

# Spiritual Leadership Values and Practices: An Analysis in Islamic Higher Education

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**Abstract-**This study presents an analysis on spiritual leadership values and practices in Islamic higher education. The aim of this analysis is to explain the phenomena and implications of spiritual leadership values and practices in Islamic higher education as seen through the lecturers. The research questions examine how the lecturers show spiritual leadership values and practices in their teachings. The case study is underpinned this analysis by using observation and semi-structured interviews which provide the narratives that informs the basis of this study. The results show that the spiritual leadership values and practices emerge from the respondents under various themes which are reflected in most of the respondents with diverse rates of each theme. These themes link the personal life experience of the respondents to unique findings which are truly in line with the current scholarly discourse on spiritual leadership values and practices.

**Keywords-***Spiritual leadership values; Spiritual leadership practices; Islamic higher education; Lecturers*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Spiritual leadership values and practices in Islamic higher education provides context by which it begins to understand on how and why teaching and learning experiences are personally transformative and deeply meaningful. The lecturers teaching experience and their unique lens in Islamic higher institution are critical in identifying how spiritual leadership values and practices enter the classroom and set the tone. These aspects have become the important components in education and scholarly discourse related to society and transformative learning.

Spirituality is defined as the quality or condition of being spiritual, when spirituality is spelled out as something related to the spirit or soul contrasted to material things and also related to religious or sacred things rather than worldly things [1]. Meanwhile, spiritual leadership values and practices are the values and actions that lead to spirituality [2]. Those terms

are commonly associated to many aspects of human life since spiritual leadership values and spiritual leadership practices can affect positively to the character of culture, communities and institutions [3]. However, their presence and contribution are assumed to be limited in much of civil society [4]. In higher education environment, especially Islamic higher institution, spiritual leadership values and practices are questionable in a society that identifies them exclusively with religion. This phenomenon poses a challenge to investigate the extent of spiritual leadership values and practices among the lecturers in Islamic higher institution environment for a very limited report of the related research [2]. Therefore, this study is aimed to find out the spiritual leadership values and practices and their congruence between those values and practices among lecturers in Islamic higher institution in Indonesia.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### A. Spirituality vs Religiosity

In this context of study, spiritual aspects are not associated with any particular religions or believes [5]. There is even a potential crash if spirituality is seen through a particular religion. This can trigger disunity because it can eliminate those who do not follow the religious traditions and also burn the social conflicts and legal administration gap [6], [7]. "Adherence to a religious workplace orientation can lead to arrogance that a particular company, faith, or even nation is somehow better or worthier than another" [8].

Although researchers have separated spirituality and religion, many individuals assume that the concept can be exchanged [3]. Results from 346 individuals from various professional and religious backgrounds showed that 74% claimed spirituality and religion were the same thing [9]. Distinguishing spirituality and religion is necessary in the study of spirituality in Islamic higher education in order to avoid the dangers of proselytizing and invasion of privacy.

The holy Buddhist, Dalai Lama [10] clearly explains the distinction between spirituality and religion. This spiritual leader of the Tibetan people stated, in his book, the ethics for the new millennium, that:

"Actually, I believe there is an important distinction to be made between religion and spirituality. Religion I take to be concerned with faith in the claims to salvation of one faith tradition or another, an aspect of which is acceptance of some form of metaphysical or supernatural reality, including perhaps an idea of heaven or nirvana. Connected with this are religious teachings or dogma, ritual, prayer, and so on. Spirituality I take to be concerned with those qualities of the human spirit—such as love and compassion, patience, tolerance, forgiveness, contentment, a sense of responsibility, a sense of harmony—which bring happiness to both self and others. While ritual and prayer, along with the questions of nirvana and salvation, are directly connected to religious faith, these inner qualities need not be, however. There is thus no reason why the individual should not develop them, even to a high degree, without recourse to any religious or metaphysical belief system. Therefore, I sometimes say that religion is something we can perhaps do without. What we cannot do without are these basic spiritual qualities" (p.22).

The general difference between spirituality and religion is the existence of altruistic love - respect or devotion to the interests of others [5]. In this case, the fundamental-spiritual teachings of almost all major religions are the same [11]. Josephson [12] calls this basic spirituality as a Golden Rule - "do unto others as you would have them do unto you" - which is common to all major religions [12]. Fry [5] states that religion is not necessary for spirituality, but spirituality is needed instead of religion. From this perspective, the existence of spirituality in the individual is much more important compared to religion. The spiritual leadership values and practices in the Islamic higher education can therefore be inclusive or exclusive to any religious theory and practice.

