholders will aid in comprehending the culture of the organization in order to measure if it is a positive, inviting culture. Invitational leadership most closely defines these features and became the conceptual framework.

Initially, consider was the leader-member exchange theory (Dansereau et al., 1975) due to its nature of understanding the relationships in the daily dealings that occur between the leader and followers. However, the leader-member exchange theory did not
have the comprehensiveness and intentionality that the invitational leadership framework possesses. Moreover, the researcher contemplated distributed leadership (Spillane, 2006) for this study because it helps build a cohesive, team-like culture; nonetheless, it lacked the details for the leader to be able to implement its framework. Likewise, the researcher examined situational leadership (Hersey & Blanchard, 1969) and cross-cultural leadership (Akiga & Lowe, 2004) for this study due their emphasis on culture. Yet, they also did not provide a clear step-by-step simple guideline to understanding culture and aiding in creating a positive school culture. Thus, the researcher chose invitational leadership theory (Purkey & Novak, 1996) for this study due to its comprehensive nature in understanding what helps constitute an inviting school culture.

**Implications for Research in the Practitioner Setting**

The intent of this study was to examine the leadership role in creating and maintaining an inviting school culture through the lens of invitational leadership. Moreover, the researcher believes that using invitational leadership (Purkey, 1978; Purkey & Siegel, 2003; Purkey & Novak, 2012; Purkey et al. 2020) as the guiding framework to examine the organizations’ dynamics will help shed some light on the leadership role in creating such a culture. This will provide a better understanding of the elements that assist in creating a positive school culture in Islamic schools in the United States. Islam emphasizes a personal relationship with God and thus a personal responsibility to society. Nonetheless, from a societal and political standpoint, unity under a moral leader is stressed. The importance of a leader in Islam is summed up in the Hadith narrated by Ibn Omar: Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, peace and blessings be upon him, said, “All of you are shepherds and each of you is responsible for his flock.” (The Hadith,
Additionally, in the Noble Quran the importance of leadership is mentioned multiple times, in one verse Allah mentioned “And We made them leaders, guiding (men) by Our Command, and We sent them inspiration to do good deeds, to establish regular prayers, and to practice regular charity; and they constantly served Us (and Us only)” (Holy Qur’an, n.d., 21:73). The role that a leader should play is clearly laid out in the teachings of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ.

Summary

While all three examined institutions are similar in that they are independent, private, Islamic schools and they all follow a hierarchical approach in leadership style, they are different in their geographical locations, ages, and sizes. These differences will help provide a more comprehensive understanding of what constitutes positive school cultures in these three successful institutions. Lastly, the invitational leadership framework was used for this study for its focus on creating a positive school climate.
SECTION THREE

SCHOLARLY REVIEW FOR THE STUDY
Introduction

Islam is the fastest growing religion in the world and the second most practiced religion after Christianity (“Pew Research Center”, 2015). Worldwide there are 1.8 billion Muslims which make up 24% of the world’s population (“Islam by Country”, n.d.). In the United States there were 3.45 million American Muslims as estimated in 2017 (“United States”, 2018). This is a 47% increase in 10 years from 2.35 million Muslims in the United States (Mohamed, 2018). This increase in Muslim population in the United States has precipitated an increase in Islamic private schools in the K-12 sector. According to Broughman et al. (2019), in the fall of 2017, there were 32,461 private elementary and secondary schools with 4,898,154 students in the United States and approximately 66% of those schools had a religious purpose. Of the 32,461 private schools in the United States, just over 235 of them are Islamic Schools, a 370% increase since 1989 from only 50 K-12 schools (Keyworth, 2011). The need for such institutions is derived from identity preservation and to allow Muslim children to practice their faith and prayers while receiving a general education. Although common beliefs and goals bring Muslim Americans to institute such educational facilities, the beliefs and practices are not always applied to help create what is termed a positive inviting culture (Keyworth, 2011; Purkey, 1992). The purpose of this study was to examine the making of a positive, inviting culture by providing key guidelines for the leader to follow. Accomplished through conducting a mixed-methods design, case study of three successful K-12 Islamic schools was this investigation. The answers to the following research questions should provide information on how much invitational leadership is in use in the examined institutions and if it is intentional. The researcher will then share the
findings and make appropriate recommendations that may improve the school culture.

Thus, the overarching research question for this study was “What is the role of a leader in creating and maintaining a positive school culture?” In order to answer the overarching research question, considered were the following three research questions:

1. What are the perceptions of the teachers and the parents regarding the leadership style of the principal within an Islamic School?

2. Are there significant differences in perceptions between stakeholders (principals, teachers, parents) regarding the use of the 5Ps (people, places, policies, programs, and processes) of invitational leadership?

3. How has the principal implemented the five elements (I-CORT) of invitational leadership to promote a positive, inviting culture within an Islamic School?

Within this scholarly review, presented first is a discussion on the myriad of studies that focus on the importance of culture and leadership within an organization. Followed by extant literature revealing gaps within the literature, and the rationale for examining culture within Islamic schools. Finally, a presentation of the theoretical framework of leadership narrowing to the conceptual framework of invitational leadership and how it impacts culture.

**Interest in Culture**

Culture has been the interest of many anthropologists for the past century (Schein, 1993). In the past five decades, researchers began to show interest in studying organizational climate and culture in hopes of deciphering their complexities (Barley et al., 1988). Culture is an abstract idea that is difficult to grasp and identify. Many have attempted to define culture and have succeeded in narrowing down to the following
definitions. Such as culture is what is accepted or not accepted in daily dealings (Schein, 1993), the feel of the building as you step foot in it (Bolman & Deal, 2017); the stories and celebrations that the stakeholders share and celebrate (Northouse, 2019); and finally, the shared values that help the stakeholders work towards a common goal (Schein, 1992). Barley et al. (1988) theorized that sub-cultures might develop within an organization. However, Schein (1993) argued that despite sub-cultures developing, there is still one overall culture that unifies an organization. Interestingly, Schein (2016) added to the definition of culture the image of self. He explained that the image of self is how the organization views itself. This is noteworthy because it aligns with invitational leadership’s self-concept theory. Purkey et al. (2020) discussed self-concept theory and pointed out how everyone’s perception of himself or herself helps shape their behavior. Similarly, Edmondson (2012) defined culture in a more dynamic way with an emphasis on shared learning. Additionally, Schein (2016) explained the implications of culture as “The concept of culture implies structural stability, depth, breadth, and patterning or integration that results from the fact that culture is for the group a learned phenomenon just as personality and character are for individuals learned phenomena.” (Schein, 2016, para. 29). The reason this is noteworthy is because this allows for culture to change if the shared learning experiences and learned phenomenon can change.

Alvesson and Sveningsson (2015) examined how cultures can adapt and change in today’s fast-paced, globalized technological world. Similarly, Bolman and Deal (2017) researched multiple organizations and found that organizations that can adapt their culture to what is effective for the current needs of consumers, survived vast changes in technologies. An example of such is Hallmark Cards, Inc. The authors discussed how
Hallmark was able to produce e-cards instead of old-fashioned cards due to advancements in technology. However, companies that are unable to shift their culture to meet the demands of the consumers and shifts in technology in addition to added competitions will suffer a great loss and in some cases shut down, such as the Eastman Kodak Company (Bolman & Deal, 2017). Researchers have linked increased job satisfaction (Atwater & Carmeli, 2009), employee retention (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995), and student achievement (Burns & Martin, 2007) to organizations who have created positive relationships among stakeholders and maintained an inviting culture. For these reasons, researchers are interested to study culture to increase organizational effectiveness and longevity.

**Interest in Leadership**

Northouse (2017) explained that the trait approach was the initial focus of leadership research in the first half of the 20th century until Stogdill (1948) challenged that concept by claiming there is more to leadership than pre-existing traits of leaders. Through research, Stogdill (1948) discovered that leadership traits are amplified in certain situations and those leaders could be more effective depending on of their relationships with the followers. This caused a major shift in research from focusing on the study of the leaders’ traits to an interest in studying leadership behavior and leadership situations (Northouse, 2017). Since then, many leadership theories were developed after extensive research in the field. Consequently, some of the developed leadership theories focus on the leader such as the skill leadership (Katz, 1955), behavioral leadership (Blake & Mouton 1964; Stogdill, 1948), and situational leadership (Reddin, 1967). Then in the 1970s research started to shift to include the focus on the
relationship between the leader and followers. The development of path-goal leadership theory by Evans (1970) and House (1971) focused more on leading with the needs of the followers in mind to help them develop individually which ultimately would allow the organization to flourish. Dansereau et al. (1975) advanced leader-member exchange theory (LMX). In LMX theory, the focus is on the relationship between the leader and followers and how that relationship impacts the work environment. Similarly, transformational leadership focused on improving the conditions of the followers by understanding their motives (Burns, 1978). The discovery of transformational leadership theory led to the development of authentic leadership theory. Like path-goal, LMX, and transformational leadership theories, authentic leadership theory (George, 2003) celebrates the relationships between the leader and followers. Other leadership theories focused more on the followers, their needs, and the dynamics of the interactions within the organizations.

With servant leadership (Greenleaf, 1970) placed the needs of the followers at the highest priority. While adaptive leadership theory (Heifetz, 1994) focused on the leader helping the followers, face challenges, adapt, and grow as a result. Follett (1949) using the followership theory viewed leadership from the follower perspective and the role the followers play in the leadership process. Spillane (2006) proposed a major shift in the leadership process, moving from a hierarchical approach to a more lateral shared leadership model with distributed leadership, known also as team leadership theory. Likewise, invitational leadership theory (Purkey et al., 2020) tended to have a more shared leadership approach with the focus on all the elements that create an inviting
organization. Lastly, cross-cultural leadership theory (Akiga & Lowe, 2004) focused on the process of understanding diversity within an organization.

Specifically, heightened in the Islamic faith due to its decentralized nature, especially among the Sunni majority (Warner & Wenner, 2006) is the interest in leadership and organizational culture. In the Islamic faith, everyone has a direct relationship with God and is responsible for their actions. There is no hierarchical leadership in the mosque where imams are considered a “primus inter pares”, rather than the connection between the laity and God. (Murad, 2020, p.4) This decentralization in religion translates to all of society, which means that the teacher plays just as vital a role as the administrator in bringing stakeholders together through their shared values. Thus, this study analyzed the inviting aspects of school culture in an Islamic private school setting.

**Importance of Culture**

Derived from the Latin word *cultus*, which means *care*, is the word *culture* (Coyle, 2018). The concept of *Culture* includes the values, beliefs, and attitudes the stakeholders share (Dinsdale, 2017; Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey, 1988; Schein, 1993; Walker & Dimmock, 1999). A common definition of culture is the learned beliefs, values, rules, norms, symbols, and traditions that a group of people shares (Dinsdale, 2017; Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey, 1988; Schein, 1993; Walker & Dimmock, 1999). With each personal interaction within an organization, culture is refined and changed. Similarly, school culture is the way teachers, staff, parents, and students interact with one another (Schein, 1993). However, no person has more influence over that culture than the leader (Gehlbach, 2014). Several existing research investigations supported the need for
effective leadership and direction in schools (Caldwell & Hayward, 1998; Davis, 2003; Fullen & Miles, 1992; Furman, 2004; Hallinger & Heck, 1999; Muijs & Harris, 2003; Schein, 2000). While Li et al. (2018) asserted choosing a good leader could transform the culture of a school and increase innovation. Specifically, the leader can change the culture not only through interaction but also through policies and programs to improve the institution (Bardach & Patashnik, 2019; Witcher, 1993). These rules and policies of an institution affect its culture and it filters down to the interactions between all stakeholders in an organization (Karadağ et al., 2014; Levi, 2017; Safarzadeh, 2018).

Accordingly, positive school culture and environment will help motivate all stakeholders and will benefit the school at large (Day et al., 2001; Purkey, 1992; Purkey & Novak, 1996; Purkey & Siegel, 2003; Stillion & Siegel, 2005). Consequently, researchers (Çayırdağ, 2016; Lewis et al., 2016; Tierney, 2012; Turan & Bektas, 2013) contended that a positive culture will help members of an organization be more autonomous and creative, thus allowing for individual growth which in return will result in organizational growth.

Researchers (Bolman & Deal, 2017; Tierney, 2012) explained the role organizational culture plays on the growth of both the individual level and the organizational level. The inverse is also true, researchers argued that a lack of a positive culture will impact students, teachers, and members of the organization in a negative way (Bolman & Deal, 2017; Peterson & Terrence, 2009; Tierney, 2012). Moreover, researchers (Angus et al., 2009; Konold et al., 2018; Ohlson et al., 2016; Peterson & Terrence, 2009; Suandi et al., 2014; Voight, & Hanson, 2017) have found a significant positive relationship between positive, collaborative school culture and students’
performance. Peterson and Terrence (2009) explained the importance of school culture and its impact on school performance:

At a deeper level, all organizations, including schools, improve performance by fostering a shared system of norms, folkways, values, and traditions. These infuse an enterprise with passion, purpose, and a sense of spirit. Without a strong, positive culture, schools flounder and die. The culture of a school or district plays a central role in exemplary performance. (p. 7)

Thus, it is essential to understand the impact of leadership on the culture of Islamic schools.

**Leaders and Organizational Culture**

A complex relationship exists between leadership and culture. Schein (1993) noted, “Leadership is the attitude and motivation to examine and manage culture” (p. 374). Schein further argued leaders influence the culture of the organization, and the organization may affect the leadership style of the leader. Delving deeper, Schein (1993) described, “That leaders create and change cultures, while managers and administrators live within them” (p. 361). Conversely, Hartnell et al. (2016) found the importance of the leader adapting their leadership style to the culture of the organization as needed to improve performance and influence the existing culture in order to transform it. Either way, leaders help shape the organizational culture by establishing group norms, developing shared values, composing a formal philosophy, creating processes, hiring skilled workers, using specific language, generating shared meaning, and integrating symbols such as physical layout of the space (Schein, 1993, p.363). Schein (1983) also explained the definition of organizational culture as follows:
Organizational culture, then, is the pattern of basic assumptions that a given group has invented, discovered, or developed in learning to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration—a pattern of assumptions that has worked well enough to be considered valid. And, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems. (Schein, 1983, p. 14)

Furthermore, leaders that aid in creating a culture where the learning process is celebrated and workers have a level of autonomy will cause growth both at the individual level and at the organizational level (Gill, 2010; Tierney, 2012). Additionally, McDowell and Martin (2021) alluded to the leader’s role in creating an inviting culture and its positive impact on teacher retention.

**Extant Literature and Gap in Existing Research**

The existing research on culture and leadership generally focuses on business organizations, public school settings, and higher educational institutions (Angus et al., 2009; Bolman & Deal, 2017; Konold et al., 2018; Ohlson et al., 2016; Peterson & Terrence, 2009; Suandi et al., 2014; Voight, & Hanson, 2017). The role a leader plays on organizational culture is also a largely uncharted territory, especially with the intersectionality of Islamic private schools using invitational leadership theory (Purkey & Novak, 1996). There remains a gap in understanding what helps create and maintain such a positive collaborative culture (Bolman & Deal, 2002, 2017) in the private school setting. Hence, the need for further examination to understand the leadership style that can promote such a culture. There is also a gap in studying culture in private schools in general (Angus et al., 2009; Konold et al., 2018; Ohlson et al., 2016; Peterson &
Terrence, 2009; Voight, & Hanson, 2017) and Islamic Schools more specifically. While there have been several studies on private Islamic schools (Aşlamacı & Kaymakcan, 2017; Ullah & Hussain, 2020), the majority of them have been conducted in predominantly Muslim countries, thus leaving a need to explore Muslim schools within the United States.

**Theoretical Framework(s)**

Chosen were the following leadership frameworks because of their emphasis on the culture of the educational institution. In the following subsections, leader-member exchange (Dansereau et al., 1975), distributed leadership (Spillane, 2006), situational leadership (Hersey & Blanchard, 1969), and cross-cultural leadership (Akiga & Lowe, 2004) will be analyzed. Finally, narrowing to invitational leadership theory (Purkey & Novak, 1996) as the conceptual framework for this study.

**Leader-Member Exchange Leadership Theory**

One of the minutiae of cultures is the daily interactions that occur between members of the organization. For this reason, considered was leader-member exchange theory for this case study. Leader-member exchange theory, known as LMX theory, focuses on the interactions that occur between the leader and followers (Northouse, 2019). Northouse explained these relationships are dyadic in nature. Dansereau et al., (1975) proposed this leadership theory labelling it as a Vertical Dyad Link (VDL). Dansereau et al. further distinguished that there were two follower groups within this framework: an in-group and an out-group. While Graen (1976) explained that followers within the organization became part of the leader’s in-group by taking on extra work, which helps strengthen the relationship between the follower and the leader. Hence,
Dansereau et al. (1975) indicated that in-group members have more power and influence on the leader. Members of the out-group preform their jobs unexceptionally and do not go beyond what is required. Additionally, Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995) added to the research of LMX theory when they observed that as the leader-follower relationship improved it enhanced the work performance within the organization.

Several researchers (Atwater & Carmeli, 2009; Ilies et al., 2007) found that strong leader-member relationships yielded higher performance, more job satisfaction, and a more positive work environment overall. Furthermore, Graen and Uhl-Bien (1991) explained the three stages of relationship development between leaders and members. The first stage is stranger stage, followed by acquaintance, and finally the partnership stage. The authors contended that in the stranger stage, the relationship is very formal, yet as time goes on and more interactions occur, this leads the relationship to be in the acquaintance stage. As interactions increase and time passes, this builds trust between the leader and members which leads to the final partnership stage of their relationship.

Northouse (2019) summarized that organizations develop a healthy work environment and culture when leaders build strong relationships with their team members and followers. Additionally, Hill et al. (2014) alluded to the need for leaders to build trust and respect with both in-group and out-group members.

LMX theory focuses on the relationship between the leader and the follower as a process and series of interactions (Northouse, 2019). It also categorizes workers into two groups: those who do more, in-group, and those who do the bare minimum, the out-group. Although this is a simplistic way to categorize members of an organization, it is a very practical, relatable way to understand the relationships between the leader and
follower. This type of member classification helps the leader be aware of potential unintentional biases in their daily dealings with their workers (Northouse, 2019). Unintentional bias occurs when the leader makes assumptions during the decision-making process (Banaji et al., 2003). Northouse (2019) also added that LMX theory highlights the importance of communication in building relationships. Additionally, Gummer (2020) and Petrides (2003) explained the importance of clear communication and information sharing during the decision-making process. Lastly, Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995) found a relation exists between LMX theory application and effectiveness, positive climate, and worker retention. However, LMX theory has a major flaw in that it is based on division in treatment, which is viewed as unfair and unethical in leadership practices (Northouse, 2019). LMX theory further focused solely on the exchanges that happen between the leader and members, although it does give a framework of how to develop those positive relationships (Anand et al., 2011). Consequently, it oversimplifies the leadership of an organization to exchanges between the leader and members and does not examine any other complexities present in the running of an organization. Not chosen, as the conceptual framework was this theory since culture encompasses many other facets beyond the leader-member daily exchanges.

**Distributed Leadership Theory**

Distributed leadership, also known as team leadership, focuses on the notion of changing organizational thinking from a traditional, hierarchical, one-person leader approach to a culture with many factors that contribute to a shared purpose among its members (Hartley, 2007; Sergiovanni, 1984). Thus, it allows for less dependence on a one-person leader in the case of that leader’s absence (Lynch, 2012). Haretly (2007)
argued that distributed leadership is not a new framework; rather, it has existed through delegating work and sharing leadership in institutions. Harely further explained the need for empowerment and accountability in distributed leadership. Spillane (2006) and Bennett et al. (2003) agreed on the difficulty of defining distributed leadership since it represents the sharing among many people that have a common goal. Notwithstanding the difficulties, Harris (2005) explained distributed leadership decentralizes power and deals more with the norms and culture of the organization. School leadership, when distributed among staff and students, yields greater effectiveness and empowerment of its members (Leithwood et al., 2006). Additionally, Harris (2005) explained distributed leadership occurred between formal and informal leaders. However, Avolio (2011) argued the hierarchical power structure is always present in distributed leadership and works effectively to create more collaborative teams. MacBeath (2005) generated a taxonomy for distributed leadership that falls into the following categories: formal, pragmatic, strategic, incremental, opportunistic, or cultural.

One criticism of distributed leadership theory is that it omits the politics at the micro level in the institution (Grace, 2000; English, 2006; Hatcher, 2005; Storey, 2004). However, since this theory is based on the interactions between leaders and followers interchanging positions based on expertise, some researchers counter-argued that distributed leadership does consider the political and social interactions at the micro level (Gronn, 2000; Spillane et al., 2004). Hartley (2007) referred to the notion that the changes in modern educational institutions and globalization constitute the need for distributed leadership. He continued to explain distributed leadership allows for autonomy and professional development of everyone involved in the institution in our
fast-changing global society (Hartley, 2007). Furthermore, governmental policies and mandated performance testing helped create a fostering environment for distributed leadership among school districts (Hartley, 2007). Distributed leadership existed in an environment where there is a high level of competence among members, quick use of initiatives, shared goals based on trust, collective serious determined effort, and modest coordination (Ingvarson et al., 2006).

Parry and Bryman (2006) constructed five main strands of distributed leadership. The first strand is leading others to lead themselves (Manz & Sims, 1991; Sims & Lorenzi, 1992). The second strand focuses on the ability of the leader to empower their followers (Kouzes & Posner, 1993). The third deals with leadership as a social process. One cannot understand distributed leadership unless the organization includes leaders and followers, and takes their social interactions into consideration (Hosking, 1988; 1991). The fourth distinguishes between traditional leadership and distributed leadership by examining the power structure in the organization (Gordon, 2002). The fifth and final strand aligned to the changes in technology (Avolio et al., 2001), since distributed leadership evolved due to easy access to information and information sharing via emails and other forms of fast-paced communication (Parry & Bryma, 2006).

“A team is a type of organizational group that is composed of members who are interdependent, who share common goals, and who must coordinate their activities to accomplish these goals” (Hill, 2019, p. 371). In distributed leadership, there is more collaboration within the organization due to technology utilization and virtual meetings (Wageman et al., 2012). Such collaboration will allow for placing the right talent where needed. This type of leadership style shifts the structure of the organization from a
vertical hierarchical approach to a more lateral team approach (Aime et al., 2014). Additionally, Levi (2017) contended that such organizational teams’ effectiveness depends on the support given from the leaders. In addition, it takes time and effort for the formation of successful teams. Furthermore, Zaccaro et al. (2001) explained the effectiveness of such teams depends on the well-developed leadership processes. Distributed leadership allows for one leader or multiple informal leaders that step up when their area of expertise is needed (Amos & Klimoski, 2014). Thus, team members “facilitate shared leadership” among themselves (Yukl et al., 2020, p. 300).

Hill’s model for distributed leadership depicts an iterative process starting with the formal leader and cycling through all members of the team. The author continued to explain that team effectiveness depends on the task, relational support, and the environment of the organization (Hill, 2019).

One strength of distributed leadership theory is that it frames power as decentralized within an organization. This change in leadership aligns with the emerging competitive globalization of organizations (Northouse, 2019). The iterative nature of team leadership allows team members to reflect and improve team performance. Lastly, distributed leadership is a practical model in the sense that it focuses on task performance and shared goals. However, team leadership is a complex framework to follow (Cobb, 2012). It requires a vast range of skills from its team members that they may or may not have (Hill, 2019). In addition, Northouse (2019) asserted that this model ignores many other facets of leadership that may be needed for decision-making. Distributed leadership makes the major assumption of diversity in the talent of a workforce, which also may or may not be true (Lynch, 2012). Another assumption in distributed leadership is that
everyone will work together ignoring possible political issues that may impede
collaboration (Hatcher, 2005; Storey, 2004). Furthermore, the framework does not give
clear guidelines on putting theory into practice other than stating that a formal leader
assigns tasks to informal leaders (Lynch, 2012). Thus, rejected as the conceptual
framework was the distributed leadership theory.

