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Sufistic Leadership Management of the Head in the Madrasah

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Abstract: Every organization or institution needs to have good leadership management and teamwork. In this case, schools need to be led properly so that management can run well. The principal's leadership style and ability needs to be good, and of course every leader has his own leadership style and characteristics. Leaders who have religious ethics, who have a clean and peaceful heart (qalb al-munib wa qalb al-salim), have a healthy mind and strong body (aql salim wa jism al-salim), and can present God in their hearts them, thus making the soul calm (nafs al-mutmainnah) are some of the characteristics of Sufistic leaders who are considered capable of making a good management system. Therefore, this study aims to reveal the leadership style and characteristics of the principal of Madrasah Ibtidaiyah at-Taqwa Bondowoso, in order to find the pattern of sufistic leadership that is applied by him. A qualitative method with an analytical descriptive approach will be used in this study. This study succeeded in finding that the sufistic characteristics of the principal of Madrasah Ibtidaiyah at-Taqwa Bondowoso are implemented in the attitude of being patient, humble, sincere, istiqamah, wara' and responsible, all of which are acknowledged by administrators and students. So it is proven that the sufistic leadership style is able to produce good organizational and institutional management systems.

Keywords : Leadership, Sufism and Head of Madrasah

INTRODUCTION

Leadership is a vital factor in the development of an educational institution. Leadership emerges from internal factors as an inherent talent (inner beauty of spiritual human beings), but it can also be shaped by the environment and circumstances (external beauty of spiritual human beings). Talent in leadership often arises from internal factors, developing, embodying, and engaging in the process of learning to lead. When one has established core beliefs and fundamental values of leadership, the essence of leadership is prepared to become a leader. Fundamental values in leadership, such as integrity, vision, character, and the ability to influence others to advance an organization, indicate that someone is truly ready to become a leader.

Every organization or institution needs effective leadership management and teamwork to easily achieve its goals. According to Roger E. Herman and Erwin Kurnia, for an organization or institution to be successful, it must have at least three elements: first, good

leadership management; second, good governance; and third, a team capable of working together productively, with mature knowledge, skills, attitudes, and intelligence (N.M., E.K., 2014).

Furthermore, as a school principal, one also has the responsibility to coordinate all school activities, from teaching to facilities and infrastructure. The primary duty of a principal is also to serve as a teacher, meaning they are the leader of the teachers as well. Government Regulation No. 19 of 2017 states that “principals are no longer burdened with teaching; principals are no longer assigned additional tasks but still receive professional allowances.” Principals can breathe a sigh of relief. Specifically, Article 54 (1) states: “The workload of an education unit leader consists only of supervisory duties, entrepreneurship development, and leadership of teachers and educators, which are important factors for the advancement of the school. Therefore, understanding the detailed concept of a principal is necessary (Julaiha, 2019).”

In the research written by Yenti, it is explained that the management of school leadership in improving the quality of learning in an educational institution can be implemented through: first, the principal’s planning based on bottom-up and top-down policies, with SWOT analysis; second, organizing by dividing tasks through official decrees and outlining them in the organizational structure; third, programming implementation through increasing teacher competition and enhancing students' interests and talents; and fourth, conducting supervision through regular school supervision programs (Yenti S., 2021).

In Islamic educational institutions, leadership management is not only limited to rational and logical organization but also involves connecting management systems with spiritual values, especially in institutions managed by pesantren staff. These values are considered important as they are a core part of Islamic teachings and a requirement for internalizing everything obtained from ritual processes (Pasiak, 2012). Therefore, it is accurate to say, as Wirawan noted in his research, that a manager or administrator needs to possess psychological qualities with good mental intelligence (Wirawan, 2013), thus making spiritual values crucial for a leader as a manager.

Furthermore, data from BPS East Java for the 2022/2023 period shows that there are 7,463 private madrasah ibtida'iyah in East Java Province. This data indicates that while there are many private school principals, not all of them perform their duties well. Every principal has their own strengths and weaknesses, and many are unable to fulfill their responsibilities as expected due to their unique leadership styles and characteristics. Therefore, this research will explore one aspect of the leadership management character of madrasah ibtida'iyah principals, specifically focusing on the leadership management of the Madrasah Ibtida'iyah at-Taqwa Bondowoso, which is suspected to implement a sufistic leadership pattern.

