THE ROLE OF ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN PRODUCING LEADERS WITH NOBLE CHARACTER

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ABSTRACT

Islamic religious education has a very important role in shaping individual character, especially in producing leaders with noble character. This article aims to explore how Islamic religious education can be the foundation in forming leaders who are not only intelligent, but also have high integrity and morals. Using a qualitative approach, this article examines the concept of leadership in Islam, which emphasizes moral values such as honesty, trust, and justice. This research also discusses the importance of the implementation of Islamic religious education in schools, families, and communities as a means to form leaders who can set a positive example for the ummah. In addition, this article identifies the challenges faced in the application of Islamic religious education in the modern era, including the influence of globalization and technology on moral values. Through this analysis, this article provides recommendations related to efforts to improve the quality of Islamic religious education to produce leaders who have characters that are in accordance with the guidance of Islamic teachings. In conclusion, Islamic religious education is the main key in producing leaders with noble character, who are able to bring positive changes in society.

Keywords: Islamic education; character education

1. INTRODUCTION

Leaders play a crucial role in guiding and shaping a country's direction. Without capable leaders to regulate and steer the nation, it would be nearly impossible to achieve the goals outlined in its vision and mission. Therefore, strong leadership is essential for managing and organizing the country to fulfill its objectives. Leadership serves as a decisive factor in a nation's success because it represents the central force behind significant changes and progress. It embodies a powerful personality that leaves a lasting impact, and it is also an art that creates harmony and stability within the country.

In any nation, a leader must serve as a role model, exemplifying admirable behavior and moral integrity. When a leader demonstrates a good character, the people naturally respect and look up to them, using the leader as a positive example to follow. Conversely, if a leader exhibits

poor morals, it negatively influences society, leading to disarray as people may become disillusioned and act without consideration for social norms or ethics.

Among the various types of leaders within a community, formal leaders—those who hold positions of power and authority—should be the primary role models. While many leaders emerge from different segments of society, political leaders or those in formal positions possess unique privileges and responsibilities. They wield authority, enjoy various facilities, manage the lives of others, enact laws and regulations, and oversee the military, police, and law enforcement agencies. Given the immense power they hold, these leaders are constantly under public scrutiny, as their actions directly impact the lives of the people they serve.

Despite almost three decades of reform and significant shifts from authoritarianism to democracy, the quality of leadership, legal improvement, and social, economic, and political reforms remain lacking. This stagnation can be attributed to the reluctance of many elites in power to set honorable and moral examples. As a result, we find ourselves in the midst of an "exemplary crisis"—a fundamental issue that underpins the ethical challenges our society currently faces.

Islamic education plays a vital role in shaping leaders who are both holistic and compassionate, guided by the principles of *kaffah* and *rahmatan lil alamin*. By strengthening leadership competencies grounded in Islamic values, promoting transformative leadership for the welfare of the *ummah*, and fostering a visionary leadership culture that aligns with moral excellence, we can develop leaders who embody the commendable qualities of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

2. METHODS

This research discusses how Islamic Religious Education assists leaders in understanding the principles of Islamic ethics, internalizing them, and applying them in daily life. Therefore, this study is classified as library research. The research itself was carried out over the period of October and November 2024. During this time, various research sources were analyzed to obtain insights into the topic.

The motivation for conducting this research stemmed from the author's observation of the significant role of Islamic Religious Education in cultivating the noble character and ethics of leaders. The study investigates how Islamic Religious Education helps leaders internalize and practice Islamic ethical principles in their everyday lives. By thoroughly reviewing and analyzing previous studies, the author aims to derive comprehensive answers related to the role of Islamic Religious Education in shaping moral and ethical leadership.

However, it is important to acknowledge the limitations present in this study. The primary constraints include limited time and the scarcity of available references directly related to the topic. The author is aware of these limitations and understands that they may impact the comprehensiveness of the findings. Nonetheless, this study contributes valuable insights into how Islamic Religious Education plays a pivotal role in developing leaders with commendable morals and ethics.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In Islam, a leader is often referred to as *umara* or *Ulil Amri*, meaning one who is entrusted with the responsibility of managing the affairs of the people. A true leader is not just a ruler but a *khadimul ummah*—a servant of the community. If a leader neglects the welfare of the people, they cannot be considered a true leader.

A leader must put himself in the position of a servant of the community, not ask to be served. The essence of true leadership lies in the willingness and ability to carry out Allah's mandate to care for and serve society. A leader unites people, guiding them towards a common goal. In the context of Islamic teachings, leadership is the act of guiding, showing, and encouraging the community to follow a path that is pleasing to Allah SWT. This leadership aims to nurture and develop abilities within the community while striving for Allah's pleasure in both this world and the hereafter.

