COVID-19, School Leadership in Crisis?  
Case Study of Principal Leadership Facing Covid-19 Crisis in Elementary School in Banjarmasin

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Abstract

This study aims to describe the pattern and leadership strategies of principals in elementary schools in dealing with the crisis in the Covid-19 pandemic. The method used in this study is qualitatively descriptive. The subject of this study was the principal and teacher at Sabilal Muhtadin Elementary School in Banjarmasin City. The data collection techniques used are interviews, observations, and documentation studies. Test the validity of the data using the triangulation technique. Data analysis uses Miles & Huberman analysis techniques that consist of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion. This research shows that the principal has a working philosophy that is to work for worship. Strategies implemented in its leadership include transparency, empowerment of teachers and employees, communication, and motivation. The conclusion is that elementary school principal Sabilal Muhtadin is transformational leadership based on Islam. The strategies used for its implementation are transparency, empowerment of teachers and employees, communication, and motivation to maintain excellence when facing crises in the Covid-19 pandemic.

Keywords: Leadership, Transformational, Elementary School, Covid-19.

A. INTRODUCTION

On December 31, 2019, the Chinese state office reported the phenomenon of collective pneumonia that appeared at a South China seafood market in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China (Viner et al., 2020). The National Health Commission sent experts to Wuhan to investigate. The new coronavirus (from now on referred to as COVID-19 for Corona Virus Disease 19) detects at the Virology Laboratory, China's Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, on January 7, 2020 (Zhu et al., 2020). The number of patients with viral pneumonia has skyrocketed and has spread throughout China, and is accidentally exported internationally (Van Lancker & Parolin, 2020); (Boccia et al., 2020); (Azzi-Huck & Shmis, 2020). Coronavirus Disease (Covid-19) is shaking the world (Covid & Team, 2020; Lee, 2020). The big event triggered by this infectious disease is beyond many people's predictions, even among practitioners and experts in crisis management. Now all sectors affected, including the world of education, even touch the way of worship and social life.
Schools are required to be still able to provide minimum standard services to their stakeholders during Work From Home (WFH) and Large-Scale Social Restrictions (Bhat et al., 2020; Mansyur, 2020; Pujilestari, 2020).

The outbreak of influenza-like diseases with new and deadly variants of the virus and has a very rapid spread, causing a lot of speculation and negative news in many media, thus forming the perception of crisis in many places in various parts of the world, including in Indonesia (Baduri, 2019). On March 2, 2020, the Indonesian government reported the first confirmed case of Covet-19 as many as two patients (Kemenkes, 2020) and dated May 29, 2020, according to the Indonesian government spokesman for the handling of covid-19 has been recorded 28,233 confirmed cases, treated 18.129, died 1.698, and patients recovered 8.406 (Halim, 2020). This phenomenon is quite troubling for some people. It has difficulty anticipating daily activities in social interaction, limited by the government, namely social restrictions with different scales different according to the conditions of their respective regions, provincial, municipal/district levels and the scope of small areas.

The World Bank mentioned that the Covid-19 pandemic is now threatening and has excellent potential to make education results worse (Al-Samarrai et al., 2020). Pandemics have had a significant impact on education by closing schools almost everywhere in the world (Bao et al., 2020; Esposito & Principi, 2020). But it is not close to the possibility of overcoming this crisis and turning the problem into an opportunity. The first step is to successfully address school closures by protecting health and safety and doing what they can to prevent students from losing learning using distance learning (Bayham & Fenichel, 2020; Kawano & Kakehashi, 2015). At the same time, countries need to start planning for the reopening of the school, ensuring healthy school conditions, and using new techniques to promote rapid learning recovery in crucial areas once students return to school (Triyason et al., 2020).

Here lies the significant role of a principal to continue to carry out his leadership well during a crisis like this. Principals are required to implement "crisis management," i.e., the process of preparing for and managing emergency or unexpected situations that affect students, teachers, staff, and stakeholders (Bundy et al., 2017). It is an essential component of public relations (PR). Different from risk management, which requires principals to assess potential threats and find the best way to avoid such hazards. In crisis management, this threat is already occurring and must be faced.

