

Religion, Leadership and School Principals; Symbolic Interactionism Perspective

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Abstract:

This study aims to analyze the leadership behavior of the madrasa principal in internalizing the religious values of the symbolic interactionism perspective in the madrasa. This research was conducted using a phenomenological type of qualitative approach, in which researchers used interviews, observations, and documentation to obtain data in the field. The data analysis was carried out circularly through data presentation, data reduction, and concluding. The results showed that the leadership behavior of the madrasa principal in internalizing religious values from the symbolic interactionism perspective was reflected in ritual practices as religious symbols that were displayed personally and collegially. In addition, sincerity is used as the basis for his perpetuation at the madrasa. This study implies that religious values must be internalized in every managerial activity in the madrasa to achieve the desired goals.

Keywords: *Kepemimpinan, Kepala Madrasah, Relegius, Interaksionalisme Simbolik*

Abstrak:

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis tentang perilaku kepemimpinan kepala madrasah dalam menginternalisasikan nilai-nilai relegius perspektif interaksionalisme simbolik di madrasah. Penelitian ini dilakukan dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif jenis fenomenologi, di mana peneliti menggunakan interview, observasi dan dokumentasi untuk mendapatkan data di lapangan. Analisis datanya dilakukan secara sirkuler melalui penyajian data, reduksi data dan penarikan kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa perilaku kepemimpinan kepala madrasah dalam menginternalisasikan nilai-nilai relegius perspektif interaksionalisme simbolik tercermin dalam praktik ritual sebagai simbol keagamaan yang ditampilkan secara personal dan kolegal. Selain itu, keikhlasan dijadikan sebagai dasar dalam pengabadiannya di madrasah. Penelitian ini memberikan implikasi bahwa nilai-nilai relegius perlu dinternalisasikan dalam setiap kegiatan manajerial di madrasah guna mencapai tujuan yang diinginkan.

Kata Kunci: *Kepemimpinan, Kepala Madrasah, Relegius, Interaksionalisme Simbolik*

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INTRODUCTION

The growth and development of Islamic educational institutions, especially madrasas, from time to time continue to increase (Prayoga et al., 2019; Tharaba, 2020). This fact is inseparable from the social conditions of the Indonesian religious people (the majority are Muslim). The high spirit of independence of the Islamic community in providing education in the form of madrasas is more driven by the religious spirit and da'wah (Tambak & Sukenti, 2020).

Likewise, leadership in madrasah educational institutions cannot be separated from the religious spirit that underlies the duties and responsibilities of leadership both as the head of the madrasa, the head of administration, and the head of the foundation (Wibowo & Subhan, 2020). Therefore, educational staff in the Islamic education tradition are positioned as noble and glorified individuals. This view does not just appear; apart from being based on a theological-normative view, it is also a product of the transition of Islamic education. Religious values that are very strong in the practice of Islamic education have been embedded in and shape the attitudes and behavior of individuals in carrying out their leadership functions (Arifin et al., 2021; Rahtikawatie et al., 2021). This is one of the characteristics that animates madrasas as Islamic educational institutions so that madrasas in the present context can survive and survive in society even in conditions that are far from ideal when viewed from the availability and completeness of educational facilities and infrastructure (Kholid, 2022).

The phenomenon that is very thick with religious nuances as reflected in the actions and behavior of the head and teacher of the Madrasah Sabibal Muhtadin Tembilihan is not an exaggeration in the context of madrasa education, nor can it be separated from the social and cultural conditions of the Tembilihan community. The form of religious expression can be seen in the attitudes and behavior of the Tembilihan people, who are deeply rooted in traditions and customs. This can at least be seen in; how to dress. People usually wear white caps or caps for those who have carried out the pilgrimage in their daily lives; In the city of Tembilihan, known as a city of worship, one indication is the number of mosques and mosques reach more than 1,600 in Indragiri Hilir Regency. II (District). At each mushalla and or mosque, apart from performing congregational prayers, recitation activities (religious lectures), maghrib recitation programs, and other religious activities are also held regularly.

