



School Principal Leadership as a Vanguard for Educators and Educational Staff in Enhancing Work Motivation at SMA Assa'adah Gresik, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

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Leadership is an aspirational, motivational, and creative moral force that can influence educators and education staff to change their attitudes, aligning them with the jointly established vision, mission, and objectives. The absence of leadership can result in disorder and ineffectiveness in achieving the shared vision, mission, and goals. This research aims to discover and analyze how school principals act as pioneers for the school community in enhancing motivation.

This research employs a qualitative descriptive research design. Data collection techniques include interviews, participant observations, and documentation. Data analysis utilizes single-case data analysis. Data validity techniques include credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

The findings of this research reveal that school principals lead by enhancing motivation in the school community through possessing a sharp, far-reaching, and transparent leadership vision, continually innovating and making improvements to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of work and being willing to take risks and responsibilities.

KEYWORDS:

Leadership,
Pioneering,
School
Community
Motivation

A. INTRODUCTION

The responsibility of a school principal as a leader in an educational institution is crucial. Ideally, a school principal should possess morals and behaviors that reflect the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) in leadership, adhering to Islamic teachings in the Quran and hadith as the primary source. If this is realized effectively, the school principal, teachers, and staff can work together efficiently. This will help achieve educational goals and improve the educational institution's quality.

Globally, Islam encourages its followers to be hardworking, with work not only serving material purposes but also as a part of preparing for the hereafter. The research was conducted at SMA Assa'adah, a renowned Islamic-based educational institution in Gresik, to evaluate how Islamic-based leadership is applied in educational institutions. This school is a private institution under the auspices of the

Qomaruddin Islamic Boarding School Foundation and Nahdlatul Ulama's Maarif. SMA Assa'adah encourages students to internalize religious values, which shape their character regarding faith and morals. Additionally, the school conducts extracurricular activities while adhering to religious values.

In the realm of leadership, there are various diverse definitions from different sources and experts. The Indonesian Dictionary distinguishes three terms related to leadership: '*memimpin*' (to lead), '*pemimpin*' (leader), and '*kepemimpinan*' (leadership). '*Pemimpin*' refers to the act of leading, heading, or guiding a group (organization), a '*pemimpin*' is a person who holds a primary role in leading, and '*kepemimpinan*' refers to how someone leads or things related to the role of a leader. In some literature, leadership is associated with an individual's power to lead others, a form of authority in decision-making (Hornby, 2000; Dubin, 1951).

Some other definitions of leadership depict its diverse dimensions. Hemphill considers it an initiative to create consistent patterns and solve conflicts or issues together. George Terry views it as an activity that influences others, whether in groups, organizations, or institutions, to achieve a common direction and goal (Terry, 2006).

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With these various definitions, it is crucial to recognize that leadership is an effort to influence and motivate others to work together to achieve organizational or group goals. While definitions may vary, the essence of leadership remains centered on the effort to voluntarily move subordinates towards achieving common goals (Arikunto, 1990; Nawawi, 1988). All these definitions emphasize that leadership is an action or activity that contains the effort to lead and motivate towards achieving organizational goals.

In the understanding of leadership, essential elements must be fulfilled, such as the existence of individuals who influence, individuals who are influenced, goals to be achieved, activities, interactions, and authority (Paul Hersey, 1994). Leadership can be understood as an individual's ability to act, lead, motivate, or influence subordinates, coordinate, and make decisions to achieve established goals. This applies in various contexts, including educational organizations where school principals or madrasah leaders play a crucial role as leaders.

Leadership is closely related to the concept of power, which leaders often use to influence the views, actions, or behaviors of those they lead. It is essential to emphasize that leaders must use their power wisely without infringing on the rights of the individuals they lead. In Islam, leadership plays a significant role in applying religious values and continuing the prophetic mission to establish a government based on Islamic principles (Muhaimin, 2010).

Motivation, in the context of leadership and management, can be understood as moving and harnessing the potential of individuals or workgroups so that they can work productively towards established goals. Motivation involves various factors, such as monetary and non-monetary rewards, that can affect an individual's performance. Motivation also involves psychological processes that include attitudes, needs, perceptions, and individual decisions. Effective leadership often requires a deep understanding of the motivation of subordinates (Rusdiana, 2016).

In various perspectives, motivation is the drive or force that compels individuals to take action. It reflects the complex interaction of various psychological factors within an individual, such as needs, desires, and goals they want to achieve (Sadirman, 2007). Motivation is also a way to inspire, encourage, and stimulate others, such as employees, to be enthusiastic about achieving desired outcomes. Effective leadership is crucial in motivating individuals or work teams to efficiently and effectively achieve organizational goals (Siagian, 2006).