The threat or crisis faced today is not entirely bad for schools. Instead, it can motivate schools to get better in the future (Wheeler et al., 2010). For example, many schools end up doing digital transformation by using web-based applications to facilitate learning, meeting, and managerial coordination when working from home. For example, academic leaders across the United States respond by moving their educational and related activities online (Fernandez & Shaw, 2020). The decision to pivot to distance learning is made quickly, especially by institutions that operate a shared leadership model, which benefits from more significant aspects of agility,
innovation, and collaboration (Bayham & Fenichel, 2020; Esposito & Principi, 2020; Giannini & Albrechtson, 2020). Leaders have an essential function that is to allocate roles, ensure the performance and behaviour expected of group members; establish and maintain a method of sharing good thoughts among team members, and oversee the internal and external environment of the organization to facilitate group work.

In the study, Fernandez and Shaw (2020) highlighted leadership best practices for navigating unexpected adaptive challenges such as those posed by the coronavirus pandemic. First, by implementing a type of servant leadership, which emphasizes empowerment, engagement, and collaboration, academic leaders with emotional intelligence and emotional stability, must put the interests of others above their own. Second, educational leaders must distribute leadership responsibilities to a network of teams to improve the quality of decisions made in crisis resolution. Third, leaders must communicate clearly and frequently to all stakeholders through various communication channels.

On the other hand, Sentell, Vamos, and Orkan Okan highlighted the specific issues of health literacy during the COVID-19 crisis, they took this opportunity to highlight the importance of the individual, community, and population health literacy, they are not only in a "pandemic" but also "infodemik" (Sentell et al., 2020). Health literacy is more important than ever in the face of this global health threat. It has impacted outcomes at all levels of social-ecological (SEM) models, including individual health behaviours, family relationships, organizational behaviour, state policy-making, national mortality statistics, and the international economy in weeks. They seek to unite threads between disciplines guided by two principles. The first is to define health literacy as an essential skill and situational resource necessary for people to discover, understand, communicate, and use information and services in various forms in various settings throughout their lives to improve health and well-being. Second is the idea that improving health literacy in populations and systems is essential to achieving health equality. Greater understanding, appreciation, and application of health literacy can support policy action at various levels to address significant public health challenges. Health literacy should be built deliberately as a population-level community resource and asset (Sentell et al., 2020).

At the same time, Javaid et al. conducted a detailed literature review on Industry 4.0 technology and its applications in the COVID-19 pandemic, using appropriate search words on the database. PubMed, SCOPUS, Google Scholar and Research Gate. The results of their study concluded. Industry 4.0 can meet the requirements of face masks and gloves and gather information for health care systems to properly control and treat COVID-19 patients (Javaid et al., 2020).

To address the gaps from previous research. This research will highlight the leadership process in dealing with the crisis at the time of this coronavirus pandemic, namely the Principal’s Leadership in elementary school in the face of the Covid-19 crisis (Case study at Sabilal Muhtadin Islamic Elementary School in Banjarmasin City). The focus of the problem in this study is, How the leadership
pattern of the Head of Islamic Elementary School Sabilal Muhtadin in dealing with the Covid-19 crisis.

B. METHOD

The research method used is descriptive qualitative research with a case study approach of principal leadership at the elementary school in Banjarmasin City. The subject of the study was the Principal and Teacher at Sabilal Muhtadin Elementary School located at Jl. Jend. Sudirman No. 1, Antasari Besar, Kec. Banjarmasin Tengah, Banjarmasin City, South Kalimantan, Indonesia.

The data source in the study, using the technique "purpose sampling". Nana Syaodih Sukmadinata (2005:101) stated purposive samples are samples that it chose because they are indeed a source and rich with information about the phenomenon they want to research. Furthermore, Johnson and Christensen (2004) stated that in purposive sampling, researchers consider the selection of respondents based on consideration of the fulfillment of data to find the focus answers studied, namely leaders, administrative personnel, and Teachers at SDI Sabilal Muhtadin Banjarmasin.

The data collection techniques in this study are interviews, observations and documentation studies. It is following the opinion of Sugiyono, who stated that, in general, there are four types of data collection techniques in qualitative research, namely: observation, interview, documentation, and triangulation (Sugiyono, 2006). At the same time, the research instruments used are interview guidelines and observation guidelines. According to Arikunto (2006: 149), research instruments are a tool for researchers in collecting data. To test the validity of the data, researchers used triangulation techniques. Data triangulation is a data checking technique that utilizes something else outside the data to check the data (Moleong, 2007: 330).

The data analysis technique used in this study refers to the concept of Milles & Huberman (1992: 20), which is an interactive model that classifies data analysis in three steps, namely data reduction, data presentation and conclusion withdrawal.

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The role of a principal cannot separate the success of an educational institution. The principal must demonstrate their ability and competence to move all elements of the school to achieve the goals set. There needs to be a straightforward work philosophy from the leader so that all elements in the school can synergize to follow the philosophy of work.

