

## The Meaning of Sincerity in Transformational Leadership at The Islamic Boarding School Educational Institution

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### ABSTRACT

A leader can discover the sincerity of their members, enhancing their work spirit. This study aims to understand transformational leadership behaviors that interpret member sincerity and its manifestation in fostering innovation in Islamic boarding school education. Employing phenomenology, data was collected through participatory interviews with the head and founder of Salman Assalam Science Islamic Boarding School, two teachers, and one administrative staff. Structured observations from activities to curriculum revealed inclusive leadership discourse. Triangulation, comprising observation and interviews, ensured data validity, further supported by member checks and audits. Findings indicate that sincerity in transformational leadership is likened to the soul, while action represents the body, fostering a conducive environment and nurturing creativity and innovation in Islamic boarding school education.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Character is the foundation for all true success of a leader (Pramudyo, 2013). The story in this paper is how leadership that upholds humanity (human relations) can reform the organization or institution it leads so that it has meaning (Rohmatun et al., 2021). The existence of a leader will be felt by its members, a good leader is a moral leader, has good morals and his actions can be considered good in the eyes of society (Hafis & Khudrotun, 2023).

Islamic boarding schools that exist and were founded in the 14th century Walisongo, live in three areas, one of which is in Cirebon. The characteristics of Walisongo's preaching can create Islamization of Indonesian society so that it can be accepted by indigenous people at that time (Susilo & Wulansari, 2020). The leadership style of the kyat has a sincere nature, from simplicity and tenacity in educating and discipline in carrying it out. This is reflected in the characteristics of a teacher in Islam, namely, Murabbi, Muallim, Muaddib, and Mudaris (Khiyarusoleh, 2020). Other research states that kyai leadership in improving quality in Islamic boarding schools is carrying out their leadership roles interpersonally, informationally, and decisionally (Zaini, 2017). The contribution of the individual spiritual greatness of Kyai Imam Badroni Burhan is a leader who does everything to get the blessing of Allah SWT and instill the value of sincerity in himself, the boarding school administrators, and Tirzah to form the prophetic nature of hablumminallah (Nilna, 2022).

Transformational leadership can provide motivation and energy to subordinates (Lussier & Achua, 2016), (Stanley, 2017), (Tua et al., 2020.). Transformational leadership focuses on the implications of social and interpersonal relationships to determine the extent to which members interpret their work meaningfully and professionally. One of them is giving rewards, namely appreciation for subordinate members who do a good job (Pramitha, 2020).

Trust in the leadership context can be established through the Spirit of giving carried out by a leader toward the people he leads (Hidayat & Nurhidayati, 2023). The spirit of giving from a leader is born from leaders who are sincere and sincere for the organization they lead (Pramudyo, 2013). Leaders who instill pride and recognize the achievements of their members are called ideal leaders who are relationship-oriented (Suhardi et al., 2022). Relationship orientation for a leader has the greatest influence, namely 76.2%, on the performance of the people he leads (Suwarno, 2020). In the past, Islamic boarding schools and madrasas were far from the modern needs they are today, Islamic boarding schools were still purely religious. The impact is that Islamic boarding schools are created with *lillahi ta'ala* without preparation, conceptual planning, human resources, costs, and so on (Nata, 2012). The rapid development of religious knowledge in this technological age requires Islamic boarding schools to have more specific goals so that they can adapt to the needs of the times (Bahijah et al, 2022.).

The sophistication of this research lies in its exploration of how leaders interpret sincerity within the components of transformational leadership, fostering member energy towards tasks without expecting excessive rewards but aiming for sincerity in their work. Previous studies have extensively discussed the leadership models of Islamic scholars (kyai) and the application of sincerity among them. Thus, this research is deemed crucial in understanding how innovation in Islamic boarding school education is not solely driven by religious motives but also strengthened by leaders who interpret the sincerity of their members through transformational leadership. Consequently, this study addresses the behaviors necessary for leaders to enhance subordinates' responses and organizational effectiveness in understanding member sincerity. Furthermore, the research findings can provide scientific insights into the characteristics of leadership reflected through the sincerity of its members.

Based on the background of the problem stated above, it is easy for researchers to find data to answer research questions. So the researcher draws the problem formulation as follows:

1. How does transformational leadership behavior interpret the sincerity of its members?
2. How can the form of sincerity in transformational leadership realize innovation in Islamic boarding school education?

## 2. METHODS

Understanding the meaning of a leader towards the sincerity of his members requires research that can obtain in-depth and complete data. This research uses qualitative phenomenological research to clarify situations in a person's life (Giorgi, 2008; Praghopalati, 2020). Revealing the same thing regarding phenomenological studies, namely studies of the essence of perception in interpersonal relationships, at this initial stage, in addition to conducting a literature review, it focuses on conducting an interview process with participants (Hamzah, 2020).