Researchers also found several people who have devoted themselves to the institution for decades. They remain consistent and have a high commitment to carrying out their leadership even though the wages (honor) are relatively small, so it is no exaggeration to say that one of the community leaders and administrators of the Sabibal Muhtadin foundation stated that this Sabibal Madrasah still exists in the community and even tends to increase. Moreover, progress to date cannot be separated from the leadership of the education staff, heads of madrasas, heads of administration, and teachers who with patient and sincere in devoting themselves to the sustainability of these

educational institutions. According to the admission of one of the administrators that the head of the madrasa in this institution carries out his duties and responsibilities more like "lillahi ta'ala," namely belief as a sacred and noble task that contains sacred values).

A high commitment and complete responsibility in carrying out the functions, duties, and responsibilities have illustrated the attitudes and behavior of their professional leadership in the institution (Mardhiyah, 2021; Alqudah et al., 2022). In theory, professionalism contains two elements: an element of calling or morals and an element of mastery, that is, operational technique (Shimazoe, 2021). The moral calling here is seen from the commitment and sense of responsibility. In addition to having a Strata 1 academic qualification (education), they always attend various pieces of training, workshops, seminars, workshops, and so on related to efforts to improve their leadership as academic staff at Madrasah Sabilal Muhtadin.

However, on the other hand, their actions and behavior are still found, which indicates their lack of professionalism in carrying out the functions and duties of leadership in the institution. For example, the absence of clear performance indicators. Performance indicators are quantitative and qualitative achievements in a predetermined period (Alqudah et al., 2022). Performance measurement can be done by comparing the targets set based on the previous year's baseline and achievements from the input, process, and output, as well as madrasah outcomes (Alam & Aktar, 2019; Mohamed & Yusoff, 2021). Performance indicators are made to make it easier to assess the level of success and failure of work programs in the context of continuous quality improvement (Piwowar-Sulej, 2022).

Other examples are the authoritarian approach that dominates decision-making by the leadership, the behavior of the madrasa principal, which seems discriminatory in treating its members (teachers and administrative employees), and the conventional leadership patterns still dominate both the headmaster and the teacher in managing learning activities and so on. -other. Meanwhile, in today's modern era, the existence of Islamic educational institutions, especially madrasahs, is faced with increasingly complex challenges (Muhammad et al., 2021). The demand for quality improvement and the quality of its graduates is inevitable (Rahtikawatie et al., 2021). In addition to the availability of facilities and infrastructure, especially those based on modern technology, the leadership of both madrasah heads, administration, and other education personnel based on modern management is necessary.

So at this point presents several problems. For example, does the religious spirit underlies the organization of Madrasah Sabilal Muhtadin runs parallel to the leadership of the head of the madrasah? How does the head of Madrasah Sabilal Muhtadin, who is religious and highly committed to their duties and functions, understand and conceptualize their leadership in education?

Based on the description above, the problem that becomes the study's focus is the pattern of the relationship between religion and the leadership of the Sabilal Muhtadin Tembilahan Indragiri Hilir madrasah in the perspective of

Symbolic Interactionism. Thus, this study aims to describe the leadership pattern of the Sabilah Muhtadin madrasa and the religious relations in that leadership.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses a qualitative case study type method. This study seeks to produce descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from people or behaviors observed in the field. This research site consists of Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Sabilal Muhtadin Tembilahan, Madrasah Aliyah Sabilal Muhtadin Tembilahan, Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Sabilal Muhtadin Tembilahan. The informants in this study were the principal and the teacher council, using a purposive sampling approach. To get an idea of the internalization of religious values in the leadership system in madrasas, the researchers used in-depth interviews. Then, the researchers also observed and documented various activities carried out by all madrasah residents.

The data analysis was carried out circularly, starting from the overall display data from the results of interviews, observations, and documentation obtained while in the field. Then the researcher conducted data reduction, sorting and selecting the data that a predetermined theme had collected so that data that was systematically arranged by the research focus would be obtained. The temporary research findings end with the study's conclusion as a research finding.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Religious Relations in the Leadership of Madrasah Sabilal Muhtadin

The head of the madrasa is an educational leader who must be able to have a positive impact on the educational institution he leads (Harini et al., 2022). Various efforts must be made to advance and improve the quality of madrasas. Based on interviews conducted, it was revealed that the forms of efforts that have been made by the head of Madrasah Aliyah Sabilal Muhtadin to improve the quality of madrasas include; 1) equate perceptions with teachers and staff regarding the vision, mission, and goals of the madrasa so that what is to be conveyed can be adequately conveyed; 2) the head of the madrasa has utilized all the potential and human resources of the madrasa; 3) addition and improvement of facilities and infrastructure; 4) organize and participate in events or activities that can support the quality of madrasas and involve students in every competition; 5) cooperation established by the head of the madrasa with several parties.

