



Leadership Management of Guardians In Character Formation of Students At As-Shidqu Islamic Boarding School, Kuningan Regency

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ABSTRACT

Pesantren has an important role in shaping the character of students to become individuals with morals and disciplined character. One of the main factors in shaping the character of santri is the leadership of the caregiver, who not only acts as a spiritual leader, but also as a manager who manages the education and coaching system of santri. However, in practice, the effectiveness of caregiver leadership often faces various challenges, such as the lack of direct interaction with students, the limitations of the delegation system to administrators, and the changing dynamics of the pesantren ecosystem which now accepts more young students. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the caregiver's leadership management in shaping the character of students as well as the strategies applied to improve the effectiveness of character building at As- Shidqu Islamic Boarding School. This research uses a qualitative approach with descriptive methods. Data collection was carried out through direct observation, interviews, as well as analyzing documentation. The data analysis technique was carried out through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The results showed that the caregiver leadership at As-Shidqu Islamic Boarding School implemented a structured and value-based management system. The caregiver not only acts as a spiritual leader, but also as a manager who ensures that the pesantren runs with a sustainable system. The caregiver applies the main strategies in including character building through exemplary, direct interaction with students, strengthening the delegation system to administrators, and a disciplinary approach tailored to the age of the students. In addition, in facing the challenges of changes in the pesantren ecosystem, which now accepts more 12-year-old students, the caregivers try to provide direct direction to the administrators and students more often so that character building can take place optimally.

Keywords: *Management, Leadership, Character.*

INTRODUCTION

Education has been a key pillar for the development of individuals and societies since ancient times. Over time, the importance of education has continued to be emphasized in various cultures, religions, and traditions, and it has been recognized as a key tool for social, economic, and cultural progress. Education, in essence, is a learning process in which the knowledge, skills, and habits of a group of people are transferred from one generation to the next through teaching, training, or research. Education refers not only to the formal process that takes place in schools or universities, but also to informal learning that occurs throughout a person's life.

Educational institutions, ranging from elementary schools to secondary schools and universities, serve as centers where knowledge is disseminated and where individuals are trained to become part of the larger society. These institutions, with their various methods and curricula, aim to develop individual potential so that they can contribute optimally to society.

In the Republic of Indonesia Education Law No. Law No. 20 of 2003 states that education aims to enlighten the nation and develop the whole person, namely a person who believes in and fears God Almighty and possesses noble character, possesses knowledge and skills, is physically and mentally healthy, has a strong personality, and is responsible for society and the nation.

Education is a crucial instrument in shaping individual character and competence. In Indonesia, Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) have long been educational institutions that play a central role in developing education based on Islamic values. One key element in a *pesantren* is the caretaker, who is respected not only as a spiritual leader but also as an administrative and managerial leader.

The caretaker plays a crucial role in guiding and directing students in their daily activities, including their education. The caretaker is an agent who can transform the quality of the Islamic boarding school. Therefore, the caretaker must possess high-quality leadership skills.

The caretaker's title, *Kiai*, is very common in Islamic boarding schools, especially on the island of Java. It's likely that Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) on the island of Sumatra more commonly use the title "*Buya*" than "*Kiai*." This is simply a cultural difference, but they both recognize someone given the title "*Kiai*" or "*Buya*" as an ideal figure due to their high cultural and structural standing (Yamaldi and Anwar 2020).

Furthermore, in today's modern era, Islamic boarding schools are required to not only teach religious material but also prepare students to become competent individuals in an increasingly dynamic society. Therefore, the role of

the mentor in leading, directing, and motivating both teachers and students is crucial.

Based on the foregoing, it can be understood that fulfilling the role of the mentor is crucial in shaping the character of students. This can be achieved by instilling an understanding of learning activities and a series of extracurricular activities through exemplary behavior, good advice, educational punishment, and the instilling of good habits in fellow students and the local community. However, literature on the role of caregivers in teacher and student management, particularly at the As-Shidqu Islamic Boarding School, is still limited. Therefore, it is important to conduct in-depth research to understand how caregivers play their roles, the strategies they implement, and how they impact the quality of education at the As-Shidqu Islamic Boarding School. Based on the very interesting background above, this study continues on "Caregiver Leadership Management in Shaping Student Character at the As-Shidqu Islamic Boarding School in Cilimus, Kuningan Regency."