METHOD

The type of research used in this study is field research. The research method employed is qualitative, focusing on narratives and words with the aim of understanding sufistic leadership patterns. The data collection techniques used include in-depth interviews, field observations, and documentation, supported by interview guidelines, observation guidelines, and documentation guidelines as field data collection instruments. This research will use theoretical explanations through data, emphasizing perspectives, definitions, and interpretations from sources or participants.

In this research, there are two sources of information: primary and secondary. The primary source comes from original and first-hand sources, including key informants such as the principal of Madrasah Ibtida'iyah at-Taqwa Bondowoso, Mr. Muhammad Zakariya, as well as the panel of teachers and senior staff he leads. The secondary source refers to information not from the primary source, such as books, articles, journals, reports, and other relevant information that supports the main topic of the research. The field data findings are

then analyzed using the Interactive Analysis model by Miles and Huberman, which includes four stages: data collection, data condensation, data presentation, and conclusion drawing.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Leadership is the ability of an individual to move, influence, motivate, invite, direct, and advise those they lead. Leadership is also a process of influencing activities related to the work of members of a specific group. Therefore, leadership always involves others, whether as subordinates or followers, and is closely related to the distribution of power between leaders and group members in a balanced manner, as group members also have their own power (Mustofa F., 2022). In this research, sufistic leadership is based on spirituality, which serves as the essence and spirit of every behavior and leadership process, rooted in sufistic values. This spirit forms the foundation of belief, work principles, and values in activities. Sufistic leadership inspires every step, regulation, habit, and tradition in leadership. On the other hand, leaders must possess the ability to use various forms of power to influence the behavior of their followers in different ways (Mustofa F., 2022). Thus, sufistic leadership emulates God's and the Prophet Muhammad's leadership, which is based on religious doctrines, especially Sufism, as a religious ethic. This religious ethic serves as a source of spirituality, aiming for Allah's pleasure and being a source of pride for the Prophet Muhammad in serving the community as exemplified by him. Leadership is also believed to be a process of providing a good example to followers in an effort to achieve the goals of a group or organization. One such leader within an organization is the school principal, who leads teachers and students.

As the top leader of an educational institution, the principal has the responsibility to direct, command, organize, prohibit, even punish, and encourage the achievement of desired goals and objectives (Azhar, S., 2016). However, only a few leaders fulfill these responsibilities effectively. The role of a leader is not as simple as it might appear, involving more than just commanding or leading subordinates. As a superior, the principal is also expected to serve as a role model for their subordinates through friendly behavior and adherence to the rules and regulations that have been collectively established. Through their members and subordinates, rules, regulations, and programs can be easily implemented, controlled, and monitored. The principal also plays a role in managing the school management system, which is linked to the success of the input, process, and output within an educational institution. The principal is responsible for the successful implementation of learning through all available school administrative tools. The availability of quality resources is also the principal's responsibility, as only with quality resources can every program and educational activity be carried out as expected (Julaiha, 2019).

The leadership of a principal is characterized by qualities that provide comfort to all members of the school. A good principal is able to cultivate a school culture, discipline, act as a work partner, and create cooperation among all school members to foster a friendly environment with shared goals. Thus, the principal's leadership enhances the quality of education (A. J. et al., 2021). In research written by Encep and colleagues, it is explained that the legitimacy of a principal's leadership differs from that of a religious leader such as a *kiai*. The legitimacy of a principal's leadership is not obtained directly from the community but through appointment by the government or foundation based on the competencies they possess. In contrast, a *kiai*'s leadership legitimacy is obtained directly from the community, based not only on religious knowledge but also on the values of authority (charisma) derived from knowledge, mystical powers, traits, and often from their lineage (Encep S. et al., 2023).

Furthermore, from these differences, there arises the possibility of combining the legitimacy found in a *kiai*'s leadership with that of a school principal, aiming to strengthen the principal's leadership. This is because the dominant strength in the development of Islamic education depends on the cultural strength of its leadership. The strength of culture

depends on leadership, and the strength of leadership depends on the commitment of leaders to religious ethics, which originate from Allah's ethical behavior towards humans.

Therefore, to achieve this, a principal is needed who can reflect themselves as a spiritual leader while embodying Allah in their heart. As a result, their soul becomes tranquil (*nafs al-mutmainnah*), their heart becomes pure and peaceful (*qalb al-munib wa qalb al-Salim*), their mind becomes healthy and clear (*'aql al-Salim*), and their body remains healthy (*Jism al-Salim*). A spiritual leader needs to possess intellectual, emotional, and spiritual intelligence simultaneously. Because they have a close relationship with worldly, supernatural, and divine spirits, they can manage their emotions and keep their hearts calm and peaceful. Allah's support is open, conscience and spirituality are fully engaged; the mind is clear, and logical and IQ, EQ, and SQ are integrated to produce the highest intelligence (Imawan, A., 2018).

