Development of Student Character through the Implementation of Religious Values: An Influential Leadership

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Abstract:

In some Eastern societies, character development is usually inseparable from people's religiosity. This research aims to reveal the role of school principals in creating student religiosity. This research uses a qualitative approach; data collection techniques are carried out through observation, involving oneself in learning activities, and interview techniques with several teachers and school principals. The collected data was validated using triangulation techniques, both sources, and techniques. This research reveals that, through example, the school principal has successfully motivated students to behave religiously. Second, the school has successfully formed students' character by applying ethics, discipline, and care. This research provides implications regarding the importance of the role of example in school principals' leadership to motivate students to behave religiously. This shows that school principals can be solid examples of students practicing religious values.

Keywords: *School Leadership, Student Character, Religious Values*

Abstrak:

Pada sebagian masyarakat timur, pembangunan karakter biasanya tidak lepas dari religiusitas masyarakat. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mengungkap peran kepala sekolah dalam menciptakan religiusitas siswa. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif, teknik pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui observasi, dengan melibatkan diri dalam kegiatan pembelajaran, dan teknik wawancara dilakukan dengan beberapa guru dan kepala sekolah. Data yang terkumpul divalidasi dengan menggunakan teknik triangulasi, baik sumber maupun teknik. Penelitian ini mengungkap bahwa pertama, melalui keteladanan, kepala sekolah telah berhasil memotivasi siswa untuk berperilaku religius. Kedua, sekolah berhasil membentuk karakter siswa melalui penerapan etika, disiplin, dan kepedulian. Penelitian ini memberikan implikasi tentang pentingnya peran keteladanan dalam kepemimpinan kepala sekolah untuk memotivasi siswa dalam berperilaku religius. Hal ini menunjukkan bahwa kepala sekolah dapat menjadi contoh yang kuat bagi siswa dalam mengamalkan nilai-nilai keagamaan.

Kata Kunci: *Kepemimpinan Sekolah, Karakter Siswa, Nilai-Nilai Agama*

INTRODUCTION

Principals and teachers are responsible for empowering the school community to create a conducive school environment for learning (Ariyani & Zuhaery, 2021; Haiyan & Allan, 2021; Kilag et al., 2023). A conducive environment can influence the success of students' religious character formation. School efforts that are effective in conditioning the environment can build constructive relationships with the surrounding community (Jabeen et al., 2022; Samsinar et al., 2023). Positive things can happen; first, it can foster mutual understanding between parents, schools, and the community. Second, it fosters an attitude of cooperation between schools and the community. This is where leadership can function as an effort to create conditions of brotherhood and cooperation so that all forms of activity can be completed quickly (Sunarso, 2020). Factors that influence the course of the leadership process are the leader's quality and the leader's type or style in carrying out their duties as a leadership effort. Based on these two factors, the leader's ability is the factor that can be said to have the most influence on the results of the leadership process (Usman, 2020; Fatimah & Syahrani, 2022).

Leadership is a person's ability to work to achieve goals by influencing others. There are several implications for the importance of leadership (Nurbaeti, 2022; Nguyen et al., 2020). First, leadership can involve other people receiving directions from leaders or group members to help without defining the status of a leader. Second, the existence of leadership can provide involvement in the unequal distribution of power. Third, the existence of leadership can make group members shape the activities of group members. Fourth, the existence of leadership can influence the behavior that is led through several steps. Fifth, combining recognition of leadership as a value with the first three aspects (Kalangi et al., 2021).

Leadership is likened to the art of coordinating and motivating someone in a group to achieve the goals set. Leadership is related to the process that influences the intentional social environment, carried out by someone against other people by being a command in carrying out various activities within the organization. Operational leadership is a person's skill in coordinating and influencing someone to be interested in following and working together according to what will be done. The elements of leadership include goals, time, environment, the leader himself, what and who is led, function, performance, typology, and ideology (Byrnes, 2022; Nurakhim et al., 2022).