Based on the definitions provided by the experts above, motivation is the factor that drives individuals to take specific actions. This factor triggers an individual's behavior. Motivation itself can take various forms.

B. RESEARCH METHOD

In this research, the method applied is a qualitative descriptive approach. Qualitative research, as explained by Suyitno (2018), is a type of research that aims to describe and interpret phenomena that occur in society. Qualitative research uses an inductive thinking approach to describe events or research objects related to various fields (Kartono, 1990). In other words, qualitative research involves analyzing facts or research objects following the natural context, which is then systematically presented (Anwar, 1996).

One of the essential elements in qualitative research is the role of the researcher. Qualitative research based on field research requires the researcher's presence at the research site. This is because one of the main instruments in qualitative field research is the presence of an observer, participant observer, or researcher. Moreover, by being directly present at the research location, the researcher has a better opportunity to interact with subjects who can provide more in-depth information related to the phenomena under study (Tanzeh & Suyitno, 2006).

In qualitative research, the role of the researcher as a critical instrument and the choice of the research location plays a central role in collecting relevant data. Furthermore, selecting appropriate data collection techniques significantly affects the researcher's understanding of the studied phenomena. Techniques such as in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation used in this research serve as the primary instruments to detail and better understand the existing context and phenomena. Therefore, this research's overall approach and techniques play a crucial role in obtaining in-depth and relevant data for further analysis.

This analysis is conducted by the researcher actively engaging in the field, conducting observations, analyzing and interpreting data, and drawing conclusions from the findings (Margono, 2004). After the data collection process is carried out, the researcher directly performs data analysis. The final step is when the researcher has completed collecting all the available data in the field. Once all the data is gathered, the researcher conducts analysis and aligns the analysis results with theory or formulates new theories based on the compiled data.

In qualitative research, such as the one conducted in this study, the theory of Miles and Huberman can be applied. As proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldana, this theory describes that data analysis in qualitative research involves three simultaneous steps: 1) data condensation, 2) data displays, and 3) conclusion drawing/verification.

Additionally, ensuring the data's validity should be noticed in the research process. This process includes two main aspects: reliability and validity. Generally, several steps are used to test the validity of research data, starting from internal validity testing, progressing to external validity

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testing, followed by reliability testing, and finally ensuring data objectivity.

C. DISCUSSION

"One form of dedication given by the school principal to the institution is by being a pioneer. This leadership is expected to boost the enthusiasm and performance of teachers and staff in the institution. It is also important to pay attention to how the staff and teachers view Muslihah and take inspiration from her efforts.

The influence of the school principal as a pioneer becomes evident when we examine the various programs implemented by the institution, both when the institution was established as a school and when it became part of the *PondokPesantren* Qomaruddin. With an A accreditation and membership in the School Movement Program, the responsibilities of the school principal at SMA Assa'adah have become more complex. In addition to promoting the school's quality improvement, the school principal must also maintain the school's reputation in the broader community. Being recognized as a School in the Movement Program makes SMA Assa'adah a model for other schools.

According to data obtained through interviews with the School Principal, it was found that SMA Assa'adah had successfully entered the School Movement Program, consisting of approximately 8 selected schools. This achievement is the result of joint efforts from all parties within SMA Assa'adah, including teachers, students, and other internal members, as well as by the permission of Allah.

Surprisingly, Muslihah is the school principal who led SMA Assa'adah when the school achieved the title of a school in the movement in East Java. This means that with Muslihah's creative and innovative leadership, SMA Assa'adah succeeded in winning the category as a school in the movement and was recognized as a school capable of developing its students to be high-quality graduates, both academically and non-academically.

According to Muslihah, the trust placed in SMA Assa'adah as one of the schools in the movement is an important achievement that has enhanced her reputation among other schools and educational institutions. In other words, Muslihah has proven to be a successful school leader in the movement. Muslihah's success has also motivated the educational and non-educational staff at SMA Assa'adah to work more diligently in enhancing the school's capabilities to compete globally. According to Eka Faizatin, during Muslihah's leadership, the working environment at SMA Assa'adah became healthier and more enjoyable.

From an interview with Eka Faizatin, it was revealed that the working environment at SMA Assa'adah is very pleasant, with reliable human resources and a focus on improving the quality of education. Muslihah, as a competent pioneer, has a forward-looking and inspirational vision and has created a safe, healthy, and conducive working

environment. In her role as a school leader in the movement, Muslihah has brought rapid development and a more systematic and structured school management, making the entire SMA Assa'adah community feel safe and inspired.