METHOD

The research approach used in this study is qualitative. This approach was chosen because it focuses on an in-depth understanding of complex social phenomena. Qualitative research is a research method that seeks to understand human or social phenomena by conducting in-depth observations of informants, conducted in natural settings, and creating a holistic picture. Its complexity can be expressed in words (Shokhibul Bakhri, 2021).

The type of research used in this study is descriptive qualitative research, with data collection techniques through observation, interviews, and documentation. This research is conducted in the field, where the research involves an intensive study of the background conditions and interactions of the social environment, individuals, groups, institutions, or communities, with the aim of systematically and in detail describing or explaining a phenomenon or condition occurring in the field. In this study, the research object is, for example, Islamic students (santri), and the focus of this research is on the character development of students in Islamic boarding schools (pesantren). This research does not aim to test a hypothesis, but rather to provide an in-depth understanding of a particular phenomenon based on the data obtained. Therefore, the aim is to describe the role of caregivers in developing the character of students through Islamic boarding school education. (Sari et al. 2022)

In this qualitative study, naturalistic research methods were adopted, resulting in data analysis conducted in the field concurrently with data collection.

The data analysis process consisted of four stages that occurred concurrently with data collection (Murdiyanto, 2020).

After the researcher entered the research object, which encompassed the social situation consisting of elements of place, actors, and activities (PAA), the researcher then conducted participant observation. The next step was to conduct domain analysis, which aimed to gain a comprehensive understanding of the social situation under study. The data collected came from grand tour and minitour questions. The results of this analysis provided a general overview of the research object that was previously unknown. At this stage, the information obtained was still superficial and not in-depth, but it was able to identify the domains or categories of the social situation being studied.

In an effort to discover the domains of the social context or object under study, Spradley proposed analyzing semantic relationships between categories. There are nine universal types of relationships that can be applied in various social situations. These semantic relationship types include: strict inclusion (type), spatial (space), cause-effect (cause and effect), rationale (rationale), location for action (location for activity), function (function), means-end (method of achieving a goal), sequence (sequence), and attribution (attribute).

This approach is used to comprehensively analyze data based on a domain defined as a closing term by the researcher. Through this analysis, data can be described in greater detail and depth. The results of taxonomic analysis can be presented in various formats, such as box diagrams, line and node diagrams, and outlines.

In the context of componential analysis, the primary objective is to organize differences or contrasts within domains, not similarities. The necessary data is obtained through observation, interviews, and selective documentation. By applying triangulation data collection techniques, specific and distinct dimensions of each element can be identified. For example, in taxonomic analysis, various levels and types of education have been identified. Based on the level and type of education, specific and contrasting elements will be sought, including aspects of school objectives, curriculum, students, educational staff, and management systems.

Thematic research or exploration of cultural themes is a step towards finding the "common thread" that unites the various existing domains. By identifying this common thread through domain analysis, taxonomy, and related components, we can construct a "construction" that represents a previously unclear social situation or research object. This allows our understanding to become clearer and more coherent as the research progresses.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Leadership Management of the Caretaker

1. Leadership Management of the Caretaker

As-Shidqu Islamic Boarding School's leadership management is not centered on a single central figure, but rather on a well-structured system. The caretaker does not want the boarding school to rely solely on him, but rather wants to create a system that runs automatically. Therefore, he has established a leadership structure based on a clear structure, where each department has its own role and responsibility to ensure the long-term sustainability of the boarding school.

"I want this boarding school to run because of the system, not because of me. Therefore, I ensure that all department heads who are given responsibility carry out their duties according to the agreed-upon guidelines. I only supervise and evaluate, but do not intervene excessively. If there is something that needs improvement, I direct it, but responsibility lies with each department."

The caretaker emphasizes that the sustainability of the boarding school should not depend solely on himself as the main figure, but must operate based on a well-designed system.

2. Systematic Value-Based Leadership

The caretaker's statement describes systematic, value-based leadership as a fitting term for him. This leadership style encompasses democratic, transformational, and delegative elements. He also emphasizes building a strong system so that the Islamic boarding school is not dependent on the caretaker, delegating authority while also exercising strict supervision, and instilling strong Islamic values in every aspect of leadership, including decision-making and student character development.