**Situational Leadership Theory**

Hersey and Blanchard (1969) created the foundational work of situational
leadership theory. They based their research on the three-dimensional model developed
by Reddin (1967) which emphasized “the importance of a manager’s relationship
orientation and task orientation in conjunction with effectiveness” (Vecchio, 1987, p.
444). Reddin (1967) believed that leaders need to act differently in different situations
and be adaptive regarding what is needed to be an effective leader. This led to the
development of the situational leadership model. In situational leadership, the leader
balances between task orientation and relationship orientation (Reddin, 1967). First, if a
problem needs high supportive (relationship) and high directive (task) behavior then the
leader is “coaching” the follower in that situation (Northouse, 2019). Second, if a task
requires high directive and low support, then this requires the leader to play a more
“directive” role towards the follower. Northouse (2019) explained the last two roles a
leader plays in the situational model are high supportive and low directive which
necessitate the leader to play a “supportive” role, while low supportive and low directive
mandates the leader to just delegate the work to the followers. Blanchard et al. (2013)
expanded on this model by explaining the followers’ development level focuses on their
level of competence to complete a given task. Northouse (2019) described situational leadership as:

Situational Leadership II classifies leadership into four styles: S1 is high directive-low supportive; S2 is high directive-high supportive, S3 is low directive-high supportive, and S4 is low directive-low supportive. The model describes how each of the four leadership styles applies to the followers who work at different levels of development, from D1 (low in competence and high in commitment), to D2 (low to some competence and low in commitment), to D3 (moderately competent but lacking commitment), to D4 (a great deal of competence and a high degree of commitment). (Northouse, 2019, p. 114)

Considered for this study was this framework because situational leadership aligns with the culture of the organization. Additionally, Schein (1992) explained the importance of task and relationship orientation in an organizational culture. “One needs to value relationships in order to achieve the level of trust and communication that will make joint problem solving and solution implementation possible” (Schein, 1992, p. 371). The leader needs to adapt their leadership style to fit the needs of the followers and the culture of the organization.

Although situational leadership shifts the focus from the leader to the followers’ needs and has a practical sense to it, it lacks clear guidelines for the leader to implement this model (Northouse, 2019). In addition, this framework does not explain how followers move from one quadrant to another in their development process. Another criticism of the situational leadership model is that it lacks methods to measure its effectiveness even when applying it (Vecchio, 1987). Similarly, in the recent COVID
pandemic, one expects situational leadership theory to flourish due to its increased use by leaders in the novel situation. However, the decentralized leadership model that developed because so many began working from home demanded that the followers become both driven and competent which diminished the use of a situational model (Arya, 2020). Therefore, not used as the framework for this inquiry was situational leadership due to its vague nature and lack of guidelines.
Cross-Cultural Leadership Theory

The next theoretical framework examined for this inquiry was cross-cultural leadership. Akiga and Lowe (2004) defined cross-cultural leadership as the process in which diverse followers intentionally motivate, and influence through their shared goal. Likewise, Schein (1993) contended that there are many factors to decipher a culture, some are: observed behavioral interactions, group norms, espoused values, formal philosophy, rules of the game, climate, embedded skills, habits of cognition, shared meanings, and metaphors or symbols. He defined culture as:

A pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems. (Schein, 1999, pp. 364-365)

Additionally, the globalization and technological advancements of today’s world has created a need for understanding cultures (House & Javidan, 2004; Lo et al., 2017). This increased the interdependence between cultures economically, socially, technically, and politically (Northouse, 2019). Furthermore, the existing diversity within the United States calls for an understanding of such a leadership style. Currently, the United States population is approximately 328 million (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019). According to the current census, 28% are non-white and 72% are white. Even the white racial subgroup is diverse when considering it includes people from different ethnic backgrounds, such as Europe, the Middle East, and North Africa (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020). Cross-cultural
leadership theory argues that this diversity necessitates a need for this style of leadership (Northouse, 2019).

Researchers (Adler & Bartholomew, 1992) explained five cross-cultural competencies needed to be an effective cross-cultural leader. First, leaders need to understand the political and cultural environments. Second, they need to grasp differences in perspectives, trends, and technologies. Third, leaders need to develop the ability to work with people from different cultures. Fourth, they must be adaptable. Lastly, they need to learn to relate to people from different backgrounds from a position of equality rather than superiority (Adler & Bartholomew, 1992, p.53). Later, Earley and Ang (2003) affirmed portions of Adler and Bartholomew’s (1992) concepts on the notion of cultural intelligence. An effective cross-cultural leader has a high level of cultural intelligence, allowing them to be effective at leading a diverse group of people.

Additionally, it is important to understand the different dimensions of cultures. Hall (1976) contended that one primary dimension of culture is whether the focus is on the individual or group. Conversely, Trompenaars (1994) alluded to two main cultural perspectives: egalitarian versus hierarchical, and person versus task. The egalitarian versus hierarchical focuses on the distribution of power. Egalitarian is shared power while hierarchical is a top-down approach. Person versus task is the extent to which a culture focuses on social interactions as opposed to getting the task completed. Meanwhile, Hofstede (1980, 2001) found five major dimensions that help define a culture: power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism-collectivism, masculinity-femininity, and long-term-short-term orientation. Power distance is the extent to which the power is hierarchical or lateral (shared) among members within the culture.
(Northouse, 2017). Additionally, uncertainty avoidance is the scale upon which the members of the organization are willing to take a risk or avoid it. Cultures that are willing to give more autonomy to their members allow for more creativity and risk-taking (Bolman & Deal, 2017). Individual collectivism is the extent, which a member of the organization is loyal to the organization and the good of the whole as opposed to the good of the individual (Northouse, 2017). Additionally, Northouse (2017) explained that gender egalitarianism, or masculinity-femininity, is how much a culture minimizes gender role differences. Lastly, future orientation refers to how concerned a culture is with its future planning. Furthermore, other researchers (House et al., 2004) identified nine cultural dimensions: uncertainty avoidance, power distance, institutional collectivism, in-group collectivism, gender egalitarianism, assertiveness, future orientation, performance orientation, and humane orientation. Uncertainty avoidance is the level of risk which individuals in a culture are willing to take (McClelland, 1961). Power distance deals with the power distribution, and its acceptance (Hofstede, 1980, 2001). Institutional collectivism measures the extent to which members of a society prioritize the success of the group over the individual (Hall, 1976). In-group collectivism gauges the sense of pride an individual has towards being a member of an organization or family (Triandis, 1995). Gender egalitarianism describes minimizing the differences in gender roles in society. Assertiveness refers to the level of forthrightness an individual shows in their interactions within a society. Future orientation is the strength of the belief in society on plans and influences (Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck, 1961). Performance orientation refers to the system in place for rewarding high performance. Humane
orientation deals with how much a society rewards altruistic behavior (House et al., 2004).

However, cross-cultural leadership theory does not delineate the strands of culture in a way that helps a leader create a positive environment (Northouse, 2019). Another weakness lies within the different dimensions of culture and how they are difficult to measure (i.e., power distance and gender egalitarianism) (Beugelsdijk et al., 2017; Venaik et al. 2013). Additionally, this inquiry focused on improving one culture and not understanding multiple cultures simultaneously. For these reasons, rejected was cross-cultural leadership theory as the conceptual framework for this study.

**Conceptual Framework**

Invitational leadership occurs when the leader utilizes invitational education in their school to create a positive culture and climate for everyone to thrive (Day et al., 2001; Purkey, 1992; Purkey & Novak, 1996; Purkey & Siegel, 2003; Stillion & Siegel, 2005). Several schools throughout the United States, Canada, South Africa, and Hong Kong, have implemented invitational leadership (Purkey & Novak, 1996, 2012, 2015). These schools “are the products of optimism, trust, respect, care, and purpose” (Purkey & Novak, 2012, p. 7). Grogan and Roland (2003) explained the heart of leadership is that the leader cares about their followers. In the fast-paced, changing environments in today’s organizations, trust and collaboration are key in facing adversity (Posner, 2020). Trust is key for people to be able to work together and collaborate towards a common goal (Halpin, 2003). A study conducted by Leithwood and Beatty (2007) found eight sets of teacher emotions that play a vital part in teaching and learning. They are teacher efficacy, stress, organizational commitment, job satisfaction, morale, trust, and
engagement. Hence, trust is a key component in a collaborative work environment. Intentionality of positivity and mutual respect adds to the ingredients of creating such inviting environments (Lynch, 2012). Invitational leadership is the notion of creating a cultural environment that helps members of the organization reach their potential through finding their value in their contributions to the institution (Coffey & Elsawy, 2017). Purkey and Novak (2012) further explained three stages to help an organization adopt invitational education. First, in the preparation stage there needs to be a desire for the change, expectation of good things, preparation of the setting, and reading the situation. Second, in the interacting stage, choosing carefully how to engage stakeholders, acting appropriately, ensuring reception and understanding of the message, and honoring boundaries are included. Lastly, stage three is the follow-up stage. This includes interpreting responses; negotiating; evaluating the process and progress; and reinforcing trust (Purkey & Novak, 2012, p. 42).

Researchers (Purkey & Novak 2012, 2015; Purkey & Siegel, 2003) contended there are five domains within the theory called the 5Ps: people, places, policies, programs, and processes. These domains comprise “everyone and everything in an organization…(that) will either build or destroy intellectual, social, physical, emotional, and moral potential for stakeholders” (Purkey & Novak, 2016, p. 7). They continued to explain by giving the starfish analogy of the five domains working together to overcome any obstacle the organization faces.

Understanding the effects of the five domains is the key to implementing invitational education (Purkey & Siegel, 2003). Empowering and motivating all people in the organization will influence students’ performance and improve social relationships.
Creating inviting spaces with positive language used for signs, students' work displayed proudly, clean, and comfortable spaces for everyone to enjoy will add to the positive experience in any organization (Bolman & Deal, 2002, 2017; Stillion & Siegel, 2005). Adopting clear and transparent policies with the input of everyone involved will help build trust and foster a democratic ethos (Fowler, 2004; Purkey & Novak, 2012). A study conducted by Burns and Martin (2007) concluded schools administrators who applied invitational education theory resulted in increased respect and trust which increased the overall effectiveness of the organization. Similarly, the implementation of programs that focus on conflict resolution in a proactive way to prevent conflict helped improve effectiveness of organizations (Purkey & Siegel; 2003). Lastly, the institutions who developed and put in place processes that helped form a democratic ethos were also more successful (Lynch, 2012; Purkey & Novak, 2012). “Invitational education is a democratic process in which those who are affected by the decisions have a say in its formulation, implementation, and evaluation” (Purkey & Novak, 2012, p. 23). Additionally, Purkey and Novak (2012) explained how improvement in a school culture occurred through three foundational constructs. First, the leader needs to create a democratic ethos in the school by involving all stakeholders in the decision-making process. Second, the leader ought to understand the perceptions of others within the organization. This will help create a more understanding environment, which will lead to more trust, respect, and hope. Third, understanding self-concept theory will help a leader motivate everyone to reach their full potential (Purkey, 1978; Purkey & Novak, 2012). Maslow (1943) explained that the highest level of psychological needs in the theory of motivation is reaching self-
actualization. “Human energy and motivation are always there. The role and responsibility of educators is to influence the direction this intrinsic energy and motivation will take” (Purkey & Novak, 2012, p. 12). Additionally, Moss (2018) linked self-determination theory and invitational education and discovered students succeed when they feel safe, invited, and have some participation in the decision-making process. Furthermore, a study conducted by McKnight and Martin (2015) found that the application of four attributes of invitational leadership (respect, trust, optimism, and intentionality) (Purkey & Novak, 1984) resulted in more effective leadership and an enhanced organizational culture.

Researchers (Purkey & Novak, 2012; Purkey et al., 2020) described the invitational helix as an upward spiral that guides leaders to implement invitational education. The four stages are awareness, understanding, application, and adoption while progressing in three phases: occasional, to systematic, and finally pervasive (Purkey & Novak, 2012; Purkey et al., 2020). The authors delve deeper into each phase to provide more guidelines. In the occasional interest, phase one, initial exposure provides rising awareness about the framework, followed by structured dialogue and general agreement to try it on a smaller scale (Purkey & Novak, 2012). This phase is finalized by uncoordinated use and sharing. Phase two is the systematic application of the framework. Intensive study and application are the initial steps of phase two, followed by division of the 5Ps into strands, and systematic application. Lastly, phase three is pervasive adoption, which is the highest phase of the Helix (Purkey & Novak, 2012; Purkey et al., 2020). The following stages are included in phase three: leadership development, depth analysis and
extension, confrontation of major concerns, and finally transformation of the culture (Purkey et al., 2020; Stillion & Siegel, 2005).

**Rationale for Choosing Invitational Leadership Theory**

Invitational leadership model, like distributed leadership, is designed to involve stakeholders in the leadership of the organization (Lynch, 2012). One major strength of invitational leadership is how it addresses all aspects that aid in creating an inviting culture giving the leader a holistic model to follow. Purkey and Siegel (2003) contended that an invitational leader invites stakeholders to share their vision for the organization. They claimed this may be accomplished by building trust among members of the institution through treating them with respect: “nothing is more important to invitational leadership than the respect for people – the belief that we and our associates are able, valuable, and responsible, and should be treated accordingly” (Purkey & Siegel, 2003, p. 7). The current globalization of all markets, technology, and COVID pandemic have created an even greater need to build relationships through trust and respect. Chosen for this study was this framework because of its holistic approach, clear implementation guidelines, and simplicity. By applying the invitational education framework, the leader is able to use invitational leadership to help transform school culture in a positive way (Purkey, 1992; Purkey, et al., 2020; Purkey & Novak, 1996, 2012, 2015; Purkey & Siegel, 2003; Stillion & Siegel, 2005). Thus, because of the utility of the invitational leadership model, and because it provides an extensive framework (a systematic design for creating a positive school culture), it was selected as the conceptual framework for this inquiry.
Additionally, chosen was this theory due to its alignment with the Islamic faith. Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said "The reward of deeds depends upon the intentions and every person will get the reward according to what he has intended." (The Hadith, n.d.). This underlines that intention is the ultimate foundation of a Muslim’s actions and rewards as well. Which is mirrored in the words of Allah as they were revealed to Prophet Muhammad ﷺ in the Noble Quran. The word intention(s), in various contexts, is mentioned 49 times in different ayahs (verses) of the Quran. Muslims are encouraged to renew their intentions daily before each of the five daily prayers in addition to renewals before every action.

**Summary**

Although invitational leadership (Purkey & Novak, 1996, 2012) is a newer construct in the realm of leadership research, it has been used effectively as the conceptual framework for understanding what creates a more inviting positive environment in an educational setting (McKnight & Martin, 2015). A positive, collaborative, and inviting school culture will help promote an atmosphere that fosters growth at the individual and organizational level (Akiga & Lowe, 2004). Leaders of educational organizations, which create a learning culture that is positive and inviting depending on the needs of the teachers and students, have a positive impact on student performance (Raza & Sikandar, 2018). A leader has a big role to play in involving stakeholders to help create and maintain a learning culture to foster an organization full of adaptive learners in challenging situations (Heifetz & Laurie, 2011). The invitation to explore new avenues of support extended to every person that enters the institution will aid in creating such an environment. A leader maintains an inviting culture by utilizing
people, places, policies, programs, and processes in pursuit of a culture based on trust, respect, care, purpose, and hope (Purkey, et al., 2020; Purkey & Novak, 1996, 2012). While this theory has been examined in a myriad of settings, it has not been utilized within a Muslim faith-based private school and thus further exploration is warranted.
SECTION FOUR

CONTRIBUTION TO PRACTICE
Introduction

Purkey and Novak (2012) explained, “intentionality education is characterized by purposes and direction” (p. 17). Consequently, Purkey and Novak (2012) contended that the leader intentionally provides people, places, policies, programs, and processes that help create such a positive inviting climate. Additionally, the five elements (I-CORT) of invitational leadership are intentionality, care, optimism, respect, and trust (Purkey & Novak, 2012). This study examined the existing facets of invitational leadership, both of its domains and elements implemented by the school leaders in three successful Islamic schools. Understanding the role a leader plays in fostering a positive and inviting school culture perhaps could happen in other similar school settings.

Research Questions

The investigated research questions were:

1. What are the perceptions of the teachers and the parents regarding the leadership style of the principal within an Islamic School?
2. Are there significant differences in perceptions between stakeholders (teachers, staff, parents) regarding the use of the 5Ps (people, places, policies, programs, and processes) of invitational leadership?
3. How has the principal implemented the five elements (I-CORT) of invitational leadership to promote a positive, inviting culture within an Islamic School?

Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks

The five theoretical leadership frameworks that were considered for this research study were leader-member exchange (Dansereau et al., 1975), distributed leadership (Spillane, 2006), situational leadership (Hersey & Blanchard, 1969), cross-cultural
leadership (Akiga & Lowe, 2004), and invitational leadership (Purkey & Novak, 1996). These chosen frameworks encompassed the culture of an organization by focusing on the leader and the interactions between all members of the institution. While leader-member exchange theory explained the interactions between the leader and members of the in-group (Graen, 1976), and out-group (Northouse, 2019) of the leader’s circles, it lacked the understanding of relationships between all stakeholders of the organization.

Conversely, distributed leadership theory focuses on interactions between all stakeholders enabling each member to be a leader at a given time which helps decentralize power in an organization (Northouse, 2019). One weakness of distributed leadership theory is its assumption that each member has the ability and desire to play the leadership role (Lynch, 2012). Researchers (Hatcher, 2005; Storey, 2004) argued another downfall of distributed leadership is its disregard of politics within the organization. In terms of a strong centralized leadership, situational leadership (Reddin, 1967) is the notion that a leader needs to act differently in different situations and be adaptive to the needs of the members of the organization. A strong criticism of situational leadership is that it lacks clear guidelines for implementation (Northouse, 2019). Next, this study considered cross-cultural leadership theory. Akiga and Lowe (2004) defined cross-cultural leadership as the process in which diverse followers are guided. Although interest in cross-cultural leadership has been piqued due to globalization and technological advancements in today’s markets (House & Javidan, 2004; Lo et al., 2017), like situational leadership, cross-cultural leadership theory lacks the clear guidelines to understand the facets that define a culture. The absence of the guidelines produces difficulty in measuring the effectiveness of the leadership theory.
Therefore, this study used invitational leadership as the conceptual framework. Invitational leadership (Purkey et al., 2020) is the notion of inviting stakeholders to buy into the vision of the organization and work as a team. The strength of invitational leadership is its detailed overview of understanding how all parts of the organization work together and impact one another. For instance, when a leader understands the inner workings of the 5Ps: people, places, policies, programs, and processes (Purkey & Novak, 2012), they are able to guide the organization toward a common purpose. Given the nature of the study, another reason this theory was used was due to its alignment with the Islamic faith. In Islam, intentions are emphasized as a big part of any action. Renewing intentions on a daily basis is a common practice among Muslims.

Participants and Data Collection

This case study was a constructivist, mixed-methods design. Mertens (2019) defined a mixed methods design as a study that utilizes both qualitative and quantitative data. The collected data occurred in a parallel, concurrent, convergent design (Creswell, 2015; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Mertens, 2019).

Qualitative Data

Interviewed were twenty-five participants from three different Islamic schools from diverse locations within the USA. Two school leaders, two teachers, one staff member, and three parents were interviewed from an independent Islamic school in California (School A), that is not associated with a mosque. The second institution is located in Texas. School B is a private Islamic school associated with a local mosque. Interviewed were two leaders, three teachers, one staff member, and two parents from School B. Another school located in Illinois, School C, is an Islamic private school
associated with a local mosque. Three leaders, two teachers, one staff member, and three parents were interviewed. The conducted interviews were via Zoom and recorded, with permission from the interviewee, to ensure accuracy of the data. An online tool, Temi, transcribed the interviews and then reviewed for accuracy and clarity. Please note that for several of the participants in this study, English is their second language. The transcripts were then individually emailed to all 25 participants for member-checking. As described by Mertens (2019), member-checking occurs during the data analysis phase of the study and helps increase the study’s validity. Additionally, the researcher collected field notes during the interviews, and immediately after when applicable. These notes aided in understanding the researcher’s thought process during the data collection phase of the study, in addition to helping remove any biases (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The average experience in education of the participants was 13 years, while the median was 10 years, the mode 20 years, with a range of 29 years. Please see Table 1 for a breakdown of participants’ codes, titles, and years of experience in education. Additionally, the researcher received, via email, documents from all participating schools.

After reviewing the interview transcripts and removing any identifying information to protect the identity of the participants, the researcher then emailed the transcripts to the participants for member-checking. Seidman (2019) explained how member-checking “contributes to the trustworthiness and credibility of the report” (p. 104). Hence, member-checking increases the validity and reliability of the study (Mertens, 2019). The qualitative data of this study helped to answer research questions one and three.
Table 1

*Description of Participants’ Codes, Titles, and Years of Experience in Education*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant’s Code</th>
<th>Participant’s Title</th>
<th>Years of Experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SAL1 (School A Leader 1)</td>
<td>Head of School</td>
<td>30 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAL2 (School A Leader 2)</td>
<td>Director of Lower Campus*</td>
<td>25 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAT1 (School A Teacher 1)</td>
<td>ELA 6-8th</td>
<td>4 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAT2 (School A Teacher 2)</td>
<td>First Grade Teacher</td>
<td>5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAS (School A Staff)</td>
<td>Office Administrator*</td>
<td>1 year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAP1 (School A Parent 1)</td>
<td>Head of Lower Campus PTA</td>
<td>10 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAP2 (School A Parent 2)</td>
<td>Active PTA Volunteer</td>
<td>21 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAP3 (School A Parent 3)</td>
<td>Active PTA Volunteer</td>
<td>11 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SBL1 (School B Leader 1)</td>
<td>School Principal</td>
<td>20 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SBL2 (School B Leader 2)</td>
<td>Academic Advisor*</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>SBT1 (School B Teacher 1)</td>
<td>First Grade Teacher</td>
<td>8 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SBT2 (School B Teacher 2)</td>
<td>Social Studies/English 6-7th</td>
<td>10 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SBT3 (School B Teacher 3)</td>
<td>Quran &amp; Arabic Teacher</td>
<td>9 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SBS (School B Staff)</td>
<td>Financial Manager*</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>SBP1 (School B Parent 1)</td>
<td>PTO Leader</td>
<td>7 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SBP2 (School B Parent 2)</td>
<td>Active PTO Volunteer</td>
<td>7 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCL1 (School C Leader 1)</td>
<td>Superintendent*</td>
<td>20 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCL2 (School C Leader 2)</td>
<td>School Principal*</td>
<td>30 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCL3 (School C Leader 3)</td>
<td>Assistant Principal*</td>
<td>20 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCT1 (School C Teacher 1)</td>
<td>Second Grade Teacher</td>
<td>13 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCT2 (School C Teacher 2)</td>
<td>First Grade Teacher</td>
<td>13 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCS (School C Staff)</td>
<td>Office Administrator*</td>
<td>6 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCP1 (School C Parent 1)</td>
<td>Active Volunteer*</td>
<td>6 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCP2 (School C Parent 2)</td>
<td>Active Volunteer*</td>
<td>20 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCP3 (School C Parent 3)</td>
<td>Active Volunteer*</td>
<td>9 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. N = 25; * means the participant plays another role at the school such as teacher, parent, or is a former alumnus of the school.*
Quantitative Data

The survey was distributed in the three schools to teachers/staff and parents via email. The aggregated data from the three schools aided in answering research question two. One hundred and forty-three responses were collected from all three schools via QuestionPro online survey tool. The respondents indicated in the survey what their role was within the school. Please note that the researcher clearly instructed the participants to fill out the answers from their role within the school that they indicated on the survey. This was important to keep the two samples independent of one another since some teachers are parents at the school as well. The participant indicated whether they were a teacher/staff or parent. The researcher then extracted the data and used an SPSS independent sample t-test to compare the means between the two groups to analyze the differences in perceptions between them. The confidence level for this study was 95%, thus the acceptance level was p=0.05. In addition, since each domain was measured four times in a single response, the total number of responses for a single domain was 143 multiplied by 4 questions across 5 domains that is equal to 2,860 total question responses, and then were divided into the five domains making the total responses 572 for each domain. However, some participants left some of the questions blank, which is why there is a discrepancy in the N values. All the N values are clearly included in any provided table for that reason. Please see Table 2 for stakeholder’s population breakdown of the surveys.
### Table 2

*Stakeholders Population Breakdown*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
<th>Total Question Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teachers/Staff</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>1,260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>1,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>143</strong></td>
<td><strong>2,860</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* N = 143

Separated into two groups was the survey data and item questions: teachers/staff, and parents. T-tests for independent means were conducted to determine if there were significant differences between perceptions of teachers/staff and parents about the domains of invitational leadership used by the leaders of the examined schools. For each statement, administered t-tests determined if significant differences existed between the ratings given by teachers/staff and ratings given by parents. The survey aided in answering research question two.

