The Low Quality of Modern Leadership Styles Backfires in the World of Islamic Education

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Abstract

This research examines the phenomenon of declining leadership styles within the sphere of Islamic education and their potentially counterproductive impacts. Over the past few decades, there has been a notable shift in the leadership approach in Islamic educational institutions, moving away from traditional models toward more modern styles that are often not tailored to the local context. Contemporary leadership approaches, which tend to prioritize managerial and administrative strategies without considering the specific values and needs of the Islamic education community, frequently lead to a disconnect between community expectations and actual outcomes. Consequently, many institutions face a leadership crisis that adversely affects educational quality, teacher motivation, and student success. This paper analyzes the factors contributing to the decline of current leadership styles and explores the negative consequences that have emerged. It also presents recommendations for improvement, emphasizing the integration of traditional values with modern leadership practices.

Keywords: Leadership Crisis; Modern Islamic Education; Era Global

INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, the landscape of Islamic education has experienced profound shifts in leadership practices, moving away from long-established traditional models towards newer, more contemporary approaches (Ali, & Weir, 2005). This transformation is influenced by broader societal changes, including globalization, technological advancement, and increasing demands for institutional efficiency. Islamic educational institutions, which have historically been grounded in religious principles, cultural values, and communal approaches to learning, are now facing challenges in leadership paradigms that may not fully respect these foundational elements (Syed, & Latif, 2020). This paper seeks to examine the consequences of this transition, analyzing how new leadership models affect the core values of Islamic education and the overall functioning of its institutions.

One of the central phenomena that this research explores is the shift from traditional leadership models to modern, often Western-influenced, leadership styles (Salleh, & Murtaza, 2015). Traditional leadership in Islamic education is characterized by a focus on communal decision-making, spiritual guidance, and a holistic approach to learning that nurtures both the intellectual and moral development of students. Leaders in these settings, often referred to as *ulama* or religious scholars, were seen not only as administrators but as moral guides who embody the ethical principles and spiritual teachings of Islam. However, as institutions strive for greater efficiency and alignment with global educational standards, there has been a gradual movement towards leadership styles that emphasize managerial effectiveness, data-driven decision-making, and performance metrics. While these modern approaches have their benefits, they may not align with the deeply rooted values and cultural expectations of Islamic educational communities.

This shift towards a contemporary leadership style brings with it a number of challenges, primarily due to its focus on managerial and administrative efficiency. Leaders are increasingly expected to meet the demands of modern educational management, such as accountability measures, performance evaluations, and strategic planning, often at the expense of more holistic considerations of the educational experience. The managerial approach tends to prioritize results that are quantifiable—such as academic achievements and institutional rankings potentially overlooking the spiritual, ethical, and community-oriented aspects that are central to Islamic education. This change in focus has resulted in a disconnect between the goals of leadership and the expectations of students, teachers, and communities within Islamic educational institutions.

The consequences of this misalignment are significant, leading to what can be described as a leadership crisis. Traditional leadership in Islamic education has historically played a key role in shaping not only the curriculum but also the moral and spiritual development of students, creating a nurturing environment for learning. The transition to more managerial-oriented leadership often undermines this holistic approach, causing frustration among educators who feel that their roles have become overly bureaucratic and removed from the core values of Islamic teaching. Moreover, students may struggle to connect with the institution's educational vision, resulting in a lack of motivation and engagement. Ultimately, the quality of education suffers when leadership is disconnected from the community it serves.

To understand the nature of this crisis, it is important to explore the historical background of leadership in Islamic education. Traditionally, educational institutions like madrasah and pesantren were deeply embedded in their local communities, with leaders who were respected for their knowledge of Islamic law, theology, and ethics. These leaders served as both educators and role models, fostering a strong sense of community and shared purpose. Their leadership style was characterized by shura (consultation), humility, and a commitment to the moral and spiritual development of students. In contrast, the modern leadership style emerging in Islamic education often emphasizes hierarchical structures, individual decision-making, and a focus on efficiency that can undermine the communal and ethical dimensions of traditional Islamic leadership.