A leader must possess intelligence that surpasses that of the average person to inspire confidence and efficiently address societal issues. An intelligent leader approaches problems with composure, finding timely solutions without succumbing to frustration.

One prominent example of leadership intelligence is demonstrated by the second Caliph, *Sayyidina Umar ibn Khattab*. When he learned that Islamic forces led by Abu Ubaidah ibn Jarrah in Syria were struck by a deadly plague, Umar immediately set out from Medina to assess the situation. Upon reaching the border, he was informed of the virus's severity. Decisively, he redirected his journey to prevent exposure. When questioned about avoiding Allah's destiny, he wisely responded, *"I turned from one destiny of Allah to another."* This remarkable decision showcases the intelligence and wisdom that a leader must possess.

The Dual Roles of a Leader: Khalîfah and Imâm

An Islamic leader essentially holds two key roles: *Khalîfah and Imâm*. Although both terms translate to "leader," they carry different meanings: Khalîfah: A successor who represents Allah in leading humanity, accountable to Him for their actions. While Imâm: A moral and spiritual guide, serving as a role model with decisions that prioritize the public good.

The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) exemplified the ideal leader by balancing power with integrity, embodying a leader who serves rather than dominates. Unlike authoritarian rulers, a true leader in Islam remains accountable to the people and upholds justice and compassion.

From a religious perspective, leaders hold a wide range of responsibilities, including maintaining a strong relationship with God, society, and the universe. According to the words of Allah SWT, leaders are required to perform prayers, pay zakat, promote good deeds, and prevent unlawful acts. Therefore, a leader who truly understands the weight and meaning of these responsibilities is the ideal choice to lead a nation, including in Indonesia.

A responsible leader is not an authoritarian figure who imposes his will on the people but rather a compassionate and considerate individual who prioritizes the welfare of the community. Such a leader is ready to be held accountable for every decision and action taken. Wise and thoughtful leadership that prioritizes the public good is essential for achieving collective progress and prosperity.

Leadership is a fundamental aspect of human life, whether in personal contexts, family settings, community affairs, or state governance. A capable leader has the power to bring about positive change and drive societal progress.

In Islam, leadership holds a significant position, as Allah SWT commands believers to follow just and wise leaders. The moral character of a leader has a profound impact on society. Leaders with noble character will guide their communities toward goodness and prosperity, while those with poor morals risk leading their people into hardship and turmoil.

Islam outlines several essential traits that a noble leader must embody:

1. Siddiq (Honest and Truthful): A leader who speaks and acts truthfully builds public trust and fosters a conducive atmosphere for development.

2. Amanah (Trustworthy and Responsible): A leader who upholds the trust of authority and the people ensures justice and prosperity.

3. Tabligh (Conveying the Truth): A leader who courageously promotes truth and justice, guiding the community towards Islamic values.

4. Fathanah (Smart and Wise): A leader who makes insightful and accurate decisions, solving problems effectively.

In addition to these four main qualities, there are also several supporting qualities that must be possessed by an Islamic leader, including:

1. Fair and objective: A fair leader will always be fair and unbiased. He will uphold the principles of justice and truth in every action.

2. Humble and not arrogant: A humble leader will always be humble and not arrogant. He will always consider himself as a servant of the people and not as a ruler.

3. Generous and caring for the people: A generous leader will always care about his people. He will always try to meet the needs of his people.

4. Be bold and firm in the truth: A leader who is brave and resolute will always have the courage to defend truth and justice. He will not be afraid to oppose falsehood and wickedness.

5. Forgiveness and forgiveness: A forgiving leader will always forgive the mistakes of others. He will always strive to create a harmonious and peaceful atmosphere.

The morals of Islamic leaders must be implemented in this modern era. Islamic leaders must be able to adapt their morals to current challenges and contexts. Islamic leaders must be able to become adaptive and transformative leaders. He must be able to lead his society to face various challenges and changes that occur in the modern era.

In addition, Islamic leaders must also be role models for their people. He must show his noble morals in daily life. Islamic leaders must also be able to foster public awareness of the importance of moral leaders.

Morals and ethics have a very important role in society. They form the moral foundations and principles that govern individual behavior and social interactions. Here are some reasons why morals and ethics are so important in society:

1. Maintaining Social Harmony: Morals and ethics help maintain peace, tolerance, and harmony in society. They provide a framework for individuals to interact respectfully with differences and prevent conflict.