**Documents**

Finally, the researcher examined documents from each institution to aid in understanding the culture of each organization. Each school provided several of the following documents or information:

- School improvement plan
- The school mission, vision, and goals
• The school handbook and written policies

• Any letters sent to parents

The researcher then performed coding and data triangulation allowing for themes to emerge naturally from the data. Mertens (2019) defined triangulation as the action researchers take when they “compare findings from the qualitative data with the quantitative results” (p. 318).

**Research Question One**

*What are the perceptions of the teachers and the parents regarding the leadership style of the principal within an Islamic School?*

**Theme: Listening:** without judgement, listening without being defensive, listening with empathy, compassionate listening, and the leaders listen and validate.

The most prominent theme in this study across the participating organizations was *listening*. Teachers, staff, and parents felt they were listened to by the leadership teams. SAL1 stated “Like you listen twice as much as you speak because right? God gave us two ears and one mouth”. SAL2 explained how everyone was treated as the unique individuals they are. She continued to explain, “everyone (teachers, parents, and students) has a voice, and everyone needs to have their voices heard.” SAT2 validated by saying how he felt that “everybody's voice matters and everybody's treated with a sense of respect and dignity”. SBL1 mentioned “we are always listening for the quieter voices in the room” and he continued to explain “And I was able to have that compassion. I was able to ask questions. So, they themselves would come to the conclusion rather than me tell them what I'm thinking”. “I give them(teachers/parents/students) the space and the
time, and I listen. I don't talk much. I let them talk and just give them all the time they need to express as much as they want to express,” SCL2 explained.

Within the listening theme, there were sub-themes such as the following: 
*listening without judgement, listening without being defensive, listening with empathy, compassionate listening,* and the leaders listen and validate. Empathy is simply understanding, or being sensitive to, even experiencing the feelings of another without having them explained. Compassion, moreover, is being conscious and sympathetic to the suffering of another, as well as wanting to help alleviate their suffering. Teachers, staff, and parents said that they felt heard and even when a decision did not go their way, the leaders were transparent and explained the reasoning behind their choice and/or the school policy. For example, SAP2 said, “Because sometimes they're like, I feel like people can be so defensive about what they think. When they find it hard to reassess and readjust. But they did, when you know this thing, we tried. Okay. That didn't work. Let's try this instead.” Please note SAP2 is referring to the leadership team when she said they in the quote. SAP3 said “because the empathy's there, the understanding is there and you kind of go, yeah, I really kind of talked about it”. While SBT3 explained the policy of the school is that “we have to find a balance basically between being strict, but at the same time being compassionate” with students. Several parents (SBP1, SCP1, and SCP2) expressed how the leaders have an open-door policy and they *feel* that they can go to the leaders of the schools and express their concerns openly and how they trust the leaders will work towards addressing their concerns. For example, SCP1, who is a parent and a teacher at the school, expressed how her son had delayed speech. She noted, “And he wouldn't talk, you know, like delayed speech, but I talked to the admin and they
understood, and I explained what he's going through and they- I talked to teachers too, and they were really supportive, masha Allah”. “But you feel like-- we don't feel like it's really admin, honestly. We feel like, like we're brother and sisters, when we want to talk about anything” (SCP2). Moreover, SBP1 expressed how the leadership of the school changed from past years and expressed how happy she was for the change in how the leader listens “like now he listens to every single parent. He listens to every child. He fist-bumps every kid that comes into the school, he listened, our coffee chat was supposed to be like 30 minutes of coffee with principal. It was over two hours”. Teachers (SAT1, SAT2, SBT1, SBT2, SBT3, SCT1, and SCT2) also expressed that they could talk to the leaders and that the leaders valued their input when making a decision. Teachers and staff (SBT1, SBT2, SBT3, and SBS) all explained how their school leader follows the leadership of prophet Muhammad ﷺ in always listening to everyone’s input prior to making any decisions in the school. In Islam, this is shurah, when a leader gathers input from everyone and ponders on all the input prior to making a decision. All school leaders expressed how they have an open-door policy and how they host coffee with the principal at least twice a year. Even during the COVID pandemic and virtual schooling, they held these events virtually to stay connected with the parents and teachers at their community schools.

Theme: Adaptive to Stakeholders’ Needs

Teachers and parents were impressed with the leadership style of the leaders in the Islamic schools and how adaptive they were to the needs of everyone at the school. The COVID-19 pandemic and the transition to online instruction are some of the examples that came up during the participants’ interviews. SCP3, who is an active parent
and an English teacher at the school, explained how the leadership team sent out a survey
to teachers, parents, and students to see how they felt about removing the mask mandate
at the school. Her statement captures this: “So, as a parent, I really felt that they care
about our kids and, you know, they didn't rush to open the school. They didn't rush to,
you know, take off our masks. We're still in masks. So, I think as-- like, they really hear
the parents, like, what do you guys want?” Similarly, teachers and parents from School A
were very impressed at how quickly SAL1 adapted to the pandemic and how focused,
calm, and composed she remained. SAP1 expressed how much the leader cared and what
actions she took to adapt to the new situation in the following excerpt:

Like that's something else I can bring up is that is the amount of- it's the plan of
action, the COVID precautions that were put into place. Like, I don't think there's
any way to show that the school cares, you know, about the kids' wellbeing about
the teacher's wellbeing, other than the fact that she went and got certified as a
contact tracer, she made sure to create like a plan of action to return that would
minimize any transmission. The teachers were vaccinated, like she fought to get
the teachers vaccinated as soon as they were eligible to be vaccinated. What else?
Just so many different things. And I felt like even just bringing us back in that
way was positive for the kids. The kids didn't have to deal with online school for
too long, and that was essential for their wellbeing. I see a big difference in my
kids and kids that ended up doing two years or a year and a half of online school.

“Even though the programs were different, but I felt we actually saw to what level
intentional care the school really takes. I did feel like they always tried to balance what
works for the teachers and what works for the parents, and what works for the students as
well” (SAP2). SAP2 also mentioned how the school provided weekly COVID tests for teachers, staff, and students to help them feel safe and be more proactive about preventing the spread of the virus. SAP3 also praised the school leadership in how quickly they adapted to the new situation:

Like how quickly they transitioned, how, like, how they tapped right into what we needed. Right? How they were able to, you know, address the academic needs, but even the spiritual needs right. Where they had like the weekly, there was like a weekly talk with the sheikh after, you know, for after the tarawih or the juma’a prayer. I mean, there was just, there was [a] sense of like we’re in this together, even in that moment with COVID. And yes, I do feel like School A has always, you know, supported, like even academically, if my kids felt like this is too easy or I need, you know, they need to be more challenged or if I brought it up to the teachers and I said, oh, well, you know, what can we do to keep them challenged?

SAL1 even put together a COVID panel of experts to answer questions that teachers and parents may have in addition to installing a new air filtration system in the school to help everyone feel safer to return to in-person schooling. School A was online from March to the end of May of 2020. They returned in person the following school year.

Teachers at School C (SCT1 and SCT2) both expressed how the leadership worked with their personal needs for scheduling and on a day-to-day basis. Additionally, leaders adapt to the students’ needs and value their input. For example, SCL2 shared how they had early release day per students’ request to play sports for the remaining time. As mentioned earlier by SAL2, they treat every student as the unique individual that they are and listen to try to always meet their individual needs. SCT1 expressed how grateful she
is that the leadership team is very flexible when it comes to scheduling and family issues for teachers and staff. SCT1 explained how the leadership team is, “so accommodating. And that just makes me want to never leave”. She finally explained how adaptive SCL1 is in the following quote:

I mean, like, you know, academically, we, you know, there's a zero tolerance, as you can say. You know, there's so many students that come in and are very low in level or too high in level, or financially, they may not be able to, you know, come to the school, but (the principal) always accommodates and includes everybody. And, you know, he looks at every situation in a different way. So, like, you know, like he'll talk to families, he'll talk to students, he'll talk to teachers. And like, he just wants to keep everybody happy and content, and he will do it until he is done working here because he will not stop. You know, masha Allah, he just, you know, includes everyone and takes care of every situation. And he understands that every situation is different. So, like he, you know, he allows us to modify. He modifies so we modify, everyone is included and tolerated and taken care of.

Theme: Leading by Example

Teachers (SBT1, and SBT3), staff (SBS), and parents (SCP3) when they were asked interview question number five’s follow-up question: What is the role of the leader in helping create such an environment? Several of them said the leader models it. For example, when they are empathetic towards the needs of the teachers, parents, and students, then the teachers will be empathetic towards the needs of the parents and students. The leaders model the behavior they want to see in others. For example, SCP3 explained how the leaders of the school model the behavior and it trickles down to
teachers then to students, “They model it, honestly, you know, I'm talking about how, like the teachers dress up, like have people come in a big Panda suit, like I need to send you the picture. I'll email it to you. <Laugh> he (the superintendent) just walks in with like a big Panda head and the kids love it. And imagine seeing your principal or superintendent or whoever doing that. You're just like, oh yeah,” The leaders are compassionate and care to follow up with any concerns the teachers, parents, and students may have. For instance, SCP3 continued to explain how the leader of the school not only had a great sense of humor and made everyone laugh, but he also cared. She shared a story of how her son, who was delayed in his speech, won student of the month and that the superintendent of the school came in the classroom dressed up and sang for him. SBT3 also explained the trickle-down effect of leading by example when he mentioned that our ultimate example as Muslims is prophet Muhammad ﷺ and how his department head of Quran, Islamic Studies, and Arabic, as a leader, referenced and followed his teaching. He continued to explain how much that impacted him as a teacher in the school and made him want to follow her examples. SCS mentioned how the leaders of the school are always ready to jump in and help when office administrators have deadlines or an increased workload within the school year. She said when you see them, the busy leaders, leaving everything behind to help us, it creates an environment where everyone wants to help everyone else. SCT1 summed up leading by example by stating the following regarding the leadership style of School C leadership team:

I think it's both. The leadership is, like, is amazing. The leadership, you know, just the way they are masha Allah, like so loving and caring and compassionate really makes you want to be like them. And when we're motivated, then the
students are motivated. And if the kids are happy and motivated and the parents are motivated, so it's like a big chain of reaction and it all comes from the leadership. They're just so genuine. They're so genuine.

**Theme: Relationship Building and Family Feel Environment**

Teachers, staff, and parents from all three schools expressed that one of the main reasons they continue to work or send their children to Islamic schools is the family-feel environment. SCS expressed how celebrated diversity is at the school and how that made her feel right at home as a Mexican Muslim. SBS also mentioned how when she was overwhelmed with work issues one day another co-worker came and comforted her:

I was just having a rough, you know, day or a rough week, I would say, personally, and then I remember I walked in and then so I, it was just like some personal issues and, you know, like something was really bothering me that week and then this person came in and then she, and she's always very nice, masha Allah. And she came in and she brought me something like a nice, cute little frame that has like Quran you know, ayahs(verses) and everything. And, you know, it just happened to be related to my personal life, whatever I was going through. And, subhan Allah, I was actually making Istikhara (the supplication of seeking guidance from Allah) and then she gave me that frame with the Quranic quotes and everything about kids.

SBT1 expressed how when a child lost his mother and the dad became a single dad, all the teachers and staff took turns to make lunch for their children and they had a signup schedule for the rest of the school year. School B parents also expressed that they have
WhatsApp groups to stay connected outside of school as well. SBL2 explained the family feel they have at the school when she stated the following:

So, it's like a family environment here. Like a recent example I can give you is like, a lot of our teachers went to ‘umrah’, so when they came back, we hosted like a potluck for them. So, everyone brought in the gifts. So, it was kind of like, it's work but it’s also like your family as well.

SCP3, who is also a teacher at the school, expressed her favorite memory of the school when she completed her first year of teaching there and was pregnant, the teachers and staff there surprised her with a baby shower dinner, flowers, and a gift card for the baby. She said how loved and supported she felt and how it made her feel like these are not her co-workers, they are her family. All three leaders expressed how relationship building is at the heart of all their efforts. SCL1 stated the importance of relationship building between him and the students when he mentioned “that way I could tell a kid, “Hey, you know what? You got nice haircut, man nice shoes. Oh my God, what's that look at that nice app.” And that becomes a big thing”. SCT1 mentioned how welcoming the leadership team is and said that it made her want to be there. SCL2 also expressed how these small daily conversations help leaders know their students better and how it will show the students that the leaders and teachers care about them. SCT1 summed up the importance of relationship building to SCL1 by saying:

So, not only is he an amazing superintendent, but he's also an amazing coach, you know, and coach for many, in many different ways, but he is also a basketball coach where he really, really, you know, his love for basketball is being shown to all the students and how they can also, you know, play basketball. And he's a
good role model for the boys as well. You know, they want to follow him and
they want to be like him. And he, you know, it's nice because sometimes he gets
to teach in classes too. And they just love when he's like the sub. <laugh>

SBT1 shared a story of how one teacher left their Islamic school to work at a public
school to earn a higher pay. She said that the teacher missed the environment so much
that mid-year she returned to the Islamic school. All participants in this study brought up
the life-long relationships and family feel.

Theme: Autonomy in Decision Making, Coaching and Supporting Instead of Telling

Another emerging theme was the autonomy given to the teachers and in some
cases the students to make their own decisions. Leadership opportunities are given
through the Leader in Me program at School A for all students. Whether it is part of a
governing body (SAL1) or leading an event like second graders greeting arriving parents
for open house (SAL2). SCL2 expressed how students have themes, for example
patience, and they do their research on what Islam says about being patient, then they
present it to the school. SAT2 explained how SAL1 invites him to observe how she is
doing coaching a student that made the wrong choice in class or on the playground and
doing the student to realize what poor choices they made through questioning instead of telling them. SCP3, who is also a teacher at the school, expressed how honored she felt
to pick the curriculum for reading and math for the younger students at her school. While
SAT1 summed it up when she said that SAL1 always says “I trust you, go get it done”.

SAT1 also explained the autonomy she is given by the school leader in saying, “She
trusted that, you know, and we know that she is not, I would say micromanaging us, you
know”. SBT2 mentioned that the current leader selected department chairs so they could
lead their colleagues and get their input. SCT1 expressed how the leaders always give her autonomy in decision making by saying “I trust your judgment” all the time to her. SCL1 expressed how there are teacher and parent voting representatives on the school board. SAL1 emphasized her method of conflict resolution of “coaching” the teachers to resolve a conflict and also probing the students to realize what they did and reflect on their own actions. SAL2 explained how this is part of their positive discipline system. SBL1 summed it up when he said, “I'm here to coach and guide and train”. Later SBL1 explained how he listens to all stakeholders and helps guide them when he stated:

I was able to have that compassion. I was able to ask questions. So, they themselves would come to the conclusion rather than me tell them what I'm thinking, you know? So, that we can go back, keep going back to those values, compassion, dignity, respect, psychological safety, optimism doesn't mean that we don't talk about difficult things. It just means that we talk about them with empathy and compassion and respect.

SAS, who is an alumna of the school, mentioned how when she makes any mistakes on the job she feels supported and cared for. She explained how they coach her and train her to do better. Found in the following passage from SBL1 is evidence of support and coaching:

Feedback could be overwhelming for sometimes for some people, but they're like, they're already thinking that whatever I know I'm doing my best. Right? And I'm telling them that I want you to get there. And I'm saying, you're not doing bad. You're really valued, but I want you to get here. And these are the skills I want you to learn. And here is the specific action items I want you to do. And I'm going
to be here for support. You can meet with me an hour every week and we'll meet
together, and we'll get there together.

Theme: Teamwork and Collaboration

SAL1 repeatedly mentioned how “we are in this together” and “we work as a
team”. Teamwork and collaboration were very evident in the interviews. SCS mentioned
how different departments helped each other when it was their busy season and how even
the leaders of the school stepped in. SAT1 expressed how teachers “have each other’s
back” when one of them has an appointment or is new and needs help. SAS expressed
how she is new on the job, yet she has lots of support and training from not only the
leaders but her colleagues as well. SBT2 expressed how, as a department chair, the
teachers of her department “work together as a unit” and she continued to explain how all
the departments work together “as well as for the whole school.” “Like we work together,
I have never seen a culture like this anywhere” (SBT2). She further explained how the
department chairs work closely with the PTO to help meet the needs of the school. SAT1
mentioned how everyone becomes a trainer when there is a new hire in the department
and that the responsibility does not only fall on the leaders or department chair. Leaders
(SAL2 and SCL2) mentioned that when there are new students transferred to their school,
they have a student assigned to them to help them adjust. Likewise, in School A, there is
an event where new parents find support from other parents in the school. SBP1
explained how every grade level has a WhatsApp group and how they add new parents to
the group to help answer any questions they may have. School C is a larger Islamic
school, and they have multiple classes for each grade level. Hence why SCT1 explained
teachers collaborate by having weekly grade level meetings that help them plan and stay
on the same page. She mentioned that when a teacher is struggling with a specific student, teachers brainstorm and share what worked and what did not for that particular student. SBL1 explained, “I'm not here to, you know, solve the problems alone. We need to work together because no one can do it alone.” Additionally, all three schools have departmental meetings and committees to help everyone collaborate. Collaboration and teamwork are at the heart of each school, not only at teacher, staff, and parent levels, but also between students.

**Theme: Increase Stakeholders Buy-in and Partnership**

SCL1 explained the importance of stakeholders’ buy-in. He said when you have their buy-in, along with building those relationships, they will do anything for the school and the community. He explained that their school board includes voting teacher representatives, as well as voting parent representatives. With this inclusion, there is more representation and buy-in from stakeholders since they are partners in the decision-making process. Similarly, SBL1 explained that getting everyone on board with an idea is crucial. He mentioned that it can be done by being transparent as a leader, explaining the thought process and reason behind the idea, and supporting it with evidence-based research. This level of transparency is so important, explained SBS. She said the leader explains with graphs and charts when something new is adopted by the school, there will always be a dip before growth. SBS said the leader always asked everyone to trust him and be patient, the subordinates would be skeptical at first but after the first couple of decisions, everyone realized how much he knows and that he could trusted. Now, he just shares the idea with his team, and everyone is on board right away. This validates what SBL1 said about buy-in:
And you're not going to get buy-in without trust. Right? So, we know the formula: as trust goes up, you know, the ability to get buy-in, or the speed of doing things go up. Right? And the same way the trust is down the speed and the cost of getting anything done, you know, it goes up.

Lastly, SAL1 expressed that educating the parents about the programs utilized in the school with their children is vital to the success of those programs. For instance, the Leader in Me Program, Positive Discipline, Zones of Emotional Regulation, and the Seven Healthy Habits, have a specific language and mindset to handle various situations. SAL2 explained when the home is on board and uses the same language as the school, the message is much clearer and stronger for the children. SBL1 explained how the Quran and the teachings of prophet Muhammad ﷺ are the foundation of their daily interactions and conflict resolution at School B. SBL1 explained that parents’ input is so valuable and “I think that's one of the main ways that parents feel like they’re partners” in the decision-making at the school. Students are treated in a way that increases their buy-in. SAL2 explained how as a school their goal is for students to think for themselves, have a voice, and share their ideas with the leaders, then make these ideas come to life. She mentioned that more often than not, the students’ ideas were outstanding, and the events or clubs were a great success. “We think like kids actually have better ideas than us because, as adults, we have limited beliefs and over time we tend to, you know, become more narrow” (SAL2). Empowering students is also evident in School C because the leadership team provides opportunities for student feedback, interfaith groups with other schools, and through clubs/sports. SCL3 mentioned that part of being a well-rounded Muslim student knows their identity in order to interact with non-Muslims which
will help them understand and respect others’ beliefs. She explained in the real world we all work together so understanding that diversity and collaboration is important to their success at the workforce.

**Theme: Mission Oriented and Long-Term Vision**

All three schools had strong leaders who are very much mission oriented. Their strong faith acts as their guide through difficult times. Their leadership style, leading by example, is evident in the stories shared during the interviews. SAL1’s strength in handling the COVID pandemic with such calmness and professionalism impressed many of her followers. SBL1’s return to the Quran for research on any work issue has impressed all of his team. SCL1’s letter to parents and teachers when he was diagnosed with a serious illness not only showed transparency, but also how he derived his strength from his faith to the point that it actually made one of the interviewees cried during the interview when she shared the story. School C leaders expressed how they wish that their school will continue to grow long past their time. SCL2 shared how she is a part of a legacy that will continue past her time.

SAT2 expressed how, on a daily basis their leader, SAL1, models and coaches the teachers to help students in a way that aligns with the school mission in the following quote:

> And that's also her, like, showing care for me and the students too, because she's working with them as well for something that's, you know, a relatively minor incident. Right? So, that was really, really helpful and really changed the way that I approach different, you know, incidents in the future. Right? Because I knew
how to, like, manage it in a way that is aligning with the vision of the leader of the school. Right?

Additionally, SAL2 expressed her vision when she said: “Our desire for our next generation to be the leaders of our ummah”. SAL2 expressed the importance of nurturing the students to know their identity, know that they have a voice and that their voice matters. She explained how students are treated as the future leaders, at a very young age since she is the director of K-2 school campus. That is the mission of the school. SCL2 expressed how she feels that she is helping build a legacy. She said that she prays to Allah to “keep me here as long as I'm good for the school. <laugh> To keep on growing its legacy. I've been here very, very long time”. SCL2, who is the principal of the school, also added:

Humaniy. It's you. You kids at this is Islamic school. You are our legacy. You are going to carry on when we're not here anymore. Somebody's going to sit in my chair. I'm not going to be here, you know, who's going to do that?

SAP3 expressed how driven SAL1 was, “I think she definitely has a vision that she really wants to happen, you know?” She continued to explain that the leader finds people who help support that vision to come to reality. SAT2 expressed how the leaders of the school are intentional during the hiring process to bring on board teachers and staff that align with the vision of the school. SBL1 explained how core values bring the school together “The first thing that I did when I came in this year was core values training. And then asking this question about what makes our school unique and then what really sets us apart?” Similarly, SAL2 expressed how part of their evaluative and coaching program for teachers has a reflective question of “Does that teacher really align with the school's
mission and vision?” It is evident that aligning the team with the school mission and vision is vital to all the schools in this study.

**Theme: Welcoming Environment Where Everyone is Valued**

SCT1 pointed out how her school celebrates teachers on the spot with “caught doing good”. Also, she explained that, through the trust and respect the leadership team shows the teachers and staff, everyone feels valued for their knowledge. Additionally, SCT1 described how welcoming the leaders are every morning and how that makes her want to be there. SAP1 described how her concerns are seriously taken every time she shares them. She mentioned that she feels welcome to share them because leadership’s open-door policy makes her feel that her voice is valued. SAP2 explained that she feels valued when her input is consideration. Additionally, she expressed feeling valued through her leadership position on the parent association board. SAP2 feels entrusted in making decisions and given the autonomy to lead the parents to help the school. SAP3 mentioned how she feels welcomed and valued by the way the leaders, teachers, and staff treat her as a respected and capable parent. She explained that helping her kids find their Muslim identity is another way the school values the parents. SBP2 shared how their office administrator, the first-person visitors encounter when they enter the school, earned the nickname “Sunshine” because she makes everyone feel warm and welcome with her smiles and Islamic greetings.

One of the teacher responses for the aggregated survey questions described how she feels “very welcomed, it’s a second home”. Another teacher mentioned, “I feel at home, I never think that I am going to work”. Additionally, a parent shared, “It’s like my second home. My kids are very happy with their caring teachers”. “There is always
someone to greet you at the door, everyone is welcoming at lunch time, and they invite you to join in, all the teachers come together for school events,” a staff member said. According to the teachers, staff, and parents that completed the surveys, the places themselves are welcoming. Everyone is welcomed and greeted with a smile. The leaders all have an open-door policy and help everyone resolve their issues or address their concerns. “Despite being from a Christian background, I have been openly welcomed since day one,” one teacher disclosed how they feel welcomed at the school in their survey response. “Very welcome! I am not Muslim, and I feel very much respected by my peers and also parents. I am asked for ideas or solutions by others. The administration checks in with me on a personal and professional level,” another non-Muslim teacher expressed in their survey response.