Therefore, this paper argues that a critical examination of leadership styles within Islamic education is necessary to address the challenges posed by the current crisis. The divergence between modern administrative approaches and the traditional values of Islamic education raises questions about how to best support leaders who must navigate both the demands of contemporary educational management and the expectations of their communities. The research aims to offer insights into how a more balanced approach to leadership might be achieved—one that integrates the best of modern managerial practices with the spiritual, ethical, and communal values that are foundational to Islamic education.

In summary, the transformations in leadership within Islamic educational institutions over the past few decades have brought both opportunities and challenges. While modern leadership practices can offer tools for improving efficiency and accountability, they often fail to account for the unique values and needs of Islamic education. This paper sets the stage for a comprehensive analysis of these leadership challenges, providing a deeper understanding of the factors that have contributed to the current crisis and proposing recommendations for integrating traditional and modern leadership practices.

METHODS

The research adopts a qualitative approach to gain an in-depth understanding of the leadership crisis within Islamic educational institutions. This approach allows for a comprehensive examination of both traditional and modern leadership styles as they are practiced across different contexts (Bush, & Glover, 2014). A broad range of Islamic educational institutions, including schools, madrasas, and universities, were selected as case studies to reflect the diverse environments in which these leadership practices unfold. The study employed multiple data collection methods to ensure a rich and nuanced analysis. First, an extensive literature review was conducted to provide a theoretical background on leadership models in Islamic education and their evolution over time. This review helped frame the key issues and informed the subsequent stages of data collection. Second, in-depth interviews were carried out with a variety of stakeholders, including educators, administrators, and community leaders, to gather first-hand insights into their perceptions of current leadership practices, challenges faced, and the effects on educational quality and community expectations. Lastly, case studies of specific institutions were developed to illustrate real-world examples of how shifts in leadership styles have impacted these organizations, enabling a comparative analysis of outcomes in settings where either traditional or modern leadership styles predominate. The methodology is further detailed by discussing the criteria for the selection of institutions, such as size, geographic location, and the nature of their leadership styles, ensuring a representative sample for comprehensive analysis. Additionally, frameworks grounded in leadership theory were applied to interpret and compare practices within these institutions.

In terms of data analysis, a thematic analysis was employed to process and interpret the collected data. This analytical method is particularly effective in qualitative research, as it allows for the identification and exploration of recurring themes that emerge from the interviews, literature, and case studies. The data were meticulously coded to uncover patterns that speak to the key factors contributing to the leadership crisis in Islamic educational institutions. Specifically, the analysis focused on understanding how leadership styles influence educational outcomes, with attention to dimensions such as the quality of education provided, teacher motivation, student performance, and the broader impact on institutional culture and values. The thematic analysis helped to distill complex information into key findings that reveal the underlying issues contributing to the leadership crisis. These findings not only shed light on the challenges associated with the adoption of modern leadership practices but also highlight areas where traditional values might be more effectively integrated into current leadership frameworks to enhance educational quality and alignment with community expectations.

RESULTS

The results of this study highlight a pronounced disconnect between the contemporary leadership practices being adopted in many Islamic educational institutions and the expectations of the broader educational community they serve. A significant finding is that modern leadership approaches tend to prioritize efficiency, accountability, and managerial control, which are hallmarks of a results-driven organizational culture. However, this emphasis on administrative efficiency often comes at the expense of the deeper values traditionally upheld in Islamic education, such as communal involvement in decision-making, ethical stewardship, and a focus on spiritual guidance. These values are not merely operational preferences but are deeply embedded in the philosophy and cultural fabric of Islamic education, which seeks to nurture holistic development—intellectual,

moral, and spiritual—in both teachers and students. The study finds that the adoption of modern leadership styles, characterized by hierarchical structures and top-down management, has often marginalized the voices of teachers, students, and community members, creating a sense of detachment and lack of ownership over the educational process.

