Madrasah Principal's Strategy in the Development of Religious Culture in the School Environment

Strategi Kepala Madrasah dalam Pengembangan Budaya Keagamaan di Lingkungan Sekolah

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Article Info	Abstrak
	Pengembangan budaya keagamaan merupakan upaya strategis untuk memperkuat karakter siswa dan menciptakan lingkungan madrasah yang kondusif bagi pengembangan nilai-nilai Islam. Kepala madrasah memainkan peran sentral dalam mengarahkan, memobilisasi, dan memastikan keterlibatan seluruh anggota sekolah dalam membentuk budaya ini. Studi ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis strategi kepala madrasah dalam mengembangkan budaya keagamaan di lingkungan sekolah dengan meninjau konsep kepemimpinan pendidikan Islam, budaya organisasi, dan praktik manajemen madrasah yang efektif. Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah pendekatan penelitian kepustakaan melalui penelusuran literatur dari buku, jurnal ilmiah, peraturan pendidikan, dan hasil penelitian sebelumnya yang relevan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa strategi kepala madrasah meliputi praktik teladan dalam ibadah dan akhlak, mengintegrasikan nilai-nilai keagamaan ke dalam kebijakan dan program sekolah, membiasakan kegiatan keagamaan yang berkelanjutan, dan memperkuat kolaborasi dengan guru, tenaga pendidik, siswa, dan orang tua. Kepala madrasah yang menerapkan kepemimpinan visioner dan partisipatif terbukti lebih berhasil dalam membangun budaya keagamaan yang bercirikan, terinternalisasi, dan berkelanjutan. Temuan ini menegaskan bahwa keberhasilan budaya keagamaan sebagian besar ditentukan oleh komitmen dan peran strategis kepala madrasah. ***Kata kunci: Kepala Madrasah, Budaya Keagamaan, Strategi Pembangunan***

Abstract

The development of religious culture is one of the strategic efforts in strengthening the character of students and creating a madrasah environment that is conducive to the development of Islamic values. The head of the madrasah has a central role in directing, moving, and ensuring that all school residents are involved in the formation of the culture. This study aims to analyze the strategies of madrasah heads in developing religious culture in the school environment by reviewing the concept of Islamic education leadership, organizational culture, and effective madrasah management practices. The research method uses a library research approach through searching literature from books, scientific journals, educational regulations, and relevant previous research results. The results of the study show that the strategy of madrasah heads includes exemplary practices in worship and morals, integrating religious values in school policies and programs, habituating sustainable religious activities, and strengthening cooperation with teachers, education staff, students, and parents. Madrasah heads who implement visionary and participatory leadership have proven to be more successful in building a religious culture that has character, internalized, and sustainable. These findings confirm that the success of religious culture is highly determined by the commitment and strategic role of madrasah heads.

Keywords : Head of Madrasah, Religious Culture, Development Strategy

INTRODUCTION

Religious culture is one of the important components in shaping the character of students, especially in Islamic educational institutions such as madrasas. In the perspective of Islamic education, moral development and spirituality cannot be separated from the formal education process (Mujib, 2013). Madrasas have a strategic function in instilling religious values through habituation, example, and integration of Islamic values in all school activities. In line with that, Schein (2010) emphasized that organizational culture is formed through values that are consistently instilled by leaders and the institutional environment. Therefore, the development of religious culture in madrassas requires a directed management and leadership design.

However, various studies show that efforts to develop religious culture often face obstacles, such as weak coordination between teachers, lack of innovation in religious programs, and inconsistent implementation of religious habits (Arifin, 2017). Some madrassas only run religious programs administratively, so Islamic values are not fully internalized in the behavior of students (Nawawi, 2019). This shows that the existence of a program does not automatically shape a religious culture; Leadership is needed that is able to move all school residents to have the same commitment. In the context of the culture of educational organizations, the principal plays a key role in creating an environment that supports the internalization of positive values (Hoy & Miskel, 2013).

The head of the madrasah, as the leader of Islamic education, has the responsibility to direct the vision, build effective communication, set an example, and ensure that all programs run consistently and sustainably. Robbins and Judge (2017) stated that effective leaders are able to build a work culture through example and strengthening the core values of the organization. In the context of madrasas, the head of the madrasah acts as a religious figure who is an example in morals, worship, and commitment to Islamic values (Mulyasa, 2016). In addition, the head of the madrasah also plays the role of a manager who integrates religious culture into policies, work programs, and habituation activities that involve all school residents (Supardi, 2020).

