

Leadership Strategy to Improve Lecturer Professionalism

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ABSTRACT: *Leadership in higher education has a strategic role in developing the professionalism of lecturers, especially in the Islamic higher education environment. The purpose of this study is to analyze leadership strategies in higher education and policies implemented to develop the professionalism of lecturers based on religious values. The study was conducted in two universities, UNHAS and UNIPDU. The type of research uses qualitative with a case study approach. Data collection involves observation, interviews, and documentation. Primary data was obtained from research subjects, namely the rector and lecturers, while secondary data was in public and private documents. Thematic data analysis techniques and data validity use triangulation techniques. The study results show that UNHAS and UNIPDU have a basic transformational leadership style but have different approaches. UNHAS applies leadership based on religious values, focusing on character and ethical development. At the same time, UNIPDU adopts leadership that is more adaptive to global change and integrates religious practices with technological developments. Both leadership models significantly impact lecturer professionalism, as seen in competence in teaching, the use of technology, and the ability to be a moral role model. This study recommends the importance of developing visionary and responsive leadership to global change and the need to integrate ethical values in developing lecturer professionalism. The implications of this study in the context of higher education confirm that supportive and participative leadership styles are essential for a thriving academic environment. Leadership styles must also be adjusted to the cultural context and values that exist in each institution. This study also contributes to the development of the lecturer's professionalism theory. The findings suggest that effective higher education leadership contributes directly to improving the quality of lecturers' work, which includes innovation in teaching and achieving research targets.*

Kepemimpinan di perguruan tinggi memiliki peran strategis dalam mengembangkan profesionalisme dosen, khususnya di lingkungan pendidikan tinggi Islam. Tujuan penelitian ini untuk menganalisis strategi kepemimpinan di Pendidikan tinggi, serta kebijakan yang diterapkan untuk mengembangkan profesionalisme dosen berdasarkan nilai-nilai agama.

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Penelitian dilakukan di dua perguruan tinggi UNHAS dan UNIPDU. Jenis penelitian menggunakan kualitatif dengan pendekatan studi kasus. Pengumpulan data melibatkan observasi, wawancara, dan dokumentasi. Data primer diperoleh dari subjek penelitian yakni rektor dan dosen sedangkan data sekunder berupa dokumen publik maupun privat. Teknik analisis data tematik dan keabsahan data menggunakan Teknik triangulasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa UNHAS dan UNIPDU memiliki dasar gaya kepemimpinan transformasional, namun memiliki pendekatan yang berbeda. UNHAS menerapkan kepemimpinan berbasis nilai agama dengan fokus pada pembinaan karakter dan etika. Sedangkan UNIPDU mengadopsi kepemimpinan yang lebih adaptif terhadap perubahan global dan mengintegrasikan praktik keagamaan dengan perkembangan teknologi. Kedua model kepemimpinan tersebut memiliki dampak signifikan terhadap profesionalisme dosen, yang terlihat dari kompetensi dalam mengajar, penggunaan teknologi, dan kemampuan menjadi teladan moral. Penelitian ini merekomendasikan pentingnya pengembangan kepemimpinan yang visioner dan responsif terhadap perubahan global, serta perlunya integrasi nilai-nilai moral dalam pengembangan profesionalisme dosen. Implikasi dari penelitian ini dalam konteks perguruan tinggi, menegaskan bahwa gaya kepemimpinan yang mendukung dan partisipatif sangat penting untuk lingkungan akademik yang berkembang. Gaya kepemimpinan juga harus disesuaikan dengan konteks budaya dan nilai-nilai yang ada di masing-masing institusi. Studi ini juga memberikan kontribusi terhadap pengembangan teori profesionalisme dosen. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa kepemimpinan perguruan tinggi yang efektif berkontribusi langsung terhadap peningkatan kualitas kerja dosen, yang mencakup inovasi dalam pengajaran dan pencapaian target penelitian.

