

Revitalization of Ethical Leadership in Islamic Education: Principal's Strategy to Face the Challenges of Globalization in Madrasah

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Abstract : *This research focuses on the role of ethical leadership in creating a positive school culture and facing challenges in the Islamic educational environment, especially in madrasahs. This study aims to identify and analyze the leadership strategies used by school principals in applying ethical values as part of a leadership strategy to increase motivation, solve problems, and shape student character. The research method used is qualitative with a case study approach in MAN 2 Banyuwangi. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observations, and documentation with key informants consisting of principals, teachers, and quality control teams. The data analysis technique uses the Miles and Huberman interactive model, which includes data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing validated by triangulation techniques. The results of the study show that school principals who apply ethical leadership through example, an inclusive approach in problem-solving, and the formation of a collaborative culture are able to create a harmonious school climate and support the development of students' character. The implications of this study highlight that ethical leadership plays an important role in facing the pressures of globalization and maintaining moral values in the Islamic educational environment. This research makes a practical contribution by providing guidance for school principals and other Islamic education leaders in implementing ethical leadership that not only focuses on academic achievement but also the formation of strong moral character among students.*

INTRODUCTION

Ethical leadership in the world of Islamic education is an increasingly relevant topic in the midst of social changes and the challenges of rapid globalization (Gardner-McTaggart, 2022; Rusdi et al., 2022; Susilawati & Astuti, 2022). In Indonesia, Islamic education has a strategic role in shaping the character of the younger generation based on religious and ethical values (Astrachan et al., 2020; Wijaya & Khoir, 2022; Chuanchen, 2023). However, the reality on the ground shows that there are challenges for school leaders in implementing consistent ethical values in the school environment, especially amid pressure to improve academic quality while maintaining moral values (Ezzani et al., 2023; Maulidah et al., 2023; Norman & Paramansyah, 2024). This condition makes the study of ethical leadership very important (Saha et al., 2020; Hasanah & Hefniy, 2023; Ansori et al., 2023), because the character of an educational leader not only directly affects the school climate, but also forms a pattern of behavior of students and staff that is in harmony with Islamic principles (Leithwood, 2021; Hamidah, 2023; Sanjani, 2023). From a theoretical perspective (Yang & Wang, 2020), ethical leadership which states that leaders who prioritize moral values tend to be able to create a healthy and positive organizational culture (Mercader et al., 2021; Zaini, 2024; Zaini, 2023). The application of this theory in the context of Islamic education highlights the importance of an in-depth study of how ethical values are applied in Islamic schools in Indonesia (Zaini, 2020; Hossain et al., 2020; Kumar & Srivastava, 2023).

In the field, it was found that the implementation of ethical leadership in madrassas still faces various obstacles, especially in maintaining a balance between academic achievement and student character formation. At MAN 2 Banyuwangi, for example, school principals face challenges in instilling the values of honesty, discipline, and responsibility in their daily routines, amid limited resources and high expectations from the community for academic achievement. School principals must play the role of role models, but the complexity of administrative tasks and the demands of responding to social change often hinder these efforts. This problem shows that there is a gap between expectations for ethical leadership and the reality of its application in the field. This urges the need for an in-depth study that not only describes the challenges faced, but also identifies strategies that can help Islamic school leaders in carrying out their roles effectively. This research leads to one significant issue, namely how ethical leadership can be optimized in madrassas to produce an educational environment that is harmonious and conducive to the development of students' character.

Previous research has shown that ethical leadership plays an important role in shaping a positive organizational climate and increasing member motivation. Dimitriou. (2022), in their study concluded that ethical leadership based on integrity and openness can increase a sense of involvement and commitment among staff, which ultimately has a positive impact on organizational productivity. Furthermore, research by Sá & Serpa, (2020), emphasizes the importance of an inclusive approach in decision-making in the educational environment to maintain job satisfaction amid various challenges.

Especially during the pandemic. Finally, Arghode et al., (2022), revealed that leaders who focus on forming a positive and collective organizational culture tend to create a conducive and productive work environment. Although these three studies are relevant, they do not specialize in the context of Islamic education in Indonesia, so the aspects of religious values in ethical leadership are still poorly explored. This gap shows that further research is needed that focuses on the role of ethical leadership in the Islamic educational environment in Indonesia, especially in the context of madrasas.