### *B. Spiritual Leadership Values*

Spreading beliefs or convincing individuals is not the main essence of spirituality in the lectures. In the context of Islamic higher education, we see that spirituality is a form of expression that is not so much in words or sermons, but in the embodiment of spiritual leadership values such as working as calling, integrity, honesty, Humility [3]. These positive phenomena are often shown in the workplace and organization.

Lecturers need to have spiritual leadership values because many prominent figures support the importance of spirituality in their efforts and struggles. For example, the Arabs lived in moral bankruptcy and slavery. Prophet Muhammad spread Islam by demonstrating the value of spirituality - in Arabic: *Siddiq, Amanah, Tablig, Fathonah* - to his followers [13]. Gandhi championed India for declaring independence in non-violent spiritual teachings (ahimsa) [14]. Martin Luther King, Jr. led to fight violence with the spirit of agape [15] and Du Bois spent his life for the peace and emancipation of African-Americans, women, the poor and Third World people [16]. Lerner [16] states that every individual needs a balance between outside work and inner work so that people will benefit themselves.

### *C. Spiritual Leadership Practices*

Lecturers need to transform their teaching materials into the bigger aspects of education. These aspects are related to the positive behavior—that the lecturers have—called spiritual

leadership practices. Meanwhile, positive attitude has been explained as spiritual leadership values. In this context, spiritual leadership practices are more related to the positive work/teaching practices rather than religious practices.

The spiritual leadership values which are inherent in the lecturer should be realized in the real actions. Lecturers should show and demonstrate spiritual leadership values which are truly in line with spiritual behavior such as expressing respect for others' values, fair treatment, caring and concern, listening, appreciating others, and reflective practices [3].

## III. METHODOLOGY

In this study, case study research was utilized for finding out the contextualized experience of spiritual leadership values and practices of the lecturers in Islamic higher institution. The data were collected through the interviews from the three lecturers and observation during their teaching and learning process. According to Yin [17], the case study research provides the framework for a "rich analysis and valuable insight", into the specific program, event or phenomenon. Case studies investigate contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident. In other words, "This method is utilized to cover contextual conditions –believing that they might be highly pertinent to your phenomenon of study," (p.13).

### *A. Data Collection*

The data was collected by class observations and followed by an in-depth interview. The researcher observed each lecturer's class once and total of semi-structured interview session was around 45 to 60 minutes. The interview questions enabled the participants to engage in a topic that began with their life and experience and how they realized the values and practices in their teaching and learning activities.

### *B. Data Analysis*

The data analysis process began with transcription of the interview recordings for all participants. Participants' recordings provided an additional sensory experience, listening to the interview results, outside the formal interview process, provided the experience and time with the participants more salience and texture. According to Boyatzis [18] this process is called as a thematic analysis. A thematic analysis is a flexible process that allows the researcher to code information and themes once uncovered and get close to the data developing a deeper appreciation for the content. After the transcription process, the researcher arranged the notes of each transcript as various information clearly emerged from the interview.

We began to categorize the emerging theories and concepts in line with the literature, such as teaching and lecture practice and spiritual leadership values and practices. Furthermore, the categories were developed based on the emerged themes that linked to the literature to anchor and frame the theme. "Devising categories is largely and intuitive process, but it is also systematic and informed by the study's purpose, the investigator's orientation and knowledge and the 'constructs made explicit by the participants in the study,'" [19] The

categorization and informing themes are critical to ensure opportunities to explain building and pattern-matching from data to theory and existing research [17].

### C. Setting and Participants

The researcher interviewed three lecturers for English Education Departments, one of department in UIN under the Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training. They have used pseudonyms to protect their identities. The pseudonyms utilize the first letter of the participants' actual names. Rendy (38), a phonology lecturer, Sammy (50), a grammar lecturer and Nindy (30), an academic writing lecturer. All three lecturers have been affiliated with UIN for at least four years. Interview were conducted on site in classroom. Each interview was approximately 40-60 minutes in length. Universitas Islam Negeri (UIN) Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung is an Islamic institution located in one of large city in Indonesia, it is a popular retirement destination for many. UIN has a comprehensive list of faculties and programs supported its teaching and learning program. UIN has various subjects included general and religious subjects that interconnected one another.

## IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based our findings on the case study data analysis, there are three main themes or narratives emerged from the data delivered by the participants: (1) spiritual leadership values and its' phenomena; (2) spiritual leadership practices and its' phenomena; and (3) the congruence between those values and practices. These three narratives provide a basis for processing these phenomena and framing the current discourse provided by the literature. Shortly, the themes provide insight into the contribution of spiritual leadership values and practices to the lecturers' teaching practice in Islamic higher institution. "Once the themes are sorted, the researcher can begin to examine related features of these groups and gain insight." [17].