Keywords: *Leadership Strategy, Lecturer Professionalism, Higher Education.*

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I. INTRODUCTION

Higher education leadership plays a vital role in determining the direction and quality of education in an institution. As is known, globally, there are various institutions under the auspices of the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Ministry of Religious Affairs with different characteristics in each region. One of them is an institution in the context of Islamic higher education, such as Hasyim Asy'ari University (UNHAS) and Darul Ulum University (UNIPDU), located in Jombang-East Java. Leadership is focused on academic and administrative success and has a vital role in shaping Islamic higher education institutions' character, morals, and professionalism. The degree of professionalism including academic expertise, ethics, and technology is influenced by various factors, including the leadership style applied in the higher education institution. UNHAS, located in an Islamic boarding school environment, prioritizes leadership that emphasizes integrating religious values into all aspects of educational development. In this institution, the leadership strives to build high Islamic moral and ethical standards, where lecturers fulfill their obligations to teach and be role models in behavior and moral attitudes that are by religious teachings (Phuong, 2022).

This leadership approach supports the development of professional lecturers in academics and in terms of morals, integrity, and role models in front of students. In this case, lecturers are also expected to be able to foster a spirit of science that is balanced with the depth of spiritual values that can guide students in forming their character. Likewise, at UNIPDU leadership is more directed at integrating traditional religious practices such as the tradition of Islamic boarding schools and modern educational innovations. At this institution, lecturers are required to maintain moral and spiritual values and master skills relevant to technological developments and industrial needs. Leadership at UNIPDU tends to be more flexible, which provides opportunities for lecturers to improve their skills not only limited to religious knowledge/issues but globally by following developments in science and technology such as information technology, communication, and digital learning methodologies. Therefore, lecturers at UNIPDU are expected to be able to adapt quickly to changes in the education sector, which are increasingly related to the global world. This change will likely affect how lecturers teach and interact with students.

From this statement, the differences in leadership models significantly impact the level of lecturer professionalism. At UNHAS, most lecturers focus more on character development and ethics based on Islamic education. Meanwhile, at UNIPDU, lecturers must be more academically competent and adaptive to the demands of the rapidly developing era. Both are not wrong because professional lecturers have a set of competencies (knowledge, skills, behavior) that must be internalized and mastered in carrying out their professional duties while still following developments in their era (Sunarso, 2023). The progress of the educational environment is determined by various factors, including lecturers, rectors, academic staff, facilities and infrastructure, and a curriculum by the developing field of science. These factors greatly determine the achievement of universal education in Indonesia, especially lecturers. Various initiatives will be implemented to improve the quality of education, but this will not be implemented without the supervision and support of professional lecturers. Therefore, to improve the quality of education in Indonesia, every lecturer must enhance their professional abilities in carrying out their duties and advancing the development of science (Watnaya et al., 2020).

Professional lecturers not only master the correct fields of science, teaching materials, and methods but must also be able to motivate students, have high skills, and have broad insights into the world of education. Professional lecturers have a mental attitude and commitment to realizing and improving their quality through various methods and strategies (Pertiwi et al., 2024). Lecturers with exemplary professionalism should have the following qualifications: 1) commitment to professionalism, reflected in self-image, dedication, and commitment to the learning process and optimal work results. 2) mastering knowledge, developing and explaining the functions in community life, explaining its theoretical and practical dimensions, and transferring knowledge, internalizing and implementing it in the scope of society. 3) Having intellectual and informational skills, as well as the ability to develop knowledge and skills systematically, ensuring that students are educated, their needs are met, and their performance is by their abilities, capabilities, and interests (Abrori & Ikhwan, 2024).