Based on the meaning of the word above, leadership behavior that tends to progress and improve towards a better direction can be said to be progressive behavior. Progress is not only in the form of physical behavior but also includes a mindset, a perspective that prioritizes aspects of change and progress, in the sense of a perspective that is always oriented towards progress and improvement in all things. Moreover, all of that has only one aim, namely for the sake of progress and the glory of education.

According to Jainuddin, as the head of Madrasah, Aliyah Sabilal Muhtadin said that "in addition to a sense of moral responsibility and a call to

heart that solidified his intention to devote himself to this educational institution, there was also a spirit of self-motivation to improve the quality and quality of education. Even though he is in an area with a socio-cultural society that is still dominant, this does not affect him, so he is resigned to accepting God's fate or "destiny." Furthermore, the administrative staff at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Sabilal Muhtadin is always ready to teach, even though he is always on standby and ready to replace teachers who cannot attend. With so much information and insight, he is more creative-innovative in developing learning materials. The strategies and methods applied are more varied so that learning is not monotonous and makes students feel happy to study with him.

The informant's statement shows that the performance displayed by the individual in the institution shows the spiritual power displayed in the individual performance. Religion, as a form of human belief in something supernatural (supernatural), will always accompany humans in a broad scope of life (Mundiri, 2011). Psychologically, religion can function as an intrinsic (internal) and extrinsic (outside) motive (Handayani, 2019; Engin, 2020). From a sociological perspective, many values can be the motive or orientation that underlies a person's attitudes and behavior. However, the motive that departs from religious values is believed to have tremendous power and is difficult to match with other non-religious values, doctrines, and secular ideologies. There is not on this earth a force equal to or close to the same protection to regulations so that humans live an orderly, united, serene, and peaceful life like the significant influence exerted by religion.

Religion in individual life functions as a value system that contains certain norms (Bali & Hajriyah, 2020). Generally, these norms become a frame of reference in behaving and behaving so that they align with their religious beliefs. As a value system, religion has a special meaning in life. A value system based on religion can provide individuals and society with a set of value systems in the form of legitimacy and justification in regulating individual and community attitudes (Widad, 2019). The influence of the value system on the individual's life because value as an abstract reality is felt as the driving force or principle that guides life. Values influence regulating behavior patterns, thinking patterns, and behaving patterns (Hamer et al., 2020). Values are the driving force in life, which gives meaning and legitimacy to one's actions so that it is not uncommon at a certain level for people to be ready to sacrifice their lives in order to maintain these values, which include two sides, namely the intellectual side and the emotional side (Susilowati, 2019; Fadlurrahman, 2020).

As can be seen from the leadership behavior of Madrasah Sabilal Muhtadin in general, it implies the dominance of religion which is also a spirit for the head of the madrasa in carrying out his duties and responsibilities. Madrasah Sabilal Muhtadin as a religious, educational institution (Islam) with all its religious activities and activities becomes a reference; even within certain limits, it is a source of value for madrasa residents in behaving wildly among madrasa teachers. This fact can be seen from their commitment to religious orders and prohibitions, which are indeed the most positive aspects of religion for madrasah residents. Likewise, in the view of society, most people see a

person's religion from this aspect. Society generally judges a person's religiosity on his obedience to carry out worship and stay away from *syara'* (religion) prohibitions.

In this research study, it can be identified at least two religious values that characterize the leadership attitudes and behavior of Madrasah Sabilal Muhtadin, including:

Ritual Practices and Religious Symbols

What is found in the context of this research shows how the Head of Madrasah Sabilal Muhtadin is very familiar with the practice of rituals and symbols as well as religious activities in their daily lives, both at the madrasa and in the community. Based on existing observations and data, it was revealed that; First, in terms of appearance, the head of the madrasa, Sabilal Muhtadin, tends to wear a bay belanga shirt and wear a cap on his head, especially when he is at madrasa, even in school regulations it is required for teachers and students to wear "caps" for men. Second, practicing religious teachings in ritual worship practices such as circumcision fasting Monday-Thursday and on days recommended for circumcision fasting, *dhuha* circumcision prayers, reading verses of the Qur'an, and others. Third, the head of the madrasa at Sabilal Muhtadin is actively involved in community religious activities, such as congregational prayers and other religious activities. Some even act as missionaries who always provide *tausiyah* and religious teachings to the community.