Understanding the factors that affect the lecture success is important for institutions to develop and gain effective and efficient work especially teachings [20]. Two such factors that have gain prominence in the leadership literatures are spiritual leadership values and spiritual leadership practices [3], [5]. Specifically, we focus on spirituality since there are a lot of previous researches which support that spirituality is the main concern of success in the future and spirituality in the workplace is a considerable precedent in the present century [8].

### A. Spiritual leadership values and Its' Phenomena

The first research question regarding how the lecturers define and implement spiritual leadership values in their practice provided several points of reference with linkages to the literature. Sammy shared the following statement regarding how he defined the spiritual leadership values through his teaching and learning activities:

*Teaching is always one of my worship and way to reach God's blessing. Since becoming a teacher is my ideal, I enjoy every time I teach. It's like a call from my inner soul. Seeing how my students improve in any learning process*

*has given me a special happiness to face every day in my life.*

On the other hand, Rendy explained how he defined his work as follow:

*This job (teaching) honestly has given me two goals in life, prestige and price. So that, I have to work so well....by coming on time and transfer them (students) valuable knowledges, I think it is more than enough. As long as they (students) receive their rights as students and do their obligation as well, I think my mission is accomplished.*

Nindy described her teaching regarding spiritual leadership values as the following statements:

*For me, teaching is make someone (student) to be a better person. While learning process is make them (students) to learn. Teacher, in the same way, also learn a lot while teaching. That's why, teaching is part of my learning process in life.*

Sammy response particularly in line with the words the statement by Vogel [21], "Our spiritual lives reflect the dreams, fears and commitments of our which we live, work, play and pray. When we claim our spiritual selves and take responsibility for understanding and nurturing the spiritual dimension of our being, we learn to teach with a deeper sense of which we are" (p.18). This is the statement how spiritual leadership values are implemented in teaching and learning activities.

Sammy's explanation also describes a determine point of self in which MacKeracher stated that "spiritual values are developed from a determine sense of oneself, with no support of our inclination to get rid into the world," (p.30). Another statement by Dik et. Al [22] also supports what Sammy explained about his teaching which stated that "work is a spiritual calling where we have a calling to a particular kind of work and also have good understanding of this calling as it applies to one personal career." Through this firm relationship between teaching and teacher, it provides the teachers to learn more about "their deepest longings and desires" where they build a more determine sense of self that is integral to spiritual development [23].

Rendy offered the different sight toward how he saw his teaching as his spiritual leadership values. Another dimension value of spirituality as stated by Fry [5] seems to be congruent with Rendy's statement. Fry stated spiritual leadership is comprised of "values, attitudes, and behaviors that are necessary to intrinsically motivate one's self and others so that they have a sense of spiritual survival through calling and membership" (p.711). In this case, Rendy showed his integrity of work where integrity is one of the features by Fry's [5] model that is a set of intrinsic rewards based on aspects of altruistic love and integrity is one of the key aspects of altruistic love in this model.

The three lecturers show their spiritual leadership values in defining their job as a teacher. Especially Sammy's statement that seems really congruent with Hill and Johnson [24] statement. According to them, delivering spiritual values in education practice means bringing out whole selves-mind,

spirit and heart to our work and creating a learning space where learners can do the same (p.23).”

#### *B. Spiritual leadership practices and Its' Phenomena*

Sammy provided the following explanation when the researcher tried to talk about his spiritual leadership practices during teaching and learning process. Sammy was asked by several questions which had the themes linked toward spiritual leadership practices.

*I have nothing special in my teaching experiences. I usually teach my students on schedule. For me, coming on time is a good starting point to begin my lesson....my rule of teaching is simple, when I'm in my class, so I decide to give all of me to them (students) at that time. I simply let everything beside when I'm teaching.*

Rendy offered the following explanation to how he taught his students:

*I am a kind of person that always look something in really simple way, include my teaching rule. I come into the class, give materials, and the rest give them (students) the score for their effort. For the score, I give them clear explanation about my rule. So that, they will know for every appraisal and punishment they receive. But, I never give any strict and hard rule to gain the score. I really tolerate to my students since I also can really give them full attention while teaching.*

On the other hand, Nindy delivered the different sights toward the questions about her teaching activities:

*I teach them (students) not only to be clever but also to discipline themselves and well behave. Even they are smart, but they can't show their good attitude then I will think twice to give them a good score... I try to always appreciate every single effort they make regarding to the subject of course.*

All the three lecturers delivered and described care and concern for their students during their teaching and learning process. It can be seen that they show their spiritual leadership practices dimension in the same way as a person. Sammy and Nindy both spoke about strong sense and integrity by respecting their students', meanwhile, Rendy showed how he gave his students the fair treatments during his class. Beside the general overview about spiritual leadership practices where these are defined as manifestations of persons' values and corresponding attitudes [15], the spiritual leadership practices showed by the lecturers are things that also revealed by Orr [9] that delivered several strategies to foster spiritual development, through the importance of educators possessing a strong sense of self. "Human potential requires nurturing and the best way to nurture it is by building self-confidence and sponsoring intentional activities (p.32).”

