Strengthening Student Character Based on Sufism Values: An Insight into Ethical Leadership Practices.

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Abstract: The main purpose of this paper is to focus on school principals' perceptions of how they understand ethical leadership and make students have a commendable character based on Sufism values through the implementation of ethical leadership. The research method used was quasi-qualitative. This study utilizes semi-structured interviews with two private school principals to explore their perceptions of ethical leadership practices and nurture their students' commendable character based on Sufism values. There were two main findings. First, the commendable character based on the values of Sufism aims to achieve the pleasure of Allah, the Almighty God. Second, the effectiveness of the propagation from habit to belief is accelerated by ethical leadership behavior with the character of moral courage, humility, empathy, honesty, and self-control.

Keywords: Ethical leadership, Islamic character, Sufism values

1. Introduction

The most concern of educational leaders in this knowledge era is the failure to produce civilized and noble students (Suhardi et al., 2020). Meanwhile, from the experts' notes, it is concluded that character education shows a strategic position of learning outcomes as the main indicator of educational success (Chou et al., 2013). The existence of bad excesses from the uncontrolled use of technology affects student behavior that is not expected which can damage the values of Sufism which have been the mission of the madrasa so far. Realizing this, madrasa leaders strive to uphold Sufism values in various ways, including the aspect of implementing leadership that applies ethical leadership. The principal of the madrasah in running the organization he leads is not only determined by formal matters but is determined by the attitude and behavior of his leadership. The attitudes of leaders to achieve success in leading can be observed from the characteristics that appear in leadership practices that are appropriate for the present century, namely: smart, honest, virtuous, able to produce ideas and rules, technological literacy, trustworthy, responsive, and empathetic and morals (Komariah et al., 2020).

Leadership that supports the enforcement of student character in accordance with Sufism values is the leadership of Rasulullah SAW, namely siddiq, tabligh, amanah, fatonah(Fairuz, 2020). In accordance with the results of a research that to instill character in schools/madrasah, school leaders must be able to emulate the leadership traits of the prophet, namely sidiq, tabligh, amanah, and fatonah and implement these characteristics with courage (Heriyanto et al., 2019). The courage of a leader becomes an added value in a successful character education program that demands innovation in knowledge, understanding, habituation, belief, doing, and maintaining the values of Sufism (Ritonga et al., 2020).

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Embedding a character based on Sufism values becomes one of the missions of Islamic education to be applied in everyday life, for that it is necessary to transform the value of Sufism to students through faith, Islam, and ihsan which are manifested in a behavior (Suteja, 2019). Behavior that appears as a representation of Sufism values requires serious education which manages the essence of Sufism as a major part of character education in Islamic boarding schools / madrasahs. In this position, the role of a leader is very decisive, namely a leader who is able to influence, direct, mobilize and empower people to remain concerned with the mission of upholding the values of Sufism.

It takes a leader who has a high level of ethics in leading madrasas who are concerned with upholding character based on Sufism values. Fairuz's research (2018) emphasizes that pesantren leaders must be role models in (1) knowing what is good, (2) loving the good, (3) wanting the good to get the values of Sufism, sincerity, repentance, zuhud, faqir, patience, pleasure, and muraqabah (Fairuz, 2018). For this reason, madrasa leaders carry out character enforcement based on Sufism values using (1) role models, (2) spiritual training with the stages of tahalli, tahalli, tajalli, and (3) storytelling.

Wright and Quick (2011) explained that ethical leadership implementation is needed to enforce rules in building student character (Wright & Quick, 2011). Ethical leadership is a role model that promotes leader behavior in accordance with norms and morals that is resonated with followers through a two-way communication mechanism, strengthening and decision making. Unfortunately, the practice of ethical leadership has not been explored in depth (Brown & Treviño, 2006). This is an opportunity for researchers as new opportunities and to find best practices for increasing the effectiveness of moral-based leadership. This article wants to reveal in depth how ethical leadership is applied to strengthen the character of students based on Sufism values.

