

Transformative Leadership of School Principals in Improving the Quality of Islamic Religious Education State Senior High School in Palu City, Indonesia



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ABSTRACT: This study examines the transformative leadership of school principals and the quality of Islamic religious education in three schools. The focus of the problem in this research is the transformative leadership of the school principal in improving the quality of Islamic religious education at Public High Schools in Palu City. This study used multiple qualitative research methods. Data was gathered through field observation, in-depth interviews, and written document analysis. The research subjects were school principals, vice principals for curriculum affairs, Islamic religious education teachers, and students. Data analysis was conducted through data reduction, data presentation, and data verification. The results of this study show that the transformative leadership of school principals in three public high schools in Palu City includes leadership that influences teachers, staff, students, and parents. They work synergistically according to the institution's vision, mission, and goals. The school principals are concerned and always encourage the achievements of the school community, respond to change, and be optimistic about future aims. Meanwhile, the quality of Islamic religious education in three public high schools was reflected in the fact that Islamic religious education learning runs in accordance with the national standard curriculum. Students' abilities and awareness were increasing in practicing the values of Islamic teachings, religious extracurricular activities were also running actively, higher student participation in religious extracurricular activities, and student's grades.

KEYWORDS: Transformative, leadership, school principal, Islamic education, quality

I. INTRODUCTION

Transformational leadership has a vision of the future and is able to identify changes in the institution and initiate change (Conger, 1999). Leaders who always create challenges and high expectations for achieving goals encourage the growth of motivation and inspiration in their members to be creative and innovative and always promote the work enthusiasm of their followers to attain maximum results. In the context of managing school institutions, the principal's transformational leadership is leadership that can influence the attitudes and behavior of his followers (Koh, Steers, & Terborg, 1995). In this case, educators, education staff, and students, in carrying out work with high awareness, are willing to work synergistically and optimally to achieve the school's vision, mission, and goals.

The principal's leadership must be able to create challenges and high expectations for achieving goals, always encouraging his followers' motivation and work enthusiasm to achieve maximum results. As a leader, the principal is caring and attentive to the needs of his followers and encourages achievement by always providing opportunities for his followers to develop themselves and improve the quality of their work.

The implementation of transformational leadership by school principals is expected to answer various educational quality problems, especially the quality of Islamic religious education (Hauserman & Stick, 2013). As a leader, the school principal has a strategic role in improving the quality of education and is responsible for micro-management of education, which is directly related to the learning process in schools. "The school principal is responsible for organizing educational activities, school administration, developing other academic staff, and utilizing and maintaining facilities and infrastructure.

The principal's transformative leadership will significantly depend on the principal's ability to transform the ideas and thoughts of his followers (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1990). Generating strong beliefs and generating high work motivation from the people they lead are challenges that must be faced by school principals. To change this situation, the school principal must have a strong influence and be a motivator.

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The principal's transformational leadership must be able to have a positive impact on the organization's progress toward improving the quality of education (Anderson, 2017). Success in achieving organizational goals depends greatly on the leader's ability to optimally direct the school's resources. Among the tasks that must be carried out by school principals as transformational leaders is to fulfill the sense of satisfaction of the people they lead. This is the main thing because satisfaction will create a sense of trust from the people around you.

Leading activity is an attempt to move a group of people in a predetermined direction. Von Krogh, Nonaka, & Rechsteiner (2012) provide limitations regarding leaders.

A leader is an individual who has skills and strengths, especially strong skills in one area so that he can influence other people to jointly carry out certain activities to achieve one or several goals.

The quality of education is the main target in the management of every educational institution (Unterhalter, 2019). Current competition in the quality of education encourages all educational institutions to always find the right way so that quality targets can be achieved optimally. The quality of Islamic religious education in schools is the main problem in the study of transformative leadership of school principals in this research. The quality of Islamic religious education must be realized so that it can make a maximum contribution to achieving national education goals. Improving the quality of Islamic religious education in schools is expected to produce students who have knowledge, skills, and attitudes and can practice the values of Islamic teachings in the life of society, nation, and state.

