



Strategies in Building Motivation for Da'wah Leadership in a Mualaf Study Group in Banda Aceh

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Abstract— This study aims to determine "The strategy of building motivation for Da'wah leadership in the study group of Mualaf in Banda Aceh". The number of mualafs continues to increase, demanding seriousness in their guidance and motivating them in leading the Islamic study group. The variety of mualaf problems is also increasingly varied. After three years as converts, they do not have enough religious understanding, even some of them have been converting to Islam for more than 30 years but still read Iqra'1. New Muslim converts and old Muslim converts have different problems and require adjustments in leading methods. The difficulty in building togetherness in the group of mualafs is also due to the lack of leadership knowledge so that they experience a group leadership crisis. On this foundation, this research was conducted, the research approach is qualitative descriptive phenomenology with observation, interview, and documentation techniques. The results of the study found. There are several strategies used in building the leadership motivation of the mualafs group, which are. 1). Encouraging them to lead their own meetings and make their own decisions, 2). Building self-confidence through group leadership training for converts in Banda Aceh conducted by the Center for New Brother Studies (Pusat Studi Saudara Baru) UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh. 3. Developing a simple module on leadership motivation. 4. Continuously motivating and assisting their leadership skills through weekly Islamic study meetings.

Keywords: Strategy, Leadership Motivation, Mualaf

1 Introduction

Mualaf, or new converts to Islam, are individuals who seek to be accepted, attracted, and strengthened in their faith in Islam due to the instability of their previous beliefs. This effort also aims to prevent potential harm they might cause to the Muslim community and to harness the benefits that can be utilized for their own and the community's welfare [1]. In Islam, a Muallaf is defined as someone whose heart has been softened and inclined towards Islam through good deeds and love, as realized through the recitation of the two shahada (declarations of faith) [2]. The spread of Islamic proselytizing (dakwah) in Aceh has had a positive impact, leading many non-Muslims in the region to become familiar with, understand, and eventually embrace Islam. These new converts often come from outside Aceh, and after deciding to convert by reciting the shahada in Aceh, they also choose to settle there. The conversion of one or more family members can sometimes lead to a separation from their original families who have not embraced Islam, leaving the converts feeling isolated and neglected. This situation often drives them to seek community and support among fellow converts.

Their voluntary conversion to Islam, driven by personal motivation without coercion from the Muslim community, results in a strong desire to deepen their understanding of Islam. This need underscores the importance of having a supportive community, such as

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study groups or pengajian [3]. Several study groups for muallaf already exist, such as those organized by the Dinas Syariat Islam, Dewan Dakwah, Forum Dakwah Perbatasan, Muslimah Nahdatul Ulama, YP2MA, and Pusat Studi Saudara Baru [4]. Despite the establishment of these groups, none have proven to be sustainable in managing the dynamics of nurturing muallaf communities. Each institution faces issues related to leadership crises within muallaf groups, leading to frequent conflicts and even bullying among members [5]. Building a sustainable muallaf study group, with diverse backgrounds, requires effective leadership training to empower them to lead their groups efficiently. These study groups serve as a second home for muallaf, providing comfort, shared experiences, and addressing both psychological and religious issues. Therefore, a leader who can facilitate gatherings and motivate group activities is essential. Several studies have been referenced to enrich this paper:

First, Putri Balkis's work titled "Challenges of Dakwah in the Guidance of Muallaf (Study at Al-Hilal Pengajian, Banda Aceh)" aims to develop dakwah strategies to meet the needs of muallaf in Aceh. The increasing number of muallaf demands serious attention to their guidance, with diverse issues identified, including: (1) longstanding muallaf with weak Islamic knowledge, (2) conflicts between new muallaf and their families, (3) psychological pressure on teenage muallaf, (4) economic dependence due to instant aid, (5) potential conflicts from ethnic diversity, (6) lack of support systems for family issues, (7) bullying from the Islamic community, (8) scheduling conflicts with educational activities, (9) difficulties in teaching elderly women the Quran, (10) lack of permanent study locations, (11) lack of transport for mentors, (12) mentor turnover upon graduation, (13) lack of funding, and (14) inability to provide social-economic support [6].