1.1 Character Education based on Sufism values

Although character has been defined conceptually and operationally in many different ways, in general, character is often called a person's character, character, character, or personality which is formed from the internalization of various virtues that are believed and used as a basis for point of view, thinking, behave, and act. Wright and Quick (2011) state that character is a habit of wholesome behavior directed at personal and social good (Wright & Quick, 2011). Virtue consists of a number of values, morals and norms, such as honesty, courage to act, trustworthiness, and respect for others. We can know character by the nature of a person in responding to situations morally. Character is generally defined as a person's nature, basic values, and way of thinking and behaving in response to a situation that is displayed in positive attitudes, behaviors and skills influenced by heredity and environment(Suhardi et al., 2020; Sunaengsih et al., 2020)

.Sufism is, essentially, the inner and esoteric dimension of Islam which comes from the Qur'an and al-Hadith (Nasr, 2002). Sufism is a path of truth and guidance whose origin is the concentration of oneself in worship, full self-hope in Allah, distancing oneself from immorality, and separation from others for seclusion and worship (Khaldun, 1986). Sufism is a self-approach to Allah by worshiping to cleanse yourself and the heart of despicable nature, adorn yourself with a commendable character, not prioritizing world affairs, feeling sufficient and grateful for what Allah has given to him accompanied by tawakkal and mahabbah to Allah (Labib & Al'Aziz, 2000). Character education based on Sufism values means education for emotional and spiritual intelligence which actually is learning to keep up

with the demands of religion, when dealing with calamities, luck, resistance from others, life challenges, wealth, poverty, self-control, and self-potential development (Suteja, 2019). The values of Sufism that are echoed in teaching and learning become a solution in the development of human spirituality (Taufikurrahman et al., 2019). Sudrajat (2011) emphasizes four ways to implement the strategy for implementing character education in madrasah, namely: (1) teaching, (2) modeling, (3) reinforcing, and 4) habituating (Sudrajat, 2011). Meanwhile, Yatimin and Thamrin (2017) mentions three methods, namely: takhalli, tahalli, and tajalli(Yatimin & Thamrin, 2017).

Character education is a deliberate attempt to help people understand, care for, and act on core ethical values(Ekind & Sweet, 1997; Elkind & Sweet, 2004). Character education has the same essence and meaning as moral education and moral education. The character in the Islamic perspective is none other than morals. Noble morals are the fruit that results from the process of implementing shari'ah which is based on a strong belief. Bahm (2012) defines character education as an educational process that not only involves schools but all school stakeholders(Bahm, 2012). This view shows that character education is more about building awareness of norms-based practices in social life. Overall character education is about how to become someone who is in accordance with the values expected by society and how the decision-making process is carried out and how to be held accountable. The implementation of character education can be translated into the stages of character building starting from providing knowledge, deepening understanding, building habits, making beliefs, doing according to the stages that have been previously owned, and the last stage is maintaining it. Its implementation must involve all school members whose key is in the leader. Character education is defined as the behavior of school members in providing education that must have character(Maarif & Rofiq, 2018; Rahman & Kasim, 2014)(Rahman & Kasim, 2014).

1.2 Ethical Leadership

Leader's character as a tool to advance leadership knowledge and practice (Sosik et al., 2019). Ethical leadership is a form of leader who has positive performance that connects the strength of character-ethical leadership-results (Sosik et al., 2019). Ethical leadership is a leader with honest/humble character, empathy, moral courage, self-control, and healthy psychological development. This is reinforced by a research which states that ethical leadership is a leader with behavioral manifestations from aspects of character, such as honesty/humility, empathy, moral courage, and self-control(Nassif et al., 2020). Ethical leaders are honest, humble and empathetic with subordinates, courageous in taking unpopular but virtuous attitudes to problems, and self-control when faced with challenges and temptations(Brown et al., 2005; Wang & Hackett, 2016). Then, it is stated that ethical leadership has a value-based leadership perspective, namely the theory that leadership is indicated as genuine, honest and honorable(Lauri & Bäckström, 2019). Sharma et al. (2019) added that an ethical leader is a person who strongly believes in following a set of values and ideals that correct their decisions, actions, and behavior(Sharma et al., 2019). One must be honest with high integrity, with a people orientation and communicate assertively.

2.   RESEARCH METHOD

This study used a qualitative approach by conducting observations, interviews, documentation, and focus group discussions on research subjects at Madrasah Matholi'ul Huda Bugel, Indonesia, and Madrasah NU Banat Kudus, Indonesia. Data was collected to answer ethical leadership implementation problems as an effort to strengthen

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the character of students based on Sufism in madrasas, Matholi'ul Huda Bugel, and Madrasah NU Banat Kudus, Indonesia.

Madrasah Matholi'ul Huda Bugel, Indonesia is one of the formal madrasas under the auspices of the Indonesian Ministry of Religion. It is a development of the Salaf Islamic boarding school in 1954, initially using the name Muallimien, then adapting to government regulations over the name Madrasah Matholi'ul Huda. Of the many operational private Tsanawiyah madrasas, Madrasah Matholi'ul Huda is classified as a madrasah with the largest number of students with 1250 (one thousand two hundred and fifty) male and female students.