Curriculum objectives are the final goals that must be achieved by students in implementing the Islamic religious education learning process at school (Herring & Williams, 2000). Improving the quality of Islamic religious education in public schools is expected to encourage the achievement of the nation's national education goals, as stated in the national education system law above.

The quality of Islamic religious education "refers to the process and results of education. Quality education process, such as teaching materials, methodology, facilities, school administration, management support, facilities and infrastructure, learning resources, and a conducive school environment (Cheong Cheng & Ming Tam, 1997).. Meanwhile, educational outcomes refer to school achievement at a certain time. Achievements can be in the form of students' academic ability test results (exam scores), or achievements in other fields (Castelló-Climent & Hidalgo-Cabrillana, 2012).

The link between transformative leadership and the quality of education has not been widely implemented in senior secondary schools, resulting in a lack of knowledge among academics and practitioners regarding the need for school principals who have transformative characteristics to improve the quality of education. For this reason, this research will examine the relationship between transformative leadership and the quality of education in high schools. Thus, this research is expected to contribute to improving the quality of education at the high school level. It is also hoped that the results of this research can help school principals implement appropriate leadership models in leading their schools so that the quality of education can improve.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Leadership Theory

Leadership has become an interesting field of study from various circles. Leadership can be viewed from various points of view. Leadership can be seen from psychological, sociological, communication, administrative, and government aspects; even leadership can also be studied in specific religious systems (Fairhurst, 2008). Experts provide different perspectives on the concept of leadership. Different perspectives on leadership variables have led to the emergence of various leadership theories. Leadership theories attempt to explain scientifically why leaders emerge and what traits leaders must have in leadership. Leadership theory generally attempts to explain the factors that enable leadership to emerge and the nature of leadership. Experts put forward many leadership theories and models, but they can be grouped into three main theories: trait, behavioral, and situation (Latham, 2014)." These leadership theories need to be explained further so that we can understand that these three theories are complementary

The first theory that emerged was trait theory (Fleeson & Jayawickreme, 2015). The trait theory assumes that leadership effectiveness is determined by the possession of certain psychological and physical characteristics or characteristics of a leader (Gehring, 2007). The trait theory starts from the idea that the success of a leader is determined by the traits, temperament, or traits that the leader possesses. Trait theory, which is parallel to genetic theory, substantially emphasizes that leaders are born, not created (Hernandez, Eberly, Avolio, & Johnson, 2011). Meanwhile, Orr (2005) emphasized: "genetic theory says a person is born to be a leader." Kartono stated that "genetic theory states that he is destined to be born as a leader under certain conditions, however, which are special." Not all humans become leaders, but only those with innate traits from birth. Syafiie explained that "trait theory states that leadership is created by a person based on the characteristics that person possesses, meaning that the person concerned from birth has the characteristics to become a leader."

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For trait leadership, Swaminathan & Bawa (2005) state, "Certain individuals have special traits or natural qualities that make them leaders, and it is these traits that differentiate them from people who are not leaders." Meanwhile, according to Robbins and Judge, "trait theories are theories that consider the qualities and characteristics of personnel that differentiate leaders from non-leaders." The definition of trait theory put forward by experts gives us an understanding that trait theory is a leadership theory formed because of the traits a leader possesses that distinguish him from non-leaders. Leadership with trait theory has been widely practiced since ancient times. In fact, all ancient social systems practically adhered to nature theory, namely in the form of kingdoms. The royal system is an example of the implementation of trait theory, namely that a person's leadership is determined by their genes or nobility traits. Therefore, it will not be possible for a person to become a leader at a high level in a state or royal system if he does not have innate qualities that are proven by nobility. Throughout history, strong leaders can be described by their traits. This theory is considered very appropriate for leadership that is oriented toward strengthening examples.