Thus, this type of leadership enables the Islamic boarding school to continue operating even if the caretaker is no longer directly involved, as the system is already well-established and independent.

3. Planning

Based on interviews with administrators and students, the implementation of caretaker leadership management at As-Shidqu Islamic Boarding School is based on a structured system, with the caretaker ensuring the school operates independently through a clear division of tasks, a cadre development system, and ongoing character development.

When considering the long-term needs of the Islamic boarding school, he carefully considers and measures the needs of his larger responsibilities, including his responsibility as the administrator of the West Java chapter of

the Prophet Muhammad's Council, the chairman of the Dar Al Musthafa alumni association of Al-Habib Umar bin Hafidz, and other matters outside the island. The Head of Education stated:

"We always design the curriculum for the year ahead every Ramadan, because during that time the administrator has more free time during his preaching schedule, so we can submit it to him. This is a crucial moment to discuss educational strategies in depth and develop a curriculum that aligns with the students' development."

This planning includes alignment with the Vision and Mission, ensuring that each Islamic boarding school program aligns with the primary goal of producing students who are knowledgeable, morally upright, and ready to apply their knowledge in society. The curriculum design for the year ahead includes programs that can develop the students' character. Because all department heads have prepared programs to be submitted to the supervisors, it is clear that the planning within the Islamic boarding school is very systematic and covers all aspects, from education and worship to student discipline.

4. Organization

As previously stated, the supervisors have divided several divisions or sections, each with assigned tasks to ensure the system runs smoothly. The department heads stated:

"In the area of education, we have a clear structure. I am responsible for managing the curriculum and teaching, ensuring that each teacher understands their duties. I also implement fundamental principles in each subject, such as etiquette and morals, a fiqh book that only discusses *ubudiyah* (Islamic law), the Indonesian language biography of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), and the basics of *Nahwu* (Islamic grammar). We also schedule evaluations to assess the students' academic progress and character development".

"The *ubudiyah* section organizes the elements of worship. Students are not only required to attend congregational prayers and recite *wirid* (recitations of the Prophet Muhammad), but also to participate in well-designed religious studies, such as the afternoon *Rauhah* (recitation of the Prophet's Birthday) and the Prophet's Birthday (*Mawlid*) every Friday night. There's also the *Basaudan* recitation on Tuesday afternoons and the *Burdah* recitation on Friday evenings. All of this aims to develop students who are accustomed to worship and have a deep understanding of Islamic values."

"What does the student affairs department do to shape the students' character? Yes, the student affairs department is built on this foundation. To

supervise individual students, we've designed a mentoring system that ensures they receive guidance from their seniors. In fact, we hope that mentors serve as the first line of character development. So, each room has a mentor, and evaluations of each student are given to the dormitory head, who oversees each room in the dormitory, and then to us. To supervise the students in general, we've designed a security section."

From the administrators' statements, it is clear that this Islamic boarding school has a well-organized leadership structure, and each administrator understands their role and responsibilities.

5. Leadership

Leadership within this leadership system is achieved through direct and indirect supervision, guidance, and motivation of the activities of the students and administrators. Ubudiyah has several programs for carrying out its supervisory duties, as stated by the Head of Ubudiyah:

"We have established a special section tasked with maintaining order and cleanliness in the mosque so that worship can proceed devoutly. For example, there are members called APM (Mosque Order Officers) who are responsible for supervising all mosque activities. Furthermore, during wirid (prayer) prayers, a schedule has been set for ustadz (preachers) who are tasked with supervising the wirid, ensuring that the students remain orderly and focused."

It is within Student Affairs that student discipline is thoroughly monitored through a robust security system and internal supervision through mentoring programs within the students' rooms.

"We hand over full oversight to the security department. If violations become widespread, the security team will issue a general warning within the mosque so that students are aware of their mistakes and can correct them before further action is taken. Internal oversight is delegated to the mentors assigned to each student's room. We even hope that these mentors will become the heads of security, cleanliness, student affairs, and education within their respective rooms."