The research reveals that this shift in leadership focus has tangible negative consequences for the educational environment within Islamic institutions. One of the key impacts is a decline in teacher motivation and morale. Teachers, who traditionally view their role as both educators and moral guides, often find themselves constrained by bureaucratic processes and performance metrics that do not align with their understanding of holistic Islamic teaching. This shift leads to a reduction in their sense of purpose and fulfillment, as the spiritual and ethical dimensions of their work are overshadowed by administrative demands. The study's case examples highlight specific instances where teachers have expressed frustration over the lack of opportunities for meaningful participation in decision-making and a perceived erosion of the institution's commitment to Islamic principles. Furthermore, the data suggest that student development is also adversely affected; the focus on managerial outcomes over moral and spiritual development has resulted in educational experiences that may lack depth and fail to foster the comprehensive character-building that is a cornerstone of traditional Islamic education. Consequently, this undermines not only the educational quality but also the institution's ability to produce graduates who are well-rounded individuals, equipped with both knowledge and moral integrity.

Detailed case studies within the results section provide concrete examples of how these leadership challenges manifest in different Islamic educational contexts. For instance, in one Islamic school, the imposition of a centralized decision-making structure diminished the role of teachers in curriculum development, reducing their capacity to incorporate Islamic values into the teaching process. Interviews with teachers from this school reflect a growing disillusionment with leadership practices that prioritize operational efficiency over educational philosophy. Similar findings are echoed in a university setting, where administrators' efforts to implement performance-based evaluations have led to an overemphasis on academic achievements at the cost of spiritual enrichment. The qualitative data, including quotes from interviews and observations, paint a vivid picture of the frustrations and challenges faced by educators who feel that their roles as spiritual and ethical guides are being undervalued. Additionally, these case examples are supported by literature that underscores the broader trends of leadership shifts in Islamic education, drawing connections between these local experiences and global patterns in educational reform. Through these in-depth explorations, the results offer a comprehensive understanding of the leadership crisis in Islamic educational institutions, pointing towards the need for a more balanced and value-based approach to leadership.

DISCUSSION

The findings from this study have significant implications for the broader landscape of Islamic education, particularly in how leadership styles shape the ethos and effectiveness of educational institutions. A key issue emerging from the research is the recognition that while modern leadership styles have introduced administrative efficiency and improved managerial control, they may also inadvertently erode the foundational values of Islamic education. This tension between efficiency and tradition raises critical questions about the sustainability of such leadership practices in settings where spiritual development and ethical guidance are considered as important as, if not more than, academic achievement and operational productivity. The discussion section, therefore, delves into

the complex relationship between these modern leadership approaches and their impact on the spiritual, ethical, and community-focused elements that have traditionally characterized Islamic educational institutions.

The emphasis on managerialism has, in many cases, shifted the focus of leaders towards goals such as financial sustainability, academic performance, and institutional competitiveness. While these are valid and necessary objectives for the operational success of any educational institution, the focus on these outcomes can conflict with the core mission of Islamic education. Traditionally, leaders in Islamic schools and universities were not merely administrators; they were mentors, spiritual guides, and moral exemplars who embodied the values they sought to instill in students. However, the rise of modern leadership styles tends to separate these spiritual and moral roles from the administrative functions, often leading to a compartmentalization that is at odds with the holistic approach valued in Islamic pedagogy. This separation risks creating an environment where spiritual growth and character building are seen as secondary concerns rather than integral components of the educational process.