Second, Putri Wahida's research on "Social Support for Muallaf (Descriptive-Analytical Study at P2MA Foundation, Banda Aceh)" examines individual-based support during Quranic study sessions, personal one-on-one mentoring, addressing difficulties in pronunciation and memory, spiritual strengthening, and building communication, care, and empathy [7].

Samsinah's research "Communication Strategies of Islamic Preachers in Muallaf Guidance in Patambia, Pinrang" explores the existence, communication processes, and strategies used by Islamic preachers in guiding muallaf in Patambia. This qualitative field research involves observation, interviews, and documentation, revealing a significant interest in Islam with 128 new converts. The guidance programs include Islamic creed, worship practices, and Quranic literacy, with effective communication strategies fostering Islamic teachings and facilitating group dialogues [9]. Although these studies address various aspects of muallaf guidance, none focus on leadership motivation within muallaf groups. Thus, this research aims to fill that gap, providing a framework for developing independent leadership among muallaf.

The Qur'an offers several verses on leadership as a foundation, including Q.S (2:30), (4:53), (38:26), (3:159), and a hadith stating: "All of you are shepherds and each of you is responsible for his flock. A ruler is a shepherd and responsible for his subjects. A man is a shepherd of his family and responsible for them. A woman is a shepherd in her husband's home and responsible for it. A servant is a shepherd of his master's wealth and responsible for it. So all of you are shepherds and responsible for your flock." (HR. Bukhari) [10]. This study applies the community leadership philosophy of Ki Hadjar Dewantara: Ing Ngarsa Sung Tuladha, Ing Madya Mangun Karsa, Tut Wuri Handayani, meaning leading by example, providing guidance in the middle, and offering motivation from behind [11].

There are seven indicators of leadership character in motivating a group: 1) Self-awareness in treating others as equals, 2) Empathy, 3) Openness to ideas and suggestions, 4) Respecting competitors, 5) Intelligence, 6) Thoroughness and resilience, 7) Effective communication skills prioritizing teamwork, creativity, and innovation [12]. The analysis in the following sections will examine whether these indicators have been developed in motivating leadership within muallaf groups, fostering self-management and community leadership capacities.

2 Results and Discussion

The initial experience of guiding muallaf requires us to listen to their stories and feelings about their journey into Islam for several months. This involves accompanying and listening to their experiences, whether it is conflicts with their original family, struggling alone in their new faith, adapting to a new environment, or seeking a community of fellow converts to deepen their understanding of Islam. Experiencing social isolation, being shunned by their families, being expelled from their homes, disowned, cut off financially, and subjected to verbal abuse are common challenges muallaf face when they first embrace Islam. These individuals need to develop self-leadership skills and emotional strength to avoid doubts and the desire to revert to their previous lives. Continuous support is crucial to stabilize their religious understanding and emotional well-being. Facing numerous crises during their conversion to Islam, new converts tend to form or be facilitated into groups to support each other. Sharing similar crises, they develop a sense of solidarity within their groups. This peer group support has positive impacts, as exemplified by As, who converted to Islam after marrying and moving to Aceh. After facing domestic violence and severe depression with no family support, As found strength in the Al Hilal muallaf study group, where she received not only religious education but also advice and assistance from fellow converts [10].

Strengthening muallaf groups is crucial for empowering and supporting new converts. These groups should be encouraged to become independent and self-sustaining, with leadership roles assumed by the muallaf themselves. However, this is challenging due to the limited leadership skills within these groups. Various groups have served as platforms for muallaf, such as Forum Muallaf, Pengajian Al Hilal, Pengajian Muallaf by the Dinas Syariat Islam, and muallaf groups within Dewan Dakwah [11].