### 2.1 Place and Research Subjects

The subject and place of this research have the following criteria: 1) Islamic boarding schools have a deep essence of sincerity reflected in the first Panca Jiwa, namely Islamic boarding schools with Gontor curriculum standards. 2) Islamic boarding school leaders have a transformational spirit that instills a sense of pride in their subordinates and provides a sense of mission. 3) leaders create a climate and habit that is conducive to the development of creativity and innovation. Finally 4) Islamic boarding schools have achievements every year such as creativity and championships. Based on these criteria, the research location was carried out at the Salman As-Salam Science Islamic Boarding School, Dukupuntang, Cirebon.

### 2.2 Research Procedure Flow

Researchers as the main research instrument pay attention to the ability to ask questions, observe and understand research data. The research steps are as follows:

- 1) In the initial activities before the research, the researcher surveyed to obtain a general description of the Islamic boarding school.
- 2) In the second activity, researchers identified theories related to transformational leaders.
- 3) In the third activity, the researcher determines the research objectives.
- 4) Next, the researcher is directly involved in the research setting to collect data. Data collection was carried out according to the research schedule.
- 5) Once saturated data is found, the next step is data analysis.
- 6) Preparation of research reports.

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Results

This research aims to explore the meaning of sincerity for leaders. Data analysis produced two themes, namely leader behavior in interpreting sincerity and the meaning of ikhlas for transformational leadership. The results of the data analysis can be presented as follows.

#### 3.1. Leader behavior in Interpreting sincerity

Behavior is the result of an understanding that is imprinted in a person. A leader's sincere behavior is the result of understanding a leader's sincerity. Sincerity is the spirit, charity is the

body is an analogy that is embedded in a leader. Sincerity embedded in the heart must be balanced with charity to provide benefits to oneself and others. A charity that is not based on sincerity will conflict with the elements of worship because it expects endless rewards from humans. As shown in the following comments.

*"I have received the instillation of Ikhlas since I became a student in Gontor with the writing on the boarding gate, namely QS. Yasin: 20-21. The analogy for me is that sincerity is the soul and charity is the body."*

Leader behavior is a real example that members can directly observe. Leaders have ways to encourage their members to comply with the goals of the organization or institution they lead. Becoming a role model is the first step taken by a leader. Reminding or advising is the second step taken by a leader. As shown in the following comments.

*"The way I motivate teachers is by example, giving advice, and making decisions"*

Leader behavior can influence teachers, employees, and Islamic boarding school students. Teachers and employees will maintain a dedication to work when they see their leaders. Sincerity can result from tasks that are measured. This means that the work assigned is by skills. So that there is no coercion and sincerity is maintained. Sincerity can grow in an environment that maintains sincerity too. For students, the cultivation of Ikhlas is implemented with responsibilities that have been given since grade 1. Responsibilities include being: class administrator, dormitory administrator, seeing teachers or educators who guide them 24 hours a day, even during holidays there are still teachers who guide students who don't go home because of distance, as well as tausiyah which is always given by a leader and teacher. The phrase "make your hut bigger and you will be big, make your hut successful and you will be successful" is a motivation for teachers to give dedication to Islamic boarding schools or Islamic boarding schools. As shown in the following comments.

*"The mother and teacher provide examples of sincerity. For example, when there are students who do not understand the lesson, the teacher will explain it well to the students without getting angry. Mudir never differentiates between its members. For us, the appreciation in the world that we hope for is prayers from a leader and his advice."*

### 3.2. The meaning of ikhlas for transformational leadership

Transformational leadership can change the mentality and behavior of members for the better so that members show a high level of job satisfaction and commitment. A leader certainly has a way of finding out the sincerity of his members. Sincerity can be known through completeness in work. Completeness in work can be known through work results. Sincerity can influence the totality of work. Indicators of dissatisfaction can be identified for many reasons. As shown in the following comments.

*"Almost every teacher has additional duties. The additional tasks given are not always accompanied by material rewards. Each activity is conceptualized with detailed planning, implementation, and reporting. Sincerity will give birth to totality in work so that the results of the work will be visible and complete according to one's abilities."*

Changes in member mentality can be made with a transformational leadership style. The concept of ikhlas is always reminded through the Islamic boarding school motto, namely that the boarding school needs to be helped, defended, and fought for. Becoming an educator in an Islamic boarding school environment is difficult for educators who have no experience in Islamic boarding schools. It is something that a leader pays attention to when educators experience a lack of self-confidence when serving in an Islamic boarding school while not being a graduate of the Islamic boarding school. The next thing that needs to be considered is that when educators come from outside Pondok Gontor, they need to adapt to the Islamic boarding school environment. However, transformational leaders can change the mentality of their members with regular meetings every week. As shown in the following comments.