The theory of the nature of substance is in line with the theory of talent, so the theory of traits is also called the theory of talent. According to Sunindhia and Widiyanti, talent theory is a theory that explains that leadership requires talent, and talent must be developed and trained according to certain traits and habits guided by a theory about the various mental traits that must be possessed in leading. This theory concludes that leaders are born, not created. Both trait theory and talent theory agree that leaders are born, not made (leaders are born, not made).

Experts then developed theories of leadership behavior. According to Badeni, "this theory is oriented to the way (behavior) used by a leader to treat his followers in an effort to influence the behavior of subordinates". According to Makawimbang, "leadership is the behavior of an individual when directing activities of a group towards achieving goals". The behavioral theory holds that "leadership success depends more on the behavior, skills, and actions of the leader and less on personal traits." By knowing effective leadership behavior, a leader can be trained to be successful. "Leadership behavior theory suggests that we can train people to become leaders."

B. Transformative Leadership of School Principals

Transformational leadership is an exciting leadership style to be applied in today's modern leadership. One of the newest and most popular approaches to leadership that has been the focus of much research since the early 1980s is the transformational approach (Bass, 1999). Transformational leadership received a wide response from various groups, initially only applied to political organizations and then expanding to other organizations, including educational organizations. Transformational leadership is open implementation, meaning it can be applied to various institutions, including in the educational sector. Transformational leadership is a current need because it is considered very significant in responding positively to changes in the management of educational organizations.

Transformational leadership is composed of the words leadership and transformational. "Leadership is how a leader influences subordinates' behavior to cooperate and work productively to achieve organizational goals (van Dierendonck, Haynes, Borrill, & Stride, 2004). The broader meaning of leadership can be seen in the previous discussion of leaders and leadership. The term transformational stems from the word to transform, which means to transform or change something into a different form. For example, transforming vision into reality, heat into energy, potential into actual, latent into manifest, and so on. Transformational, therefore, contains the meaning of characteristics that can change something into another form, for example, changing potential energy into actual energy or achievement motives into real achievements.

Transformational contains the meaning of characteristics that can change something into another form, for example, changing potential energy into actual energy or achievement motives into tangible achievements. This paradigm indicates that the pattern of changing something into something else is a substantive work in educational organizations. Transformational leadership was originally introduced by James McGregor Burn in 1978. Burn divided leadership into two, namely transformational leadership and transactional leadership (Allix, 2000). Transactional leaders are those who lead with social exchange. Meanwhile, transformational leaders are those who stimulate and inspire followers to achieve extraordinary results and, in the process, develop their leadership capacity. Initially, transformational and transactional leadership concepts were applied in a political context. A politician leads by exchanging one thing for another, for example, a job to gain votes or a subsidy for campaign contributions. In the same way, transactional business leaders offer financial rewards for productivity or refuse rewards for lack of productivity. Northouse says, "Transactional leadership refers to a collection of leadership models that focus on the exchanges between leaders and followers."

C. Islamic Religious Education

Epistemologically, the study of Islamic religious education covers various aspects contained in Islamic religious teachings, which have the meaning of education (Suhayib & Ansari, 2023). The material consists of *aqidah*, worship, and morals, which "leads to a discussion regarding the introduction to Allah SWT, human potential and functions and morals." Islamic religious education has close ties with Islamic education.

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Islamic religious education is more Amalia or practical as a "subject that contains Islamic religious teaching material to be conveyed and studied and can be put into practice in everyday life by students." Even though the study material is the same as Islamic religious education, Islamic education is more thought-provoking and philosophical. Islamic education is education that is based on the values of Islamic teachings as stated in the Koran and hadith, as well as in the thoughts of the ulama and the historical practice of Muslims (Hussin & Tamuri, 2019; Roslan Mohd Nor & Malim, 2014). The formulation of Islamic education was also put forward by Yusuf Qardhawi: "Islamic education is the education of the whole person which includes the mind and heart, spiritual and physical, morals and skills. Therefore, Islamic education seeks to prepare humans to be able to live, both in conditions of security and war, as well as in facing society with all its good and evil."