This research fills the gap in the ethical leadership literature by paying special attention to the context of Islamic education in Indonesia. While previous research has highlighted the importance of ethical leadership in increasing motivation and job satisfaction, this study emphasizes the application of ethical values in shaping character and culture in madrasas, which has not been widely discussed in previous studies. Thus, this research not only expands the literature on ethical leadership in educational organizations, but also introduces a more holistic perspective on how ethical leadership can be aligned with Islamic principles. This study provides an opportunity to deepen the understanding of educational leadership that is not only results-oriented, but also on character building and integrity.

The novelty of this study lies in its unique approach in integrating ethical leadership theory with Islamic values to analyze the role of school principals in madrasas. This study not only examines the impact of ethical leadership on school performance, but also examines how the values of honesty, discipline, and openness are directly applied in daily life in Islamic school environments. By exploring the ethical values-based leadership strategies implemented by school principals at MAN 2 Banyuwangi, this study offers a new perspective on how leadership principles can be tailored to the unique needs and characteristics of Islamic schools. This approach provides added value in the educational leadership literature by presenting innovative methodologies and results that can be applied in the context of Islamic education at large.

The main objective of this study is to identify and analyze the role of ethical leadership in shaping a positive school culture in madrasas, especially through example, problem solving, and collaboration. This goal is important to achieve because it can provide practical guidance for Islamic education leaders in carrying out their duties ethically and effectively. In addition, this research aims to reveal strategies that can be applied by school principals in facing contemporary challenges, so as to make a real contribution to the development of more effective Islamic education. It is hoped that the results of this research can provide deep insights for academics and education practitioners about the importance of ethical leadership in supporting the achievement of Islamic education goals in Indonesia.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative research type with a case study approach to deeply understand the role of ethical leadership in building a positive school culture and overcoming challenges in the Islamic education environment, especially in MAN 2 Banyuwangi. The qualitative approach was chosen because it is able to deeply explore the meanings, views, and experiences of participants in a specific cultural context, which is difficult to obtain through quantitative methods (Alhazmi & Kaufmann, 2022). This study aims to explore the role of school principals in implementing ethical values as part of leadership strategies, so that the qualitative case study approach provides flexibility to explore this phenomenon in a natural context. Compared to more structured quantitative methods, the qualitative approach allows this study to delve deeper into the nuances and complexities of leadership behavior, thus providing a more holistic understanding of the phenomenon studied.

Data collection was carried out through three main techniques: in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation (Kang & Hwang, 2021). Interviews were conducted with the principal, teacher council, and quality control team at MAN 2 Banyuwangi, with the aim of exploring their perspectives on the application of ethical values in leadership. The number of respondents in this study consisted of one principal, five teachers, and two members of the quality control team, who were selected based on their roles and responsibilities in running and supporting the school culture. Participatory observation is carried out in the school environment to see firsthand the interaction between principals, teachers, and students, as well as to observe how ethical leadership values are implemented in daily activities. Documentation in the form of school activity reports, principal's work programs, and other related archives is also used as complementary data to verify information obtained from interviews and observations. The choice of location at MAN 2 Banyuwangi is based on the school's reputation in prioritizing ethical values in education, as well as the principal's strong commitment to implementing Islamic values-based leadership.

The collected data was analyzed using interactive analysis techniques from Miles and Huberman (Asipi et al., 2022), which included three main stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawn. In the data reduction stage, data from interviews, observations, and documentation are selected and simplified by eliminating irrelevant information, while retaining the most important parts and directly related to the focus of the research. Furthermore, the reduced data is presented in the form of a matrix or narrative to facilitate the analysis of patterns and themes. The presentation of these data helps researchers identify key themes related to ethical leadership, such as motivation by example and inclusive problem-solving. The final stage is conclusion drawn, where the researcher evaluates the findings based on existing data and verifies through data triangulation to ensure the validity of the research results. This analysis process is carried out iteratively and in-depth to gain a comprehensive understanding of the role of ethical leadership in shaping a positive school culture at MAN 2 Banyuwangi.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This study reveals three main aspects in the role of ethical leadership to overcome contemporary challenges in Madrasah Aliyah Negeri (MAN) 2 Banyuwangi: Motivation Through Example, Effective Problem Solving, and Fostering a Positive School Culture. These findings are supported by in-depth interviews with principals, teacher councils, and quality control teams, as well as direct observation. Each finding is reinforced with interview quotes and interpreted to explain the meaning behind the interviewees' statements.