The existence of a good level of lecturer professionalism cannot be separated from a good leadership strategy in an institution. So in higher education leadership, visionary leadership is also needed, namely, a leader who can formulate and communicate a clear and inspiring vision for the future. According to Khan et al. (2024), visionary leadership

is a leader who can develop and communicate a clear and inspiring vision for the future. Where the leader does not only focus on short-term goals but also has a broad view of the direction and potential for the development of the institution he leads and the absence of a single unreasonable decision. On the other hand, according to Bernards (2023), visionary leadership is defined as the capacity of a leader to develop, articulate, communicate, socialize, change, and implement ideal peer-to-peer projects that originate from within or from social interactions (relationships) between individuals. Leadership plays a vital role in an organization because in addition to determining the vision, mission, goals, and achievement strategies, it is also tasked with leading, directing, and motivating group members to achieve goals. Morrill (2010) said "Leadership is one of the most widely observed and least understood phenomena on earth". From this statement, leadership is widely studied but challenging to understand. The same thing was expressed by DePree (2011), who stated that leadership is a topic that is not easy to explain. Leadership is an ability that must be possessed by a leader how to carry out his leadership so that subordinates can move according to what is desired in achieving previously set goals. The movement of this leader must follow the flow of organizational/institutional goals that are to be completed and not something that is pretended by his leadership. Movement in achieving goals is the legitimacy of the leader's power because it is not just a symbol or position. The leader is a catalyst who is responsible for everything that happens in an organization so that the level of professionalism in it depends on the leadership model (Sunarso, 2023).

In this case, the practice of effective higher education leadership significantly influences the quality of human resource management, which will improve the education standard in each institution (Kemal & Rosyidi, 2019). With visionary leadership and a clear mindset, the leader of the higher education institution will build a framework that allows academic staff to realize their potential to the fullest. Good leadership will inspire lecturers to develop their professionalism by knowing the importance of discipline in learning and teaching, providing motivation, fully supporting active participation in curriculum development, etc. This is in line with the results of previous research which shows that an effective leadership style and increased discipline can be an effective strategy in increasing the motivation and performance of lecturers in higher education (Yusuf, 2024). So, with leadership that supports innovation and continuous professional development, lecturers feel empowered to improve academic competence, which affects the professionalism of lecturers in the future. This will also positively impact the quality of education received by students (Nurdiana, 2023).

However, despite the reality that traditional pesantren values in UNHAS serve as a foundation, it is contrary to the context of modern education, especially in this era of rapid technological development where the application of technology and competency-based learning methodologies. In this context, this study will determine how pesantren-based leadership in UNHAS can accommodate more complex and global educational needs without sacrificing the prioritized fundamental values. So it is still a question whether the leadership is flexible enough to face global challenges or some gaps need to be addressed to improve the quality of lecturer professionalism in UNHAS. On the other hand, UNIPDU leadership tends to be more flexible, which provides opportunities for lecturers to improve their skills not only limited to religious knowledge/issues but globally by following developments in science and technology such as information technology, communication, and digital learning methodologies (Cameron & Green, 2019).

Therefore, this study examines how two leadership models in UNHASY and UNIPDU can affect lecturer professionalism. Because there is still limited research that discusses this context, this study will also explore how each institution implements the policies to discover the development of lecturer professionalism and how the implementation of leadership models is based on religious values. This study can significantly contribute to leadership development in higher education by providing more detailed recommendations to improve professional skills. Thus, it is hoped that the results of this study will not only be beneficial for academic development and the development of comprehensive Islamic education in Indonesia.

II. METHOD

This study uses a qualitative research method with a case study approach that provides in-depth insight into the role of Islamic education in shaping students with noble character. Through this method, researchers can holistically understand how leadership is applied to improve the professionalism of lecturers in each of the intended research contexts (Ikhwan, 2021). This research was conducted at UNHASY (Hasyim Asy'ari University) and UNIPDU (Darul 'Ulum Islamic Boarding School University), both in Jombang. The data collection techniques used were observation, interviews, and documentation. In this study, researchers conducted participant observation to collect diverse data and to gain a deeper understanding of the research context. Observations were performed at each campus over four months. In addition, researchers also conducted unstructured interviews with the rector and several lecturers as primary data sources, where the role of the rector is as the primary leader in higher education, complemented by several other lecturers as supporting data and validators of the intended research context. Researchers also analyze public and private documents in official records, diaries, or other archives as secondary data sources to support the findings of observations and interviews (Creswell, 2021). By conducting in-depth interviews, researchers can obtain more in-depth information about participants to understand the situations and phenomena that occur (Hardani et al., 2020). Researchers use data analysis techniques with careful thematic analysis, where researchers can find key topics and understand the complex dynamics between college leadership and the development of lecturer professionalism. The data validity technique used is triangulation, where researchers collect data from interviews, observations, and documentation which are then analyzed in full to build a coherent justification for the themes.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Analysis of Leadership Models at UNHASY and UNIPDU