Leaders have several characteristics, which include firstly, being able to carry out leadership activities secondly having high morale, thirdly generating commitment and being able to work together fourthly being enthusiastic, enthusiastic and passionate, fifthly focusing on the people being led; and sixthly, having a good attitude (Schiuma et al., 2022). Foresight, the seventh is careful in taking risks, the eighth is honest, the ninth is responsible, the seventh gives freedom to subordinates to act, the eleventh makes decisions based on experience, and the twelfth believes that they can change the world. For the better (Khan, 2020). The role of the principal in leading describes the form of responsibility for every school activity, which is not only academic but every activity with various

conditions in the school environment (Caldwell & Spinks, 2021; Setyaningsih & Suchyadi, 2021; Ferreira et al., 2020).

The principal's responsibilities relate to the goals to be achieved; of course, educational goals must be able to move and manage subordinates according to the goals to be achieved (Komalasari et al., 2020; Baharun et al., 2021). Every activity of the school principal must be carried out by the leadership function, which is related to creating a conducive, efficient, effective, and productive school climate and culture and achieving the educational goals themselves (Mulyati, 2022). From that, school principals are also required to understand educational components, including educators, students, materials, learning processes, learning methods, objectives, environment, tools, and educational evaluation (Hamilton et al., 2021; Velarde, 2020).

The general perspective of the principal's leadership to improve the performance of educators is the implementation of an effective and efficient educational process. Educational resources and staff also significantly contribute to realizing the school's vision and mission. In addition, educators and educational staff must also be able to create good environmental conditions and make themselves role models (Komalasari et al., 2020; González-Falcón et al., 2020; Agustina et al., 2021). In carrying out its duties and functions, the principal must pay attention to the role of the principal himself, including first as an educator; the point is that the principal must have the right strategy to be able to create the professionalism of education staff who are constantly increasing (Bahi & Santosa, 2022; Mubarak & Santosa, 2020; Santosa, 2022). Second, the role of a manager means that the principal must have a strategy for empowering education personnel through cooperative cooperation. The third role of the administrator means that the principal has a relationship with every activity carried out by administrative management, recording, compiling, and documenting programs in the school. In carrying out their duties as administrators, the four principals must prioritize their duties to be carried out correctly. The five roles of supervisors mean that the principal supervises the education staff and supervises and controls the performance of education personnel.

Character is also a form of implementing good values in actual attitudes and is carried out in everyday life (Hidayati et al., 2020; Khaidir & Suud, 2020). Character is associated with adjectives that have a distinctive meaning or distinction or represent someone in a certain way (Charlesworth et al., 2021). Character is also a value embedded in a person and attached to an attitude (Kurdi et al., 2022; Tsoraya et al., 2022). Character is related to limitations in terms of who you are, so it becomes a characteristic of someone with a fixed nature that can be distinguished from others (Astawa & Sukerti, 2021). Character education is an activity that educates a child to make an appropriate decision and can contribute to his social environment (Zulfiati et al., 2021; Santosa & Zuhaery, 2021; Fitriyani et al., 2023). Gafar defines character education into three things: first, related to the transfer of a value, related to growing value development in a person, and third, related to making that one value in an attitude (Ali et al., 2023). Character education is comprehensive about everything that can improve student knowledge and foster potential (Fathurohman & Santosa, 2020).

Character education based on religion, culture, and nation has objectives, including emphasizing responsibility and leadership toward students. Second, being able to develop the skills of each student. In the school environment, character education generally aims to reinforce students' life values to correct inappropriate student attitudes and create harmonious relationships with society (Baharun, 2017; Pradana et al., 2020). Apart from that, several other goals of character education are firstly as developing the potential that exists within students, secondly as developing students to get used to positive behavior, thirdly as developing a sense of responsibility and leadership, fourthly. as developing every skill possessed by students, fifth as developing a creative and environmentally friendly school environment (Pradana et al., 2020). In contrast to previous research, this research emphasizes uncovering the strategies and efforts made by the school to form good character so that this school can become a reference for the community around Purwokerto district.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses a qualitative phenomenological approach, while data collection techniques are carried out through observation, interviews, and documentation (Aziz & Khan, 2020). The research location took place at SMAN 5 Purwokerto, Central Java. The research subjects included the school principal, several teachers in charge of spiritual activities, and several students taken at random. Initial data collection was carried out through observation techniques, and the results of this initial information were then used to direct research in selecting more specific data sources.