**Research Question Two**

*Are there significant differences in perceptions between stakeholders (teachers, staff, parents) regarding the use of the 5Ps (people, places, policies, programs, and processes) of invitational leadership?*

Collected from all three schools via QuestionPro online survey tool were one hundred and forty-three responses. The respondents indicated in the survey what their role is within the school. Please note that the researcher clearly instructed the participants to fill out the answers from their role within the school. This was important to keep the two samples independent of one another since some teachers are parents at the school as well. In addition, since each domain was measured four times in a single response, the total number of responses for a single domain is 143 multiplied by 4 questions across 5 domains which is equal to 2,860 total responses, they were divided into the five domains.
making the total responses 572 for each domain. However, some participants left some of the questions blank, which is why there is a discrepancy in the N values. All the N values are clearly included in the provided tables for that reason.

Performed using IBM SPSS v28 was an independent t-test, comparing the mean values of the two groups, teachers/staff and parents, measuring the five domains of invitational leadership. The survey had an indicate your role question, followed by 20 Likert scale questions, and two short answer questions. The 20 questions included four questions from each domain to measure perceptions of stakeholders. Randomly ordered were the questions. Table 3 and Table 4 include descriptive statistics of both groups.

Table 3

*Descriptive Statistics for Teachers’/Staff’s Responses*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>People</td>
<td>243</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.35</td>
<td>0.666</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Places</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.12</td>
<td>0.729</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policies</td>
<td>242</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.36</td>
<td>0.616</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programs</td>
<td>243</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.97</td>
<td>0.771</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Processes</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.29</td>
<td>0.655</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. N = 252 (63 Teachers/Staff)*

As viewed in Table 3, the highest mean for teachers and staff was policies, 3.36, followed closely by people, 3.35. This suggests that the internal stakeholders of the organizations interact effectively with people and understand the use of school policies. Processes and places also scored high at 3.29 and 3.12 respectively. The lowest was
programs, 2.97; perhaps due to lack of awareness of specific programs to internal stakeholders, or that they believe needed are more programs at their schools. During the interviews, several interviewees expressed how the strength of the school is their qualified teachers (SAP1, SAP3, SBT2, and SCP3), and they believed the decision-making process and policies are fair and inclusive (SAT1, SAT2, SAP2, SAP3, SBT1, SBT2, SBT3, SBP1, SBP2, SCT1, SCT2, SCP2, and SCP3).

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics for Parents’ Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>People</td>
<td>309</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.20</td>
<td>0.822</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Places</td>
<td>305</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.14</td>
<td>0.741</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policies</td>
<td>306</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.21</td>
<td>0.800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programs</td>
<td>303</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.87</td>
<td>0.855</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Processes</td>
<td>298</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.21</td>
<td>0.746</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. N = 320 (80 Parents)

Reflected in Table 4 are the parents’ responses to how inviting the 5Ps were in their school. The highest means were policies and processes, at 3.21, followed closely by people, at 3.20. This parallels the teacher and staff’s responses. This suggests viewed similarly by external and internal stakeholders were the schools. Places were the fourth domain and scored the third highest mean with respect to parents at 3.14. The lowest mean was programs (2.87). This mirrors the data collected from the teachers and staff’s
descriptive statistics. This again could be due to a lack of awareness of specific programs to external stakeholders, or that they believe more programs should be at their schools.

This data highlights the importance of creating positive school culture and effective leadership because capable leaders must strive to keep the external and internal views of the stakeholders synchronized and balanced. Furthermore, the quantitative findings support the qualitative theme of listening and caring about the stakeholders, both inside and outside the organization. The data further suggests the leaders in these schools were involving the views of the external stakeholders by listening to them and including them in the decision-making process and thereby internalize them personally, but across their respective organizations. This strongly suggests a reason why so little difference exists in the perceptions of the various stakeholders’ views when it comes to the five domains.

Using the statistical treatment of the Levene’s Test for Equality of Variance and the \( t \)-test for Equality of Means the \( t \)-tests were administered for each of the five domains. The significance level at 0.05 was applied for the domains of people, places, policies, programs, and processes. Discussed below are the items on the survey for each domain and the \( t \)-test findings.

**People Domain**

On the distributed survey the following questions measured how trusting, respectful, optimistic, caring, accessible, courteous, and intentional the people of the organizations are:

5. The principal involves everyone in the decision-making process.

13. Teachers work to encourage students’ self-confidence.
16. The principal treats people as though they are responsible.

19. People in this school want to be here.

There was a total of 552 valid responses for the four questions that measured how inviting the people are within the schools. The findings for the domain of people, noted in Table 5, indicate that equal variance is assumed since the significance level is at 0.056 and is higher than $p=0.05$ acceptance level. The significance of the two-tailed t-test for equal variance is assumed measured at $p=0.025$. Since the value 0.025 is less than 0.05, that means there is a difference in the mean scores between teachers/staff and parents. This indicated that there is a difference in perception between the stakeholders regarding the domain of people.

**Table 5**

*SPSS Independent t-test Mean Value Comparisons between Teachers/Staff and Parents*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>Levene’s Test for Equality of Variance</th>
<th>Equal Variance</th>
<th>Equal Variance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Levene’s Test for Equality of Variance</td>
<td>Equal</td>
<td>Equal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assumed</td>
<td>Not Assumed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>F</strong></td>
<td>3.657</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sig.</strong></td>
<td>0.056</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>t-test for Equality of Means</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>t</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>df</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sig. (2-tailed)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mean Difference</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Std. Error Difference</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>95% Confidence Interval</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of the Difference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. N = 552, *significant*
Places Domain

On the distributed survey, the following questions measured how functional, attractive, clean, efficient, aesthetic, and personable the places of the organizations are:

6. Furniture is pleasant and comfortable.
12. The principal’s office is attractive.
14. Bulletin boards are attractive and up-to-date.
17. Space is available for student independent study.

There was a total of 550 valid responses for the four questions that measured how inviting the places are within the schools. The findings for the domain of places, noted in Table 6, indicate that equal variance assumed since the significance level is at 0.571 and is higher than 0.05 acceptance level. The significance of the two-tailed t-test for equal variance assumed measured 0.720. Since the value 0.720 is well above 0.05, that means there is no significant difference between the means. This indicated that there are no differences in perception between the stakeholders regarding the domain of places.

Table 6

SPSS Independent t-test Mean Value Comparisons between Teachers/Staff and Parents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>Places</th>
<th>Equal Variance</th>
<th>Equal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Levene’s Test for Equality of Variance</td>
<td></td>
<td>Assumed</td>
<td>Not Assumed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>0.321</td>
<td>0.571</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>t-test for Equality of Means</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>t</td>
<td>-0.358</td>
<td>-0.359</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>df</td>
<td>548</td>
<td>526.272</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>0.720</td>
<td>0.720</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean Difference</td>
<td>-0.023</td>
<td>-0.023</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std. Error Difference</td>
<td>0.063</td>
<td>0.063</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>95% Confidence Interval Lower</td>
<td>-0.147</td>
<td>-0.146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of the Difference Upper</td>
<td>0.101</td>
<td>0.101</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. N = 550*

**Policies Domain**

On the distributed survey, the following questions measured how inclusive, fair, equitable, tolerant, defensible, consistent, and just the policies of the organizations are:

7. Teachers are willing to help students who have special problems.

9. Students have the opportunity to talk to one another during class activities.

11. School policy encourages freedom of expression by everyone.

15. The messages and notes sent home are positive.

There was a total of 548 valid responses for the four questions that measured how inviting the policies are within the schools. The findings for the domain of policies, noted in Table 7, indicate that equal variance *not* assumed since the significance level is less than 0.001 and is significantly less than the 0.05 acceptance level. The significance of the two-tailed t-test for equal variance *not* assumed measured at 0.018. Since the value of 0.018 is well below 0.05, that means there is a significant difference between the mean scores between teachers/staff and parents. This indicated that there is a difference in perception between the stakeholders regarding the domain of policies.
Table 7

SPSS Independent t-test Mean Value Comparisons between Teachers/Staff and Parents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>Policies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Levene’s Test for Equality of Variance</td>
<td>Equal Variance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variance</td>
<td>Equal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>11.953</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig.</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**t-test for Equality of Means**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>t</th>
<th>2.294</th>
<th>2.363</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>df</td>
<td>546</td>
<td>545.630</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>0.022*</td>
<td>0.018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean Difference</td>
<td>0.143</td>
<td>0.143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std. Error Difference</td>
<td>0.062</td>
<td>0.060</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>95% Confidence Interval Lower</td>
<td>0.021</td>
<td>0.024</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of the Difference Upper</td>
<td>0.265</td>
<td>0.262</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* N = 548 *significant

**Programs Domain**

On the distributed survey the following questions measured how enriching, stimulating, healthful, interactive, constructive, and developmental are the programs of the organizations:

4. Everyone is encouraged to participate in athletic (sports) programs.

8. There is a wellness (health) program in this school.

10. School programs involve out of school experience.

21. The school sponsors extracurricular activities apart from sports.

There was a total of 546 valid responses for the four questions that measured how inviting the programs are within the schools. The findings for the domain of programs, noted in Table 8, indicate that equal variance *not* assumed since the significance level is
0.002 and is significantly less than the 0.05 acceptance level. The significance of the two-tailed t-test for equal variance *not* assumed measured 0.156. Since the value 0.156 is well above 0.05, that means there is no significant difference between the means. This indicated that there are no differences in perception between the stakeholders regarding the domain of programs.
Table 8

SPSS Independent t-test Mean Value Comparisons between Teachers/Staff and Parents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>Programs</th>
<th>Equal Variance</th>
<th>Equal Variance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Assumed</td>
<td>Not Assumed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Levene’s Test for Equality</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of Variance</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>9.781</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig.</td>
<td>0.002</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

-t-test for Equality of Means-

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Equal Variance</th>
<th>Equal Variance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>t</td>
<td>1.406</td>
<td>1.422</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>df</td>
<td>544</td>
<td>536.575</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
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<td>0.156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean Difference</td>
<td>0.099</td>
<td>0.099</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std. Error Difference</td>
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<td>0.070</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>95% Confidence Interval of the Difference</td>
<td>Lower</td>
<td>-0.039</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Upper</td>
<td>0.238</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. N = 546

Processes Domain

On the distributed survey the following questions measured how academic, interdisciplinary, encouraging, democratic, cooperative, and collaborative are the processes of the organizations:

3. Student discipline is approached from a positive standpoint.

18. People often feel welcome when they enter the school.

20. Many people in this school are involved in making decisions.

22. Classes get started quickly.

There was a total of 543 valid responses for the four questions that measured how inviting the processes are within the schools. The findings for the domain of processes, reflected in Table 9, indicate that equal variance assumed since the significance level is
0.232 and is significantly more than the 0.05 acceptance level. The significance of the two-tailed t-test for equal variance assumed measured at 0.159. Since the value of 0.159 is well above 0.05, that means there is no significant difference between the means. This indicated that there are no differences in perception between the stakeholders regarding the domain of processes.

Table 9

**SPSS Independent t-test Mean Value Comparisons between Teachers/Staff and Parents**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>Processes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Levene’s Test for Equality of Variance Variance</td>
<td>Equal Variance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>1.431</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig.</td>
<td>0.232</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>t-test for Equality of Means</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>df</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean Difference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std. Error Difference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>95% Confidence Interval</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of the Difference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* N = 543

Based on the quantitative analysis in this study, there is a difference in perceptions between teachers/staff and parents regarding the domains of people and policies. However, the data indicated there are no significant differences in perceptions between teachers/staff and parents with respect to the domains of places, programs, and processes see Figure 1. One possible explanation is that internally, the teachers and staff view themselves as inviting; however, the parents are not seeing the behaviors as
inviting. Additionally, a possible explanation for the discrepancy between the stakeholders’ perception of the policy domain is that parents may need to be educated on existing school policies, and perhaps more involved in the creation and evolution of a policy to be better informed.

\[\text{Figure 1} \]
\textit{Five Domains of Invitational Leadership}

\[\text{Note. Aggregated Survey Data}\]
Research Question Three

*How has the principal implemented the five elements (I-CORT) of invitational leadership to promote a positive, inviting culture within an Islamic School?*

**Intentionality**

All three leadership teams discussed how they are intentional about their daily interactions, such as their people, places, policies, programs, and processes. For example, SAT2 explained how intentional the leadership team is about bringing the right people that buy into the vision of the school in the following quote:

> That, you know, whoever's hiring is intentional about who they're going to employ, you know, like, and that could be in an interview about, you know, someone saying something negative about their old job might reflect on that person's character and that person might not necessarily make a good fit then, you know. So, that's something that, you know, I would assume, like, I'm sure that there's a very intentional vetting process. Like, not everybody's just going to be hired. You know what I mean? Somebody who the leaders see could be a fit amongst the school is going to be hired. And if it turns out that they're not, then I would assume that they were not good, that employee would not continue with the school for much longer.

SBL1 explained that, as a school, they selected six core values and were very intentional in carrying out those values when he said:

> Voting and then choosing the top five, you know, and then adding sixth- we added a sixth one later, but you might have seen the core values document and, you know, just always making sure that the way that we're speaking, giving
feedback, taking feedback, listening, or serving, teaching or learning, is that through this sense of God-centeredness versus self-centeredness. Is it based on compassion? Is it based on humility to listen and learn or grow? Is it based on preference to others to try to serve each other? Is it based on, you know, *ihsan* (highest level of kindness) and spiritual excellence? So, we feel we have a sense of presence, peacefulness, and you know, this striving for excellence.

SBL1 explained how intentional he is about creating a psychologically safe environment for everyone to be able to try, fail, and learn. Team leads and departments provide support during meetings by asking “How are you doing emotionally? How are you feeling? If there's anything we can do to support?”

The schools are very intentional in their choice of words when they sent letters to parents or any surveys to stakeholders. Examples of this is reflected in Appendix H that includes a letter sent from School B to parents and SBL1 stated “I invite you to take 10 minutes to reflect and journal about the questions above to engage in a Spiritual Self-Discovery and Intention-Setting exercise to fuel your personal journey to your best self.”

School A improvement plan, (Appendix I), is a testament on that the school is goal oriented and is working to grow the school to meet the changing world of today. Additionally, in Appendix J, School A’s Parent Handbook, the rules and expectations are communicated in a very clear and comprehensive manner.

**Care**

*School A*

SAL1 discussed that the most important way to express caring is by listening. She has a monthly “coffee with the principal” event so everyone may express their concerns.
School A sends out surveys to teachers, staff, and parents to get feedback. They offer breakfast to teachers and staff. Additionally, she explained how structure and division of work is a form of care, not overloading a few teachers with extra school duties for example. SAL2 expressed that the Leader in Me program, which is based on Steven Covey’s seven healthy habits, celebrates all students’ personalities, their strengths, and that “everyone can be a leader”. School A has an annual fundraising gala where all current and former members of the school meet as families and have a dinner auction. Furthermore, provided workshops to teachers, staff, and parents train them on new programs the school is adopting so everyone is onboard. SAL1 expressed “For me, my role is not to be well-liked or to be popular. My job is to do the job of protecting our faculty and staff, protecting our students, protecting the families.” During the COVID pandemic the School A leadership team did an outstanding job, according to the parents interviewed, to minimize educational disruption, transition to online learning quickly, and take the input of stakeholders seriously. The school leaders took everyone’s input seriously and they took steps towards making the school environment CDC-compliant which sped up the process of returning to in-person learning by fall 2020. Implementing the Zones of Regulation program also helps students be more mindful of their emotional needs. SAL1 explained that her job is to make things fair so that teachers and staff will continue working at the school. She said taking care of parents is listening to them and honoring why they enrolled their children in this school. SAL2 expressed how their frequent workshops, training, and webinars to all stakeholders help educate them. She mentioned that the topics are selected based on the needs of the teachers, staff, parents, and students. Additionally, she said treated is each student as a unique individual.
Differentiating the needs of the students is a form of caring for them. School A leaders expressed their belief that creating an environment where there is structure, transparency, frequent and clear communication, and consistency will foster a caring culture.

**School B**

During the teacher meetings there is exercise time built in. The leader is intentional about promoting physical, emotional, and mental wellbeing for teachers and staff. For the mind, reading is important for SBL1, so he started book clubs in each department wherein each teacher reads a book and shares their thoughts. Sometimes they all read the same book and have discussions. He was intentional about the book choices too, when he explained:

> Also, we've chosen some of these, vulnerabilities, empathy, and a few other type of books that helps us create that resilience and wellbeing for teachers. And my first PD also, we’re focused on teachers’ wellbeing and resilience. So that teachers feel their best at school.

The leader is adamant about listening to the parents’ concerns. He explained that the school sends surveys to parents prior to making a decision, then after making and implementing a decision, the school sends out a satisfaction survey to parents.

Workshops provided monthly for parents to attend on topics such as mindful emotional intelligence. For students, offered are leadership programs, workshops for mental and emotional wellness, and career counseling. Additionally, SBL1 has a coffee with the principal event to listen to everyone’s concerns and address those concerns. School B leadership team shows a great level of individualized care for students. For example, in
the School B *hifz* program, the teachers meet with the student and parents and discuss the student’s goals for Quran memorization.

**School C**

School C leaders are passionate about developing students holistically. They show their care to their students by listening to their input, allowing them to fully lead morning assembly, compete in doing good deeds, celebrating their Islamic identity through leading prayer and delivering *khutbah*, the Friday sermon. SCL1 values sports and the role it plays in students’ success. He is the basketball coach and he mentioned that it allows him to connect with the student on a personal level during after school practice time. SCL1 uses humor to win the students’ hearts. The teachers and parents also spoke about how he adds a certain fun spirit to the school with the funny hats he wears daily when he is greeting teachers, staff, parents and students during drop off and pick up.

SCL2 explained how they take care of their teachers, staff, and students:

> Well, mental health is a big one these days, especially the pandemic. And so, we actually are blessed to have two counselors on our team, one male, one female. We share them across both campuses. They are part-time, but they are very, very active, very proactive and very available for the students and the school. They will run-- Every month we have a value of the month. So, this month is patience. And so last week we had our counselor run the sixth through high school program. We had an early dismissal, meaning school ended at 11 o'clock and the counselors together put together a program to do with, so they don't have regular class, but they do activities related to the value of the month. So that's what they did. And so, I think that helps, in so many ways.
It is evident that School C cares about the well-being of their stakeholders. Furthermore, SCL3 explained workshops and professional development offered at the school; however, post-COVID, they focused on how teachers feel emotionally and psychologically in the workshops they offered. For instance, teachers have teacher workdays to catch up on grading and other administrative work. There are also early release days, SCL2 explained, which also help with teacher workshops. The leaders are ready to listen and work on the concerns teachers, staff, parents, and students have. School C also offers mental health days for teachers and staff. Teachers have teacher assistants to help them with making copies, taking attendance, etc. Counselors are also available for teachers. Teachers’ paid time off carries over to the next year if they are not used. Taking care of parents is also evident in providing time for them and listening to their concerns. SCL1 expressed how parents are the customers at the school and they must strive to make them happy. SCL3 explained that it is about balance between meeting the needs of the child, working with the parents, while at the same time supporting the teachers. Parents fill out satisfaction surveys and the leaders consider their feedback and offered workshops to help them with guiding their children at home. Lastly, School C, like Schools A and B, see each student for their unique needs and offer solutions that are unique for that student. For instance, the president of student council emailed the principal to ask for extra time to play sports, so SCL2 arranged for an early release day to allow students to play. Listening to the students’ needs shows the students how much the school leaders care about them and value their input.
Optimism

School A

“Optimism is faith” (SAL1). SAL1 explained how many stakeholders claimed she is overly optimistic about her vision for the school in terms of financial growth. She said that she has faith in her teachers, staff, families, and students.

SAL2 discussed how their adopted programs are all based on a positive mindset, for example:

We have actually several things that we've done intentionally and created programs to build on that optimism. We have a growth mindset philosophy that starts with teachers, you know, feeling that about their own profession, as well as teachers having that mindset for students. And then teaching that to students that if you don't know it yet, is that magic word of power of yet, you don't know it yet.

She continued to explain how the use of positive discipline is a paradigm shift to many:

So even that mindset of, okay, you messed up, how are we going to fix it for the next time? So that feeling is a again carried by leaders, by teachers, and then parents who have very a traditional kind of thinking a lot of times that, oh, my child got in trouble and they went to the principal's office. We have to educate them that, you know, instead of just punishing them, there are opportunities where we ask them for their, can you maybe take away a privilege to really send the strong message. But a lot of times, especially at the younger age, I have to kind of educate and talk to the parents and coach them. So, part of my job is to be a coach is to coach them and say, you know, talk with your child and see how they can
repair the damage that was done and encourage them to, you know, ask questions rather than just tell of them and lecture them.

School A leadership team is optimistic and believe in a growth mindset with their teachers and staff as well:

The other part I wanted to mention as far as growth and opportunity and optimism for teachers is last year, the other directors and I created a, we call it a teacher coaching model and it was a faculty evaluation sort of redone, reorganized. So, it's less evaluative and more coaching based. And so, the teachers feel supported. They actually set their goal and, you know, through conversations with us, they take an assessment and then they determine what goal they want to focus on as a teacher. And then we get to support them by checking in, by coaching, by doing an observation, you know, by them reflecting. And so, we piloted last year, and I hope to like keep growing that in the future years. So, that's something that we've started recently to build up (SAL2).

**School B**

SBL1 explained how optimism is there by focusing on Allah in the actions at the school versus focusing on self by stating:

Just always making sure that the way that we're speaking, giving feedback, taking feedback, listening, or serving, teaching or learning, is that through this sense of God-centeredness versus self-centeredness. Is it based on compassion? Is it based on humility to listen and learn or grow? Is it based on preference to others to try to serve each other? Is it based on, you know, ihsan (highest level of kindness) and spiritual excellence?
He mentioned how in today’s world it is all about individualism and very egocentric in nature. The leader then explained that by referring to the core values of Islam when anyone gives feedback to anyone else, it helps shift from the individual to the community and makes that feedback easier to give, which in turn leads to growth for the individual and school as a whole. He also explained that the way a leader provides the feedback makes a great difference. Making the teachers, staff, parents, and students feel that they are coached, supported, and cared has more of an impact than to just criticize and judge them. Lastly, he explained when they feel respected and treated with compassion, they are more likely to comply and work together to improve themselves and the school.

**School C**

The leaders in School C understand the importance of celebrating everyone’s strength. For example, they celebrate student of the week, student of the month, and teacher of the month. When an interviewee, SCT1, was asked if that created competition or jealousy between teachers, she smiled and said not really, because the leaders point out the good in everyone. However, there are lots of competitions daily between students. The school has a character score where points are deducted or added based on the student’s actions. Points can always be earned back, teaching students that they can work to improve themselves. This gives students hope. The concept of as long as you are living, it is not too late to repent, and improve oneself aligns with the teachings of Islam. SCL2 explained how they have the “caught doing good” on the spot award for students. Where they will have points added to their character grade. The students are divided into “houses” by grade, and when a student earns points for themselves, they also earn those points for their house. SCL1 explained that the focus of the school is to help all students
be well rounded and improve. Developing their academics, character, and faith. In terms of optimism for teachers and parents, SCL3 expressed how in every meeting, whether with parents or teachers, there is always room for improvement. To her, leader’s job is to help support teachers and parents become better at their roles and offer workshops to all stakeholders, including students, in areas of their interests and needs. School C leaders mentioned how speakers are brought in from different states and countries to help inspire the new generation of Muslim leaders and how these speakers are selected carefully based on the students’ interests. SCT1 expressed how important it is for Muslim students as a minority in the US to learn about famous Muslim leaders in North America to help motivate them and inspire them. Furthermore, students have their individual goals such as reading goals during the school’s literacy week. The students display their accomplishments in the hallways, which helps them celebrate accomplishments and acts as a motivating factor for other students to see according to SCL2. This helps students compete with themselves and improve by reaching a new reading level. SCL2 also mentioned how important it is to allow teachers to grow on their own while leaders are there to support them and coach them in the process. SCL1 summed it up when he said that their school was large enough to need three leaders and they promoted everyone from within the school. He explained that it helps other teachers and staff see that there is potential for career growth within the organization.

Respect

School A

SAL1 explained how she respects parents’ wishes when it comes to their children’s future. In School A, there is an exit meeting with parents to help them
transition their child to public schools for high school. SAL1 posited that respect and trust are difficult to separate. She explained that because she trusts her teachers, staff, and parents she shows them respect that way. As a leader, she respects that teachers, staff, and parents are able to make their own decisions (SAL1). SAL2 shared a story where a first-grade student misbehaved in school and that instead of scolding him and lecturing him, she respected him and coached him via questions she posed about changing his behavior:

I said, can you? And so, there was this whole question and answer instead of a lecture way. At the end of like three-minute conversation, he says to me, he goes, I can do this. And I said, I believe you. I said, I totally think you can. What do you think you need to do to try it? And he said, just don't email my mom. And I said, well, I said, I don't like to keep secrets from parents. It's not something we do here. But how about you show me the rest of the day what we're talking about. And then I can say a positive thing to your parents, you know, tell them that you made better choices today and his whole demeanor changed from kind of, you know, naughty sounding, bratty sounding, boy, “I didn't do anything.” He was standoffish. You can just tell when you reach them.