*"Sincerity needs to be instilled in all elements in the cottage. When new students enter the Islamic boarding school environment, there are several difficulties, one of which is accepting the luxuries they get at home so that they can adapt to the boarding school. Willing to leave behind their luxury cellphone, Ikhlas's parents left their child at the cottage. However, of course, sincerity needs always to be reminded and motivated, one of which is by holding regular weekly teacher meetings."*

Transformational leaders instill pride and recognize the achievements of the people they lead and are called ideal leaders. Those who have carried out their responsibilities well will be allowed to become teaching staff at Islamic boarding schools, and teachers who have maintained their dedication for two years will be allowed to continue their studies at the undergraduate level. Transformational leadership has an orientation toward problem-solving. Meeting the needs of teaching staff has several problems. The ikhlas concept applied in Islamic boarding schools does not rule out the possibility of teachers resigning because materially they do not meet their daily needs. So it will affect the social relations between teachers and students. Santri will feel like they have lost their teacher figure when there is a

good relationship between the teacher and the students. Teachers with good work results do not rule out the possibility of resigning because materially other places can meet their needs or because of other factors.

So leaders must have problem-solving to overcome this.

- 1) Problem-solving Strategies in Islamic Boarding Schools:  
Leaders face challenges related to teacher turnover and its impact on the teaching process. Concerns arise about maintaining continuity in teaching methods and effectiveness amidst teacher changes.
- 2) Concept of Community-Based Service:  
School principals propose a solution based on community-based service. Two concepts emerge: "Bani" and "Bina," referring to descendants of founders and individuals dedicated to returning to the school respectively.
- 3) Long-Term Planning for School Continuity:  
The proposed concepts are seen as solutions for the next 10 to 20 years. These concepts aim to ensure teaching continuity and adherence to the school's objectives and Islamic principles.
- 4) Alignment with School Objectives:  
The solutions must align with the goals and concepts of Islamic boarding schools. Strategies must be in line with the school's mission and values to maintain effectiveness.

### **Discussion**

A leader with a transformational leadership type will facilitate his members to grow and develop. Leaders' behavior towards their members with transformational leadership can be realized by the behavior of respect, commitment, and trust towards their members. The relationship that exists between transformational leaders and their members can create positive interactions between the two. Therefore, the ability to understand the needs of its members can only be understood if a leader has a high concern for his members.

If seen from the perspective of sincerity, of course, it can be understood that someone sincere is working solely to seek Allah's approval. Sincerity in work can be seen in an individual's behavior towards their work. Work with a full sense of responsibility and have high motivation to do a good job. Sincerity can keep someone from doing things that are not good in their work.

Based on the conditions and initial research findings, researchers assume that members who work with sincerity certainly need recognition from a leader. The behavior carried out by a leader towards his members will have an impact on the quality of work.

Based on a leader's understanding of the meaning of members' sincerity in the research process, we identified Ikhlas according to John Erikson, namely sincerity consisting of two

values, namely linguistic and non-linguistic (Eriksson, 2010). Linguistics includes words, sentences, tone of voice, and behavior. Meanwhile, non-linguistic has the sincerity value of body movements. However, in this discussion, the researcher is more concerned with the meaning of Ikhlas, not just sincerity. Sincerity in Islam is the highest level of a person in Islam, namely ihsan. Ihsan is the level possessed by a Muslim to make his Islam valid if he improves his deeds and dedicates them only to Allah SWT (Liana et al., 2019).

Human actions result from the behavior they carry out. Sincere behavior expects that their behavior will be judged as worship before Allah SWT, and therefore sincerity is the crown of someone achieving happiness in carrying out all the actions of their behavior. Members who are considered to have sincerity will have different ethos and performance results. Good performance is produced by people who are responsible and have integrity. Transformational leaders provide opportunities for their members to always develop themselves with the abilities they have, this will make the members' prosperity increase. Members who have responsibility within themselves will give birth to sincerity, and sincere members will have good mental health. Research (Nabila et al, 2021; Shafira & Anisa, 2022) found that sincere people will have happiness within themselves because sincerity has a positive relationship with happiness.

Finding the meaning of sincerity can be built by transformational leaders, opportunities arise for self-development, therefore, the meaning of sincerity can be built from:

- 1) It creates students who are given the opportunity and trust to hold a small trust, such as cleaning their respective rooms and carrying out office pickets, to be able to create a spirit of responsibility in any situation and anywhere.
- 2) Provide an example from the highest paradigm of a teacher or *mudir*, namely a role model to students. What students do, from what teachers do. Humans are *mahalul khotowan nisywan* whose place is to make mistakes and make mistakes, therefore a good exemplary spirit is still being built for students.
- 3) Transformational leaders create *ukhuwah* relationships with members, to create acceptance and respond to situations with a calm attitude without thinking about other people's comments, while still being able to carry out self-development.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

Working with sincerity can produce work that is full of responsibility and produces good results. A leader's ability can be seen from the leader's choice of actions in dealing with problems that occur. Transformational leaders can create a conducive climate that can develop creativity and innovation. Each member certainly has weaknesses, strengths, and potential. Transformational leadership will understand the potential of each member. Placements that suit the potential of its members will certainly produce much better results.

Transformational leadership behavior toward understanding the sincerity of its members will produce quality education that can innovate. This research provides benefits for the breadth of theory regarding transformational leaders which can be realized in behavior and policies based on the meaning of members' sincerity. Transformational leadership behavior can create a climate that can motivate its members, resulting in creativity and innovation.

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