The oversight system is implemented periodically to ensure all areas are running smoothly and in accordance with established regulations. Each section has a structured evaluation meeting schedule to report on progress and discuss any challenges encountered.

In the education sector, oversight is carried out through regular meetings between administrators and students, where each teacher and class leader submits a report on the students' academic progress.

"We hold teacher and class leader meetings every two weeks. This aims to evaluate the learning system and students' academic development so that the education system at the Islamic boarding school continues to run optimally."

After each division has conducted its own evaluation and to ensure that all divisions are running according to established systems, each division head holds a monthly meeting with the Islamic Boarding School Principal. At this meeting, the head of education, the head of *ubudiyah* (Islamic boarding school), the head of student affairs, and other heads submit reports from their respective divisions, including challenges encountered and improvement plans.

The Supervisor stated:

"I request that meetings be held at least once a month to submit reports from each individual. I also frequently emphasize to the Islamic Boarding School Principal to be more thorough in supervising the Islamic boarding school, as it is a significant mandate, and he cannot take it lightly. Because everything entrusted to us will be accountable to God."

Meetings held by the Head of the Islamic Boarding School to prepare reports to be submitted to the supervisors each month. With a structured monitoring system based on regular evaluations, *As-Shidqu* Islamic Boarding School ensures that every aspect of student education, worship, and discipline is running optimally. Supervision of student affairs, education, and worship is carried out through regular meetings, at the mentor, class head, section administrator, and head of the Islamic boarding school levels.

This structured system provides indirect learning for each section, including the supervisors themselves. The supervisors strongly discourage reports that are incomplete, as many section heads are reprimanded when reporting on a program.

The desired report must be organized neatly and clearly, including the writing, program implementation, budget, objectives, and results. With this system, the Islamic boarding school can ensure that every planned activity and policy remains aligned with the vision and can promptly address any obstacles or issues that need to be addressed.

B. The Character of Students at *As-Shidqu* Islamic Boarding School

Students at *As-Shidqu* Islamic Boarding School are formed with strong character through the practice of worship, discipline, independence, and an education based on good manners and knowledge. The administrators emphasize that the primary goal of this Islamic boarding school is to produce

students who are 'Alim, 'Amil, and Shalih' (pious), meaning those who possess knowledge, apply their knowledge, and possess noble character. Caretaker's Statement:

"Students must not only possess knowledge, but also understand what they are learning from it. Knowledge that is not put into practice is useless, and knowledge without manners will not bring blessings. Remember, knowledge is a fear of Allah. If a learned person does not exhibit fear of Allah, it shows that their knowledge is not beneficial. Therefore, they must be disciplined and follow the established principles of the Islamic boarding school until they can take responsibility for themselves. This can only be achieved through obedience to their teachers. I want the students who graduate from this Islamic boarding school to be not only intelligent but also ready to take responsibility for the knowledge they have acquired. Because the hope of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) rests on your shoulders, you must be ready to serve his people."

The caretakers emphasize that the success of students is not only measured by the amount of knowledge they possess, but also by how well they practice that knowledge with proper etiquette. Students are accustomed to discipline in performing their religious duties, maintaining good manners in their interactions, and being responsible for adhering to the regulations of the Islamic boarding school. This discipline is implemented so that they can manage their time, maintain cleanliness, and develop an independent attitude without relying on others.

Furthermore, students are also taught to develop leadership skills and social awareness. They are taught to think critically, solve problems appropriately and correctly, and develop a strong mentality to face life's various challenges. This Islamic boarding school is not only a place to seek knowledge, but also a place to develop character that is ready to benefit those around them. The character traits developed include:

1. Religious Character

Students must have a strong religious foundation and understand the purpose and purpose of the knowledge they acquire. A student's success is not measured by the amount of knowledge they possess, but rather by how that knowledge benefits them. Beneficial knowledge fosters fear of Allah SWT, leading to obedience to His commands and avoiding what He forbids.

2. Discipline and Independence

Discipline is expected to enable students to use their time wisely and avoid wasting it. Students can manage their time wisely, knowing when to study,

play, worship, and attend to other needs. They are responsible for their allocated time and resolve any problems they encounter.