Each institution certainly has a different vision, mission and policies. Based on the results of interviews with the rector, each institution has different visions and missions. UNHASY has a vision: to become a center for developing Islamic boarding school-based science and entrepreneurship to produce a generation of perfect people. It has a mission: First, it organizes higher education with a religious nuance to create professional and religious graduates with an entrepreneurial perspective, mastering information technology, as well as Arabic and English. Second, superior research in religious science, general science, education, and teaching should be developed, and

third, community service in religious science should be carried out with general science insight and general science based on religious science. Fourth, religious science should be developed to be integrated with general science. Fifth, general science should be developed based on religious science. Sixth, producing professional and non-educational personnel based on religious science. Seventh, the university is a center for developing religious science education integrated with general science and general science integrated with religious science. Eighth, developing cooperation with various institutions, agencies, and stakeholders for the sustainability of the implementation of study programs and/or the opening of new study programs. The vision and mission differ from those of UNIPDU, namely the vision of becoming a university that excels in intellectuality and noble morals. Mission: a) Implementing high-quality and noble moral education and teaching. b) Research to develop science, technology, and art that benefit society. c) Implementing and developing community service activities with a sustainable empowerment pattern. Both are also based on the documentation results obtained by the researcher.

The researcher also explored the leadership approach to the professional environment of lecturers. The researcher also examined the leadership approach to the professional environment of lecturers, with the results of the interviews revealing significant differences between the two institutions. At UNHAS, the rector and lecturer A revealed that several approaches are applied while still prioritizing Islamic boarding school values and Islamic ethics, developing morals, ethics, and exemplary behavior in the attitudes and behavior of lecturers, emphasizing character and moral development through religious-based activities, encouraging lecturer professionalism through improving ethics and morals, being more of an ethical role model, relatively slow in adopting technology, prioritizing consistency with traditional values. Meanwhile, the results of the interview with lecturer F revealed that the UNIPDU institution combines the values of Islamic boarding schools with the modernization of education, improving the technical skills and adaptability of lecturers to modern technology and learning methods, providing training programs for modern technology and methodology, with a focus on improving digital skills, forming professional lecturers who are responsive to technological developments and changes in the world of education, and responding quickly to technological developments and global education trends. From these differences, each institution has the same leadership style, namely transformational but with a unique approach. This is in contrast to UNIPDU, which combines the traditional values of Islamic boarding schools with the modernization of education. So with this approach, UNIPDU will be better able to follow and adapt to current technological developments and global education trends.

At UNHAS, the leadership style is based on values with a transformational approach that emphasizes spiritual motivation. This transformational leadership is based on religious values and emphasizes moral exemplars. The leadership strategy focuses more on fostering morals and integrity through a personal and spiritual approach. To improve the professionalism of lecturers can be done through the development of Islamic values. Some policies support religious and spiritual activities, such as regular studies and religious studies for lecturers, to improve lecturers' ethics and character. Moral development programs can be carried out through religious development and training based on Islamic values. This focuses on improving lecturers' morals and professional integrity in the context of Islamic boarding school values. In addition, other forms of support can be through religious activities, lectures, and personal mentoring by leaders

emphasizing morals and spirituality and providing space for spiritual reflection and socio-religious activities that foster community ties. However, on the other hand, a leadership style that prioritizes morality by ignoring technology creates limitations in adapting technology and modern teaching methods because it focuses too much on traditional values.

Meanwhile, UNIPDU has an adaptive leadership style that encourages collaboration and technology-based innovation. Adaptive leadership emphasizes human resource innovation. Integrating flexible and collaborative leadership methods to promote adaptation to technological developments and globalization. Under UNIPDU's leadership, policies to improve technological competence and academic skills are implemented in several ways, including technology training, innovative research, and developing digital-based learning methods. Examples include training in the use of digital platforms and innovation in the classroom so that the programs held can improve lecturers' professional competence and digital skills.