Motivation Through Example

The Head of MAN 2 Banyuwangi, Drs. H. Saeroji, M.Ag., pointed out that motivation through example is a central aspect in his role as a leader. This finding can be seen from how leaders become role models in carrying out ethical values which are then followed by staff and students. In the interview, Saeroji said, *"As a school principal, my role is very crucial in providing motivation through example. A leader must be able to demonstrate good behavior, honesty, hard work, and integrity in their every action. Thus, their members will be inspired and motivated to follow in the leader's footsteps."* (Interview, Saeroji, 2024).

Through the results of the interview conducted above, Saeroji's statement illustrates the importance of a leadership role that not only provides direction, but also becomes a source of inspiration through concrete actions. As a school principal, he emphasized that effective leadership requires honesty, hard work, and consistent integrity. By demonstrating this positive behavior, Saeroji believes that school members—including teachers and students—will feel compelled to adopt the same values. This reflects the belief that the most powerful motivation does not come from instructions or commands, but rather from the example shown directly by the leader. This interpretation indicates that trust and respect in ethical leadership grow from a leader's commitment to being a real example to the people he leads. This is supported by the teacher who stated that, *"We see the principal as a disciplined and highly committed person, so we are also encouraged to behave similarly, not only at school but also in daily life."* (Interview, Teacher A, 2024).

Through the interview activities conducted above, it highlights how school principals are not only seen as authority figures, but also as role models that reflect high discipline and commitment. Principals who are consistent in their attitudes and actions are able to have a significant impact on staff and students who are inspired to imitate these behaviors, both in the school environment and in daily life. This shows that positive role models from leaders can create a motivating environment, where the values of discipline and commitment become an integral part of the school culture that carry over into individual behavior outside of school.

In observation, the leader of MAN 2 Banyuwangi motivated teachers and students by presenting honest and diligent figures. When the principal always takes the time to discuss with staff about educational values and ethics, this creates a sense of community and increases motivation. This exemplary figure has formed a bond between leaders and staff that allows for the creation of an atmosphere of mutual respect and positivity in the school.

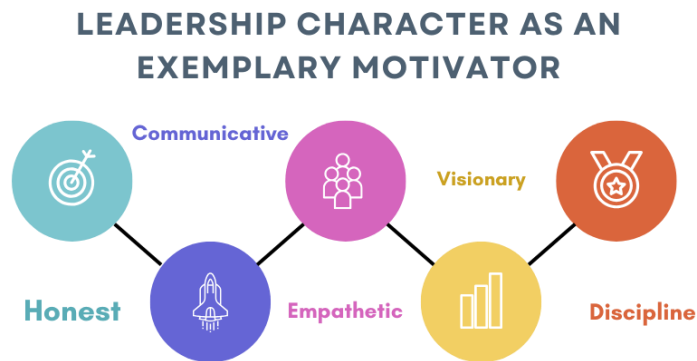


Figure 1. MAN 2 Banyuwangi Leadership Character Chart
(Source: processed by researchers based on direct observation)

The implications of these findings support the ethical leadership theory put forward by Asipi et al. (2022), about the influence of ethical leadership in building a healthy organizational culture. The success of leadership through example shows that the behavior of leaders has a profound impact on the character of organizational members, especially in the context of Islamic education where religious values are the foundation of moral education. Furthermore, these findings show that ethical leadership not only increases motivation but also members' trust in the school's vision.

Solve Problems Effectively

Other findings show that ethical leadership allows MAN 2 Banyuwangi leaders to overcome challenges with an inclusive and equitable approach. In resolving conflicts or problems, school principals use strategies that involve various stakeholders. Drs. Saeroji explained, *"In solving problems, I always start by listening to all parties involved. It helps me understand the root of the problem from different points of view. I then held an open discussion to find a solution together, involving teachers, students, and parents if needed."* (Interview, Saeroji, 2024).