Islamic education is essentially an endless process of education that is in line with the universal consensus established by Allah SWT and His Messenger. "Continuous education is known as "min al-mahdi ila al-lahd" (from the cradle to the grave) or in other terms: "life long education" (lifelong education within the body)." Meanwhile, Islamic religious education is a serious effort to prepare students to be able to master the teachings of Islam, be competent in "carrying out what Allah SWT and His Messenger commanded, and able to practice the teachings of the Islamic religion in everyday life. Students are not only required to master Islamic religious education material but also to practice the values of Islamic teachings in their lives.

III. METHODOLOGY

This study uses qualitative methods. In qualitative research, the use of theory is only a guide so that the research focus is in accordance with the facts in the field (Nurdin & Pettalongi, 2022; Nurdin, Stockdale, & Scheepers, 2016). The data was collected through direct observation, in-depth interviews, and written document analysis at the research site (Rusli, Hasyim, & Nurdin, 2021; Rusli & Nurdin, 2022). This research was carried out in three state high schools in Palu City, Central Sulawesi Province, Indonesia. The choice of location for this research was based on several considerations, including that all the schools were accredited A. Then, we saw an interesting phenomenon in the competition for the quality of school management through the leadership style of each school principal. Furthermore, there is a strong commitment from the "school principal in efforts to improve the quality of Islamic religious education in schools" in accordance with the school's vision and mission.

The interviews involved five local election commission members, local citizens, and three local government staff. We also interview five figures from the Department of Religious Affairs. The interviews were recorded and transcribed. The results of the transcripts were consulted with the participants to obtain their consent (Nurdin, Scheepers, & Stockdale, 2022; Nurdin, Stockdale, & Scheepers, 2014). The data analysis technique used a deductive thinking technique, which can be interpreted as a research procedure that produces deductive data from the interviews and field notes. Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis from Strauss and Corbin (1998). The analysis started with open, axial, and selective coding. The final result of the data analysis is themes found from the data.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Implementation of School Principals' Transformational Leadership in Improving Islamic Religious Education.

Based on the grand theory used in this research, developed by Bass and Avolio, four main components or characteristics of transformational leadership are proposed: ideal influence, individualized consideration, intellectual stimulation, and inspirational motivation. Four leading indicators were studied in this research to further analyze the transformative leadership of school principals in improving the quality of Islamic religious education, namely, influence the people he leads to work synergistically according to the vision, mission, and goals of the organization, generate enthusiasm and motivation of the school community in facing challenges, care and always encourage members' achievements and respond to changes and be optimistic.

Based on data obtained through observation, interviews, and document analysis, the author presents various information regarding the transformative leadership of school principals in improving the quality of Islamic religious education at SMA Negeri 1 Palu. Data regarding school principals in implementing transformative leadership was presented by school principals in the city of Palu as follows:

In leading the school so far, I have involved the school community in formulating the school's vision and mission because this school is the oldest in Palu City, which has many graduating alums. We hold a meeting at the beginning of the year to determine the school's achievement program so that all parties, including teachers, administration, students, and parents, can be involved in making the school program a success.

The principal's transformative leadership always directs the school community toward achieving the school's vision, mission, and goals. Then, the principal is always open to the teachers, including the school community; he conveys his vision and mission and what the school program is every year; he always conveys every school activity through meetings of the teacher council, vice principal, and his assistants.

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The principal's transformative leadership always builds communication with the teacher council. The principal's leadership always directs and encourages teachers and students. Regarding the transformative leadership of the school principal, it was stated by students that:

So far, The head's leadership has been very good and active with the students, and we, the OSIS administrators, are close to the teachers, often providing motivation and the head of the school providing breakthroughs. For example, school activities are carried out quite enthusiastically so that students feel comfortable with the breakthroughs they have made.