Based on the importance of the leadership role, this study aims to analyze the strategy of madrasah heads in the development of religious culture in the school environment. The research uses a literature study approach by examining the leadership theory of Islamic education, the concept of organizational culture, and the results of previous research on the development of religious culture in madrasas. This study is expected to provide a comprehensive overview of effective strategies that can be applied by madrasah heads, so that religious culture is not only a slogan, but really shapes the character of students in a sustainable manner.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach with the library research method. Literature studies were chosen because the focus of the research lies in conceptual analysis and theoretical studies of the strategy of madrasah heads in building religious culture based on existing literature. This method allows researchers to search ideas, theories, and empirical findings from various sources such as scientific books, national and international journal articles, previous research results, and official educational documents. According to Zed (2014), literature study is a systematic process of collecting, identifying, and managing written information sources in order to gain a deep understanding of the phenomenon being studied.

The research stage began with the collection of data from scientific databases such as Google Scholar, Garuda, and DOAJ using the keywords "madrasah head," "religious culture," and "Development Strategy." The sources obtained are then selected based on relevance, credibility, and novelty. Furthermore, the researcher conducts criticism of sources, both externally and internally, to ensure the validity of the content. The data that has been collected is analyzed using content analysis techniques which include the process of categorization, interpretation, and synthesis of concepts. This analysis aims to find the pattern of the leadership strategy of the head of the madrasah as well as the supporting and inhibiting factors for the implementation of religious culture in the madrasah environment.

The analysis process is carried out continuously until a comprehensive picture is obtained of the role of madrasah heads in building religious culture. This method allows researchers to present in-depth theoretical understanding without conducting field observations, in accordance with the characteristics of literature research as stated by George (2008) that literature review can produce a strong conceptual model through critical reading and in-depth analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Basic Concepts of Religious Culture in Madrasah

Religious culture in madrassas is a set of religious values, customs, and practices that are internalized in the daily lives of school residents. This culture includes not only worship activities, but also the formation of social ethics, communication patterns, and religious ways of thinking. According to Muhaimin (2012), religious culture is "a systematic effort to build a school atmosphere full of piety and noble morals through continuous habituation." This definition affirms that religious culture is a condition that is consciously created through a long and consistent process.

In the madrasah environment, religious culture becomes an institutional identity that distinguishes it from public schools. Zamroni (2010) argues that school culture, including religious culture, functions as a "character-building machine," because moral values that are routinely practiced have a strong internalizing power. This confirms that religious culture is not only seen from the ceremonial aspect, but also from the pattern of daily interaction that reflects Islamic ethics.

Conceptually, religious culture plays a strategic role in shaping the character of students. Rahmat (2013) stated that a religious environment can strengthen self-control, improve social behavior, and foster a sense of responsibility. Therefore, strengthening religious culture is an integral part of the function of Islamic education, which is to create knowledgeable and noble people. In the context of modern madrasas, religious culture is an identity that shapes the image of institutions in society. Madrassas that succeed in building a strong religious culture often have a high level of public trust, because they are considered to be able to produce a generation that is knowledgeable and moral.

The Role of the Head of the Madrasah as a Spiritual Leader and Organization

The head of the madrasah has a strategic position in the process of forming religious culture because he plays the role of an organizational leader as well as a spiritual leader. As the leader of the organization, the head of the madrasah is in charge of ensuring that all managerial and student programs run in a directional and measurable manner. As a spiritual leader, he must be the main example in practicing Islamic values. Mulyasa (2011) emphasized that the principal is a "central

figure who determines the quality of school culture," because the behavior and policies of the leadership are often a reference for all school residents.

Example is a very important aspect in the leadership of Islamic education. Madrasah heads who consistently carry out prayers on time, behave politely, uphold self-discipline, and show high integrity will be a model for teachers and students. Arifin (2014) emphasized that exemplification is "the most effective method of moral education" because it is able to have a stronger psychological impact than verbal instruction.

In addition to example, madrasah heads must have qualified managerial competence. He needs to be able to plan religious programs, organize them, monitor, and evaluate the success of the program systematically. Interpersonal communication skills, motivation, and the ability to build a collaborative culture are also important factors in the success of religious culture development.