Thus, adequate facilities are needed for research and international conferences to encourage innovation and collaboration in education and support for digital facilities and technology-based learning resources. To develop the professionalism of lecturers, this institution focuses on the technical and academic competence of lecturers with training in the use of technology and innovation in teaching so that they are adaptive to global changes in the world of education, such as providing access to digital training, professional workshops, and support for modern technological facilities to improve lecturer's skills in academics and technology. Thus, maintaining a balance between technological innovation and religious values in teaching needs to be considered. Following rapid technological changes in education while remaining based on spiritual values significantly impacts the progress of a quality nation and state because it will create adaptive human resources that positively impact the surrounding environment.

Leadership Model to Improve Lecturer Professionalism

The research findings show that leadership at UNHAS and UNIPDU significantly impacts lecturers' professionalism. The leadership style in its application has a theoretical basis that is used. There are various leadership theories, one of which is transformational leadership. At UNIPDU, the leadership pattern applies transformational leadership theory by adjusting its leadership style to fit the needs of a dynamic environment. The emphasis on innovation and technology in education reflects the need to adapt to global change. The leadership style at UNIPDU focuses on developing practical skills relevant to industry needs, showing how leadership can adapt to changing contexts.

Meanwhile, at UNHAS, leadership that is orientated towards religious values and morality creates an atmosphere that supports the development of lecturers' character. The leadership pattern at this institution seeks to foster strong relationships with lecturers through integrating Islamic values in teaching. In addition, this leadership pattern also emphasizes moral exemplars through strategies that focus more on fostering morals and integrity through a personal and spiritual approach.

This is by the transformational leadership pattern. Namely, the leader can influence his members not based on power but on the ability to influence ideas, concepts, and missions and show the urgency of member contributions with other groups to achieve common goals while still adjusting the intended context. In the characteristics of transformational leadership theory, there are four multi-dimensions: idealized influence,

inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Huynh Thi Thu & Pham, 2024).

In addition to these four dimensions, Bass also bases transformational leadership on three moral aspects. First is the moral character of the leader. Second, ethical values are embedded in the leader's vision, articulation, and program. Third is the morality of choosing social ethics and actions that leaders and followers are involved in collectively achieving targets. This leadership is related to emotions, values, ethics, standards, and long-term goals. Transformational leadership involves extraordinary forms of influence that move followers to achieve more than what is usually expected of them (Udin, 2023). This process often combines charismatic and visionary leadership, where leaders can influence their members when they can convey an attractive vision, communicate expectations and high performance, and express the belief that their members can achieve these goals (Ulwiyah et al., 2021).

Transformational leadership does not only discuss a leader who is the center of the study. This aligns with the research by Ulwiyah et al. (2021), which discusses and places members as essential and primary subjects in building an organization. In addition, it places commendable moral values that bind the relationship and interaction between leaders and followers in carrying out the mission and realizing the organization's vision, as well as essential points of the vision they want to achieve and learn.

However, in UNHAS leadership, apart from focusing on a transformational leadership style, it also applies an ethical one. Ethical leadership is an approach that emphasizes the application of moral and ethical principles in the decision-making process and interactions with its members. This leadership model aims to create a fair, transparent, and accountable environment, where ethical values are the basis for all actions and decisions such as religious values and morality with integrity through a personal and spiritual approach (Jia et al., 2022). Studies show ethical leadership can influence member behavior by applying clarity of values and moral behavior. Leaders who demonstrate ethical role models motivate members to emulate such behavior, creating a more ethical and productive organizational culture (Nazaruddin et al., 2021). In a crisis, ethical leaders also play an essential role by prioritizing the welfare of all parties through transparency and empathy (Ughulu, 2024).