SMA Assa'adah has high-quality flagship programs, including character education, Quranic recitation practices, worship habituation, language, champion school, super skills, environmental programs, and national education. Muslihah also led the formation of good habits within the school environment, such as collective prayers, Quranic recitation, congregational Duha prayer, all of which are supported by various parties.

The good habits implemented at SMA Assa'adah have had a positive impact felt by almost the entire school community, enhancing human resources and learning quality. Under Muslihah's leadership, SMA Assa'adah has achieved numerous achievements in both academic and non-academic fields, making it one of the leading schools in East Java known regionally, nationally, and internationally."

Based on the research findings at SMA Assa'adah Gresik, the researcher will present the findings based on the three main research questions in the following points, which include the principal's guidance on the motivation of educational and non-educational staff at SMA Assa'adah:

- 1) The school principal creates a supportive environment for all school members, where mutual support for joint good and individual attention is highly valued.
- 2) The school principal holds regular monthly meetings with the participation of all educational and non-educational staff. These meetings have a relaxed yet profound format, where learning activities are evaluated, input from school members is received, and the school principal provides guidance.
- 3) New teachers are asked to become assistant teachers for senior teachers for one month as part of their learning process. This helps new teachers learn effective teaching methods from senior teachers and build good relationships with students.
- 4) The school principal maintains a humanistic, friendly, and communicative relationship with all members while remaining firm in their duties.
- 5) The school principal creates a safe and comfortable environment for school members who need advice or input. Communication can be done directly and personally or through short messages.
- 6) Regularly, all school members participate in Islamic studies to enhance their work motivation.
- 7) The guidance provided is based on the values of Islamic teachings.

Change is inevitable, but not everyone is ready to accept it. Leadership is critical in bringing innovation and driving organizational development. Change can trigger other changes simultaneously. Leadership involves leading in implementing change and setting an example for others. In

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the context of school leadership, a principal who pioneers change must be willing to take risks, be open to innovation, and manage power effectively. In addition, prophetic leadership characteristics, such as *tabligh* (communication) and *fathanah* (strategic thinking), play a significant role.

Tabligh emphasizes transparent communication and building trust, while *fathanah* refers to emotional and spiritual intelligence that helps leaders address problems and find beneficial solutions. In an organization, leaders typically serve as role models in change at the highest and middle levels, making leadership modelling more effective than non-leaders.

Nanus and Dobbs suggest that the state of an organization, especially non-profit organizations, is always influenced by an ongoing battle between continuity and never-ending change. Continuity represents stability and continuous service to clients or the broader community, while change involves a series of conditions that characterize an organization in transition. Therefore, change is an inseparable part of an organization's existence.

Although change is unavoidable, it is often challenging to achieve. Change brings concerns and uncertainties within an organization. Some individuals may feel threatened by change, significantly if it disrupts established routines or known ways of working that offer rewards. They may feel uncomfortable because they do not know how the proposed changes affect them. Many worry that the proposed changes will increase their workload, which often becomes a reality.

Considering the challenges associated with organizational change, leadership becomes essential. Effective leadership, particularly by organizational leaders, is required to manage change. This leadership involves transforming oneself and setting an example when facing change. Strong leadership makes positive and significant changes more efficient and effective.

D. CONCLUSION

The research results can be summarized as follows regarding the focus, research questions, data presentation, and research findings regarding the leadership of school principals as pioneers for educators and educational staff in enhancing work motivation.

The school principals' leadership at SMA Assa'adah Gresik and SMA Kanjeng Sepuh Gresik encompasses several essential elements. These include:

1. having a clear, sharp vision of leadership that is future-oriented,
2. consistently promoting innovation and change to enhance effectiveness and efficiency in performing tasks,
3. having the courage to take risks and take responsibility for the decisions made.

Based on the summary of the research findings above, here are some constructive recommendations that can be given to school principals to enhance the motivation of educators and educational staff within the school environment:

1. Utilizing the Authority of the School Principal: School principals need to recognize the importance of their role and authority in stimulating and motivating every school member. This authority can be used to encourage and support the staff in finding higher work motivation.
2. Internal and External Motivation: Educators and educational staff must seek motivation from within themselves and through external factors. Strong motivation often comes from a personal understanding of their work's significance and positive impact on students.
3. Leadership Training: Educational departments or relevant institutions should provide intensive training to school principals in guiding, providing support, and setting an example (leadership) for the school staff. Principals skilled in leadership can be more effective in motivating the staff.
4. Further Research: Other researchers can further this research, possibly with a more specific focus or by involving other schools. This can help expand the understanding of the role of school principals in enhancing work motivation in various educational contexts.

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