Moreover, the implications of this leadership shift are not limited to administrative concerns but extend deeply into the daily experiences of teachers and students. For teachers, the move towards a managerial leadership model has often meant an increase in bureaucratic responsibilities, performance evaluations based on quantifiable metrics, and a diminished role in decision-making. This has a direct impact on their job satisfaction and sense of purpose, as many educators feel their ability to contribute to the moral and spiritual development of students is constrained by administrative priorities. Teachers who were once seen as the custodians of Islamic values now find themselves navigating a system that places more value on measurable outcomes than on nurturing a comprehensive Islamic worldview. The implications for students are equally profound; without leadership that prioritizes spiritual guidance and ethical considerations, the educational experience can become fragmented, focusing on academic success without necessarily developing the moral character and spiritual maturity that are hallmarks of a well-rounded Islamic education.

Given these challenges, the discussion explores how integrating traditional Islamic values with modern leadership practices could address the current crisis and improve the leadership dynamics within Islamic educational institutions. It proposes that a balanced approach is needed, one that does not reject modern managerial skills outright but seeks to incorporate them within a framework that is sensitive to the spiritual and ethical context of Islamic education. For instance, leaders could adopt community-based decision-making processes that encourage participation from teachers, students, and parents, thereby reflecting the *shura* (consultation) approach that is rooted in Islamic tradition. This would not only enhance the sense of shared purpose and community ownership within the institution but also ensure that decisions are made with a comprehensive understanding of the cultural and spiritual needs of the students and staff.

The discussion also emphasizes the need for leadership development programs that train current and future leaders to navigate both the demands of modern educational management and the spiritual expectations of their communities. Such programs would equip leaders with skills in conflict resolution, ethical decision-making, and spiritual mentorship, in addition to more conventional administrative competencies. Leaders must be prepared to act as moral role models and mentors who can guide their institutions through the complexities of modern educational landscapes while remaining faithful to Islamic principles. This requires a reorientation of leadership training to include modules on Islamic educational philosophy, spiritual leadership, and community engagement, alongside training in strategic planning and resource management.

In conclusion, the discussion argues that the resolution of the leadership crisis in Islamic education depends on the ability to create a synthesis between modern and traditional leadership models. Leaders must be able to reconcile the need for administrative efficiency with the imperative to uphold and model the spiritual and ethical teachings of Islam. By adopting an integrative approach, Islamic educational institutions can develop leadership practices that not only support operational success but also foster environments conducive to holistic spiritual and moral development. This integrative approach will not only address the immediate challenges of leadership but also ensure that the mission of Islamic education preparing students for both worldly success and spiritual fulfillment remains at the forefront of institutional goals.

Ultimately, this discussion lays the groundwork for practical recommendations that can be implemented to foster leadership that respects the cultural and spiritual fabric of Islamic education while also meeting the demands of an ever-changing educational landscape. The balance between tradition and modernity is not easily achieved but is essential for the future success and relevance of Islamic educational institutions.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study significantly contribute to the ongoing development of a character education curriculum that is both contextually relevant and deeply rooted in local wisdom and cultural literacy, particularly within the context of Indonesian language learning. By focusing on how character education can be effectively integrated into language studies, this research offers practical insights and strategies that educators can use to design curricula that resonate with students' cultural experiences and values. The emphasis on local wisdom ensures that character development is not treated as an isolated aspect of education but is instead woven into the very fabric of language learning, making it a natural and meaningful part of the learning process. This contextually appropriate approach acknowledges the diverse cultural backgrounds of students in Indonesia, providing a pathway for more personalized and impactful character education that respects and reflects the students' community values and traditions.

The broader implications of this study highlight the potential for adopting an innovative and culturally responsive approach to education that significantly enhances students' character formation. By integrating local wisdom and cultural literacy into the curriculum, students not only develop core moral values but also acquire a deeper understanding of their cultural identity and responsibilities as members of their community. This culturally grounded form of character education prepares students to engage in active citizenship, equipping them with the moral and ethical competencies needed to participate constructively in society. Moreover, this research underscores the importance of moving beyond generic models of character education toward approaches that are adaptive to cultural contexts, ultimately fostering a generation of students who are morally grounded, culturally literate, and equipped to navigate the complexities of modern society with a strong sense of character and civic responsibility.

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