Data collection is mainly through interviews and document review. Several teachers, administrative staff, and some students were taken as samples. The sampling of teachers is mainly based on considerations of their involvement as those responsible for student character development activities. Meanwhile, it was done randomly for students and administrative staff. After the data is collected, it is cleaned using triangulation to achieve a degree of validity. Triangulation is carried out by comparing data obtained from one respondent with other respondents (Natow, 2020). Data from various school documents is also used as a clarification tool so that the accuracy of the interview data can be guaranteed. The valid data collection results are then analyzed and grouped based on themes. Then, each emerging theme conclusion is analyzed in stages using the results of previous research findings so that a more general and representative conclusion is obtained.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The results of the interviews show that the religious activities carried out at SMAN 5 have been integrated into every learning activity and extracurricular activity. These activities have encouraged the realization of student character. Religious activities include studying the Koran every Friday for Muslim students, saying greetings when entering class, praying before studying, praying after studying, and greeting when coming home from school. Extracurricular activities include scouts, administrators of Islamic religious activities, the Youth Red Cross, and sports. Character education is implemented democratically and humanely.

Every activity and decision-making always refers to the results of deliberations and decided together (Results of Interview with Deputy Head of School for Student Services, 19 January 2013).

Based on observations in the field, the development of the religious culture of school leadership is partly due to the decisive role of the principal, especially as an educator, administrator, manager, and in directing his subordinates as leaders in the school (Aula et al., 2020; Mubarak & Santosa, 2020; Riani & Ain, 2022; Salendab, 2021; Santosa, 2022).

The principal has a policy that acts as a driving force, knowledge transfer, and direction so that students with religious character can be formed (Khaidir & Suud, 2020; Hefniy et al., 2023). For example, every school community member communicates well, greets each other in a friendly manner when they meet, shakes hands, and says hello. As an educator, the principal often supervises, enters class, and replaces teachers who cannot attend (Pakpahan et al., 2021). Of course, this attitude shows that the roles and responsibilities of the learning process to improve school quality are always prioritized. The reports of several teachers also show that the principal is comprehensive and disciplined in directing school members to be responsible for completing administrative tasks. Due to its role as a strong manager, it supports overseeing school members completing daily tasks that will improve school quality (Bredeson, 2000; Buku et al., 2021; West et al., 2000). According to several teachers, this exemplary attitude has encouraged school members to create an excellent working character, which has been ordered by religion. The religious character of the school members, of course, also colors students' religiosity; this is reflected in student behavior and discipline, not only in the implementation of worship practices but also in the completion of academic assignments, which can always be done on time. The role of the school principal as a manager has encouraged the implementation of tasks in various activities related to the manager's duties, including activating, planning, and coordinating each school activity.

The school principal has carried out his duties by planning the formation of a religious character, as evidenced by the existence of a need-assessment document, which contains various considerations about the situation in the school environment, including considering the existence of non-Islamic school members who can jointly contribute to improving the quality of religious character. On the other hand, the critical role of school principals in formulating policies was also reported by several teachers who were quite dominant (Haiyan & Allan, 2021; Kim et al., 2022; Surel, 2000); several regulations emerged related to restrictions on the use of social media, monitoring of break times, the use of school uniforms and attributes, regulations regarding the discipline of school members, to regulations regarding behavior and practice religious values. All regulatory documents and school activities are also stored neatly, making it easy to access if needed. With his dominant role in administration, academic data management, and other archives, the school principal is a good administrator.