3. Social and Leadership Character

Students are expected to be prepared to face any situation. When asked to lead tahlil (recitation of the Koran), lead prayers, recite the Yasin (recitation of the Koran), and meet other community needs, they are ready to do so. Cultivating leadership skills in several senior students when entrusted with certain tasks provides experience in leading tasks, so they are ready when entrusted with a mandate.

4. Academic and Scientific Character

Knowledge that benefits others and enlightens human life. Students who think critically, understand problems logically, seek solutions based on Islamic principles, and are prepared to face life outside the Islamic boarding school, whether in the educational, social, or professional world.

5. Moral and Ethical Character

A character that prioritizes good manners over knowledge. Students who reflect the quality of Islamic boarding school education and serve as role models in society.

Through this program and its supervision, students are not only forced to be disciplined but also guided to develop self-awareness in maintaining order and being responsible for their surroundings. This program is not intended solely to produce students who are disciplined, independent, and possess a strong work ethic. To develop social and leadership character, the Islamic boarding school implements various programs conducted by each division to train students in self-management and others, as well as to enhance their social interactions.

As-Shidqu Islamic Boarding School instills the concept of Sakinah wal Waqor as the primary foundation for developing student character. Sakinah reflects calmness in speech, behavior, and dealing with situations, while Waqor is the dignity that must be maintained in one's demeanor. This principle is applied in the students' daily lives, including their speech, dress, and demeanor during various Islamic boarding school activities. Students are taught to speak in a polite and respectful tone, especially to teachers and administrators. Rushing or speaking in a high tone is considered unsuitable for Sakinah wal Waqor, so administrators constantly remind students to maintain composure in communication.

Beyond speech, this concept is also applied to dress and appearance. Students are required to wear neat and clean clothing at all times, as well as a

long-sleeved koko (traditional Islamic headdress) and a skullcap (kopiah) when leaving their rooms. This principle is also applied to their walk and demeanor.

In their daily lives, students are continuously guided to apply this principle in all their activities. Administrators and guardians constantly supervise and provide guidance to students who are unfamiliar with this rule. Through continuous practice, students not only understand the meaning of *Sakina wal Waqor* but also incorporate it into their personalities. This provides essential provisions for students when they enter society, enabling them to become knowledgeable, civilized, and dignified individuals in facing various life situations.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study indicate that the leadership management of the caretakers at the As-Shidqu Islamic Boarding School plays a significant role in shaping the character of the students. The caretakers implement a leadership system based on delegation of authority, deliberation, ongoing evaluation, and role modeling in every aspect of Islamic boarding school life. Through this approach, students are not only directly guided but also given space to develop in discipline, independence, and leadership.

The development of the students' character is evident in various aspects. In the religious aspect, students appear to be accustomed to regularly performing religious services. With guidance from mentors, administrators, and seniors, this gradually increases their attitude toward religious discipline. This is evident in the situation of seniors at the junior high school (*tsanawiyah*) level, who are becoming accustomed to performing religious services without any demands, even making these religious trips a necessity. This reflects the successful instilling of spiritual values in the students' character.

In terms of discipline and independence, research findings on the students' lifestyles, including neat rooms, neat beds, doors that are always locked at the appointed time, sandals neatly placed, neat and clean clothing, and adherence to established regulations, demonstrate the success of developing a well-organized character of discipline and independence.

In terms of social and leadership aspects, development in leadership and teamwork skills has significantly improved, as evidenced by the number of responsibilities entrusted to them by the management. Research findings indicate that the students' sense of caring is fostered by adhering to established Islamic boarding school customs, so that when someone experiences a disaster, they instinctively rally to help one another.

Academic and scientific achievements are also evident in achievements in scientific competitions and recognition from other Islamic boarding schools in the Bahtsul Masail forum. The success of many Islamic boarding school graduates, who have become teachers, principals, and even heads of Islamic boarding schools, demonstrates that the educational system implemented has been able to produce students who not only understand religious knowledge but are also competitive academically and socially. Challenges were encountered in the moral and ethical aspects, with the results indicating a decline in morality among the students. While this situation is not widespread, guardians and administrators need to take a more intensive approach to ensure that the values instilled in students are maintained at all levels.

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