SAL2 expressed her thoughts on showing respect to others by saying” I think having open dialogue, transparent conversations, listening, those are some of the key parts that I've implemented.” She continued to explain how teachers are respected by having their voices heard and how they are given the autonomy to make decisions in various situations. Nonetheless, SAL2 emphasized her role as a leader in coaching and supporting
the teachers, “A leader's job, especially as a school leader with teachers, is to know that they're supported.”

**School B**

SBL1 expressed how respect is built by listening to the needs of others. He mentioned how he is *serving* the community as a leader. Moreover, he explained that respect comes when the followers feel comfortable talking to the leader and the leader listens to the followers. SBL1 then mentioned that an open-door policy existed: “We're all here to serve each other and connect with each other.” School B leader also expressed how he is dissolving these ideas of teachers versus parents, teachers versus admins, etc. He mentioned that parents told him that “customer is king” and parents respected and listened to above all. He responded with the following:

That's our American understanding of service. And I was just telling them that Islamically, the teacher is the king. Because our prophet(saws) said, “I was sent as a teacher.” You know, if we respect the teacher, if we support the teacher, if we help grow and, you know, develop the teacher. And if we have the right *adab* (manners) with the teacher, then, you know, we are creating an environment where our kids are learning from that teacher. Taking the best out of that teacher.

SBL1 and SBL2 both explained that in listening to stakeholders the key is to earn and give respect. When they feel heard, and when the leaders take actions to address their needs and concerns, they feel respected.

**School C**

SCL1 explained how respect is through inclusion. School C celebrates diversity, and it shows. They have students attending the school from over 50 countries. After
prayer, the superintendent (SCL1) makes sure he has an opportunity to talk to the students. He said taking the time to talk to them, showing them that he cares, building those relationships, is how he shows the students that he respects them. SCL1 expressed how as a leader, he wants the students to be excited to see him and greet him, as opposed to fear him. He mentioned how the students shared with him that he is so funny. “I don't want these kids to respect me out of fear” (SCL1). School C leaders (SCL1, SCL2, and SCL3) noted that there are two voting members on the school board representing teachers, and two voting members on the school board representing parents. This representation and inclusion show how the school respects teachers’ and parents’ voices. Stakeholders have a voice in the school and the leaders acknowledge it and listen to it. SCL3 shared how communication helps build that respect between leaders and teachers. SCL2 and SCL3 remarked that trusting teachers’ and staffs’ competencies to do their jobs is a form of respect as well. SCT1 expressed how valued she felt and how that made her feel respected both as a teacher and parent at the school. SCP2 shared that the leaders’ open-door policy meant that they listened to the parents’ concerns and valued their input. SCP3 smiled as she mentioned how she feels that her concerns become the leaders’ concerns. School C’s culture shows respect to teachers and students by celebrating them and getting to know them through student of the week postings in the hallway or a game they play at assembly to get to know their teachers better. SCL2 explained the following regarding how teachers and staff feel: “I just feel that they feel taken care of and valued and respected for their profession”. “Communication is the key,” SCL2 stated, especially with the COVID-19 pandemic. There is a high level of respect between teachers, SCL2 explained. At the department level they work as a team and hold weekly meetings to
collaborate and better serve the students. SCL2 noted that teachers and staff also show
their respect for parents through clear and frequent communication regarding the
students. Teachers often send online surveys to gather specific information about the
students and better understand parents’ opinions. Each teacher in School C has their own
page with online resources and surveys for parents.

Trust

School A

SAL2 acknowledged how vital building trust between stakeholders is in School A:

One of the core paradigms and programs within Leader in Me is the speed of
trust. And so, we actually led several trainings in how do you build trust among
different stakeholders? So, I've led, you know, those trainings with my team, for
example. And so, the teachers learn about the 13 behaviors of trust, and we
encourage them to apply those traits and, you know, trust habits within their own
lives. And that includes parents. So, when you have sort of like that foundational
level that is leading with intention as you were explaining, and, and then when
you provide avenues of, again, expression. Parents have the right to ask for certain
things, you know, when they reach out to teachers or myself, I know that this is
coming from a place of concern.

Both leaders of School A noted the importance of building relationships with all
stakeholders to help build that trust factor.

SAL1 gave an example of one of the 13 behaviors that help build trust:

So, one example would be straight talk, right? Like being truthful without being
hurt, like knowing that that could hurt, but, but not mincing words, not like not
dancing around it. Being able to say, you know, your child is really struggling. Their level is not anywhere near the other kids’ level. I know that's not something you want to hear, but I feel like you need, you need to know because at the end you're going to want him to succeed. And if you know, now maybe you could put things in place to get him or her. What they need.

She expressed the importance of balancing being truthful to build trust and being companionate at the same time. Using kind words is key (SAL1). The leaders of School A promote “publicly praise, privately critique” (SAL1). They believe in building the trust through respecting everyone.

**School B**

SBL1 gave the example of a man that came to prophet Muhammad ﷺ and told him that he wanted to commit Zinna (sexual intercourse without marriage). Instead of scolding him or telling him that it is forbidden, he instead questioned him, “would you like this to be done with anyone in your family? Your, you know, your sister or aunt?” the man said no to the prophet ﷺ. So, he continued to explain how Prophet Muhammad ﷺ had “emotional kind of like sensibilities”. He made the man arrive at the answer. School B leader then explained that connecting with people builds trust:

> connection with students can really help build that trust and validating their feeling to an extent that it is their feeling. It is their emotion. It's okay to feel those emotions, but it's not okay to act on them. If the action is not responsible, the action is not compassionate, the action doesn't produce a positive result for them or others.
The leaders of School B also mentioned that clear communication and transparency also help build trust between administrators, teachers, staff, parents, and students.

**School C**

SCL2 noted that the visibility of the leaders during arrival and dismissal of the students is very important in building trust. She mentioned how the short morning and afternoon conversations help build the trust between the school leaders and the parents. She added that no matter what the weather is like, the leaders of School C are always there greeting the parents and students daily. “Parents seeing that shows them that we care about the whole child. And you know, and I think that helps them build trust” (SCL2). School C leaders shared how open communication, transparency, and building relationships are all factors that are vital to building trust between stakeholders. SCL2 also pointed out that the leaders of the school *model* the behavior they want the other stakeholders to have. For example, SCL2 said we respect and trust our teachers and staff. This trickles down to teachers and staff respecting and trusting each other, parents, and students. Parents bring their children to School C because they trust the leadership team will only hire the best certified teachers to teach the students, as SCL3 pointed out. SCL3 further noted that the teachers at the school, and the school leaders, all bring their own children to attend School C, which “speaks very loudly” of how the teachers trust the school. Lastly, SCL3 mentioned that at the school there is no blaming or “finger pointing”. She explained that the faith grounds everyone at the school because they all know they will answer to Allah. SCL1 summed it up when he said, “stakeholders share all their concerns with us because they trust we will address them and follow up.”
Discussion of Findings

The researcher discovered the following themes emerging from research question one: *Listening; adaptive to stakeholders’ needs; leading by example; relationship building, and family-feel environment; autonomy in decision-making; coaching and supporting instead of telling; teamwork and collaboration; increase stakeholders buy-in and partnership; mission oriented and long-term vision; and welcoming environment where everyone is valued.* Additionally, this study analyzed the five domains (people, places, policies, programs, and processes) of invitational leadership in the quantitative portion which helped answer research question two. Lastly, the researcher examined the implementation of the five elements of invitational leadership: intentionality, care, optimism, respect, and trust (I-CORT), in the three schools while answering research question three.

The interviews and document analysis supported that the schools are unintentionally inviting in the answers to research questions one and three. However, the analysis of the aggregated surveys revealed that two (people and policies) of the five domains are unintentionally disinviting. In the subsequent sections, discussed is each research question.

Research Question One

What are the perceptions of the teachers and the parents regarding the leadership style of the principal within an Islamic School?

Listening and Being Adaptive to Stakeholders’ Needs

The theme which emerged most often in interviews was feeling listened to. Stakeholders felt that their voices matter and that they are heard and validated. Several
interviewees specifically mentioned that they knew that their opinions are valued. Many
gave the example of COVID-19 and its impact on education. All three leaders used
various means to see how teachers, staff, parents, and students felt about online learning
and masks. Stakeholders in the schools feel listened to and heard by the leadership of the
schools. The interviews revealed that the scheduled meetings between the principals and
the teachers or parents were important drivers in stakeholders’ perception of listening.
Interviewees used as examples of leaders listening the leaders sending out surveys to
teachers and parents for feedback. This adaptive behavior of changing behavior is
reflected in Heifetz and Laurie (2011) that adaptive leaders can view the situation from
various perspectives and listen to the suggestions of others. “Adaptive leaders incorporate
many of these behaviors simultaneously, and interdependently, with some of them being
more important at the beginning of a particular process and others at the end” (Northouse,
2019, p. 273). Furthermore, the parents mentioned that they felt listened to even when
their suggestions did not reflect the result in the decision-making process. The teachers
and parents alike shared that they believe the leaders will always consider the various
inputs and do their best to make a collective decision for the schools. As Purkey and
Novak (2012) explained, the democratic ethos values the voices of all stakeholders and
creates a climate where members believe their input will be valued. The results of this
inquiry supported Purkey and Novak (2012) findings.

Leading by Example

The administrators modeled the behavior that they want to see in others.
Interviewees explained that the prophet Muhammad ﷺ was a teacher and that Muslims
need to follow his example. This correspondence between the leaders’ styles and their
faith only strengthened their authenticity as leaders. Avolio et al. (2009) supported this parallelism when they contended that authentic leaders have four distinct but related characteristics: self-awareness, internalized moral perspective, balanced processing, and relational transparency. When leaders modeled the behaviors they want to see in others, their followers will have a clearer message of the vision of those leaders. “Authentic leaders understand their own values and behave towards others based on these values” (Northouse, 2019, p. 200). Furthermore, this research supports the findings of Purkey, et al., (2020) and Stillion and Seigel (2005) finding that inviting cultures had positive impacts on stakeholders. Specifically, an inviting culture is one focused on intentionality regarding the respect and trust created within the culture of the organization through a clear vision.

**Relationship Building and Family-Feel Environment**

Northouse (2019) summarized that organizations develop a healthy work environment and culture when leaders build strong relationships with their team members and followers. Additionally, Hill et al. (2014) alluded to the need for leaders to build trust and respect with all members of the organization. Furthermore, empowering and motivating all people in the organization will improve social relationships (Anderson, 1982; Strong & Jones, 1991). This study found that the stakeholders developed a family feel in all three schools. This perception creates not only a sense of belonging and family feel but also loyalty. This perception in turn forms a community where even some alumni come back to teach at their former schools although the pay is much lower than public schools. This sense of belonging establishes a collaborative environment among the members of the organization. Although supported by the qualitative data, especially by
the teachers and staff, the quantitative data denotes the need to be more inviting to the parents on policy and programs.

**Autonomy in Decision-making: Coaching and Supporting Instead of Telling**

The leaders at all three schools have a growth mindset for their teachers, staff, students, and parents. They understand their role as that of a supporter and trainer to help everyone improve and grow. The leaders allow the teachers and the students to self-reflect and decide what to do in challenging situations yet provide them with the support they need. In addition to having this level of autonomy on a daily basis, the teachers’ and staff feedback was valued when it came to making bigger decisions as well. Cultures that are willing to give more autonomy to their members allow for more creativity and risk-taking (Bolman & Deal, 2017). Furthermore, leaders that aid in creating a culture where all celebrate the learning process and workers have a level of autonomy will cause growth both at the individual level and at the organizational level (Gill, 2010; Tierney, 2012). Researchers (Çayırdağ, 2016; Lewis et al., 2016) contended a positive culture will help members of an organization be more autonomous and creative. Thus, it is evident the leaders have created a positive school culture by giving their subordinates autonomy.

**Teamwork and Collaboration**

“A team is a type of organizational group that is composed of members who are interdependent, who share common goals, and who must coordinate their activities to accomplish these goals” (Hill, 2019, p. 371). Teachers and staff shared how they informally cover for each other when needed. Teachers have formal and informal meetings to discuss curriculum and help support each other. Likewise, parents have social media groups and events where they share information that will be helpful for their
children throughout the year. Furthermore, teachers have parents that support their classrooms by volunteering for any needed help. This level of collaboration is the essence of teamwork. When team members “facilitate shared leadership” among themselves (Yukl et al., 2020, p. 300) much can be achieved. Furthermore, for the environments in today’s organizations, trust and collaboration are key in facing adversity (Posner, 2020). Reflective of this behavior was how the schools handled the pandemic and worked through the issues as a team. Additionally, Levi (2017) contended that such organizational teams’ effectiveness depends on the support given from the leaders. In addition, it takes time and effort for the formation of successful teams. In the interviews, the leaders also emphasized the importance of teamwork and collaboration. They mentioned that “we are in this together” and that everyone ought to care about everyone else’s wellbeing and check on them.

**Increase Stakeholders Buy-in and Partnership/Mission Oriented and Long-term Vision**

The shared values and the focused vision the leaders bring to the institutions play a significant role when it comes to bringing everyone together. Purkey and Novak (2012) explained, “intentionality education is characterized by purposes and direction” (p. 17). Leaders that refer to the school vision, stay the course, and are transparent gain their stakeholders’ trust and respect. Several leaders noted that it is a process to coach and train both parents and teachers, but this may bring unity to the school in the end. Furthermore, leaders explained how the stakeholders helped develop the school mission. They explained that when the followers share their values and what they deem as important to them, the stakeholders are then more likely to buy-into the mission of the school. Additionally, the leaders expressed how they wanted to help build a legacy that others
will continue leading on. Bolman and Deal (2017) contended that leaders that have long vision for the institutions tend to be more successful leaders. Successful leaders not only bring a uniformity of vision, but they also look to see what everyone sees, their individual views and goals. This is supported by Levi (2017) when he explained that shared goals help create more unified, effective teams.

**Welcoming Environment Where Everyone is Valued**

People are vital to any organization. Treating people with care, trust, respect, optimism, and intentionality will help them feel welcomed and valued (Purkey & Siegel, 2003). Moreover, creating inviting spaces that are user-friendly is also a contributing factor to inviting schools (Purkey & Novak, 2012). Parents expressed that they felt valued in the schools. Likewise, teachers and staff shared that they knew the leadership team, as a contributing factor to the successes of the schools, valued their expertise. One teacher explained how happy the school leaders are to see her every morning and it made her *want* to be there and how it does not feel like a job to her because of the way they make her feel. Additionally, teachers that left the Islamic schools returned to work there because of the environment despite the comparatively lesser pay.

**Research Question Two**

*Are there significant differences in perceptions between stakeholders (teachers, staff, parents) regarding the use of the 5Ps (people, places, policies, programs, and processes) of invitational leadership?*

**People**

The survey data reflected a different environment when it came to the domain of people. This did not seem to detract significantly from the overall positive view the
stakeholders had of the institutions. This was reflected in the t-test data findings between the teachers/staff and the parents. There were significant differences between the perceptions of teachers/staff and parents. Parents’ data showed that they felt less involved. Hence, the domain of people was unintentionally disinviting. Yet with the willingness and desire to be inviting as reflected in the voices of the leaders and teachers, the school can minimize this disconnect. This willingness on the part of the leaders and teachers to be personally inviting supports Purkey and Novak’s (2012) earlier findings denoting that being personally inviting allows others to be “able, valuable, and responsible” (p. 32). While their intention is strong, inconsistent measures lead to unintentionally being disinviting when it comes to the domain of people not supporting Purkey and Novak’s (2012) findings. Effective communication requires presence, intentionality, and focusing on the quality of the connection where everyone feels taken care of by other members of the organization. This disconnect between the educators and the parents caused by ineffective communication of resulted from the educators being inviting inconsistently.

**Places**

The t-test results of the domain of places seems to align well with the qualitative data findings. The domain of places is unintentionally inviting and there are no significant differences between the teachers/staff and parents. Purkey and Novak (2012) stated that the leader intentionally provides people, places, policies, programs, and processes that help create such a positive inviting climate. During the interviews all interviewees, teachers/staff and parents, expressed that the schools felt like a second
home to them. Stakeholders further expressed that they felt welcomed and valued by the leadership and by the staff when they walked into the facilities.

**Policies**

The t-test analysis found a significant difference between the perceptions of teachers/staff and parents with regards to the domain of policies. This is a reason to believe that in the domain of policies, the schools were unintentionally disinviting. Fowler (2013) defined policy as a set of rules that help solve a public problem. In addition, when a leader understands the inner workings of the 5Ps: people, places, policies, programs, and processes (Purkey & Novak, 2012), they are able to guide the organization toward a common purpose. Adopting clear and transparent policies with the input of everyone involved will help build trust and foster a democratic ethos (Fowler, 2004; Purkey & Novak, 2012). Lastly, when the leaders of the institutions become more intentional about including the parents in the policy adoption process this difference in perception gap could be minimized.

**Programs**

Invitational leadership is the notion of creating a cultural environment that helps members of the organization reach their potential through finding their value in their contributions to the institution (Coffey & Elsawy, 2017). The afterschool sports and academic programs are very diverse and inclusive according to both the qualitative and quantitative data collected in this study. Additionally, all three schools maintain individualized in-school programs such as Quran memorization, reading, writing, and accelerated math programs. Additionally, understanding self-concept theory will help a leader motivate everyone to reach their full potential (Purkey, 1978; Purkey & Novak,
Maslow (1943) explained that the highest level of psychological needs in the theory of motivation is reaching self-actualization. “Human energy and motivation are always there. The role and responsibility of educators is to influence the direction this intrinsic energy and motivation will take” (Purkey & Novak, 2012, p. 12). Additionally, Moss (2018) linked self-determination theory and invitational education and discovered students succeed when they feel safe, invited, and have at least some participation in the decision-making process. Therefore, offering diverse programs in school, and out of school, both academically and athletically, helps students choose their areas of interest, motivate them, and allows for everyone’s abilities and gifts celebrated.

**Processes**

In the domain of processes, this study found the schools to be unintentionally inviting given that there were no differences in perceptions between teachers/staff and parents. It is evident that the stakeholders are well-informed, with clear communication and transparency, of the processes in the schools. This is the definition of an invitational leader, according to Purkey and Novak (2012) when they contended that the leader intentionally provides people, places, policies, programs, and processes that help create such a positive inviting climate. A leader maintains an inviting culture by utilizing people, places, policies, programs, and processes in pursuit of a culture based on trust, respect, care, purpose, and hope (Purkey, et al., 2020; Purkey & Novak, 1996, 2012). Thus, the leader ought to be intentional about the establishment and maintenance of the five domains, 5Ps, in order to create and sustain a positive school culture.

Understanding the effects of the five domains is the key to implementing invitational education (Purkey & Siegel, 2003). Empowering and motivating all people in
the organization will influence students’ performance and improve social relationships (Anderson, 1982; Brookover et al., 1977; Lezotte et al.; 1980; Strong & Jones, 1991). Creating inviting spaces with positive language used for signs, students' work displayed proudly, clean, and comfortable spaces for everyone to enjoy will add to the positive experience in any organization (Bolman & Deal, 2002, 2017; Stillion & Siegel, 2005). Adopting clear and transparent policies with the input of everyone involved will help build trust and foster a democratic ethos (Fowler, 2004; Purkey & Novak, 2012). Similarly, the implementation of programs that focus on conflict resolution in a proactive way to prevent conflict helped improve effectiveness of organizations (Purkey & Siegel; 2003). Lastly, the institutions who developed and put in place processes that helped form a democratic ethos were also more successful (Lynch, 2012; Purkey & Novak, 2012). “Invitational education is a democratic process in which those who are affected by the decisions have a say in its formulation, implementation, and evaluation” (Purkey & Novak, 2012, p. 23).

**Research Question Three**

*How has the principal implemented the five elements (I-CORT) of invitational leadership to promote a positive, inviting culture within an Islamic School?*

**Intentionality**

Bolman and Deal (2017) emphasized the importance of investing in a committed and talented staff that is loyal to the company’s success. The leaders of all three schools were clear in their intention to hire staff that matched their vision. Additionally, Purkey and Novak (2012) explained, “intentionality education is characterized by purposes and direction” (p. 17). In fact, this concept appeared several times in the interviews by
leaders, teachers, and parents that the leaders are very intentional about who joins the team. The leaders ensured that the hiring process aided in hiring qualified teachers that aligned with the school vision. Parents gave family feel and qualified teachers as reasons why they send their kids to the schools. Additionally, the leadership team is intentional about the places they help create. For example, the schools are growing their facilities to offer more sports and programs. Furthermore, the leadership teams are transparent and inclusive when it comes to adopting new policies for the schools. This level of inclusion is also extended to program adoption. The leaders also consider the students’ input when it comes to sponsoring a new program. Lastly, the schools adopted processes and procedures that will help ease transition of students, make them and their families feel welcomed and supported by their school community.

Care

Grogan and Roland (2003) explained the heart of leadership is that the leader cares about their followers. The word Culture derives from the Latin word cultus, which means care (Coyle, 2018). Purkey et al. (2020) placed care at the heart of invitational education. This study found that the leaders formed a welcoming and inviting culture by simply listening to everyone’s needs and concerns. Building an environment where relationships are valued seems to be the key. Teachers and parents alike are aware that the leaders care enough about their input and concerns, and they can keep coming to the leaders and sharing them. This helps develop strong relationships and build respect and trust within the schools. In the interviews, surveys, and document analysis, stakeholders described how much the leaders care about the wellbeing of the students and success of the school. Caring for the institution requires taking care of its individual parts.
Optimism

Invitational leadership is the notion of creating a cultural environment that helps members of the organization reach their potential by finding value in their contributions to the institution (Coffey & Elsawy, 2017). Purkey and Novak (2012) further explained three stages to help an organization adopt invitational education. First, in the preparation stage there needs to be a desire for the change, expectation of good things, preparation of the setting, and reading the situation. Second, in the interacting stage, choosing carefully how to engage stakeholders, acting appropriately, ensuring reception and understanding of the message, and honoring boundaries are included. Lastly, stage three is the follow-up stage. This includes interpreting responses; negotiating; evaluating the process and progress; and reinforcing trust (Purkey & Novak, 2012, p. 42). The leaders of the schools expressed the importance of coaching and training while celebrating individual growth within each member of the school. Leaders have a growth mindset that allows for individual progress and growth which shows their optimism for their people and their institution. Purkey et al. (2020) summed up how optimism gives hope for improvement for any student or teacher, which helps create a positive mindset. This supports what Stillion and Siegel (2005) argued that when leaders utilize invitational education in their school they create a positive culture and climate for everyone to thrive.

Respect

Purkey and Siegel (2003) explained that treating people with respect will help them feel welcomed and valued. In the interviews, the teachers expressed that they felt trusted and respected to do their jobs and given autonomy to make decisions within their realms, and not micro-managed. A study conducted by Burns and Martin (2007)
concluded schools administrators who applied invitational education theory resulted in increased respect and trust which increased the overall effectiveness of the organization. Furthermore, this study revealed that when parents felt more respected by the leadership, they were more likely to share their input and concerns with the school because they believed leadership would take their input seriously. Respect also helps build relationships between stakeholders and increase trust (Purkey et al., 2020).

**Trust**

During the COVID pandemic, the education field faced myriad challenges. In the fast-paced, changing environments of today’s organizations, trust and collaboration are key in facing adversity (Posner, 2020). Trust is key for people to be able to work together and collaborate towards a common goal (Halpin, 2003). A study conducted by Leithwood and Beatty (2007) found eight sets of teacher emotions that play a vital part in teaching and learning. They are teacher efficacy, stress, organizational commitment, job satisfaction, morale, trust, and engagement. Hence, trust is a key component in a collaborative work environment. When stakeholders feel trusted, valued and celebrated at their school, it creates a sense of belonging that will keep them coming back. One of the main guiding beliefs of invitational leadership is “…people are valuable, able, and responsible and should be treated accordingly” (Purkey & Novak, 2012, p. 15).