Ritual practice, as described above, is an inseparable part of religious doctrine; it will automatically give birth to positive forms of vertical or horizontal activity. Of course, each dimension has a different scope according to its character. However, the two dimensions of religious rituals in the daily activities of religious people are challenging to separate. Not infrequently, the essence and incident of religion are very thick in the traditions and culture of specific communities. Antony F.C. Wallace mentions ritual practice as religion in action (Baharun & Intania, 2020).

In this case, Islam, as one of the significant religions, adheres to and establishes teachings about rituals. Muslims fully accept rituals in Islam as teachings originating from the verbal texts of God (al-Qur'an) and the traditions of the Prophet (al-Sunnah). The regulation of rituality in Islam relies on normative rules and takes place based on the provisions of time and social beliefs such as death with various variants of the ritual, *Maulid Nabi* and *Muharram* with various forms of response and types of ritual activities that are believed by the community. Ritual is not just a symbolic-formalist face of the definition of Islam but as an expression of obedience and obedience to religion; the relationship between a servant and his Lord is the essence, sympathy, respect, and openness that is meaningful for its adherents.

From this, it can be seen that religion is not only a spirit for the leadership behavior of Madrasah Sabilal Muhtadin but also a mediation in shaping and building its personality because the existence of madrasa leadership has always been a role model for subordinates and students. The

attitude and behavior of the Head of Madrasah Sabilal Muhtadin try to form his self-image as an "ustadz" in line with what is perceived by the community. The existence of harmony built between the madrasa and the community in terms of prioritizing religious teachings and values makes religion the dominant factor that characterizes the leadership behavior of Madrasah Sabilal Muhtadin, including in its social interactions in the community. Of course, this cannot be separated from the socio-cultural situation and condition of the Tembilahan community, which is still very thick with "religious" nuances with traditional religious patterns. The form of religious expression can be seen in the attitudes and behavior of the Tembilahan people, who are deeply rooted in traditions and customs. That is why Tembilahan was dubbed the city of "Worship."

Sociologically, rural communities are very familiar with traditional religious patterns, prioritizing formal rituals and religious symbols (Mundiri, 2011). Religion, in this sense, has always been a benchmark for a person's existence and prestige in society (Audah, 2017; Nihayatul & et al., 2019).

Devotion and Sincerity

Religious values in the leadership behavior of Madrasah Sabilal Muhtadin also appear in their dedication and sincerity in carrying out their duties and responsibilities as teachers and madrasa heads. This devotion and sincerity are manifested in their commitment and consistency (*istiqamah*) in the discipline of carrying out learning activities. This can be seen at least from the actions and behavior of teachers who are always present (rarely absent) in class, carry out teaching, become teachers, and last for decades in this madrasa. From a financial point of view, they receive relatively small amounts of money each month as an honorarium or wages from their profession as teachers.

Even so, the facts show that the Sabilal Muhtadin Madrasah, which was established in 1983, in its development, this educational institution has experienced an increase both in quantity and quality. At first, this institution only provided non-formal education as religious education, then turned into a formal educational institution which currently consists of three levels, namely; elementary level (Madrasah Ibtidaiyah), middle level (Madrasah Tsanawiyah), and upper secondary level (Madrasah Aliyah).

According to the acknowledgment of the Chairperson of the Sabilal Muhtadin Foundation, that the Sabilal Muhtadin Madrasah still exists and survives in the community to this day, it cannot be separated from the role of teachers who are patient and earnest, and sincere in devoting themselves to the sustainability of this educational institution. Dupni, one of the teachers at the madrasa who has been teaching for 12 years, said, "I have been teaching at this madrasa for about 12 years. My background is in religious education. Therefore I feel obliged to teach the religious knowledge that I have. In addition, I also feel very concerned about the current state of the people, who seem less concerned with religious sciences. This prompted me to dedicate myself to this madrasa and survive until now. Even though the salary is relatively small, thank God it is enough. For me, the problem of sustenance has been arranged by God; the important thing is that we try. The monthly salary does not

determine success in becoming a teacher. Success for me as a teacher is when I see students change more positively along with the development process. Being a teacher is not easy. You could say teaching is easy. However, educating that is extraordinary requires patience and sincerity. I finally realized that being a teacher is a calling from the soul and religion. I also understand more and more why religion is so much appreciated in the teaching profession."