The principal of Madrasah MI At-Taqlwa integrates a comprehensive leadership model that combines various models, styles, and strengths to advance the institution they lead, encompassing intellectual, spiritual, emotional, moral, ethical, and character aspects. Thus, this sufistic leadership is built upon three values: mysticism, ethics, and logic. Ust. Zakariya's leadership emphasizes spiritual awareness through practicing religious values and deeply understanding their content. Because he maintains a balance between worldly and spiritual aspects in achieving a fulfilling life. However, this has become one of the guiding models. This means that not everyone can swing between this world and the next. Therefore, in this case, the researcher discusses leaders who are able to balance both aspects to always bring positive impacts in their leadership.

The current principal of Madrasah Ibtidaiyah at-Taqlwa is Muhammad Zakariya, who has been leading since 2018. Zakariya was chosen as a leader based on a result of *istikharah* (a prayer for guidance) and his teaching experience and traits that reflect those of a religious leader, indicating he has legitimacy similar to that of *kiai* as religious figures. As a result, he has gained broad trust from the community. The sufistic values applied by him include several important aspects: *Mujahadah* (striving), *Riyadlah* (spiritual exercises), and *Istikharah* (prayer for guidance), performed with trust and the paradigm that the principal is a trust to be dedicated to service, worship, and striving for Allah's pleasure.

In addition, Zakariya also meets the requirements to be a school principal. This can be seen from his image as a superior, as the principal has a primary role and responsibility as a leader in the school. Foreseeing the future of the school is also part of his responsibility, requiring him to innovate with creative initiatives and activities to make the future of the school he leads better. Developing strategies or operational methods for the success of innovative ideas, as well as planning both strategic and operational aspects, is essential.

Zakariya also applies his teaching experience to develop the potential within the institution. Therefore, Madrasah Ibtidaiyah at-Taqlwa implements a blend of modern and traditional management. These two approaches do not contradict each other; rather, the traditional character is integrated through the application of moral values and Sufism, resulting in students who possess good morals and can adapt well to modernity. One of Zakariya's innovations includes regularizing religious rituals, such as *istighasah* (prayers for divine assistance) filled with *dhikr* (remembrance of Allah), *wirid* (regular recitations), and *manaqib* (praises of the Prophet). Additionally, he has implemented the practice of *Solat Dhuha* (forenoon prayer) to seek and ask for Allah's guidance. This ensures that all teaching and learning activities not only produce quality students but also instill religious attitudes and habits. Students are also taught good character and ethics, including respecting elders such as teachers, parents, siblings, and neighbors, and showing kindness to those younger. This way, students' religious values become complete with a good relationship with Allah and all of creation.

The facilities at MI at-Taqlwa are also modern, with available internet and computers

for accessing educational resources and strong literacy. The madrasah also provides other facilities such as a school building, mosque, and library. Interestingly, during the initial construction, the kiai and elders of the at-Taqwa foundation performed prayers and dhikr together, asking for blessings for the newly built building. They believe that a good building is not measured by its grandeur but by its blessings that can provide extensive benefits to the community. The furnishings, including decorations and amenities, also reflect high spiritual and religious values, which can deeply affect the students and inhabitants. These factors have made students obedient and respectful of the rules, as they follow the principal's example of obedience and leadership. They even show respect to teachers by not looking directly at them during interactions and standing quietly in honor when teachers pass by. This tradition of respecting teachers is well-established in MI at-Taqwa Bondowoso, carried out without any specific teaching or directives.

In the view of the leadership characteristics applied at MI at-Taqwa, Zakaria demonstrates several traits defining his leadership style. Firstly, Zakaria's humility is evident in his close relationship with teachers, staff, and students, treating them without status distinctions. This approach facilitates easier communication and fosters a positive relationship with subordinates. When mistakes occur, Zakaria opts not to address them directly but instead asks his deputies to provide wise and considerate corrections. This method is also used to address violations in programs, ensuring that communication remains effective and employing local language to enhance understanding and proper etiquette. Secondly, consistency is a crucial principle in Zakaria's leadership. He believes that steadfastness in fulfilling duties and responsibilities is essential. He emphasizes the importance of routine activities such as communal prayers at the Agung at-Taqwa Mosque in Bondowoso, which he consistently maintains. Thirdly, transparency is a key aspect of Zakaria's management. He views openness in institutional and financial management as vital, especially in the modern era. Comprehensive discussions with all elements of the institution are seen as an effective way to resolve issues. Fourthly, responsibility is firmly upheld by Zakaria. He remains focused on his role as the head of the madrasah, avoiding additional responsibilities outside this role. His decisions are made with consideration of both worldly and spiritual aspects, aiming to seek Allah's approval. Lastly, patience is a highly valued trait for Zakaria. Although he avoids anger and often uses humor to manage situations, he remains committed to giving students the opportunity to improve their diligence. His approach seeks to correct mistakes without harming the feelings of subordinates and students, even when advised to be stricter in addressing violations.