**Conclusion**

This case study focused on examining the role of the leader in creating an inviting culture in three outstanding Islamic schools in diverse locations across the US. After analyzing and triangulating the data, 25 interviews, 143 surveys, and document analysis, this study found that although each school has its own unique culture, it is evident that
the three Islamic schools are mostly unintentionally inviting. The qualitative and of the majority of the quantitative data alluded to this conclusion except for the domains of people and policies where the schools were found to be unintentionally disinviting.

Furthermore, one may argue that they have intentionality due to daily-renewed intentions in the Islamic faith; however, their behavior cannot be intentionally inviting without daily application of the invitational leadership framework. Interestingly, the way each school approaches being inviting is quite different. Understanding leaders and their roles in building and sustaining a positive school culture are essential (Northouse, 2019). One school instills leadership in everyone and refers heavily to research-based methods. While another school focuses on love and understanding of the Quran, while referencing the prophets’ teachings to resolve any issues that arise. Lastly, the third school highlights the diversity within Islam and has celebrations, humor, and school spirit. These schools achieved a positive school culture and if they coupled their existing methods with the invitational leadership framework, it may help the schools become intentionally inviting and reach the “plus factor”. Reaching this level implies the school is effortlessly inviting (Purkey et al., 2020). The findings are useful for leadership training programs and professional development for principals and teachers. Also noted is the intersectionality of studying invitational leadership and culture in Islamic schools in the United States is still uncharted territory.

**Research Question One**

The teachers, staff, and parents reflected on the leadership styles of their school leaders in the interviews. The emerging themes were that leaders cared and listen to everyone’s concerns. Furthermore, they were adaptive to their followers’ needs. The
leaders of the schools modeled the behavior they wanted to see in their followers.

Additionally, the leaders valued building relationships by gaining their followers trust and respect. The school leaders achieved this gain by always keeping clear communication and being transparent about school matters. These relationship developments helped create a family-feel atmosphere at the schools that touched everyone there.

Leaders gave their stakeholders a high level of autonomy that stemmed from their level of trust in them. Furthermore, the leaders understood their roles as supporters and team members of the schools. This high level of teamwork and collaboration helped increase buy-in from stakeholders and make everyone a partner in the success of the schools. It was also evident that all leaders had a keen sense of mission, faith-based and academically, for their schools. Overall, the leaders’ styles, in their own ways, were very inviting due to their styles and welcoming schools.

**Research Question Two**

The quantitative data revealed that in terms of the domains of places, programs, and processes, the three schools were unintentionally inviting. The aggregated survey data reflects a lack of significant differences between the perceptions of teachers/staff and parents. However, according to the findings, in regard to the domains of people and policies, the schools were found to be unintentionally disinverting. The data shows significant differences in perceptions between the teachers/staff, and the parents. One explanation for these differences is the lack of consistency in applying the invitational leadership framework.

**Research Question Three**
The leaders implemented intentionality in their daily dealings in large part through their Islamic faith. In Islam, intentions are the start of every action. However, none of the leaders are familiar with invitational leadership. The interviewees shared how the leadership team care about the well-being of the school and all involved individuals. In addition, the school leaders captured the essence of relationship building by understanding the importance of developing the trust and respect of their followers.

**Implications and Recommendations**

Overall, the three Islamic schools are unintentionally inviting with the exception of the domains of people and policies, revealed to be unintentionally disinviting. The leaders’ styles in creating a positive school culture are vastly different. School A leader adopted programs based on research like Leader in Me, Positive Discipline, and Zones of Regulation. She believes in turning to experts when unsure of a situation such as during the COVID pandemic. School B leader is very inclusive in the decision-making process. He refers to Quran and Sunnah, the teachings of prophet Muhammad ﷺ, in decision-making and conflict resolution. While School C leader loves to celebrate everyone, include everyone, demonstrates school spirit, and has a sense of humor while carrying it all out. The implication here is that leaders can achieve a positive school culture in different ways. These schools achieved a positive school culture; however, if they coupled their existing methods with the invitational leadership framework, it may help the schools become intentionally inviting and reach the “plus factor” (Purkey et al., 2020). According to Purkey et al. (2020), reaching this level implies the school is effortlessly inviting.

**Recommendations**
The first recommendation is for the schools to adopt invitational education and receive training in the theory. This will help improve the consistency of communication regarding programs and policy implementation.

The second recommendation is for the schools to collaborate with other Islamic schools across the United States. The schools can easily achieve this via two meetings per school year through virtual meeting platforms. The schools could share common concerns; ideas on what worked and what did not work and find support from other school leaders. This could also be a strategy to enhance the professional development of invitational theory.

The last recommendation is for each school to revisit the mission, vision, and goals and frame them using the tenets of invitational leadership. Next post the newly crafted vision and mission on the school’s website. Further, having school personnel discuss in every setting the mission and vision of the school guides in the continuance of an inviting school setting. Placing these statements prominently on the school’s website and allowing them to guide processes and programs will serve as a reminder to stakeholders.

**Opportunities for Future Research**

This study added to the literature of invitational leadership. Leaders in the Islamic schools strive to help students excel by understanding their Muslim identity and role within a society where Muslims are a minority. Finding successful Islamic schools in predominantly Muslim countries and examining the leader’s role in creating a positive school culture may add to that understanding. Another opportunity for future research is to examine Islamic schools that have implemented invitational leadership. Additionally,
further examination of the role a leader plays in creating a positive self-identity in minority Muslim youths may be beneficial.

**Power Point Presentation**

Presented to the personnel in each school, especially the leadership team, is the following presentation formatted in PowerPoint.
01. Invitational Leadership

Why adopt this framework?
Research supports that a positive and inviting school culture helps stakeholders thrive which in turn helps the organization grow.

Leaders of organizations may instill shared positive values through the people, places, policies, programs, and processes they adopt. However, they may not have the innate skills to do so.

Islamic schools have shared beliefs among stakeholders; however, these shared beliefs do not always create a unified inviting culture.

Foundations of Invitational Leadership

Democratic Ethos

“Doing with” rather than a “doing to” attitude. Democracy exists when everyone is informed and included in the decision-making process. This is based on the idea that everyone matters, is capable, and is respected.

Preceptual Tradition

People are impacted by their perceptions of the events and not the events themselves. Therefore, in order to understand why individuals act a certain way, it is vital to understand their perceptions.

Self-Concept Theory

“Who am I and how do I fit in the world?” Self-concept theory is complex and dynamic. It encompasses how an individual views themselves and how that view impacts their actions.
“Invitational education is a democratic process in which those who are affected by the decisions have a say in its formulation, implementation, and evaluation” (Purkey & Novak, 2012, p. 23).

The Elements of Invitational Leadership

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intentionality</th>
<th>Care</th>
<th>Optimism</th>
<th>Respect</th>
<th>Trust</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intentionally helps people create and maintain an inviting culture for themselves and others</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Care is the core element of IL because everyone should care about themselves and others</td>
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<tr>
<td>Optimism lies in the process of believing that change for the better is possible and people have an undiscovered potential</td>
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<tr>
<td>Respect is achieved through treating people as valuable, able, and responsible beings. Respect is best sensed in the five domains of IL</td>
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<tr>
<td>Trust is built over time through inviting interactions and allows for cooperation and collaboration to increase among stakeholders</td>
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</table>
The Five Domains of Invitational Leadership

- **People:** Trusting, respectful, optimistic, caring, accessible, courteous, and intentional
- **Places:** Functional, attractive, clean, efficient, aesthetic, personal, and warm
- **Policies:** Inclusive, fair, equitable, tolerant, defensible, consistent, and just
- **Programs:** Enriching, stimulating, healthful, interactive, constructive, developmental, and engaging
- **Processes:** Academic, interdisciplinary, encouraging, democratic, cooperative, collaborative, and evaluative

“...people are valuable, able, and responsible and should be treated accordingly” must be one of the guiding beliefs of an invitational leader (Purkey & Novak, 2012, p. 15).
Figure 2. Invitational Theory (Purkey et al., 2020)
Data Collection and Findings

What are the answers to the research questions?

Research Questions

❖ What are the perceptions of the teachers and the parents regarding the leadership style of the principal within an Islamic School?

❖ Are there significant differences in perceptions between stakeholders (principals, teachers, parents) regarding the use of the five P’s (people, places, policies, programs, and processes) of invitational leadership?

❖ How has the principal implemented the five elements (I-CORT) of invitational leadership to promote a positive, inviting culture within an Islamic School?
- The leaders provided the researcher with the staff, teachers, and parents’ contact information
- A total of 25 interviews were conducted via Zoom: seven school leaders, seven teachers, three staff members, and eight parents
- The researcher provided a unique link of the survey for each school to send to their teachers/staff and parents to complete
- 143 total responses were collected and aggregated from all three schools
- All the findings are in aggregated format to allow protection of the identities of all participants in the study

The principal investigator collected, from all participating schools, 63 teachers/staff responses and 80 responses from parents.

Concurrently, the researcher interviewed the leaders of the organization, in addition to 18 teachers, staff, and parents.

In addition, the researcher analyzed documents such as the schools’ websites; improvement plan; school mission, vision, and goals; handbooks and written policies; and letters to parents.

This study analyzed the data with a t-test for independent means to determine if there were significant differences between perceptions of teachers/staff and parents about the domains of invitational leadership.

The principal investigator analyzed and coded interview transcripts to identify emerging themes to help answer research questions one and three.
❖ Leaders at the schools...
❖ listen with compassion; stakeholders feel heard
❖ are adaptive to stakeholders’ needs
❖ model the behavior they want to see in others
❖ value relationships with stakeholders; schools have a family feel environment
❖ give autonomy to teachers/staff and do not micromanage them
❖ coach and support their subordinates instead of telling them what to do
❖ foster high levels of teamwork and collaboration among everyone
❖ increase stakeholders’ buy-in and partnership through inclusion
❖ are mission oriented and have long-term vision for their institutions
❖ create a welcoming environment where everyone is valued.

❖ The Islamic schools were found to be unintentionally inviting from the interviews and document analysis
❖ There were no differences in perception between teachers/staff and parents in the domains of places, programs, and processes. However, there were significant differences in the domains of people and policies between the stakeholders. From the quantitative data, the schools were found unintentionally inviting in regard to the domains of places, programs, and processes. The schools were found to be unintentionally inviting when it pertains to the domain of people and policies
❖ The leaders’ styles are very different in creating a positive school culture:
❖ The first leader instills leadership in everyone and refers heavily to research-based methods.
❖ The second leader focuses on love and understanding of the Quran, while referencing the prophets’ teachings to resolve any issues that arise.
❖ The third leader highlights the diversity within Islam and has celebrations, humor, and school spirit
03. Implications and Recommendations

What are the researcher’s recommendations for all participating schools?
The implication here is that leaders can achieve a positive school culture in different ways.

These schools achieved a positive school culture but if they coupled their existing methods with the invitational leadership framework, it may help the schools become intentionally inviting and reach the "plus factor" (Purkey et al., 2020). Hence, the first recommendation is for the schools to adopt invitational education. (https://www.invitationaleducation.org/)

The second recommendation is for the schools to collaborate and share ideas on a regular basis with other Islamic schools across the United States.

The last recommendation is for each school to revisit the mission, vision, and goals and frame them using the tenets of invitational leadership.

Conclusion
What is the main takeaway?
Different leadership styles can lead to creating a positive school culture, hence an inviting and inclusive school culture.

The Islamic schools studied were found to be unintentionally inviting except for the domains of people and policies.

If leaders apply invitational leadership framework, the schools could be intentionally inviting and reach the “plus factor” - when the intentions are so effortless that everyone within the organization is inviting (Purkey et al., 2020).
SECTION FIVE

CONTRIBUTION TO SCHOLARSHIP
Target Journal and Rationale

The author will submit to *The Journal for Invitational Theory and Practice* (JITP). JITP is a journal that promotes the tenets of Invitational Education. The International Alliance of Invitational Education (IAIE) was founded in 1968 by Dr. Siegel and Dr. Purkey. Then in 1982, “a group of 12 educators and related helping professionals from throughout the United States and Canada met on the campus of Lehigh University with Drs. Betty Siegel and William Purkey. Together, this group founded the Alliance for Invitational Education as a not-for-profit organization. The Alliance has grown to include hundreds of professionals in the fields of education, healthcare, and business in over 15 countries” (“The Origins of IAIE”, 2021, para. 1). The JITP is published annually and is currently indexed by ERIC and EBSCO databases. JITP was first published in 1992. Additionally, the researcher hopes to present at an IAIE conference.

Rationale

*The Journal for Invitational Theory and Practice* (JITP) is the chosen journal due to the alignment of the IAIE mission and the goal of this study. The mission of the IAIE, “The International Alliance for Invitational Education works to create and sustain positive school climates. It seeks to enrich the physical, social, emotional, and intellectual lives of people in schools” (“International Alliance for Invitational Education”, 2021, para. 1) aligns with the study. Since this study focused on positive school culture, it is extremely fitting to choose JITP as the journal for publication.

Plan for Submission
The Dissertation in Practice will be submitted upon completion of both the written component and the oral defense of the DIP. *The Journal for Invitational Theory and Practice* (JITP) suggest submitting two copies electronically using the JITP guidelines. One copy with the identifying author information and one copy without (blind copy). The blind copy will be then submitted to the review board and scored using a rubric. The JITP editorial review board will respond to the author within eight weeks.

**Submission-Ready Article for the Journal for Invitational Theory and Practice (JITP)**

**Title Page**

THE LEADERS’ ROLE IN CREATING A POSITIVE CULTURE IN ISLAMIC SCHOOLS THROUGH THE LENS OF INVITATIONAL LEADERSHIP: A CASE STUDY

By Diana A. Elkishawi and Dr. Barbara N. Martin

University of Missouri – Columbia

Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis

5712 Northeast Sapphire Lane

Lee’s Summit, Missouri 64064

[delkishawi@gmail.com; bmartin@ucmo.edu](mailto:delkishawi@gmail.com; bmartin@ucmo.edu)

**Abstract**

Although private Islamic schools in United States have shared values that bring stakeholders together, a positive, inviting school culture does not always result from such common values and practices. Thus, a leader’s style may aid in creating a unified,
positive school culture. Invitational leadership (Purkey et al., 2020) is the framework for this qualitative case study. A leader has an important role to play when it comes to putting in place people, places, policies, programs, and processes that promote an inviting culture. Lastly, Purkey and Novak’s (2016) I-CORT (intentionality, care, optimism, respect, and trust) are the foundational lens of understanding what rules the leaders have adopted in order to understand the schools’ cultures.

The researcher conducted 25 interviews and several documents to answer the research questions. The three schools were found to be unintentionally inviting. Several themes emerged from the data including listening; adaptive to stakeholders’ needs; leading by example; relationship building, and family feel environment; autonomy in decision-making: coaching and supporting instead of telling; teamwork and collaboration; increase stakeholders buy-in and partnership; mission oriented and long-term vision; and welcoming environment where everyone is valued.

Keywords

Islamic Schools, Private Schools, Leadership, Positive School Culture, Invitational Leadership, Invitational Education, I-CORT, 5Ps, and Leaders’ Role

Cover Letter

The following inquiry provides data concerning the leader’s role in creating a positive school culture. The researcher interviewed 25 stakeholders from three successful, private, Islamic schools in diverse locations within the United States. After analyzing the data from the interviews, and collected documents, the three schools were found to be unintentionally inviting. Several common themes emerged from the data including listening; adaptive to stakeholders’ needs; leading by example; relationship building, and
family feel environment; autonomy in decision-making: coaching and supporting instead of telling; teamwork and collaboration; increase stakeholders buy-in and partnership; mission oriented and long-term vision; and welcoming environment where everyone is valued.

The data collected from this study is currently not being used in any other papers including those accepted, published, planned, or under review. The study was approved by the Institutional Review Board at the University of Missouri-Columbia. This research has never been submitted to The Journal for Invitational Theory and Practice (JITP) for publication nor is it currently under review in any other journals.

Introduction

Islam is a monotheistic religion that is the second-largest religion in the world, after Christianity (Shakeel, 2018). Researchers (Bolman & Deal, 2017; Purkey et al., 2020; Purkey & Novak, 1996, 2012; Purkey & Siegel, 2003; Schein 1993, 1997, 2000) gave considerable attention to studying the culture within organizations over the past several decades. In a private, faith-based school, stakeholders tend to share common values and beliefs (Evangelinou-Yiannakis, 2016). However, Shakeel (2018) explained these shared beliefs do not always manifest to create a unified culture due to the diversity of background and Islamic practice. “A positive workplace culture is built when leaders have full trust in their team and allow them full autonomy over their work” (Guidarelli, n.d., para. 17). Leaders have a significant impact on their organizations (Bolman & Deal, 2017; Northouse, 2019; Purkey et al., 2020). A gap exists in the current literature of examining the impact the leadership style a leader has on the organization culture of Islamic schools in the United States. Hence why this study focused on examining the role
of the leader in creating an inviting culture in Islamic schools where Islam is the minority religion, such as the United States.

**Theoretical Framework**

Several leadership frameworks were examined for this study. However, several of them lacked the detailed framework that invitational leadership provides. Therefore, invitational leadership (Purkey et al., 2020) was selected as the framework for this inquiry. Invitational leadership occurs when the leader utilizes invitational education in their school to create a positive culture and climate for everyone to thrive (Day et al., 2001; Purkey, 1992; Purkey & Novak, 1996; Purkey & Siegel, 2003; Stillion & Siegel, 2005). Invitational leadership is the notion of creating a cultural environment that helps members of the organization reach their potential through finding their value in their contributions to the institution (Coffey & Elsawy, 2017). Researchers (Purkey & Novak 2012, 2015; Purkey & Siegel, 2003) contended there are five domains within the theory called the 5Ps: people, places, policies, programs, and processes. These domains comprise “everyone and everything in an organization...(that) will either build or destroy intellectual, social, physical, emotional, and moral potential for stakeholders” (Purkey & Novak, 2016, p. 7). Additionally, the five elements (I-CORT) of invitational leadership are intentionality, care, optimism, respect, and trust (Purkey & Novak, 2012). This study examined the existing facets of invitational leadership, both of its domains and elements, that were put in place by the school leaders in three successful Islamic schools in the United States. Understanding the role a leader plays in fostering a positive and inviting school culture may applied in other similar school settings.

**Purpose of the Study**
The purpose of this study was to examine the leadership role in creating and maintaining a positive school culture. Furthermore, the researcher believes that using invitational leadership (Purkey, 1978; Purkey & Siegel, 2003; Purkey & Novak, 2012; Purkey et al. 2020) as the guiding conceptual framework to examine the organizations’ dynamics will help reveal insights on the leadership role in creating such a culture. The tenets of invitational leadership (Purkey et al., 2020) were measured in three Islamic schools from the perspectives of the leaders and stakeholders of the organization. This will aid in better understanding the elements that assist in creating a positive school culture in Islamic schools in the United States. Used interchangeably for the purpose of this study, are “culture” and “climate.”

Design of the Study

This qualitative case study focused on understanding the leader’s role in creating a positive school culture. A case study is an “empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the ‘case’) in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident” (Yin, 2014, p. 16). Three successful Islamic schools were selected for this study in three diverse states. Twenty-five interviews of leaders, staff, teachers, and parents were conducted to answer the two research questions. The researcher performed document analysis to allow for data triangulation when answering the research questions. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) explained that data triangulation provides a more complete analysis of a research study. The researcher utilized purposeful sampling. Purposeful sampling is a method by which the samples are chosen to provide the most information possible for the study at hand (Mertens, 2019). Furthermore, this inquiry followed a structured method of
analysis that examines non-numerical data and focused on the understanding of meaning, concepts, definitions, and descriptions of things (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Results of the Study

Research Question One

What are the perceptions of the teachers and the parents regarding the leadership style of the principal within an Islamic School?

The teachers, staff, and parents reflected on the leadership styles of their school leaders in the interviews. The emerging themes were that leaders cared and listen to everyone’s concerns. Furthermore, they were adaptive to their followers’ needs. The leaders of the schools modeled the behavior they wanted to see in their followers. Additionally, the leaders valued building relationships by gaining their followers trust and respect. The school leaders achieved this gain by always keeping clear communication and being transparent about school matters. These relationship developments helped create a family-feel atmosphere at the schools that touched everyone there.

Leaders gave their stakeholders a high level of autonomy that stemmed from their level of trust in them. Furthermore, the leaders understood their roles as supporters and team members of the schools. This high level of teamwork and collaboration helped increase buy-in from stakeholders and make everyone a partner in the success of the schools. It was also evident that all leaders had a keen sense of mission, faith-based and academically, for their schools. Overall, the leaders’ styles, in their own ways, were very inviting due to their styles and welcoming schools.

Research Question Two
How has the principal implemented the five elements (I-CORT) of invitational leadership to promote a positive, inviting culture within an Islamic School?

The leaders implemented intentionality in their daily dealings in large part through their Islamic faith. In Islam, intentions are the start of every action. However, none of the leaders are familiar with invitational leadership. The interviewees shared how the leadership team care about the well-being of the school and all involved individuals. In addition, the school leaders captured the essence of relationship building by understanding the importance of developing the trust and respect of their followers.

**Discussion of Findings**

The researcher discovered the following themes emerging from research question one: Listening; adaptive to stakeholders’ needs; leading by example; relationship building, and family-feel environment; autonomy in decision-making; coaching and supporting instead of telling; teamwork and collaboration; increase stakeholders buy-in and partnership; mission oriented and long-term vision; and welcoming environment where everyone is valued. Additionally, the researcher examined the implementation of the five elements of invitational leadership: intentionality, care, optimism, respect, and trust (I-CORT), in the three schools while answering research question two. The interviews and document analysis supported that the schools are unintentionally inviting in the answers to the research questions. In the subsequent sections, discussed is each research question.

**Research Question One**

*What are the perceptions of the teachers and the parents regarding the leadership style of the principal within an Islamic School?*
Listening and Being Adaptive to Stakeholders’ Needs

The theme which emerged most often in interviews was feeling listened to. Stakeholders felt that their voices matter and that they are heard and validated. Several interviewees specifically mentioned that they knew that their opinions are valued. Many gave the example of COVID-19 and its impact on education. All three leaders used various means to see how teachers, staff, parents, and students felt about online learning and masks. Stakeholders in the schools feel listened to and heard by the leadership of the schools. The interviews revealed that the scheduled meetings between the principals and the teachers or parents were important drivers in stakeholders’ perception of listening. Interviewees used as examples of leaders listening the leaders sending out surveys to teachers and parents for feedback. This adaptive behavior of changing behavior is reflected in Heifetz and Laurie (2011) that adaptive leaders can view the situation from various perspectives and listen to the suggestions of others. “Adaptive leaders incorporate many of these behaviors simultaneously, and interdependently, with some of them being more important at the beginning of a particular process and others at the end” (Northouse, 2019, p. 273). Furthermore, the parents mentioned that they felt listened to even when their suggestions did not reflect the result in the decision-making process. The teachers and parents alike shared that they believe the leaders will always consider the various inputs and do their best to make a collective decision for the schools. As Purkey and Novak (2012) explained, the democratic ethos values the voices of all stakeholders and creates a climate where members believe their input will be valued. The results of this inquiry supported Purkey and Novak’s (2012) findings.

Leading by Example
The administrators modeled the behavior that they want to see in others. Interviewees explained that the prophet Muhammadﷺ was a teacher and that Muslims need to follow his example. This correspondence between the leaders’ styles and their faith only strengthened their authenticity as leaders. Avolio et al. (2009) supported this parallelism when they contended that authentic leaders have four distinct but related characteristics: self-awareness, internalized moral perspective, balanced processing, and relational transparency. When leaders modeled the behaviors they want to see in others, their followers will have a clearer message of the vision of those leaders. “Authentic leaders understand their own values and behave towards others based on these values” (Northouse, 2019, p. 200). Furthermore, this research supports the findings of Purkey, et al., (2020) and Stillion and Seigel (2005) finding that inviting cultures had positive impacts on stakeholders. Specifically, an inviting culture is one focused on intentionality regarding the respect and trust created within the culture of the organization through a clear vision.