Work philosophy or work ethic is the thought or view of doing a job to achieve the target/desire. So, if a leader has the right work philosophy, it will affect the results or goals to be completed. It follows research conducted by Musaddad (2010) which states that there is a positive relationship between the level of the work ethic of the principal and the level of quality of education.

The philosophy of work closely held by the Head of Islamic Elementary School Sabilal Muhtadin Banjarmasin is working for worship and intention because of Allah.
SWT, meaning working hard, intelligent, sincere and valuable for the crowd. The principal, teachers, and employees strive to maintain the quality of the school in the Covid19 Pandemic. There are eight aspects of work ethic: work is grace, work is trust, work is a vocation, work is worship, work is actualization, work is art, work is an honour, and work is service (Sinarmo, 2009); (Kirom, 2018).

The headmaster's work philosophy influences by religion and the school environment based on Islam. It follows the opinion (Kusnan, 2004) work ethic/work philosophy influences by several factors, namely: religion, culture, socio-politics, environmental conditions (geographical), education and intrinsic motivation of individuals. The strategy carried out by the headmaster of Islamic Elementary School Sabilal Muhtadin Banjarmasin in carrying out his leadership, among others, transparency, empowerment of teachers and employees, motivation and effective communication. It can see in the following picture.

**Leadership of the Principal of SD Sabilal Muhtadin Banjarmasin during the Covid-19**

**Vision:** "The realization of Islamic education and teaching, of high quality, highly competitive and rooted in society"

**Mission:**
1. Organizing education through integrated guidance, teaching and training between the world and the hereafter.
2. Organizing education through high quality guidance, teaching and training.
3. Organizing education that emphasizes worship, morality and Arabic and English language skills.
4. Organizing education whose results provide satisfaction to the customer community.
5. Organizing education through guidance, teaching and training with modern management and being accountable to the public.

**Work Philosophy**

Working for worship and intentions for Allah SWT, means working hard, smart, sincere and useful for many people

**Leadership Behavior**

Idealized Influence
Inspirational Motivation
Intellectual Stimulation
Individual Consideration

**Excellent Islamic Elementary School in the Covid-19 Pandemic**
The first leadership strategy is the strategy of example or example. In terms of attitudes, the principal showed a philosophy that can be exemplified by teachers and employees, among others:

1. The principal always arrives early than the teacher and the student. The principal always comes at 07.00, even though the school starts at 7:30.
2. The principal is always present on time at the time of the meeting. From the observations and interviews with teachers and staff, the principal is always on time during sessions. Even when attending meetings online using web meetings, the principal always joins first.
3. The principal has always been friendly and humble to teachers, employees, students and even to researchers. At observation, the principal always greets teachers, employees or students by saying "Assalamualaikum". In addition, in every interaction, he cannot be separated from the words "thank you", "sorry", and "please".

The attitude of the example of Principal Sabilal Muhtadin Banjarmasin is very inspiring for all teachers and employees. Discipline, commitment to performance and hospitality make all school residents admire and appreciate the principal's leadership. Thus, the principal can be a role model and a charismatic leader for all teachers and employees, known as charismatic influence or idealized influence.

According to Avolio et al (Gregory Stone et al., 2004), Charismatic Influence or Idealized influence means that a transformational leader must be charismatic who can "bewitch" subordinates to react to the lead. In concrete form, this charisma demonstrates through understanding the vision and mission of the organization, having a firm stance, commitment and consistency to every decision taken, and respect for subordinates. In other words, transformational leaders become role models admired, valued, and followed by their associates.

The following strategy is to motivate teachers and elementary school employees Sabilal Muhtadin Banjarmasin. It is evident in the principal's attitude, who always provides opportunities and encouragement to Teachers who face obstacles in online learning in the Covid19 pandemic. The principal also accompanies teachers during training or classroom teacher discussion forums. The assistance becomes motivation and encouragement for teachers and employees because they feel cared for by the leadership. This leadership behaviour is known as inspirational motivation. According to Avolio et al. (Gregory Stone et al., 2004), the character of a leader who can apply high standards but can encourage subordinates to achieve these standards. Feelings like this can evoke high optimism and enthusiasm from associates. In other words, transformational leaders always inspire and motivate their subordinates.

Another strategy is the empowerment of teachers and employees. It is apparent when the principal gives teachers and employees freedom to make innovations related to learning and performance effectiveness in this pandemic period. In addition, the principal also initiated the implementation of training -
training in the use of e-learning media so that all teachers and employees have skills in using applications that support online learning activities.