Through the interviews conducted above, it shows an inclusive and collaboration-based leadership approach in problem solving. By starting the process by listening to all parties involved, it not only seeks the root of the problem from various perspectives, but also creates a sense of fairness and openness in the decision-making process. The open discussion involving teachers, students, and parents showed that Saeroji valued input from all stakeholders and emphasized the importance of cooperation in achieving solutions. This approach reflects ethical leadership principles that focus on transparency, participation, and respect for each individual's role in the school community, thereby creating a supportive and harmonious environment.

This approach shows the importance of a fair process in problem solving and how it can create a sense of ownership of the solutions taken. Meanwhile, another teacher stated that, *"In the staff meeting, we were all given the opportunity to*

voice our views. The principal really makes sure that everyone feels heard." (Interview, Teacher B, 2024).

The statement delivered by teacher B underlined the principal's inclusive leadership approach and valued the active participation of all staff. By giving everyone the opportunity to voice their views in meetings, the principal not only shows an open attitude, but also creates an environment where each staff member feels valued and listened to. This shows the principal's commitment to leadership principles based on collaboration and mutual trust. In this way, the principal manages to build a positive work atmosphere, where effective two-way communication becomes the main foundation in decision-making and problem-solving in the school environment.

The results of these findings support the concept in ethical leadership theory which states that fairness and transparency are essential components in the decision-making process (Kang & Hwang, 2021). By engaging multiple parties and prioritizing open discussions, leaders demonstrate a commitment to ethical values that not only reduce tensions but also increase job satisfaction among staff. This is important in the context of Islamic education, where the principles of transparency and collaboration are seen as integral in managing contemporary challenges. The effective problem-solving steps in Man 2 Banyuwangi are presented in the following chart:



Figure 2. Chart of Effective Problem-Solving Steps in MAN 2 Banyuwangi
(Source: processed by researchers based on direct observation)

Based on the chart above, the steps to effectively solve the problem include problem identification, root cause analysis, information collection, involvement of related parties, search and evaluation of solutions, selection and implementation of solutions, and ending with monitoring and evaluation. This approach ensures that the problem is well understood, the solutions taken are effective, and the results are continuously evaluated for optimal improvement.

Fostering a Positive School Culture

One of the important roles of ethical leadership at MAN 2 Banyuwangi is to create a school culture based on positive values. Leaders and staff collaborate to ensure that Islamic values are integrated into every aspect of school life. The principal, in his interview, stated, "*Fostering a positive school culture requires a clear vision and mission, as well as a commitment from all school residents to value the values of honesty, responsibility, and discipline.*" (Interview, Saeroji, 2024). This statement underscores that a positive culture depends not only on rules but also on the tangible application of values embraced by the entire school community.

Observations show that school principals are actively involved in extracurricular activities that facilitate the learning of religious values, such as through joint recitation and character guidance. Teacher B stated that, "*These joint activities help build togetherness, where students feel that they are in a supportive and positive environment.*" (Interview, Teacher B, 2024). These results show that school activities arranged based on religious values are able to increase students' sense of attachment and motivation.

These results support the transformational leadership theory put forward by Alhazmi & Kaufmann, (2022), in which leaders who inspire members to contribute to a positive organizational culture can improve performance and satisfaction. In the context of Islamic education, the application of positive culture is an integral part of the learning process of moral values. This shows that ethical leadership not only focuses on academic outcomes but also on character building, which ultimately shapes a harmonious and conducive school culture.

Thus, students feel valued and motivated to contribute positively. The way to foster a positive culture applied at MAN 2 Banyuwangi through the processing of researchers based on direct observation is presented with the following chart:

Table 1. Chart of how to cultivate a positive culture

| No. | Strategies to Foster a Positive School Culture |
|-----|--|
| 1 | Clear Vision and Mission |
| 2 | Teacher and Staff Training |
| 3 | Open Communication |
| 4 | Recognition and Appreciation |
| 5 | Comfortable Physical Environment |
| 6 | Teacher-Student Relationship |
| 7 | Success Evaluation |

Through table 1. The above shows that a positive school culture is not just the result of one factor, but a combination of various interrelated strategies, focusing on aspects of leadership, communication, personal development, and a supportive environment. These strategies encourage the creation of an environment conducive to learning, character development, and improving the quality of education.