**Relationship Building and Family-Feel Environment**

Northouse (2019) summarized that organizations develop a healthy work environment and culture when leaders build strong relationships with their team members and followers. Additionally, Hill et al. (2014) alluded to the need for leaders to build trust and respect with all members of the organization. Furthermore, empowering and motivating all people in the organization will improve social relationships (Anderson, 1982; Jones, 1991). This study found that the stakeholders developed a family feel in all three schools. This perception creates not only a sense of belonging and family feel but also loyalty. This perception in turn forms a community where even some alumni come
back to teach at their former schools although the pay is much lower than public schools. This sense of belonging establishes a collaborative environment among the members of the organization. Although supported by the qualitative data, especially by the teachers and staff, the quantitative data denotes the need to be more inviting to the parents on policy and programs.

**Autonomy in Decision-making: Coaching and Supporting Instead of Telling**

The leaders at all three schools have a growth mindset for their teachers, staff, students, and parents. They understand their role as that of a supporter and trainer to help everyone improve and grow. The leaders allow the teachers and the students to self-reflect and decide what to do in challenging situations yet provide them with the support they need. In addition to having this level of autonomy on a daily basis, the teachers’ and staff feedback was valued when it came to making bigger decisions as well. Cultures that are willing to give more autonomy to their members allow for more creativity and risk-taking (Bolman & Deal, 2017). Furthermore, leaders that aid in creating a culture where all celebrate the learning process and workers have a level of autonomy will cause growth both at the individual level and at the organizational level (Gill, 2010; Tierney, 2012).

Researchers (Çayırdağ, 2016; Lewis et al., 2016) contended a positive culture will help members of an organization be more autonomous and creative. Thus, it is evident the leaders have created a positive school culture by giving their subordinates autonomy.

**Teamwork and Collaboration**

“A team is a type of organizational group that is composed of members who are interdependent, who share common goals, and who must coordinate their activities to accomplish these goals” (Hill, 2019, p. 371). Teachers and staff shared how they
informally cover for each other when needed. Teachers have formal and informal meetings to discuss curriculum and help support each other. Likewise, parents have social media groups and events where they share information that will be helpful for their children throughout the year. Furthermore, teachers have parents that support their classrooms by volunteering for any needed help. This level of collaboration is the essence of teamwork. When team members “facilitate shared leadership” among themselves (Yukl et al., 2020, p. 300) much can be achieved. Furthermore, for the environments in today’s organizations, trust and collaboration are key in facing adversity (Posner, 2020). Reflective of this behavior was how the schools handled the pandemic and worked through the issues as a team. Additionally, Levi (2017) contended that such organizational teams’ effectiveness depends on the support given from the leaders. In addition, it takes time and effort for the formation of successful teams. In the interviews, the leaders also emphasized the importance of teamwork and collaboration. They mentioned that “we are in this together” and that everyone ought to care about everyone else’s wellbeing and check on them.

*Increase Stakeholders Buy-in and Partnership/Mission Oriented and Long-term Vision*

The shared values and the focused vision the leaders bring to the institutions play a significant role when it comes to bringing everyone together. Purkey and Novak (2012) explained, “intentionality education is characterized by purposes and direction” (p. 17). Leaders that refer to the school vision, stay the course, and are transparent gain their stakeholders’ trust and respect. Several leaders noted that it is a process to coach and train both parents and teachers, but this may bring unity to the school in the end. Furthermore, leaders explained how the stakeholders helped develop the school mission. They
explained that when the followers share their values and what they deem as important to them, the stakeholders are then more likely to buy-into the mission of the school. Additionally, the leaders expressed how they wanted to help build a legacy that others will continue leading on. Bolman and Deal (2017) contended that leaders that have long vision for the institutions tend to be more successful leaders. Successful leaders not only bring a uniformity of vision, but they also look to see what everyone sees, their individual views and goals. This is supported by Levi (2017) when he explained that shared goals help create more unified, effective teams.

**Welcoming Environment Where Everyone is Valued**

People are vital to any organization. Treating people with care, trust, respect, optimism, and intentionality will help them feel welcomed and valued (Purkey & Siegel, 2003). Moreover, creating inviting spaces that are user-friendly is also a contributing factor to inviting schools (Purkey & Novak, 2012). Parents expressed that they felt valued in the schools. Likewise, teachers and staff shared that they knew the leadership team, as a contributing factor to the successes of the schools, valued their expertise. One teacher explained how happy the school leaders are to see her every morning and it made her want to be there and how it does not feel like a job to her because of the way they make her feel. Additionally, teachers that left the Islamic schools returned to work there because of the environment despite the comparatively lesser pay.

**Research Question Two**

*How has the principal implemented the five elements (I-CORT) of invitational leadership to promote a positive, inviting culture within an Islamic School?*

**Intentionality**
Bolman and Deal (2017) emphasized the importance of investing in a committed and talented staff that is loyal to the company’s success. The leaders of all three schools were clear in their intention to hire staff that matched their vision. Additionally, Purkey and Novak (2012) explained, “intentionality education is characterized by purposes and direction” (p. 17). In fact, this concept appeared several times in the interviews by leaders, teachers, and parents that the leaders are very intentional about who joins the team. The leaders ensured that the hiring process aided in hiring qualified teachers that aligned with the school vision. Parents gave family feel and qualified teachers as reasons why they send their kids to the schools. Additionally, the leadership team is intentional about the places they help create. For example, the schools are growing their facilities to offer more sports and programs. Furthermore, the leadership teams are transparent and inclusive when it comes to adopting new policies for the schools. This level of inclusion is also extended to program adoption. The leaders also consider the students’ input when it comes to sponsoring a new program. Lastly, the schools adopted processes and procedures that will help ease transition of students, make them and their families feel welcomed and supported by their school community.

**Care**

Grogan and Roland (2003) explained the heart of leadership is that the leader cares about their followers. The word *Culture* derives from the Latin word *cultus*, which means *care* (Coyle, 2018). Purkey et al. (2020) placed care at the heart of invitational education. This study found that the leaders formed a welcoming and inviting culture by simply listening to everyone’s needs and concerns. Building an environment where relationships are valued seems to be the key. Teachers and parents alike are aware that
the leaders care enough about their input and concerns, and they can keep coming to the leaders and sharing them. This helps develop strong relationships and build respect and trust within the schools. In the interviews, surveys, and document analysis, stakeholders described how much the leaders care about the wellbeing of the students and success of the school. Caring for the institution requires taking care of its individual parts.

**Optimism**

Invitational leadership is the notion of creating a cultural environment that helps members of the organization reach their potential by finding value in their contributions to the institution (Coffey & Elsawy, 2017). Purkey and Novak (2012) further explained three stages to help an organization adopt invitational education. First, in the preparation stage there needs to be a desire for the change, expectation of good things, preparation of the setting, and reading the situation. Second, in the interacting stage, choosing carefully how to engage stakeholders, acting appropriately, ensuring reception and understanding of the message, and honoring boundaries are included. Lastly, stage three is the follow-up stage. This includes interpreting responses; negotiating; evaluating the process and progress; and reinforcing trust (Purkey & Novak, 2012, p. 42). The leaders of the schools expressed the importance of coaching and training while celebrating individual growth within each member of the school. Leaders have a growth mindset that allows for individual progress and growth which shows their optimism for their people and their institution. Purkey et al. (2020) summed up how optimism gives hope for improvement for any student or teacher, which helps create a positive mindset. This supports what Stillion and Siegel (2005) argued that when leaders utilize invitational education in their school they create a positive culture and climate for everyone to thrive.
Respect

Purkey and Siegel (2003) explained that treating people with respect will help them feel welcomed and valued. In the interviews, the teachers expressed that they felt trusted and respected to do their jobs and given autonomy to make decisions within their realms, and not micro-managed. A study conducted by Burns and Martin (2007) concluded school administrators who applied invitational education theory resulted in increased respect and trust which increased the overall effectiveness of the organization. Furthermore, this study revealed that when parents felt more respected by the leadership, they were more likely to share their input and concerns with the school because they believed leadership would take their input seriously. Respect also helps build relationships between stakeholders and increase trust (Purkey et al., 2020).

Trust

During the COVID pandemic, the education field faced myriad challenges. In the fast-paced, changing environments of today’s organizations, trust and collaboration are key in facing adversity (Posner, 2020). Trust is key for people to be able to work together and collaborate towards a common goal (Halpin, 2003). A study conducted by Leithwood and Beatty (2007) found eight sets of teacher emotions that play a vital part in teaching and learning. They are teacher efficacy, stress, organizational commitment, job satisfaction, morale, trust, and engagement. Hence, trust is a key component in a collaborative work environment. When stakeholders feel trusted, valued and celebrated at their school, it creates a sense of belonging that will keep them coming back. One of the main guiding beliefs of invitational leadership is “…people are valuable, able, and responsible and should be treated accordingly” (Purkey & Novak, 2012, p. 15).
Summary

The shared values and beliefs of Islam, brings stakeholders together in Islamic schools in the United States to preserve their Muslim identity and foster and Islamic environment for students to thrive. However, these shared values do not automatically create a positive, inviting school culture. Leaders have a significant impact on their organizations (Bolman & Deal, 2017; Northouse, 2019; Purkey et al., 2020). Therefore, examining the leader’s role in creating an inviting culture aided in understanding the foundations that private schools’ leaders may put in place for such an environment to develop.

Biographical Sketch

Diana Ali Elkishawi currently resides in Lee’s Summit, Missouri with her husband, Adam Turk, and their three sons, Younis, Yahya, and Ali. She graduated from the University of Central Missouri with her undergraduate degree in Computer Science and Mathematics in 2001. She took an interest in helping her community and found herself a math teaching position in Islamic School of Greater Kansas City where she excelled and became the math department lead teacher. With a desire to learn and grow as an educator, she then completed her middle and high school math teaching certifications, along with her master’s degree in Education from the University of Central Missouri in 2012. Prompted by a desire to lead, in October of 2022, Diana completed her Doctorate in Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis at the University of Missouri-Columbia. At the university, she studied the leaders’ role in creating a positive culture in Islamic schools through the lens of invitational leadership. Currently, Diana continues to teach and lead in the public schools’ sector at Center School District 58.
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SECTION SIX

SCHOLARLY PRACTITIONER REFLECTION
Introduction

This journey of learning in the Educational Doctorate program has been a transformative, reflective, and iterative process for me. Many of my core beliefs were reinforced through the readings and research, namely the need for equity and justice; intentionality of ethical behavior; and leading in the good. While other readings made me think and question my stance on issues such as how I feel about people who have a different perspective than myself in terms of religion and sexual orientation. This caused a paradigm shift in the way I view others and the world around me. While still being true to myself and my core values and how I choose to live my life, I do believe that diversity always makes us better. Our strength, whether in education or the workforce, comes when we recognize our talents and potential so that we may work together to benefit ourselves and society. I have reflected many times on my readings and noticed a change in the way I speak, the way I handle conflict, and the way I treat others including my family members. Those around me have noticed the change as well.

As a Palestinian American Muslim woman, I hold each one of my intersectionalities very dear. As a Palestinian, I can remember what it means to go through checkpoints as a child, just so I can see my grandparents in Gaza, Palestine after a nine-hour journey that should only take two hours from Kuwait. I know what it means to not have a valid passport because Palestine is occupied and is not recognized as a sovereign state. As a proud Muslim, I have been the victim of stereotypes based on media propaganda. As an immigrant, I live the American dream, in the wonderful nation that gave me a chance to live a peaceful life in pursuit of happiness by working hard to make my dreams a reality. Finally, as a woman, raised in the Middle East, a culture that values
and is dominated by males, I understand the struggles of speaking up when it is necessary even if it is not always welcomed.

Therefore, I believe I am an authentic leader. I hold my core values so dear that they are my inner compass and my identity. They help guide me in my day-to-day interactions with others. I understand my world through my past and present experiences. Yet, I value relationships and listening to understand others. I believe that just as I influence my students, they also influence me, and we grow together through our interactions and experiences. Being open, honest, loyal, and trustworthy are extremely important to me as I go through life and build relationships with others. Section six will capture my reflection on my coursework on leadership theory and practice, organizational analysis, policy analysis, and content and context of learning.

**Leadership Theories and Constructs**

As the Mathematics lead teacher at my school, I oversee the curriculum and textbook orders; hold departmental meetings; and help mentor, coach, and evaluate new math teachers. As a leader in my classrooms, I have taught and coached math for 13 years to fifth through tenth grade students; established the Mathcounts competition team, the Math Video Challenge, and founded Math Club at our school. Additionally, I have led community service projects, student council, and counseling, among other leadership roles at my school. Throughout my work, I have utilized many leadership styles. However, the three that are most prominent for me are adaptive leadership, transformative leadership, and authentic leadership.

**Adaptive Leadership**
Heifetz et al. (2009) described adaptive leadership as “the practice of mobilizing people to tackle tough challenges and thrive” (p. 14). Adaptive leaders’ behavior helps provide a support system for the followers as they are challenged or face changes within their organizations (Northouse, 2019). Additionally, Heifetz (1994) sectioned adaptive leadership into four perspectives: system, biological, service orientation, and psychotherapy prospects. The author continued to explain that adaptive leaders use their positions to serve their followers by understanding that challenges are present in a complex, evolving system. Adaptive leaders provide a supportive environment for the followers to develop over time and help them with their adversities (Heifetz, 1994). Similarly, Heifetz and Laurie (2011) explained that adaptive leaders can view the situation from different perspectives; analyze problems; regulate distress through support; help followers focus; listen to other’s suggestions; and listen to marginalized voices from below. “Adaptive leaders incorporate many of these behaviors simultaneously, and interdependently, with some of them being more important at the beginning of a particular process and others at the end” (Northouse, 2019, p. 273). Moreover, Warren et al. (2011) characterized adaptive leadership in the following passage:

Indeed, our recent research has led us to conclude that one of the most reliable indicators and predictors of true leadership is an individual’s ability to find meaning in negative events and to learn from even the most trying circumstances. Put another way, the skills required to conquer adversity and emerge stronger and more committed than ever are the same ones that make for extraordinary leaders.

(p. 97)
As a math teacher, my analytic ability and reflection are parts of my daily problem-solving routine. Students often ask me “Sister Diana, where will we use this in real life?” My answer typically explains to them how problem solving is embedded in our lives as humans and learning math just helps us develop our analytical skills. As a leader in my classroom, I value students’ opinions in my decision-making process. During the current COVID pandemic, like many other educators, I was faced with many challenges that were new to me. I had to learn to teach and coach my math students virtually. In addition, I had to provide them with the support they needed to learn and grow. I value students’ and parents’ input and provide multiple opportunities throughout the year for them to share their opinions to help me improve and serve them more effectively. Building these relationships are the foundations to facing and conquering challenges together.

**Transformational Leadership**

Northouse (2019) explained transformational leadership as a process in which the leader influences followers, motivating them to go above and beyond the desired goal. The author continued to explain this may be accomplished by focusing on emotions, values, ethics, standards, and long-term goals. Another name for transformational leadership is charismatic leadership. House (1976) explained the notion of charismatic leadership theory which entails the behavior of the leader and how that behavior has a charismatic effect on the followers. He contended that charismatic leaders have five main behaviors. Charismatic or transformational leaders are role models; they are competent and confident; they promote ideological goals; they have high expectations; and they bring out task-relevant motives in their followers (House, 1976). Additionally, Northouse
(2019) explained that transformational leadership is “the process whereby a person engages with others and creates a connection that raises the level of motivation and morality in both the leader and follower” (p. 164). Consequently, transformational leaders affect their followers in the following ways. They help increase buy-in of the leader’s ideology, loyalty, affection, obedience, connection with the leader, emotional involvement, and increased confidence as a result (Northouse, 2019). Similarly, Northouse (2019) further provided seven factors of transformational leadership. These factors include idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration.

As a leader in my classroom, I understand the necessity to motivate all my students. My passion for learning and teaching is often mirrored in my students. “Sister Diana, if you ever consider changing your career, you should consider becoming a motivational speaker,” a student once said to me. When I asked her why, she said that after sitting in my class she feels she can accomplish anything. In addition, during parent-teacher conferences, two parents mentioned how my being in the Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis program while working full time, has motivated them to go back and finish their nursing degree and real estate certification. They mentioned to me that I am a role model and motivator to students and parents alike. I believe prior to being in the Educational Doctorate program, I possessed transformational leadership qualities; however, understanding our strengths as leaders only enhances our ability to lead.

**Authentic Leadership**

Shamir and Eilam (2005) contended that authentic leaders are genuine, lead from conviction, and are trustworthy. The authors continued to explain that authentic leaders
have self-knowledge, self-regulation, and self-concept. In addition, Eagly (2005) alluded to the interpersonal process: relationship that is created by leaders and followers together, and how the actions of both affect each other. Avolio and Gardner (2005) explained the developmental perspective: something that can be nurtured in a leader, throughout their lives, and can be triggered by a major life event. Northouse (2019) explained the four components of authentic leadership as self-awareness, internalized moral perspective, balanced processing, and relational transparency. George (2003) explained how authentic leaders have a strong sense of purpose; strong values about doing the right thing; they build relationships with others; exhibit self-discipline and act on their values; and are sensitive and empathetic to the plight of others. Authentic leaders demonstrate a passion for their purpose, practice their values consistently, and lead with their hearts as well as their heads (George et al., 2007). Similarly, Bolman and Deal (2017) defined leadership as a “process of mutual influence fusing thought, feeling, and action” (p. 338).

I identify most with authentic leadership. My core beliefs guide me to be true to myself and my vision in life. As a Palestinian American Muslim teacher, I hold my values and identity dear to me. I believe teachers influence students, and I also allow my students to influence me. I value these interactions with my students and love to build lasting relationships with them. These connections allow growth to happen. As a leader, I do my best to model my beliefs and what I preach to my students for my message to be heard and taken seriously by others. In addition, as an authentic leader, I believe in my mission, and I am reminded of it every time I pray five times a day. In our leadership course work, I discovered my true style of leadership and connected who I am to my actions in my profession. My faith and values guide my actions everywhere I go, whether
I am in the majority or minority of the group. In teachers’ meetings, I often speak up even if my voice does not align with the popular opinion in the room. This happens because I do feel there is something inside me that guides how I think, act, and interact with others. I believe it to be my faith.

**Organizational Analysis**

In the first semester of our Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis program, we learned about organizational analysis. The four frames discussed by Bolman and Deal (2017) have influenced my thinking and understanding of how organizations function the most. I felt a paradigm shift in my thinking after Summer One in our program. According to Bolman and Deal (2017), organizations may be analyzed through four frames. The structural frame focuses on whether the organization is hierarchical or has essentially one level and shared leadership with smaller teams. Second, the authors discuss the human resource frame which highlights the vital importance of the workers in the organization. Third, the political frame is concerned with networking and building connections in order to gain power in the organization. Lastly, the symbolic frame, which is the frame that I identified with the most, focuses on the celebrations of milestones within the organization. Additionally, Boleman and Deal (2017) provided analogies to sum up the four frames by describing organizations as factories (structural frame), families (human resource frame), jungles (political frame), and temples (symbolic frame).

Islamic school is a hierarchical (structural) organization. The decisions are made by the board members, then the middle managers (principal and vice principal) convey the decisions to the workers and staff at the bottom level. Understanding and analyzing the organization I currently work in helped me learn to let certain decisions be made by
others without interfering. While my strongest suit is the symbolic frame, my weakest is my political frame. Acquiring such knowledge about myself helped me see myself in my organization in a much clearer way. Understanding organizations helped me improve my political skills. I realized that certain decisions are out of my realm, regardless of how I feel about them. It helped me open my eyes and see those relationships between people outside of the workplace were placing some workers at an advantage, such as having more say in decision-making. Nevertheless, I still do my best to advocate for my students and influence the decision-making process more strategically. The COVID pandemic is the perfect example of how I gained this skill from the program and applied it to benefit fellow teachers. Several teachers had mixed feelings about returning to teach at Islamic school especially with the knowledge of the usual lack of resources at our school. We requested a meeting with the school board and professionally raised our concerns. Observing the power dynamics in our meeting, building coalitions, and anticipating the opposition, were techniques I used to help teachers speak up and demand some options from the board. As a result, we advocated for our rights and the board agreed to give teachers options regarding their work location.

I do believe all four frames are foundational to any organization. Some organizations emphasize some frames more than others; however, I do believe an effective organization will manage to find the equilibrium in all frames. In Islamic school, I would say the political frame stands out the most to me simply because we are an organization that is over 50% funded by donors. These donors then gain power and have the attention of the board members when decisions impact their children that attend the school. The human resource frame is also very visible due to the close community
interactions in other events. The symbolic frame is present due to the school being a faith-based school with its celebrations and Islamic rituals. However, I would like to see more celebration of academic accomplishments and most certainly of the staff and teachers. Unfortunately, staff, teachers, and administrators are rarely celebrated. The main motivator for this practice is to avoid jealousy. To me this is pathetic. As I mentioned earlier, we as teachers are reminded by the administration, almost daily, of the hierarchical structure and who is in charge. This is both structural and political, which leads to policy impacts within our organization.

**Policy Analysis**

Fowler (2013) defined policy as a set of rules that help solve a public problem. Policy analysis is the process of examining a lack of policy or an existing policy that is ineffective (Bardach & Patashnik, 2019). There are several theories within policy analysis, and they help us understand the different perspectives on the agenda of policies. Anderson (2015) examined some of these theories which include political theory, group theory, elite theory, institutionalism, and rational-choice theory. In an educational setting, group theory is most appropriate. Anderson (2015) explained that in group theory “public policy is the product of group struggle” (p. 21). Bradach and Patashnik (2019) explained the Eightfold Path model which includes defining the problem; assembling some evidence; constructing the alternatives; selecting the criteria; projecting the outcomes; confronting the trade-offs; stop, focus, narrow, deepen, and decide; and tell your story.

As doctorate students, we were asked to find a policy of interest in our institution or in the field of education that needs improvement or removal. As a math teacher, I always wondered about the effectiveness of students being held back a grade based on
their academic performance. This policy was my choice for analysis. I met with the principal of our school and analyzed our school policy regarding students who did not qualify to go to the next grade level. After review of the existing literature and following Bardach and Patashnik’s (2019) Eightfold Path model, I concluded the retention policy is not effective or beneficial to students socially or academically. One alternative resolution is to detect the problem early by assessing students early and often. Another alternative recommendation is to utilize summer school for underperforming students. I shared my research findings with my principal. It is important to note that policy analysis is an iterative process and alternatives need to be assessed after each iteration.

This academic school year has proven to be a challenge for teachers and students alike. Due to the current COVID pandemic, many schools were hybrid or online. This has impacted students’ performance. Islamic school is no exception. As a result of the information shared, the Islamic school administration is choosing to have summer school this year to avoid holding students back a grade. I am happy to observe such changes driven by my summer research. This helped me see the value in analyzing existing policies and not accepting the status quo when there are better alternatives that benefit the students.

**Content and Context for Learning**

Throughout this program, I have been reflecting more and more to understand who I am to better serve others. Reflection is the process of finding useful meaning in an individual's learning journey (Gill, 2010). Understanding who I am as a learner helps me learn better. Recognizing different learning styles aids me to appreciate the different
types of learners within my classroom. Moreover, Gill (2010) stated adults need to learn how they learn and discover their learning style.

What drew me to this program is the fact that it focuses on the practicality of what is being taught to adult learners. Merriam and Bierema (2014) emphasized the importance of creating a meaningful classroom experience that connects to students’ real-life experiences as a motivational factor in adult learning. Adult learners are motivated by autonomy, mastery, and purpose (Pink, 2009). Within the six semesters in the Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis program we were provided with several opportunities to select topics of interest to us as learning professionals. We were also supported to keep improving in our learning process. As educators, we have a sense of purpose and moral obligation to continue to improve as leaders for the sake of our students. As an authentic leader, I am not surprised that I am a transformative, spiritual, and adaptive learner.

This process has been transformative to both my thinking and my actions as a leader to my students and as a student in leadership. Mezirow (1991) described the transformative learning process as:

an enhanced level of awareness of the context of one’s beliefs and feelings, a critique of their assumptions and particularly premises, and assessment of alternative perspectives, a decision to negate an older perspective in favor of a new one or to make a synthesis of old and new, an ability to take action based upon the new perspective, and a desire to fit the new perspective into the broader context of one’s life. (p. 161)
I found myself reflecting more on my actions, removing myself from a situation and pretending I am the other person, and recognizing how much I have changed in dealing especially with professionals in my field of education.