The statement highlights Zakaria's unique leadership qualities, demonstrating his sincerity and dedication in fulfilling his responsibilities. This sincerity is particularly challenging to grasp, especially for those who struggle with controlling their own egos, including his subordinates such as teachers, staff, and students. Thus, it can be concluded that Zakaria is a distinctive leader with a strong mystical character, as he takes his responsibilities seriously and reflects a deep sense of trustworthiness and commitment to his role at MI at-Taqwa. In addition to his charismatic and sincere leadership, Zakaria also harbors ambitions typical of those who aspire to hold specific positions of authority. This mirrors the concept of *maqamat* in Sufism, specifically the trait of *wara'*—a characteristic of cautious behavior. Zakaria demonstrates a readiness to accept and perform all assigned tasks correctly, embodying a sense of contentment (*ridha*) with God's decrees. His decisions are made with a focus on consultation, fostering a sense of brotherhood and family within the institution.

The head of Madrasah Ibtidaiyah At-Taqwa further explains that he is committed to being accountable for everything entrusted to him, both in this world and the hereafter. He pursues his lifestyle with simplicity and caution, avoiding anything that might arouse suspicion or contravene legal or religious norms. From his perspective, the head of a school should serve as a role model, demonstrating exemplary behavior that others can follow and

emulate. Here is a comparative analysis of spiritual leadership in relation to other leadership models:

Table 1. Results of the Comparative Study Analysis of Spiritual Leadership Among Other Leadership Models

Description	Transformational Leadership	Religious Leadership	Sufistic Leadership
Essence of Leadership	Mandate from fellow humans	Tests and mandates from God and humans	Leadership as a trust and a means of worship to seek Allah's pleasure
Function of Leadership	To empower followers through authority, expertise, and role modeling	To empower and enlighten followers' faith and conscience through jihad (sacrifice) and altruistic deeds	To serve the community, fulfill religious duties, and dedicate oneself to the Creator
Leadership Ethos	Dedication of efforts to others for a better shared life	Dedication of efforts to Allah and fellow humans (worship) selflessly	Sincerity, humility, consistency, responsibility, patience, transparency
Target of Leadership Actions	Mind and conscience	Spirituality and conscience	Intellect, heart, and spirit
Leadership Approach	Authority, expertise, and role modeling	Conscience and role modeling	Heavenly contracts, brotherhood, consultation, exemplary conduct
Method of Influence	Calm the soul and build charisma	Calm the soul, inspire faith	Charismatic, calming the soul, service-oriented, worship-oriented, seeking Allah's pleasure
Leadership Goals	Building togetherness	Building love, spreading goodness, and channeling divine mercy	Seeking Allah's pleasure, being praised by the Prophet, spreading benefits, serving the Prophet's community

This analysis highlights fundamental differences in the essence, function, and ethos of leadership among the three models. Transformational leadership focuses on empowerment and role modeling in human relationships, while religious leadership emphasizes spirituality and altruistic actions. Sufistic leadership, in contrast, views leadership as a trust and a form of worship aimed at achieving Allah's pleasure, with a focus on spiritual values such as humility, consistency, and patience.

CONCLUSION

The head of MI At-Taqwa Bondowoso implements Sufi values in his management model. The Sufi values he applies include humility (Tawadhu), patience (Sabar), consistency (Istiqamah), piety (Wara'), sincerity (Ikhlas), responsibility (Tanggung Jawab), and joy (Sukacita). Based on this, it can be said that Muhammad Zakariya has successfully fulfilled his role as a leader. He has met the essential aspects required of a school principal. MI At-Taqwa Bondowoso has advanced and developed under Zakariya's leadership and his team. Through Zakariya's demonstrated attitudes and qualities, both teachers and students are gradually able to transform their personalities by adopting the Sufi values and traits exemplified by their leader.

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