Other dimension of spiritual leadership practices also showed from what Nindy describe about his job as teacher. Nindy reflections are in line with Orr [2] who revealed that concerns about others are integral aspects of spiritual development. "A fully integrated spiritual person reaches beyond him or herself and acknowledges uniqueness of others,

and ultimately assumes the responsibility for caring and concern about other humans (p.30).” Moreover, educators as some educational leaders show their respect to their students by modeling how they values others by treating them in a courteous and considerate way [2]. Meanwhile, Nindy's statement about how she teaches her student to be a better person seems in line with Vogel [21] explanation about how educators reckon their spiritual lives to help their students also to reckon with their spiritual lives.

#### *C. The Congruence between Spiritual leadership values and Practices*

Sammy responses toward his spiritual leadership values as stated one chunk of the interview that "It's like a call from my inner soul". This statement really reflected one of spiritual leadership values known as defining work as a calling rather than a job. Paloutzian, Emmons, & Keortge [25] stated that when somebody shown his/her work as a calling rather than a job, or as an opportunity to serve God, work-related strivings to the new significance and meaningful. Moreover, those who defined their work as calling also reported to be less absenteeism than those who defined their work as a job or career [25]. Regarding to leadership organization, those who showed their work as a means of spiritual growth also proved to increase organizational performance [3]. On the other hand, Sammy's spiritual leadership values of describing his teaching as calling seems to be really congruent to his spiritual leadership practices. His spiritual leadership practices as stated in his statement that "I decide to give all of me to them (students) at that time. I simply let everything beside when I'm teaching" described respect, caring and concern of spiritual leadership practices through his teaching activities. There is a review that the relationship between effective leadership (in this term a teacher as a leader) leads naturally to one of the important point of spiritual leadership practices where one of the acts is respecting to others [5]. When Sammy's described his spiritual leadership values as defining his work as calling and realize his spiritual leadership practices by caring and concerning on his students seem to be really linear as Fry supported that altruistic love as a sense of wholeness, harmony and well-being also as a serve of God produced through care, concern, and appreciation of both self and others (p. 712).

The congruence of Sammy's spiritual leadership values and practices has something in common with the statement from Nindy. She described her spiritual leadership values as self-humility or process in life. She said "Teacher, in the same way, also learn a lot while teaching. That's why, teaching is part of my learning process in life." Moreover, her spiritual leadership practices showed the same practice as Sammy's description. She reflected her respect and concern to her students as shown through her statement that "I teach them (students) not only to be clever but also to discipline themselves and well behave." One of implication of how humility and leadership effectiveness related one another has to do with the ability to receive any negative feedback which is really important for the leaders (teachers in this case) to know the problem faced by them. On the other hand, the one with high opinions of himself has been found to be most unreceptive to criticism or negative feedback [25].

The last congruence shown by Rendy's description are between integrity as his spiritual leadership values in teaching and fair treatment and listening for others as his spiritual leadership practices. Rendy stated that "*This job (teaching) honestly has given me two goals in life, prestige and price. So that, I have to work so well..*" showed his integrity to his job. Moreover, He also described "*For the score, I give them clear explanation about my rule. So that, they will know for every appraisal and punishment they receive.*" for his fair treatment to his students. Integrity deals with treating other people fairly since it is a natural consequence of viewing other people with respect [3]. Justice and fairness are important points that display spiritual paths for treating other people in unfair way indicates a lack of integrity and respect [3].

## V. CONCLUSIONS

In this study, we seek to examine empirically that spiritual leadership values and practices have important roles Islamic higher education. In this research, spiritual leadership values and practices are articulated to be more in demonstrating attitude and behavior. Spiritual leadership values are working as calling, integrity, honesty, Humility; spiritual leadership practices are expressing respect for others' values, caring and concern, listening, and appreciating others. Incorporating the spiritual leadership values and practices in education life can bring consistency between the teachers' image and also allow the students' function with their higher level of inner personal integration. In other words, the consistency between educators' values and behavior will create the effectiveness and acceleration in gaining goals [3]. When the spiritual leadership values and practices can meet in one point under educational environment, the life balance and also success of education goals can be no more a dream. Thus, holding programs that stimulate spiritual leadership values and practices are important in order to reach the vision of organizations.

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