Merriam and Bierema (2014) explained spiritual learners connect to others, the world around them, and higher forces. My Islamic belief system is embedded in my daily dealings and actions with others. I believe in giving back to my Muslim community which is why I continue to work as a full-time math teacher and volunteer my time for after-school programs. Additionally, researchers (Merriam & Bierema, 2014; Tisdell & Tolliver, 2003) contended that spiritual learners have a sense of connection to a greater life force, being related to a religious context and that spirituality has to do with meaning-making. Additionally, I discovered my ability to adapt to challenging situations as a learner. During the COVID pandemic, I became an online math teacher, something I never imagined I could do, especially for students in the sixth through 10th-grade levels. Yet as a transformative, adaptive learner, I did adapt to the situation and it transformed my thinking. I can make the online learning experience work for my students. As a Palestinian Muslim immigrant, adaptation, transformation, and spirituality have played a significant role in my learning journey throughout my life.

Diversity and Ethics

As a Muslim teacher who has worked at an Islamic school and now at a diverse public school, diversity is embedded in my faith and surroundings. There is diversity in the followers of Islam (“Islam by Country”, n.d.). Consequently, this helps effortlessly construct a remarkably diverse classroom. Ethics is always held high in many faiths and Islam is no exception. As a leader at my school, I help coach a Mathcounts competition
team. I want the opportunity to be available to all students. Therefore, I volunteer my
time as opposed to charging parents money to coach their kids. I want to provide more
equitable opportunities to students of various socioeconomic statuses. Furthermore, there
is an entrance test for students to determine their eligibility to be on the team. This also
helps eliminate possible biases in selecting who is on the team. I also founded a
scholarship for excelling math students in honor of my late father with set criteria to
select the highest achieving students for the scholarship. Regardless of gender, race, or
parents’ income, the students who work hard have a chance to achieve and excel.
Furthermore, I sometimes code their names as numbers in order to avoid any possible
bias in grading. This will aid in avoiding unintentional bias. Unintentional bias occurs
when assumptions are made during the decision-making process (Banaji et al., 2003).

Gummer (2020) and Petrides (2003) explained the importance of clear
communication and sharing information during the decision-making process. Therefore,
all the selection criteria for the competition team and scholarship are communicated
every season with parents and students. Although ethics in my decision-making process
at Islamic school has always been a part of my professional journey, the Educational
Leadership and Policy Analysis program taught me the importance of having crucial
conversations and not falling into the status quo. Johnson (2018) stated that “we need
ways not only to have serious conversations across differences, but to act decisively to
end the most destructive source of unnecessary suffering in the human experience” (p.
65). Johnson (2018) continued to urge the need to discuss social issues, privilege, and
have uncomfortable conversations in order to bring the issues to light and resolve them.
Challenging the status quo helps avoid the status quo trap in decision-making. Hammond
et al. (2006) described the source of the status quo trap as a “trap lies deep within our psyches, in our desire to protect our ego from damage” (p. 6). Thus, reflecting, renewing, and involving diversity in our daily dealings is so crucial to get more equitable and meaningful decisions and hence opportunities for students of diverse backgrounds.

Another reflection point for me is the fact that in Islamic school everyone knows everyone outside of school settings. This sometimes may lead to unethical favoring of certain people. Bolman and Deal (2017) explained the meeting after the meeting that happens between allies and friends and how that helps certain stakeholders develop coalitions and powers over others. As a teacher, I always ask myself “is this decision the same for others that are not my outside friends?” If the answer is yes, then I know I am not favoring based on outside of school relationships. This is so important to watch out for because it is a trap that many fall into given the community feel of the private school setting.

Summary

Eight years have passed since my father died. To think that I am fulfilling one of his wishes for me, which is to complete my doctorate degree, is extremely rewarding. As a Palestinian Muslim American woman, I understand the struggles of being a refugee, living through wars, and surviving. I value the American dream and the land of opportunity which is why I have held the experiences this program provided to me with the utmost gratitude. I always knew that I have inner values that guide me and that I value relationships and ethics. Now I understand that I am an authentic leader. I have grown significantly in the last four years. Others noticed that I have changed as well. Understanding the dynamics of the organization and situation through the various frames
has helped me take a step back and look at all the angles to provide more meaningful and balanced feedback. I now value the impact policies have on people. I also understand that if policies are left on the shelf untouched and unevaluated, they may be causing more harm than good. Lastly, as Merriam and Bierema (2014) stated, “adults are learning all the time” (p. 11). Learning is a lifelong journey for me, and this is not the end, rather it is the beginning of more opportunities for me to reflect, learn, and grow to be the best for those around me.
References


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February 16, 2022

Principal Investigator: Diana Elkishawi (MU-Student)
Department: Educational Leadership-EDD

Your IRB Application to project entitled **THE LEADERS' ROLE IN CREATING A POSITIVE CULTURE IN ISLAMIC SCHOOLS THROUGH THE LENS OF INVITATIONAL LEADERSHIP: A CASE STUDY** was reviewed and approved by the MU Institutional Review Board according to the terms and conditions described below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IRB Project Number</td>
<td>2088642</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IRB Review Number</td>
<td>371299</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initial Application Approval Date</td>
<td>February 16, 2022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IRB Expiration Date</td>
<td>February 16, 2023</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of Review</td>
<td>Exempt</td>
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<td>Project Status</td>
<td>Active - Exempt</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exempt Categories (Revised Common Rule) 45 CFR 46.104d(1)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Risk Level</td>
<td>Minimal Risk</td>
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</table>
**HIPAA Category**
No HIPAA

**Consent (Exempt Studies Only): #582032**

**Consent (Exempt Studies Only): #582033**

**Consent (Exempt Studies Only): #582273**

**Approved Documents**
Instruments (i.e. surveys): #582274
Interview Questions: #582030
Interview Questions: #582031
Recruitment E-Mail: #578460

The principal investigator (PI) is responsible for all aspects and conduct of this study. The PI must comply with the following conditions of the approval:

- No subjects may be involved in any study procedure prior to the IRB approval date or after the expiration date.
- All changes must be IRB approved prior to implementation utilizing the Exempt Amendment Form.
- Major noncompliance deviations must be reported to the MU IRB on the Event Report within 5 business days of the research team becoming aware of the deviation. Major deviations result when research activities may affected the research subject’s rights, safety, and/or welfare, or may have had the potential to impact even if no actual harm occurred. Please refer to the MU IRB Noncompliance policy for additional details.
- The Annual Exempt Form must be submitted to the IRB for review and approval at least 30 days prior to the project expiration date to keep the study active or to close it.
- Maintain all research records for a period of seven years from the project completion date.

If you are offering subject payments and would like more information about research participant payments, please click here to view the MU Business Policy and Procedure: [http://bppm.missouri.edu/chapter2/2_250.html](http://bppm.missouri.edu/chapter2/2_250.html)

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the MU IRB Office at 573-882-3181 or email to muresearchirb@missouri.edu.

Thank you,
MU Institutional Review Board
APPENDIX B

Interview Protocol
(Leaders)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Research Questions Addressed:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Introduction: 1 minutes</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Researcher]: Assalamu Alaikum (Peace Be Upon You). Thank you for meeting with me today. My name is Diana Elkishawi. May I have your permission to record this Zoom call?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am a doctoral candidate at the University of Missouri. The purpose of this study is to understand the leader’s role in creating a positive school culture.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To that end, I will be asking you some questions. The interview will take approximately 60 minutes to complete. If you wish to elaborate on the answers, it may take more time. If at any time, you would like to expand on an idea or go back to a previous discussion, please feel free to do so. Likewise, I may ask follow-up questions to further understand your point of view. If you would like to take a break, please let me know. My goal is for this to be as comfortable as possible for you. Do you have any questions for me at this point?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Opening Questions: 5 minutes</strong></td>
<td>Learn about the leader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Please tell me your name, role, and how many years you have been at this school?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Probe:</strong> Did you have prior experience in education elsewhere or in a different (public/higher education) setting?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. What inspired you to become an administrator?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Probe:</strong> If you can go back and change anything about your career choice, would you?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key Questions: 45-50 minutes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Please give examples of how students are given the opportunity to lead in the school.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Probe:</strong> How are you making sure these opportunities are inclusive and given to every student?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q3 (Intentionality &amp; Care)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. As a leader, how do you treat teachers and parents with intentional care, optimism, respect, and trust?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Probe:</strong> Should students be treated in a similar way? Please explain.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q3 (I-CORT/Leader)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. How do teachers and staff treat parents and students with intentional care, optimism, respect, and trust?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Probe:</strong> Do you think intentional care, optimism, respect, and trust is present also between teachers? Between students?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q3 (I-CORT/Culture)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Since you started leading this school, what programs, policies, and processes did you put in place to help students succeed?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Probe:</strong> Give examples of each please.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2 (5Ps)  Q3 (Intentionality &amp; Care)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Please describe the decision-making process in the school and who is included or excluded in this process.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Probe:</strong> Give examples of each please.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q3 (Respect &amp; Trust by treating others as valuable, able, and responsible)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. In your opinion, what attracts stakeholders (teachers/staff, parents, and students) to attend this Islamic school?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Probe:</strong> Why not other Islamic schools since there are several in the region?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions</td>
<td>Research Questions Addressed:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. How do you make people feel welcomed and valued when they walk into the Islamic school?</td>
<td>Q3 (Intentionality &amp; Care)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Probe:</strong> How about an angry parent? Or a student that is unhappy? Or a teacher/staff that feels overworked?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. How is discipline handled in the school?</td>
<td>Q3 (I-CORT &amp; 5Ps)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Probe:</strong> With students? With teachers?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Question: 3 minutes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. What is the most important take away any Islamic student should take away after attending your institution? Why is it the most important?</td>
<td>Learn about the leader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Probe:</strong> Do you have anything else you want to add or want me to know?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closing: 1 minute</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These are all the questions I have for you today. I appreciate your participation in this study. I will summarize the information you shared with me today and send it to your email to ensure I accurately represented your answers. I appreciate your time. Jazakum Allah Khairan (May Allah reward you). Assalamu Alaikum (Peace Be Upon You).

**Interview Protocol**

*(Teachers/Staff and Parents)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant:</th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Position:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date/Time:</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Research Questions Addressed:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction: 1 minutes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
[Researcher]: Assalamu Alaikum (Peace Be Upon You). Thank you for meeting with me today. My name is Diana Elkishawi. May I have your permission to record this Zoom call?

I am a doctoral candidate at the University of Missouri. The purpose of this study is to understand the leader’s role in creating a positive school culture.

To that end, I will be asking you some questions. The interview will take approximately 60 minutes to complete. If you wish to elaborate on the answers, it may take more time. If at any time, you would like to expand on an idea or go back to a previous discussion, please feel free to do so. Likewise, I may ask follow-up questions to further understand your point of view. If you would like to take a break, please let me know. My goal is for this to be as comfortable as possible for you. Do you have any questions for me at this point?

Opening Questions: 5 minutes

1. Please tell me your name, role, and how many years you have been a part of the school community?
   **Probe:** What drew you to be a member (teacher, staff, or parent) of the school?

2. Why did you pick this private school and not any other private or public schools?
   **Probe:** If you can go back and change your choice, would you?

Key Questions: 45-50 minutes

3. Please give examples of how the leader of the school has given the opportunity for teachers, staff, parents, and students to be partners in the decision-making process.
   **Probe:** Do you feel these opportunities are given equally to everyone? Please give examples.

4. Do you feel the leaders of the school treat teachers, staff, parents, and students with intentional care, optimism, respect, and trust?
   **Probe:** Please give specific examples.
5. How do teachers and staff treat each other with intentional care, optimism, respect, and trust?  
   **Probe:** What is the role of the leader in helping create such environment?  
   | Q1 |

6. What programs, policies, and processes did the leader put in place to help students succeed?  
   **Probe:** Give examples of each please.  
   | Q1 |

7. Do you feel that you are treated as valuable, able, and responsible by the school leaders?  
   **Probe:** Give examples of each please.  
   | Q1 |

8. In your opinion, what attracts stakeholders (teachers/staff, parents, and students) to attend this Islamic school?  
   **Probe:** Why not other Islamic schools since there are several in the region?  
   | Q1 |

9. Give examples of how you feel welcomed and included in the school.  
   **Probe:** How do school leaders treat stakeholders that are unhappy about an issue? Give examples.  
   | Q1 |

10. How is student discipline handled in the school?  
    **Probe:** Do you feel it is consistent and fair?  
    | Q1 |

**Final Question: 3 minutes**

11. What is your best memory about this school?  
    **Probe:** Do you have anything else you want to add or want me to know?  
    Learn about the participant
Closing: 1 minute

These are all the questions I have for you today. I appreciate your participation in this study. I will summarize the information you shared with me today and send it to your email to ensure I accurately represented your answers. I appreciate your time. Jazakum Allah Khairan (May Allah reward you). Assalamu Alaikum (Peace Be Upon You).
APPENDIX C

Gatekeeper Permission for Superintendent or School Principal Participation

I, ________________________________, grant permission for the school superintendent or school principal to be contacted to participate in the research study, The Leaders’ Role in Creating a Positive Culture in Islamic Schools Through the Lens of Invitational Leadership: A Case Study conducted by Diana Elkishawi, doctoral candidate at the University of Missouri- Columbia. The IRB number for this study is 2088642.

By signing this permission form, I understand that the following safeguards are in place to protect institution leaders choosing to participate:

- All participation is voluntary and may be withdrawn at any point before consummation of the study.
- All responses will be used for dissertation research and for potential future journal publications.
- All identities will be kept confidential in all phases of the research.
- An interview will take place with either the school superintendent or a school leader lasting approximately 60 minutes in length. Interviews will be recorded, transcribed, and coded to determine common themes regarding a leader’s role in creating a positive school culture in Islamic schools.
- The information gathered should be beneficial to all leaders in private school setting.
- There is no cost to the institution to be a part of this study and may discontinue participation at any time without penalty.
- Participants must be 18 years of age or older.

Please keep the consent letter and a copy of the signed consent form for your records. If you choose to grant permission for school leaders in your institution to participate in this study, please complete this Superintendent or School Principal Participation Form, and return it to Diana Elkishawi electronically as soon as possible. Or you may reply to this email with your contact information and that will serve as your consent to participate in this study.

If you have any questions about the research, please contact Diana Elkishawi via email at delkishawi@gmail.com or the faculty advisor Dr. Barbara Martin at bmartin@ucm.edu

You may contact the University of Missouri Institutional Review Board (IRB) if you have any questions about your rights as a study participant, want to report any problems or complaints, or feel under any pressure to take part or stay in this study. The IRB is a group of people who review research studies to make sure the rights of participants are protected. You can reach them at 573- 882-3181 or muresearchirb@missouri.edu. If you want to talk privately about your rights or any issues related to your participation in this study, you can contact University of Missouri Research Participant Advocacy by calling 888-280-5002 (a free call) or emailing MUResearchRPA@missouri.edu.
I have read the material above, and any questions I have posed have been answered to my satisfaction. I grant permission for myself or an institution leader to be contacted and invited to participate in this study.

Signed: _________________________________ Date: ____________________

Title/Position within the organization: _________________________________

**Contact Information:**

Phone: ____________________________ (circle one) WORK HOME CELL

---

Please return to: Diana Elkishawi, 5712 NE Sapphire Ct. Lee’s Summit, MO 64064

Cell Phone: 816-547-5653  Email: delkishawi@gmail.com
APPENDIX D

Informed Consent from Interview Participant

I, ____________________________, agree to participate in the study *The Leaders’ Role in Creating a Positive Culture in Islamic Schools Through the Lens of Invitational Leadership* conducted by Diana Elkishawi, doctoral candidate at the University of Missouri-Columbia. The IRB number for this study is 2088642.

I understand the following:

- My participation is voluntary and may be withdrawn at any point before consummation of the study.
- My responses will be used for dissertation research and potential future journal publications.
- My identity will be kept confidential in all phases of the research.
- An interview will occur by video conference at a mutually agreed upon time, lasting approximately 60 minutes in length.
- Participants must be 18 years of age or older.

Please keep the consent letter for your records. If you choose to participate, please reply to this email with your contact information and that will serve as your consent to participate in this study. If you have any questions about the research, please contact Diana Elkishawi via email at delkishawi@gmail.com or the faculty advisor Dr. Barbara Martin at bmartin@ucm.edu.

You may contact the University of Missouri Institutional Review Board (IRB) if you have any questions about your rights as a study participant, want to report any problems or complaints, or feel under any pressure to take part or stay in this study. The IRB is a group of people who review research studies to make sure the rights of participants are protected. You can reach them at 573-882-3181 or muresearchirb@missouri.edu. If you want to talk privately about your rights or any issues related to your participation in this study, you can contact University of Missouri Research Participant Advocacy by calling 888-280-5002 (a free call) or emailing MUREsearchRPA@missouri.edu.

I have read the material above, and any questions that I have posed have been answered to my satisfaction. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

**Contact Information:**

Phone Number: ___________________________ (circle one) WORK HOME CELL

Best time for contact: ________________________________

Email: ____________________________________________

________________________________________________

Please return to: Diana Elkishawi, 5712 NE Sapphire Ct. Lee’s Summit, MO 64064
The Inviting School Survey-Revised (ISS-R©): English, Spanish, Traditional and Simplified Chinese

PEOPLE ITEMS

3. The principal involves everyone in the decision-making process.

6. Teachers in this school show respect for students.

9. Teachers are easy to talk with.

12. Teachers take time to talk with students about students’ out-of-class activities.
15. Teachers are generally prepared for class.

18. Teachers exhibit a sense of humor.

21. People in this school are polite to one another.

24. Teachers work to encourage students’ self-confidence.

27. The principal treats people as though they are responsible.

30. Students work cooperatively with each other.

33. People in this school want to be here.

36. People in this school try to stop vandalism when they see it happening.

39. Teachers appear to enjoy life.

42. School pride is evident among students.

45. Teachers share out-of-class experiences with students.

48. Teachers spend time after school with those who need extra help.

PROGRAM ITEMS

2. Everyone is encouraged to participate in athletic (sports) programs.

10. There is a wellness (health) program in this school.

17. School programs involve out of school experience.

23. Good health practices are encouraged in this school.

31. Interruptions to classroom academic activities are kept to a minimum.

38. The school sponsors extracurricular activities apart from sports.

46. Mini courses are available to students.

PROCESS ITEMS

1. Student discipline is approached from a positive standpoint.
7. Grades are assigned by means of fair and comprehensive assessment of work and effort.

14. All telephone calls to this school are answered promptly and politely.

22. Everyone arrives on time for school.

29. People often feel welcome when they enter the school.

35. Many people in this school are involved in making decisions.

43. Daily attendance by students and staff is high.

50. Classes get started quickly.

**POLICY ITEMS**

5. Teachers are willing to help students who have special problems.

11. Students have the opportunity to talk to one another during class activities.

19. School policy encourages freedom of expression by everyone.

26. The messages and notes sent home are positive.

34. A high percentage of students pass in this school.

41. School buses wait for late students.

47. The grading practices in this school are fair.

**PLACE ITEMS**

4. Furniture is pleasant and comfortable.

8. The air smells fresh in this school.

13. The school grounds are clean and well-maintained.

16. The restrooms in this school are clean and properly maintained.

20. The principal’s office is attractive.

25. Bulletin boards are attractive and up-to-date.
28. Space is available for student independent study.

32. Fire alarm instructions are well posted and seem reasonable.

37. Classrooms offer a variety of furniture arrangements.

40. Clocks and water fountains are in good repair.

44. There are comfortable chairs for visitors.

49. The lighting in this school is more than adequate.
APPENDIX F

Assalamu Alaikum (Peace Be Upon You): You are invited to participate in a research study of Islamic Schools with Diana Elkishawi, a doctoral candidate at the University of Missouri Columbia. The Leaders' Role in Creating a Positive Culture in Islamic Schools Through the Lens of Invitational Leadership: A Case Study. The IRB number for this study is 2088642. It will take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete the questionnaire. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. There are no foreseeable risks associated with this project. However, if you feel uncomfortable answering any questions, you may withdraw from the survey at any point. Please note that when the results of this study are published, they will only be reported in aggregate and no participant identifiers will be published except for their role within the organization. Your survey responses will be strictly confidential at all stages of this research study. Please note that all participants in this survey must be 18 years of age or older. If you have questions or concerns at any time about the survey or the procedures, you may contact the researcher at delkishawi@gmail.com

You may contact the University of Missouri Institutional Review Board (IRB) if you have any questions about your rights as a study participant, want to report any problems or complaints, or feel under any pressure to take part or stay in this study. The IRB is a group of people who review research studies to make sure the rights of participants are protected. You can reach them at 573-882-3181 or muresearchirb@missouri.edu. If you want to talk privately about your rights or any issues related to your participation in this study, you can contact University of Missouri Research Participant Advocacy by calling 888-280-5002 (a free call) or emailing MUResearchRPA@missouri.edu.

Jazakum Allah Khairan (May Allah reward you) for your time and support. Press START to begin the survey. By clicking START below you voluntarily consent to participate in this study. Please read each question carefully because each is important to understand your opinion. Please ensure you answer ALL questions.

What is your role within the organization?
1. Parent
2. Teacher/Staff

Student discipline is approached from a positive standpoint. (Q2: Process)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Please select one:</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
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Everyone is encouraged to participate in athletic (sports) programs. (Q2: Program)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Please select one:</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The principal involves everyone in the decision-making process. (Q2: People)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Please select one:</td>
<td>□</td>
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</table>

Furniture is pleasant and comfortable. (Q2: Places)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Please select one:</td>
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</table>

Teachers are willing to help students who have special problems. (Q2: Policy)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Please select one:</td>
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</table>

There is a wellness (health) program in this school. (Q2: Program)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
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<td>Please select one:</td>
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Students have the opportunity to talk to one another during class activities. (Q2: Policy)

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
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<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
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School programs involve out of school experience. (Q2: Program)

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School policy encourages freedom of expression by everyone. (Q2: Policy)

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The principal’s office is attractive. (Q2: Place)

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Teachers work to encourage students’ self-confidence. (Q2: People)

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Bulletin boards are attractive and up-to-date. (Q2: Place)

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The messages and notes sent home are positive. (Q2: Policy)

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The principal treats people as though they are responsible. (Q2: People)

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Space is available for student independent study. (Q2: Place)

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People often feel welcome when they enter the school. (Q2: Process)

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People in this school want to be here. (Q2: People)
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Many people in this school are involved in making decisions. (Q2: Process)

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The school sponsors extracurricular activities apart from sports. (Q2: Program)

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Classes get started quickly. (Q2: Process)

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How do you feel welcome at the school? Please provide examples.

What policies and programs has the leadership team instituted to ensure students' success? Please list as many as possible.
APPENDIX G

Document Review Form

Name of Document

Document #

Date Obtained

Document Received From

Notes:
APPENDIX H

*Document Review Form*

Name of Document: Journeying Towards Our Best-Self: 6 Core Values

March 2022

Document #

Date Obtained: 03/24/2022

Document Received From: SBL1

Notes:

- References to the teachings of Islam
- Positive language usage
- Reminders to reflect inward
- Leader invites the parents to join
APPENDIX I

*Document Review Form*

Name of Document: School A Improvement Plan

March 2022

Document #

Date Obtained: 03/30/2022

Document Received From: SAL1

Notes:

- Goal oriented
- Working towards sustainability and growth
- Looking to connect Muslims with the community at large
- Excellent language usage and clear writing
Document Review Form

Name of Document: School A Parent Handbook

March 2022

Document #

Date Obtained: 03/30/2022

Document Received From: SAL1

Notes:

- Extremely detailed and well organized
- Themes/Reminders for each month include:
  - Responsibility
  - Honesty
  - Thankfulness
  - Self-Restraint and Control
  - Fairness and Justice
  - Commitment
  - Generosity
  - Respect
  - Kindness and Care
  - Citizenship
Vitae

Diana Ali Elkishawi currently resides in Lee’s Summit, Missouri with her husband, Adam Turk, and their three sons, Younis, Yahya, and Ali. She graduated from the University of Central Missouri with her undergraduate degree in Computer Science and Mathematics in 2001. She took an interest in helping her community and found herself a math teaching position in Islamic School of Greater Kansas City where she became the math department lead teacher. With a desire to learn and grow as an educator, she then completed her middle and high school math teaching certifications, along with her master’s degree in Education from the University of Central Missouri in 2012. Prompted by a desire to lead, in October of 2022, Diana completed her Doctorate in Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis at the University of Missouri-Columbia. At the university, she studied the leaders’ role in creating a positive culture in Islamic schools through the lens of invitational leadership. Currently, Diana continues to teach and lead in the public schools’ sector at Center School District 58.