Overall, this study shows that ethical leadership, as applied by school principals, has a significant impact on building a positive school culture through motivation, inclusive problem-solving, and the application of Islamic values in school life. The principal, succeeds in motivating staff and students by being an

example of honesty, hard work, and integrity, which inspires school members to emulate this attitude both at school and in daily life. Its inclusive approach to problem solving, by involving various parties such as teachers, students, and parents, creates an atmosphere of trust and active participation, increasing job satisfaction and mutual respect. In addition, the focus is on forming a culture based on positive values through religion-based activities to build a harmonious and conducive atmosphere for the development of students' character. These findings support the concept of ethical and transformational leadership, demonstrating that ethical leadership not only creates a productive learning environment, but also forms a strong individual character, which is particularly relevant in the context of Islamic education.

The results of this study, which highlights the role of ethical leadership in motivating by example, inclusive problem solving, and the formation of a positive school culture at MAN 2 Banyuwangi are in line with the concepts in previous studies, but also offer a perspective that enriches the understanding of Islamic educational leadership. According to research by Asipi et al., (2022), leadership that prioritizes the values of integrity and openness significantly increases a sense of involvement and commitment among members of the organization. This is in line with the findings that school principals are able to build trust and respect through consistent and ethical behavior. Another study by Kang & Hwang, (2021), highlights the importance of inclusivity in the decision-making process in educational institutions, especially during the pandemic, to maintain stability and job satisfaction amid existing challenges.

The principal's approach that involves all stakeholders in solving problems shows that openness and active participation are indeed effective in building collaboration and increasing the sense of ownership of the solutions taken. Furthermore, these findings also confirm research from Alhazmi, A. A., & Kaufmann. (2022), which emphasizes that transformational leaders who focus on the formation of a positive culture and collective values can result in a more conducive and productive educational environment. Thus, although the results of this study support previous studies, the emphasis on ethical aspects of leadership in Islamic education reveals additional nuances in how ethical leadership not only increases motivation and job satisfaction but also plays a role in the formation of character in accordance with Islamic principles.

In addition, this research makes a significant theoretical contribution by enriching the literature on ethical and transformational leadership in the context of Islamic education, especially in madrassas in Indonesia. Theoretically, this study expands the understanding of how ethical leadership not only increases motivation and trust in educational organizations, but also plays a role in shaping a school culture based on the values of honesty, integrity, and responsibility, which are in line with Islamic principles. The discovery that motivation through example and inclusive problem-solving can create a harmonious learning environment supports the ethical leadership theories of Brown and Treviño as well as the transformational leadership of Leithwood and Jantzi, with a particular emphasis on Islamic values that have not been widely explored in previous research. Practically, this research offers guidance for school

principals and other leaders of educational institutions to apply ethical leadership in addressing contemporary challenges, such as the pressures of globalization and social change, while still maintaining Islamic identity and values. With an inclusive and example-focused approach, leaders can increase staff motivation and job satisfaction, while building positive character in students, which will ultimately improve the overall quality of education.

CONCLUSION

This research highlights the importance of ethical leadership in Islamic education, especially in the context of madrasas. Through the application of motivation based on example, inclusive problem-solving, and the formation of a positive school culture. The findings show that leaders who prioritize the values of honesty, discipline, and openness are able to build trust and collaboration in the school environment, which directly increases the motivation and commitment of teachers and students. With an ethical and inclusive approach, the principal at MAN 2 Banyuwangi has succeeded in creating a harmonious working climate and supporting the development of students' character in accordance with Islamic values. An important lesson that can be learned is that leadership not only serves to direct but also serves as a source of inspiration that shapes the culture of an organization. These findings reinforce the understanding that ethical leadership has a profound impact in the world of education, not only from a performance perspective, but also in the formation of character that supports holistic educational goals.

This research contributes to the literature on Islamic education leadership by enriching the perspective on the importance of ethical values in leadership, which has not been widely explored in the context of Islamic education in Indonesia. By combining ethical and transformational leadership theories in this study, this study updates the perspective on the role of leadership in creating a conducive educational environment. However, this study has limitations, especially in the limited scope of one madrasa in one specific location, so the results may not be fully generalizable to other contexts. In addition, the study did not consider variations of other factors such as gender, age, or more comprehensive survey methods that might result in richer findings. Therefore, further research with a wider scope and involving demographic variations and more diverse methodological approaches is needed to obtain a more holistic picture and strengthen these findings as a foundation for more effective and relevant Islamic education policies.

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