Based on experiences from several study groups, the dynamics of muallaf crises often intersect with group dynamics. Individual conflicts arise, cultural differences trigger tension, and their dependence on institutions hinders their independence. Therefore, several strategies have been employed to motivate independent group leadership:

1. **Reducing Dependence on Support Institutions**
Continuous guidance and support are provided weekly in the form of study sessions. Initially, facilitators accompany them continuously for three months, then gradually reduce to twice a month, and eventually once a month. This gradual reduction helps them adjust to independence. Although they may feel abandoned, it is a training process for self-reliance. Facilitators manage a schedule to ensure someone is available for support each week.
2. **Encouraging Freedom to Express Opinions**
Before Quranic study sessions, a 30-minute discussion on women's fiqh, purification, neighborly conduct, and other basic daily topics is held. This is followed by Quranic recitation, daily prayers, and addressing social issues within the group, such as visiting sick members or those facing hardships. These activities are planned and decided by the group, fostering social support and trust among members, creating a close-knit community.
3. **Allowing Autonomy in Meetings and Decision-Making**
Facing diverse personal and group issues, members are encouraged to discuss openly in forums. Initially, this openness caused some chaos, but with guidance, they learned to resolve issues patiently and wisely. Facilitators initially help by asking for members' opinions on resolutions, gradually building their confidence to handle problems independently.
4. **Conducting Leadership Training**
Leadership training is conducted by the Forum Saudara Baru UIN Ar-Raniry, in collaboration with YP2MA and ITF UIN Ar-Raniry. The training spans two days and involves faculty members, students from various departments, and the Center for Gender and Children's Studies (PSGA) UIN Ar-Raniry. The training starts with assessing the basic knowledge of participants, allowing facilitators to tailor the material appropriately, eventually leading to the creation of a simple leadership module.
5. **Developing a Simple Leadership Module**

The module serves as a reference for all parties involved in muallaf guidance, focusing on motivating group leadership. Topics include the concept and urgency of leadership, leadership models, individual and group leadership skills, internal and external leadership challenges, motivation, and accountability.

The simple module which contains several simple sub- themes:

- Concept and urgency of leadership (Jauhari) = 1x,
- Leadership model (Dicky) = 1x,
- Leadership skills: individual, group, practice (Marini) =3x,
- Leadership challenges (internal - external) (Cut Riska) =2x,
- Leadership motivation (individual and group (Sakdiah) =2x,
- Leadership Responsibility for the world - the hereafter (Dr. Abizal) = 2x,
- Leadership Practice (Leading meetings) with actual issues = 3x,
 - a. Religious understanding issues (Prayer - Thaharah - Fasting)
 - b. Internal group conflict issues
 - c. The issue of family disharmony [13].

Additional topics like public speaking, problem-solving strategies, and coordination techniques are included to enhance leadership skills. This comprehensive approach helps muallaf realize their potential as responsible leaders [14].

a. Results of Leadership Training

Post-training observations indicate the emergence of seven key leadership traits among muallaf participants:

1. Self-Awareness and Equality
2. Participants begin to treat others equally, sharing a common religious identity and encouraging each other to study together.
3. Empathy
Empathy towards fellow believers facing hardships strengthens group solidarity, with increased mutual support.
4. Openness to Ideas
Members are more open to listening to and discussing ideas, fostering a culture of collaboration in problem-solving.
5. Respect for Competitors
Rather than viewing peers as competitors, they see them as partners in religious learning, motivating each other to progress in Quranic recitation, with rewards for achievements.
6. Intelligence
Improved understanding of leadership roles enhances communication within the group, with fewer misunderstandings.
7. Thoroughness and Resilience
While thoroughness remains low, the resilience built from their journey into Islam is strong.
8. Respect and Self-Discipline
Respect and discipline are enforced through group rules, such as attendance policies, fostering a sense of responsibility.
9. Effective Communication and Teamwork
Communication skills have improved, and while creativity and innovation are still developing, there is a positive trend towards better group interaction [15].

In conclusion, the leadership training has successfully initiated the development of essential leadership traits in muallaf, contributing to their overall empowerment and the sustainability of their groups [16].

3 Conclusion

Many parties are involved in the leadership motivation training because it is hoped that we can collaboratively build strategies for guiding muallaf. The results obtained from

this study indicate that after the training, the muallaf are more confident and have a better understanding of self-leadership and group leadership. Within two months after the leadership training, they have become accustomed to leading their own groups, while the facilitators only monitor the progress through the WhatsApp group.

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