Lecturer Professionalism Improvement Strategy

Lecturer professional development is crucial for improving the quality of higher education. Professional lecturers are expected to have high academic competence and the ability to adapt to changes in the world of education (Rohman et al., 2023). Professional development strategies include ongoing training, pedagogical skills development, and technology integration in teaching. Ongoing professional development is essential to ensure that lecturers remain relevant to developments in science and technology (Loeneto et al., 2022). One effective strategy for developing lecturer professionalism is through a structured training program.

This program should cover pedagogical, technological, and ethical aspects of education. The training that focuses on developing teaching skills and using technology can significantly improve the quality of lecturers' teaching (Lubkov, 2020). In addition, this training also increases lecturers' confidence in facing challenges in the classroom. Technology integration in education is another increasingly important strategy in today's digital era. Lecturers need to be trained to use practical digital learning tools and methods. The use of technology in the learning process not only makes it easier for

lecturers to deliver material but also increases student interactivity and engagement. Thus, mastery of technology is one of the indicators of lecturer professionalism that must be developed sustainably (Nelly et al., 2024).

In addition to training and technology integration, collaboration between lecturers is also an essential strategy in developing professionalism. Through collaboration, lecturers can share knowledge, experiences, and best practices in teaching (Hayes, 2022). Previous research shows that collaboration between lecturers can increase innovation in teaching and create a more supportive learning environment (Bernards, 2023). This collaboration can also be done through joint research and curriculum development that is more relevant to industry needs (Nguyen et al., 2022). Overall, the strategy for developing lecturer professionalism must be holistic and sustainable. Higher education institutions must commit to providing the resources and support needed for lecturer development (Djunaedi et al., 2023). By considering structured training, technology integration, and collaboration between lecturers, lecturer professionalism can increase, which will positively impact the quality of education received by students. This is in line with previous findings that lecturer professional development is an essential investment for the future of higher education (Hidayat et al., 2023).

Both institutions have similar lecturer professionalism development strategies, with different approaches. At UNHASy, professionalism development focuses on moral and ethical values rooted in Islamic education. Training and development programs include religious-based activities that help lecturers internalize these values in their teaching. Meanwhile, UNIPDU is more modern and flexible but emphasizes improving lecturer competence. This institution provides training programs that emphasize technical and academic skills and adaptation to technology. This does not rule out the possibility of similarities in the strategy of lecturer professionalism development, where both uphold the importance of values in lecturer development. However, UNHASy focuses more on religious values, while UNIPDU focuses more on practical skills. In addition, leaders at both institutions actively support and facilitate lecturer professionalism development, indicating that good leadership is essential to creating a productive learning environment.

IV. CONCLUSION

Leadership in higher education is crucial in determining the direction and quality of education, especially in the context of lecturer professionalism. In this study, two Islamic higher education institutions in Jombang, namely Hasyim Asy'ari University (UNHASy) and Darul Ulum University (UNIPDU) showed the same leadership style, transformational but with different approaches that influenced the improvement of lecturer professionalism. UNHASy applies leadership based on morality and religious values, while UNIPDU emphasizes an adaptive approach to educational innovation. These differences indicate that the two institutions have different strategies to improve lecturer professionalism. UNHASy focuses on character development based on Islamic values, while leadership at UNIPDU combines traditional values from Islamic boarding schools with educational innovation. Encouraging lecturers to develop technical skills and adapt to technological developments. This reflects how the cultural context and local values can influence how educational institutions manage lecturer leadership and professional development. Both leadership models also show the importance of institutional support in developing lecturer professionalism. UNHASy provides support

through religious activities and mentoring, while UNIPDU provides access to lecturers, such as technology training and modern resources. Such support is essential in creating a conducive environment for developing lecturer competencies, which will improve the quality of education provided to students. The findings of this study indicate that effective leadership can encourage lecturer professionalism through appropriate approaches. Therefore, exploring and developing leadership models that can accommodate increasingly complex educational needs is essential. Overall, the results of this study provide a significant contribution to understanding the role of leadership in developing lecturer professionalism in Islamic higher education. By identifying factors that influence lecturer professionalism, this study is expected to be the basis for developing better leadership policies and practices in higher education institutions in Indonesia.

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