Madrasah NU Banat Kudus, Indonesia is one of the leading educational institutions under the auspices of the Indonesian Ministry of Religion in Kudus, Indonesia. It is located atArwani Amin Street, Karandon Kota Kudus, Indonesia. It manages female students, in the 2019-2020 school year there are 1039 students in this madrasah, with 350 Class X, 337 Class XI, and 352 Class XII, with various expertise and majors they are pursuing.

The data analysis technique in this study was carried out by organizing and selecting data into units that can be obtained from existing data in two madrasas, namely Madrasah Matholi'ul Huda Bugel, Indonesia and Madrasah NU Banat Kudus, Indonesia, related to implementation. ethical leadership related to strengthening the character of students based on Sufism by: 1) compiling information; 2) understanding all information and giving signs; 3) making detailed and detailed descriptions of the cases studied and their contexts; 4) establishing patterns and looking for relationships between several categories; 5) provide interpretations and generalize naturally both for researchers and for their application in other cases; and 6) present data in a narrative (Darmadi, 2014).

3.   RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

3.1 Character Based on Sufism Values

Characters based on Sufism values are the morals of students with a commendable nature, not only prioritizing world affairs, but also the hereafter, carrying out all His commands and staying away from all His prohibitions, being grateful for what is obtained, and tawakal with what has become the provisions of Allah. Activities to build characters based on Sufism values as described in Table 1.

Table 1 Activities based on Sufism- values

No	Activities based on Sufism values
Daily	
1	Duha praying
2	Dhuhur praying in congregation
3	Religious lectures (after dhuhur praying)
4	Tadarrus al Qur'an (5 minutes before the learning activity)
5	Maintaining wudhu/ablution
6	The main prayer (before and after learning activities)
Weekly	
1	Islamic Da'wah
2	The recitation of ahkussunnahwaljama'a
3	Rebana/tambourine &sholawatan
4	Calligraphy
5	Qiro'a
6	SoroganSalaf Book (Kitab Kuning)
Momentum to commemorate Islamic holidays	
1	Commemorating Isra' Mi'raj Prophet Muhammad SAW
2	Commemorating the Prophet's birthday
3	*Istighasah*before the National Exam

4	*Khotmul Qur'an* ahead of the National Exam and the birthday of madrasa
5	Supporting orphan's day
6	Ramadhan Islamic Boarding

Source: Survey data, 2020

Students in the madrasa environment carry out spiritual practices as a means to get closer to God. This practice is a principle of guidance and solid mental development to increase devotion to Allah by carrying out all His commands and avoiding His prohibitions. From the activities that are accustomed to this madrasah, the character of students is formed based on the values of Sufism in them, so that the goal of getting closer to Allah will be increasingly realized. These various practices also function as a relationship between a servant and the Creator in asking forgiveness for all the sins and mistakes they have committed. These activities, their knowledge and understanding are transferred in the lessons in madrasas in religious subjects as well as in other subjects. Activities outside class hours or before entering into formal subjects, habituation is made as stated in Table 1.

In some interviews with teachers and madrasah principals, information was obtained that this habituation effort is expected to form student confidence, so that it can be a commitment of students to do so outside of school and still maintain it as part of student character.

3.2 Implementation of Ethical Leadership in Character Education

The implementation of ethical leadership in character education is based on teacher perceptions in terms of honesty, humility, empathy, moral courage, and self-control.

Table 2 Ethical leadership in character education based on Sufism values

Dimension	Criteria
Moral Courage	Not fickle, not hesitant, daring to make decisions and taking risks from decisions, daring to prevent unethical behavior, not weak in maintaining an attitude that has been believed when receiving blasphemy from outside, and strong in defending the right.
Humble	Mingle with teachers and be familiar with students, not talking about their own glory, but telling stories about insight, not telling about other people's weaknesses.
Empathy	Showing empathy among teacher and student problems with deeds, not just verbally. Building a madrasah and developing a sense of emphaty, learning to understand the conditions of others and sharing with others.
Honest	Madrasah leaders always showing themselves as people who can always be trusted in words and dwwds. Don't like to lie, have integrity that can be trusted.
Self-control	Does not overreact emotionally; not blaming others for his mistakes; think before you act.

Source: Survey data, 2020

Based on the data in table 2 the results of interviews with madrasah principals, teachers and employees. The first aspect of ethical leadership that is needed to instill character education based on Sufism values is moral courage, humility, empathy, honesty, and self-control.