Madrasah Head's Strategy in the Development of Religious Culture

The strategies applied by madrasah heads in developing religious culture are generally multidimensional and integrated. There are at least six main strategies:

1. Habituation Strategy

Habituation is a fundamental strategy. Activities such as congregational prayers, reading the Qur'an before lessons, saying greetings, maintaining cleanliness, and carrying out routine religious activities are part of character building. Muhaimin (2012) states that values will be permanently internalized if they are "practiced repeatedly and consistently." Therefore, habituation functions as a form of non-formal education that relies on hands-on experience.

2. Exemplary Strategy

The example of madrasah heads and teachers is the moral foundation of the institution. When the head of the madrasah shows a religious attitude and integrity, teachers and students will be easier to imitate. This strategy also serves to strengthen the moral legitimacy of madrasah heads in the eyes of school residents.

3. Strategies for Strengthening Religious Programs

Madrasah heads often design programs such as flash pesantren , moral development, religious lectures, Friday Blessings, and other activities. The program aims to enhance students' spiritual experience and expand the space for practicing religious values outside the classroom.

4. Integration of Religious Values in the Curriculum

Religious values are not only taught in PAI subjects, but are integrated in all subjects. Teachers are expected to be able to relate the subject matter to moral teachings, such as honesty, hard work, discipline, and simplicity.

5. Collaborative Strategies

The head of the madrasah builds cooperation with teachers, committees, religious leaders, and parents. This collaboration strengthens the continuity between education at school and education at home. A supportive social environment accelerates the internalization of religious values.

6. School Climate Management

Physical and social environments that reflect religious values, such as Islamic motivational posters, environmental cleanliness, and a polite learning atmosphere, are an important part of the religious culture development strategy.

Supporting Factors for Strategy Implementation

The development of religious culture in madrassas cannot run optimally without strong supporting factors. One of the main factors is the visionary and transformative leadership of the head of the madrasah. Madrasah heads who have a clear religious vision are able to move school residents towards a culture based on Islamic values. According to Bass & Riggio (2006), transformative leadership is characterized by the ability to inspire, motivate, and instill values that have a long-term impact on the organization. In the context of madrasas, this can be seen through the example of madrasah heads in worship, speech, and policies that are consistent with religious values. Examples like this are referred to as moral modeling, which according to Lickona (2013), is the most effective way to shape the character of students.

In addition, the involvement of teachers and the commitment of all school residents is also a very decisive supporting factor. Teachers play a central role in habituating religious behavior, especially through daily interactions with students. Habituation activities such as greetings, smiles, prayer before studying, and daily tadarus will be effective if the teacher is actively involved. In line with the opinion of Muhaimin (2012), religious culture will not grow if there is no involvement of teachers as cultural agents in schools. Teachers' examples of honesty, discipline, and good manners are an important part of building a strong religious ecosystem.

The next supporting factor is the availability of religious facilities and infrastructure, such as prayer rooms, special spaces for religious activities, and learning media that support the internalization of religious values. A religious physical environment can strengthen the school climate and create an atmosphere conducive to religious practice. This is in line with Vygotsky's theory of the learning environment which emphasizes the importance of social and physical context in the formation of behavior. When the school environment is designed to support worship and religious interaction, the process of internalizing values takes place naturally and sustainably.

Furthermore, parental and community support is also an important factor that strengthens religious culture. Collaboration between madrassas and parents helps ensure that the values instilled in the school are in harmony with the home environment. Epstein (2011) explained that parental involvement in education has a significant influence on the development of students' character and achievement. In the context of madrasas, this synergy is realized through Islamic parenting activities, regular communication, and parental involvement in religious agendas such as the commemoration of Islamic holidays.

Overall, factors supporting the development of religious culture include strong leadership, commitment of teachers and school residents, religious infrastructure, family and community support. All of these factors are interrelated and must be managed synergistically to build a religious culture that is not only ceremonial, but also becomes the daily habitus of students. With solid supporting factors, madrasas have a great opportunity to create an educational environment that is in line with Islamic values and produce graduates with superior character.