The principal in transformative leadership is a leader who always influences, directs, motivates, communicates, and encourages participation of the school community and is actively involved in implementing school programs to achieve the school's vision, mission, and goals. Regarding improving the quality of Islamic religious education, the Islamic religious education teacher explained as follows:

There are many efforts made by school principals, including us religious teachers, who are always encouraged to improve competence through MGMP and workshops or training activities. The students are directed every day to carry out the Dhuhur prayer at school for the children from the Rohis section to carry out Koran studies in the mosque. This is a direction from the school's principal on how the religion teacher can motivate the children to come to the mosque to pray with other teachers. We are also involved in the mosque; there are also activities to commemorate Islamic holidays, and we also carry out sacrifices for both teachers and students for students as a lesson for the children.

School principals strive to improve the quality of educators through implementing workshops and MGMP, providing supporting facilities and infrastructure such as school mosques, teaching materials, and learning media. Religious activities are aimed at raising students' awareness of practicing the values of Islamic religious education in daily life at school. There are no significant obstacles to improving the quality of Islamic religious education at SMA Negeri 1 Palu. This is because the activities carried out are school programs that must run regularly every year. Activities to improve the quality of Islamic religious education carried out at the school are running well and organized because all parties support them. The Islamic religious education teacher also said there were no obstacles to improving the quality of Islamic religious education.

B. Islamic Religious Education Quality

The quality of Islamic religious education at state senior high schools in Palu City can be seen based on observations, interviews, and document analysis presented in the following section.

1. Quality Teaching Process

Teaching and learning activities in senior high schools in Palu have gone well according to the educational calendar and schedule the deputy principal has prepared for the curriculum sector, which still uses the 2013 curriculum. Islamic religious education is also going well because of the availability of sufficient teaching staff; they are competent in teaching Islamic religious education at this school.

The process of learning Islamic religious education at school is going well. Teachers have teaching competence according to national education system standards. The teacher's presence in carrying out learning activities was quite good, as confirmed by the Deputy Head of Curriculum:

If the process goes like other learning, in general, the learning process goes well in class, thank God. In religious education learning, with the presence of good teachers, everyone carries out their teaching duties according to schedule.

It was explained that the curriculum used was the 2013 curriculum. The principal emphasized that in learning Islamic religious education, students must be able to read and write the Koran. In general, learning activities ran smoothly even though the last pandemic occurred online due to the central government's implementation of Limited Face-to-Face Learning (PTMT) nationally.

Still related to the implementation of Islamic religious education learning, a student said the following:

The study of Islamic religion went well; before studying, we prayed first, and then we were told to read short letters. We studied as usual according to the teacher's schedule. The teacher also taught us quite interestingly so that we felt happy participating in the lesson.

Another student also said, "Whenever studying, someone is asked to lead the prayer, usually when reading short letters together." Observations in the field strengthened the student's statement: "When starting class, after praying, the students read short letters together for approximately 15 minutes. "This activity is part of students' habituation activities in practicing the values of Islamic teachings."

2. The Contextualization of Islamic Values within the School Environment

Next, data is presented regarding students' implementation of Islamic religious values in their daily lives at school. The results of an interview with a school principal showed that:

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We really emphasize the practice of Islamic educational values in the school environment because it is in accordance with the school's vision and mission that activities that can encourage this are carried out, such as carrying out daily congregational prayers, the culture of greetings, maintaining the cleanliness of the school environment and carrying out other Islamic religious activities such as commemoration of Islamic holidays as an effort to instill awareness among school members in practicing the values of Islamic religious education in increasing religious beliefs and exemplary values or good character, especially for students.

Observations and documents and a form of triangulation strengthen this data. The results of the observations showed that "every morning before the first period starts, the students are tasked with cleaning the classroom, and the picket teacher also directs the children in the morning to pick up rubbish around the school environment and say hello and kiss hands when the students meet their teacher. Every day, students perform congregational prayers, even if the implementation is staggered because there are a large number of students, and there are students who deliver kultum before prayer. This data is supported by other data, namely "document data in which the school's vision and mission is about increasing students' faith and piety through guidance activities and implementing the practice of religious values in daily life at school."