In this context, it can be seen that the religious values that underlie the behavior of madrasa leadership in implementing their duties and responsibilities, in turn, provide inner stability, a sense of happiness, a sense of protection, a sense of success, and a sense of satisfaction with their duties at the madrasa. Religion is influential as motivation in encouraging madrasa principals to carry out activities because actions carried out with religious backgrounds are believed to have elements of purity and obedience.

A madrasa principal will feel comfortable and highly loyal to educational institutions if he gets inner satisfaction and feels happy carrying out his duties and responsibilities as a teacher by what he wants. Job satisfaction is one of the work attitudes of leaders that need to be created in educational institutions so that their subordinates and teachers can work with high morale, discipline, enthusiasm, dedication, and live their profession (Cansoy, 2018; Mastur et al., 2022). Teachers and staff who are satisfied with their institutions will impact the smooth running of educational activities in schools and improve the quality of services to students.

This is reflected in the student's acknowledgment of Syarifah, a teacher in her class, who says, "We are delighted to study with Ustazdah Syarifah; he teaches the subject of Akidah Akhlak. Ustazdah always looked cheerful and enthusiastic when teaching; we were already starting to feel tired because it was the last hour of class, but Ustazdah was able to regenerate our learning spirit sometimes before starting the lesson Ustazdah invited us to sing along with Islamic songs, sometimes told us to change seat positions, sometimes Ustazdah holds games (games). We were also excited to take lessons with Ustazdah. His gentle and smiling language and his enthusiasm in teaching us made us feel comfortable and happy to study with Ustazdah Syarifah". This statement can be drawn as a common thread that madrasas can succeed if they are supported by professional quality teachers (Dodillet et al., 2019; Sánchez-Cruzado, Santiago Campión, & Sánchez-Compañía, 2021). Being a professional teacher means being a teacher who never stops learning.

An ideal relationship is built between teachers and their students. If examined further, this relationship model is in line with humanistic and competency-based education (education base competency), which emphasizes the development of human dignity, which is free to make choices with beliefs (Purnomo et al., 2021). Humanistic education is a global concept, but some of the basic principles are taken by education experts to be used as a learning approach system (Muali, 2017; Umar et al., 2021).

Mahdar, the Head of Administration for the Sabilal Muhtadin Madrasa, said Syarifah, apart from being the head of MTs Madrasah Sabilal Muhtadin, is also a senior teacher who has devoted herself to this madrasa for a long time.

He always appears cheerful and enthusiastic in teaching children, so the children feel comfortable and enjoy learning with him.

These data indicate that the satisfaction shown by subordinates, both students, employees, and teachers, indicates that the services provided by the leadership, either directly or indirectly, can realize their expectations. Trust in students, teachers, and employees can increase their respect for their leaders. This, in turn, can become a spirit and inspiration for all madrasah residents to be more active in improving their professionalism and performance. Another implication is the growing sense of trust and respect among students towards their teachers and teachers and employees towards their leaders, encouraging closeness, intimacy, and harmonious relations between teachers and students.

CONCLUSION

The leadership behavior of the madrasa head in internalizing the religious values of the symbolic interactionism perspective in the madrasa can be seen in the Practice of Rituals and Religious Symbols, which is manifested in the performance of the head of the madrasa, the practice of religious teachings, and the activeness of the madrasa principal in religious activities in the community. In addition, the dedication and sincerity displayed by all madrasa heads in carrying out the mandate given regardless of the size of the income/salary they receive. Everything is based on the intention of lillahi ta'ala in serving, which is based on professionalism. The results of this study cannot be generalized, considering that this research site is only limited to educational institutions under the auspices of a foundation with distinctive characteristics, culture, and local wisdom and cannot be equated with educational institutions in general. The limitations of this research can provide opportunities for further researchers to develop further research in different perspectives and diverse socio-cultural backgrounds.

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