The school principal strongly supports implementing religious programs, as evidenced by the provision of funds for religious activities such as prayer and the construction of mosques or other necessary religious facilities. The principal's

leadership in creating a religious character is pursued by making joint decisions through deliberations with every element in the school environment to achieve goals. The principal's efforts in building religious character are pursued in several ways. First, the principal has set an excellent example in his environment in every activity. Both school principals act as professional managers in seeking improvement and supporting students in every activity. Third is the principal's role as an administrator who has been able to encourage the government-mandated learning process. Fourth, the role of the principal as a leader is related to his duties in carrying out processes to influence every element of the school. Fourth, the role of the principal as a leader relates to his duties in carrying out processes to influence every element in the school environment in achieving school targets effectively and efficiently. Character education is an integral part of the educational process that aims to develop aspects of morals, ethics, and positive attitudes in students (Dewi & Alam, 2020; Khaidir & Suud, 2020). One practical approach to building student character is to instill religious values. Religious values provide a solid foundation for developing excellent and dignified character (Jumriani et al., 2022; Lian et al., 2020). Religious values include moral and ethical principles certain religions teach (Malla et al., 2020). For example, various religions often teach values such as compassion, honesty, justice, hard work, and compassion. Instilling these values can help students develop strong and positive characters. Religious values help students understand the difference between right and wrong and teach them to choose the right action. Religious values often encourage students to care about the needs of others, promoting empathy and compassion (Willis, 2023; Wath & Wyk, 2020). Religion often teaches discipline in living life and taking responsibility for their actions. Instilling religious values can also teach tolerance of differences and the ability to work with people from diverse backgrounds (Fausi, 2020; Islam, 2020).

One thing that needs to be mentioned here is the role of the school principal every time he implements a policy, which rarely causes turmoil. The strategy carried out based on the researcher's observations is to always prioritize positive thoughts in directing staff and provide inspirational and enthusiastic enlightenment about the final goal of the vision so that these ideas can influence the minds of staff to follow them. The teachers (TD, BSA, GR, and SN) also recognize the principal's ability as someone whose ideas always inspire others to follow them. Some researchers doubt that a person's ability to influence sometimes cannot be applied in different situations; the success of a school principal cannot necessarily be transmitted to other schools through the same approach and steps (Brauckmann et al., 2023; Sepuru & Mohlakwana, 2020; Dekawati, 2020; Marasan, 2021).

Other schools can also integrate religious values into the curriculum, teaching students to apply these principles daily. Using religious or moral stories in learning can help students understand and internalize religious values (Dahlan, 2022;). Holding religious activities such as collective prayer, worship, or charitable activities can help students practically experience religious values. Respecting and integrating various religious beliefs in this approach may be a challenge, but it can be overcome through an inclusive approach that respects differences. In a secular

environment, it is essential to ensure that religious values are taught by respecting the diversity of views and beliefs. Instilling religious values is an approach that can become a strong foundation for building student character (Astuti, 2020; Rahmah & Ilham, 2022). By revealing the research results regarding how school principals have significantly influenced teaching ethics, morals, tolerance, and responsibility, students in schools can contribute to developing students in other schools to become better and more dignified individuals in society. One crucial thing we note here is the effort to balance respecting religious diversity and teaching religious values inclusively in the educational environment.

CONCLUSION

This research shows that the school principal has become an educational partner, professional manager, wise administrator, and influential leader in shaping students' religious character. Through this research, the school principal's example has impacted the attitudes of teachers, staff, and students regarding implementing good habits for building religious character in the school environment. This good behavior can influence the surrounding community so that religious character education as a means of instilling faith and religious values can create a good culture in the future. For improvement, completing further research related to this theme is highly expected so that the role of school principal leadership in shaping religious character more broadly and its positive implications in society will be further developed.

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