Another Islamic religious education teacher said, "The implementation of religious values in this school is quite good; we as teachers emphasize students' morals." Students' implementation of the values of Islamic teachings in daily life at school is going well. Apart from being taught good morals, students are also encouraged to pray in the school environment and are taught zikr and kultum. Other statements were also made by students:

We were taught that every time we met the teacher, we had to say hello, and the class had to be clean before class started. When it was prayer time, we prayed in the congregation; before beginning class, we always prayed and read short letters; girls were not allowed to touch boys. Men are included in female religious teachers, but it depends on the teacher.

Based on data from interviews, observations, and documents regarding the practice of Islamic religious values in daily life at school, the author can state that students' implementation of Islamic religious education values at SMA Negeri 1 Palu is going very well. This can be seen from students' habits of performing congregational prayers, dhikr, cult, reading the Koran, behavior of mutual respect and respect, attitudes of tolerance, greeting habits, discipline, order, and clean culture.

3. Students Participation and Activities in Religious Learning

Islamic religious extracurricular activities are running well and are scheduled and carried out by the management of the student organization for Islamic spirituality and youth at the school mosque. They said that the Islamic religious teachers have actively helped them get involved in religious activities at school and outside school. Extracurricular activities include Islamic studies, regular recitation every Saturday, Basic Leadership Training activities, Ramadhan safaris, joint tarwih, and commemoration of major Islamic holidays. The following statement from an informant supports this data:

As for the extracurriculars, thank God, they run according to the school program. In this school, all religious activities, for example, commemoration of Islamic holidays, leadership training, and religious practices, Risma's children are the ones who help in the activities.

All students' religious extracurricular activities at school are carried out according to the school program in a planned and directed manner. Regarding the implementation of extracurricular activities for students, the Islamic religious education teacher also stated that "extra activities are going well in the afternoon, there are recitations, a Ramadhan safari with our teacher, if we get used to praying at the mosque every day." This was also confirmed by another Islamic religious education teacher that "Rohis children, such as Islamic studies and other activities, very actively carry out religious extracurricular activities."

Religious extracurricular activities are a school program that aims to create a school that follows the school's vision. Schools carry out various forms of religious activities to increase students' understanding and belief in their religion. In this context, the author puts forward statements made by students as follows:

Kegiatan ekstrakurikuler keagamaan di sekolah kami berjalan baik ada bidang Rohis OSIS setiap malam Jum'at melaksanakan zikir termasuk melaksanakan kegiatan lain seperti pengajian rutin dan ada program dari masing-masing kelas menyampaikan kultum pada saat pelaksanaan shalat berjama'ah setiap hari di masjid sekolah ada juga kegiatan buka bersama dan shalat tarwih bersama di sekolah pada bulan Ramadhan yang diikuti oleh siswa dan dewan guru.

Religious extracurricular activities in our school are running well. There is a Rohis OSIS sector every Friday night carrying out dhikr, including other activities such as routine recitations, and there is a program for each class to deliver kultum during daily congregational prayers at the school mosque. There are also joint iftar activities and tarawih prayers together at school during Ramadan, which students and the teacher council attend. Apart from the activities mentioned previously, there are also activities such as carrying out dhikr every Friday night, breaking fast together, and performing tarawih prayers together at school in the month of Ramadan, which students and the teacher council attend.

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V. CONCLUSIONS

The implementation of transformative leadership by school principals in three public high schools in Palu City is leadership that influences teachers, staff, students, and parents so that they are willing to work synergistically according to the vision, mission, and goals of the organization. have concern and always encourage the achievements of the school community; respond to change and be optimistic; and always arouse the enthusiasm and motivation of the school community in facing challenges. An overview of the quality of Islamic religious education in Public High Schools in Palu City includes Islamic religious education learning runs according to the 8 SNPs, increasing students' abilities and awareness in practicing the values of Islamic teachings, active religious extracurricular activities, active participation of students in taking part in religious extracurricular activities, increasing students' grades, and increasing the percentage of students graduating.

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