Challenges in the Development of Religious Culture

Structural challenges stem from bureaucratic dynamics and national education policies. Changes in curriculum and government policies that change frequently can affect the stability of religious programs that have been running. For example, high administrative demands sometimes make teachers and madrasah heads more focused on fulfilling documents than on substantively strengthening religious values. As stated by Tilaar (2012), administrative and bureaucratic pressure often reduces the space for teachers' creativity in developing school culture.

In addition, the development of information technology presents new challenges in the management of religious culture. Students have wide access to gadgets that can bring positive and negative influences. Digital content that is not in accordance with Islamic values can weaken the efforts of madrassas in building religious habits. Madrasah heads need to develop a religious digital literacy strategy so that students are able to filter information independently. These challenges show that the development of religious culture does not only depend on ritual activities, but also requires a multidimensional approach that is relevant to the development of the times.

Another challenge is related to limited learning time and the density of academic activities that make religious programs often not the top priority for some school residents. In some madrasas, the high workload of teachers leads to less than optimal involvement in non-learning religious activities. If not taken seriously, this can lead to religious activities becoming mere formalities with no substantive meaning. Therefore, more flexible time management and program planning are needed so that religious activities continue to run effectively without interfering with the implementation of the learning process.

The Impact of Religious Cultural Development on Madrasah

In addition to having an impact on the character of students, strengthening religious culture also contributes to improving the performance of educational institutions as a whole. Madrassas with a strong religious culture tend to show an increase in teacher discipline, learning effectiveness, and harmonious relationships between school residents. According to Fathurrohman (2017), a positive school culture has a correlation with increased learning motivation so that students can achieve academic achievement more easily.

Another significant impact is the increase in public image and trust in madrasas. When religious culture is seen through student behavior and institutional activities, the community considers madrasas as institutions that are able to provide strong character education. This has implications for increasing parental interest in sending children to madrassas, which ultimately supports the sustainability of religious cultural strengthening institutions and also helps madrassas avoid internal conflicts because spiritual values act as moral guidelines in problem solving and decision-making. In addition, religious culture also has a positive impact on the relationship between school and society. When madrassas show commitment to moral values and religious activities, the community will see schools as institutions that can be trusted in fostering the morals of the younger generation. This belief strengthens social support, including moral, financial assistance, and parental involvement in madrasah activities. Thus, religious culture not only improves the internal quality of the school, but also expands the social network that supports the sustainability of educational programs in the future.

Synthesis of Literature Findings

Synthesis findings from various studies show that the strategy of madrasah heads in developing religious culture is always rooted in the synergy between spiritual values and managerial practices. The literature reviewed shows that the success of religious culture cannot be separated from the ability of leaders to manage human resources, the environment, and institutional programs in an integrative manner. This strengthens the view of Syafaruddin (2015) that Islamic education leadership is leadership that balances between transcendental and operational dimensions.

Theoretically, the synthesis of literature also shows that the development of religious culture is not just a strategy of internalizing values, but a process of institutional transformation. Madrasas that have successfully implemented this strategy have not only experienced changes in the behavior of school residents, but also experienced a reorientation of values, vision, and policy directions that are more based on Islamic principles. Therefore, it can be concluded that the strong, collaborative, and visionary leadership of madrasah heads is the main foundation for the creation of a solid, adaptive, and sustainable religious culture.

CONCLUSION

The development of religious culture in madrassas is a strategic process that requires visionary, consistent, and character-oriented leadership of madrasah heads. Based on the synthesis of the literature analyzed, it can be concluded that religious culture is not only formed through religious ritual activities, but also through example, habituation, institutional strengthening, and environmental atmosphere that supports the internalization of Islamic values. The head of the madrasah acts as a spiritual and organizational leader who directs all the school residents to be involved in a variety of structured and sustainable religious programs.

The success of the implementation of the strategy is influenced by several important factors, such as leadership commitment, teacher participation, infrastructure support, and parental and community involvement. However, madrasas also face a number of challenges, including the low commitment of some school residents, limited facilities, and the influence of digital culture that is not in harmony with religious values. However, if the strategy is carried out consistently, religious culture has proven to be able to improve discipline, spiritual character, and a harmonious school climate, while strengthening the image of the madrasah in the eyes of the public.

Thus, religious culture is a fundamental aspect in improving the quality of madrassas and building an educational environment based on Islamic moral, ethical, and spiritual values.

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