Empowerment of teachers and employees include in the character of intellectual stimulation leaders. Intellectual stimulation is the character of a transformational leader who can encourage his subordinates to solve problems carefully and rationally. In addition, this character encourages associates to find new, more effective ways of solving problems. In other words, transformational leaders can encourage (stimulate) subordinates to always be creative and innovative (Gregory Stone et al., 2004)

Another strategy is effective communication. That is evident in the principal's attitude, who always opens communication with all Teachers and employees. The principal can do direct contact during meetings or consultations in the teacher's room, or indirect communication via chat in WhatsApp groups or telephone. In addition, the principal always tries to monitor the performance of Teachers and Employees directly and does not hesitate to greet them just asking for news and then continue by discussing the performance of Teachers and employees. If there are obstacles, the principal always takes the initiative to find a solution in deliberation.

The attitude of the leader follows the character of the leader, known as Individualized consideration. Individualized consideration means the nature of a leader who can understand the individual differences of his subordinates. In this case, transformational leaders are willing and able to hear aspirations, educate, and train subordinates. In addition, a transformational leader can see the potential achievements and evolving needs of associates and facilitate them. In other words, transformational leaders can understand and appreciate subordinates based on assistants' needs and pay attention to associates' presidential and growing desires (Gregory Stone et al., 2004).

From the strategies carried out to carry out leadership performance that has a working philosophy of "work is worship", it can conclude that the leadership model of elementary school principal Sabilal Muhtadin is transformational leadership based on Islam. That is following the opinion of (Bass, Bernard M. and Steidmeier & N, 1994) in (Shalahuddin, 2016) which states that transformational leadership has the characteristics of inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration and idealized influence. Transformational leadership, Leithwood et al., posited: "Transformational leadership is seen to be sensitive to organization building, developing shared vision, distributing leadership and building school culture necessary to current restructuring effort in schools". So transformational leadership has the dominant characteristics of sensitivity to institutional development, developing a shared vision among institutional communities, distributing leadership roles, developing school culture and conducting restructuring efforts in schools (Danim & Suparno, 2009)

In addition, transformational leadership in Sabilal Muhtadin Islamic Elementary School, Banjarmasin started from a clear vision, mission and goal and ended by building a culture of learning and working in a school environment
following Islamic values. That is in line with research conducted by (Samsudin & Azizah, 2021) which states that Islamic educational institutions must start by making a clear vision and end by building a culture of learning in institutions. The spirit of change and revolution is transformational in the Islamic religious perspective, and the Islamic realms explain clearly. Epistemologically we can rely on the Qur'an and al-Hadith so that the basic concept of this transformational leadership style is a new spirit that is assembled deeply by actual experts in Islam itself. The idea and way of practice have been explained and given examples by salafiyyin (former soleh) (Rafiuddin, 2015)

The transformational leadership carried out by the Head of Islamic Elementary School Sabilal Muhtadin, Banjarmasin, was able to improve the performance and motivation of Teachers and employees during the Covid19 pandemic. That has an impact on improving the quality of schools and maintaining the characteristics of the school, namely Islamic-based learning. That is in line with the opinion (Russamsi et al., 2020) that principals' transformational leadership can improve teacher performance in the pandemic period. In addition, the responsive and swift attitude carried out by the headmaster of Islamic Elementary School Sabilal Muhtadin, Banjarmasin, made the atmosphere of learning and worked adaptive to the New Normal Era and the Industrial Revolution Era 4.0. To be able to make the school survive and continue to increase its achievements in the Covid19 pandemic. That is in line with the opinion of (Nadeak & Juwita, 2020), (Nadeak & Juwita, 2020) of the headmaster who is swift and responsive to create adaptive learning and work environment in the Covid19 pandemic the quality of education.

D. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of research and discussion, it can conclude that the principal's leadership at Sabilal Muhtadin Islamic Elementary School, Banjarmasin is an Islamic-based transformational leadership model with a working philosophy of "work for worship". Strategies carried out by the principal in carrying out his leadership, among others, example or Idealized Influence, empowerment of Teachers and employees or Intellectual Stimulation, the provision of motivation or Inspirational Motivation, and effective communication—individualized consideration. The principal's leadership pattern and strategy improved the performance of teachers and employees, thus impacting the improvement of school quality while maintaining the characteristics and excellence of Sabilal Muhtadin Islamic Elementary School, Banjarmasin during the Covid19 pandemic.

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