2. Maintenance of Justice: Ethics and moral principles help society to understand and apply the concept of justice. This includes treating everyone fairly, regardless of social status, religion, or background.

3. Prevention of Criminal Acts: Strong ethics and morals can prevent criminal and immoral behavior. Individuals who have good ethical values are more likely to avoid actions such as fraud, theft, and violence.

5. Respect for Human Rights: Ethical principles promote respect for human rights. This involves the protection of individual rights such as the right to life, freedom of speech, and freedom of religion.

6. Corruption Avoidance: Ethics plays a role in fighting corruption. Individuals who have strong integrity and ethical values are more likely not to engage in acts of corruption in government, business, or other organizations.

7. Encouraging Good Behavior: Morals and ethics encourage individuals to behave well and provide support to others. This involves volunteerism, charity, and community service.

8. Individual Character Development: Ethics and morals help shape individual character. They guide individuals to be honest, responsible, and caring for others.

9. Avoiding Discrimination: Ethics and morals promote equality and respect for all people, regardless of race, religion, gender, or sexual orientation. This helps prevent discrimination and prejudice.

10. Environmental Awareness: Ethics also plays a role in environmental awareness. Ethical principles can help individuals and communities care more about the natural environment and maintain the sustainability of the earth.

11. Important in Career and Business Development: Ethics play an important role in business and career. Ethical behavior can improve reputation and trust in the business world, as well as help build good professional relationships.

12. Responsible Generation Formation: Morals and ethics are an important part of children's education. They help form a generation that is responsible, caring, and has a sense of empathy for others.

13. Improved Quality of Life: Good ethics and morals contribute positively to the quality of life of individuals and society as a whole. They create a safe, respectful, and sustainable environment.

In other words, morals and ethics are a strong foundation in forming a just, civilized, and responsible society. They assist communities in achieving common goals such as peace, justice, and shared happiness. Therefore, the development and application of moral and ethical values is a must in maintaining the welfare and positive development of society.

In the face of a modern era filled with global challenges, leaders in Islamic education must adapt to changing times without compromising Islamic values. To achieve this, several important aspects must be considered when implementing leadership in the modern context:

1. *Utilizing Technology in Education*

Leaders must leverage technology to enhance the quality of Islamic education. This includes utilizing digital media for online learning, developing a comprehensive Islamic digital curriculum, and implementing IT-based school management applications. By embracing technology, educational institutions can remain relevant while upholding Islamic principles.

2. *Aligning Education with the World of Work*

Leaders should ensure that Islamic education prepares students for the professional world while maintaining a strong foundation of Islamic values. It is crucial to integrate practical skills with moral and ethical education, so graduates are equipped to navigate both their careers and personal lives with integrity.

3. *Character Building Through Moral and Spiritual Education*

Beyond academics, leaders must focus on developing Islamic character through moral and spiritual education. This can be achieved by embedding character-building activities into every aspect of the school environment, fostering a holistic approach to personal and spiritual growth.

Management and leadership within Islamic education are fundamental to ensuring that the educational process aligns with Islamic values. Effective leaders must possess a clear vision, lead by example, and consistently implement Islamic principles in the management of educational institutions.

With strong leadership and effective management rooted in Islamic teachings, it is hoped that Islamic education will continue to evolve and thrive—producing a generation that is not only academically superior but also faithful and resilient in the face of global challenges.

4. CONCLUSION

Islamic Religious Education plays a crucial role in shaping the noble character and ethical conduct of leaders within society. It serves as a vital foundation for developing responsible, honest, and well-mannered individuals who are guided by Islamic moral and ethical values. Through Islamic Religious Education, leaders gain a deep understanding of essential virtues such as honesty, justice, compassion, and social responsibility, which profoundly influence their behavior in everyday life. Moreover, Islamic Religious Education promotes an understanding of ethics in various contexts, including business, social interactions, and other aspects of life. It also instills the importance of justice, equality, and respect for human rights within the framework of Islamic teachings. This educational approach significantly contributes to building a fairer, safer,

and more harmonious society. Furthermore, Islamic Religious Education encourages leaders to embody ethical leadership, fostering positive contributions to society while also demonstrating care and responsibility toward the natural environment. In this way, PAI not only cultivates individuals with commendable character but also supports the development of a more advanced and civilized community. Therefore, it is essential to give adequate attention and support to Islamic Religious Education, as it plays a fundamental role in forming noble character and fostering strong ethical leadership within society.

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