3.3 Discussion

Sufism is the esoteric side of Islam which teaches how to get closer to Allah (Gitosaroso, 2016). Praying activities as a character education program are used at the beginning and at the end of the lesson to emphasize the existence of a relationship between a servant and the Khaliq, namely Allah. The students are expected to only ask

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Allah, rely on Allah and not on other creatures. The main purpose of Sufism-based activities is to save oneself from shirk and false beliefs, and to escape from liver diseases. Only Allah is the goal and Allah is the place to ask. As mentioned in the Koran Surah 40 Verse 60, "and your Lord said: " Pray 'you to Me, believe I allow your prayers' a request. Indeed, those who are arrogant, arrogant rather than worshiping and praying "to Me, will go to Hell in a lowly state".

The habits instilled in madrasas before formal lessons are intended to shape students' Islamic character and have a positive impact on learning behavior and social life. Budimansyah states that activities outside of this lesson are intended to further strengthen the personality formation of students (Budimansyah, 2010). Activities that are religious in nature with Sufism nuances can affect the moral formation of students (Sa'ida, 2018).

The values of Sufism in madrasas are the essence of Muslim character which requires systematic character education. Singh et al. (2019) argues that to obtain success in character education, it is necessary to apply principles based on the Character Education Partnership (CEP), including: 1) the school/madrasa community promotes ethics and core performance of values as the basis for good character; 2) school/madrasah defines "character" comprehensively as thinking, feeling, and doing activities; 3) schools/madrasahs use a comprehensive, deliberate and proactive approach to character development; 4) schools/madrasahs create community awareness; 5) school/madrasah provides students with opportunities for moral action; 6) schools/madrasahs offer meaningful and challenging academic curricula that respect all learners, develop their character, and help to succeed (Singh et al., 2020).

Leadership is the driving force for school activities, including character building activities. Madrasa leaders are required to be leadership role models who uphold ethics and work on a high ethical basis based on morals, values, and spirituality. In practice, Arar et al. (2016) state three dimensions that show a picture of ethical leadership, namely: 1) caring ethics, namely the relationship that occurs with madrasa citizens as the most important that shows the functioning of the organization; (2) ethics of justice, namely promoting a strong social order with the organization, the coordination of the results of collaboration between all the people involved; and (3) critical ethics, namely awakening others to get a better balance in the distribution of social benefits (Arar & Abu-Romi, 2016).

In the results of research at madrasah, moral courage is very urgent to be shown by the madrasah leadership. Moral courage is courage in a moral challenge. Moral courage to face challenges is not only physical courage, it contains moral courage and a mentality of courage (Kidder, 2005). It is also stated that there is an influence between moral courage on ethical decision making by a person (Sparks & Pan, 2010). Moral courage is an act of honor (an act of virtue) in the face of moral challenges (Sekerka et al., 2009), and moral courage is the readiness of madrasa leaders to face pressure that will help prevent unethical behavior (Gibbs et al., 2007; Walumbwa et al., 2012). The concept of courage describes the ability of individuals who face danger, uncertainty, and challenges and overcome them without fear (Mahoney, 1998). Individuals who have high moral courage will also have high intentions in upholding the character building of students based on Sufism values.

Ethical Leadership in the implementation of strengthening character education is carried out in six steps, namely: 1) knowledge; 2) understanding; 3) habits; 4) beliefs; 5) conducting behavior; and 6) maintaining. The process of character formation is how students are given knowledge and understanding of goodness values based on Sufism values in Lickona's study (2012) called moral knowing which consists of knowledge and understanding, so

that in the end it forms beliefs (Lickona, 2014). Students not only arrive at an understanding of the values of Sufism, but are able to get used to and form beliefs, which is called moral feeling. After forming understanding and attitudes, students act consciously with the values of goodness (moral behavior) which are adopted as an expression of the values of Sufism. Santoso and Cahrolis (2018) provides a strategy for implementing character education in schools/madrasah that can be done in four ways, namely: (1) teaching, (2) modeling, (3) strengthening (reinforcing), and (4) habituating (Santoso & Cahrolis, 2018).

4. CONCLUSION

Characters based on Sufism values are the behavior, personality and attitudes of students to get closer to Allah and achieve the pleasure of Allah. Strengthening character based on Sufism through various habituation activities of do'a, shalawat, praying in congregational prayers, being fond of tadarrus al-Qur'an, being diligent in doing zikir and doing istighfar, being diligent in mujahadah and istighasah in the madrasa environment. The success of strengthening character education is supported by ethical leadership based on the implementation of the characters of moral courage, honesty, humility, empathy, and self-control. Through ethical leadership, madrasah leaders form students' sufism-based character through knowledge, understanding, habits, beliefs, practices, and defenses in life in madrasas and in society.

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