LEADERSHIP IN ISLAMIC EDUCATION: THE ROLE OF AQIDAH-BASED PRINCIPLES IN SCHOOLS UNDER YAYASAN ISLAM KELANTAN

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Abstract
This article discusses educational leadership in Yayasan Islam Kelantan (YIK) schools by emphasizing the role of the principle of *'aqidah*as the foundation of Islamic leadership. The study highlights the implementation of the Kelantan Rabbani Education Policy (*Dasar Pendidikan Rabbani Kelantan*, DPRK), which is based on *tauhid* (monotheism), and its relationshipwiththedevelopmentofself-efficacyamong school communities.Thediscussion also elaborates on the concept of the *tauhid paradigm*, the leadership practices of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), and al-Ghazali's perspectives on educational leadership. Findings show that leadership based on *'aqidah*can enhance the quality of administration, buildstrongidentityandself-efficacyamongteachersandstudents,andnurtureaholisticand excellent educational organization. This study suggests that the principle of *'aqidah*should continue to be strengthened in educational leadership to ensure the well-being of the ummah in this world and the Hereafter.

 Keywords: Educational Leadership,Yayasan Islam Kelantan,Principle of'Aqidah,Self-Efficacy, Tauhid Paradigm

Introduction
Educational leadership is an important element in ensuring effective management and student achievement in schools. In the context of Yayasan Islam Kelantan (YIK), school leadership not onlyplaysaroleinmanagingacademicandadministrativeaspectsbutalsobearstheresponsibility of shaping students' character based on the principle of *'aqidah*and Islamic values. This aligns with the Kelantan Rabbani Education Policy (DPRK),whichplaces *tauhid*asthe primary foundation in human development. Therefore, this study examines leadership based on *'aqidah*and its relationship with the building of self-efficacy within the school community, while also exploring Islamic leadership models according to the Qur'an, the Sunnah, and the thoughts of Islamic scholars such as al-Ghazali.

In the field of education, leadership is crucial, especially in shaping a generation of students who can contribute positively to society. Educational leadership is evident in schools, which serve as the main platform in the education industry. High-quality leadership competence is essential in managing and administering organizations (Noh, Sabran, Abdullah, & Said, 2021). Yukl (2006) defines leadership as a process that is dynamicand highly complex. Sergiovanni (1998) describes leadership as the process of influencing followers to act together in order to achieve established goals. Bae and Park (2019) assert that quality administrators can influence and enhance subordinates' commitment to a higher level within the organization. The main factor behind the success of school management depends on school leadership. Moreover, good administrators are able to apply appropriate approaches according to various circumstances (Noh et al., 2021).

Contemporary leadership trends no longer focus merely on individual abilities, skills, or competencies, but rather emphasizeshared responsibility, a cultureof collaborative learning, and the development of leadership capacity a crossschools (Harris,2002). According to Senge(2006), administrators are individuals at various levels of an organization who are capable of understanding tasks and leading within their responsibilities. Furthermore, school leaders must ensure a positive working environment for teachers, while playing a significant role instimulating

the learning climate, setting the school tone, strengthening teachers' professionalism and morale, and being concerned about students' futures (Silam, Pang, &Lajium, 2020). Armstrong (2012) also views leadership as the process of inspiring subordinates to perform their tasks well(Murgaya& Hamid, 2020).

Yayasan Islam Kelantan Schools

Yayasan Islam Kelantan (YIK) is as tatutorybodyunder the Kelantan State Government. Since its establishment in 1983, YIK has been entrusted with managing religious schools, and by 2018, a total of 90 schools had come under its supervision. To ensure smooth management, YIK categorized schools into two types: Fully Aided and Partially Aided schools. Fully Aided schools receive financial support from the state government for teacher and staff salaries as well as development and utility expenses.

In 2006, YIK further divided schools into threecategories: Controlled Maahad, Selected Maahad, and Government Maahad (Ramli,2018). Partially Aided schools, however, only receive teacher salaries and allowances, while development and utility costs must be sourced externally, such as through donations and student fees. On August 12, 2008, the Kelantan State Government under the leadership of YAB Dato' BentaraSetia Tuan Guru HjNik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to register 20 SMUA schools with the Ministry of Education Malaysia (KPM) as Government-Aided Religious Schools (SABK). This entitled these schools to receive all locations from KPM, including staff and development support. For this study, SABK schools are categorized as SMUA (Ramli, 2018).

Kelantan Rabbani Education Policy(DPRK)

Inmanaging schools, YIK places the principle of'aqidahas a foundation in all aspects, including leadership and education. The Kelantan Rabbani Education Policy (DPRK) was launched as a reference framework. The DPRK establishes a clear philosophy: education is a continuous effort with Allah as its ultimate goal, carried out holistically and in balance (YIK, 2018). Its purpose is to shape noble individuals who are highly skilled, realistic, and able to contribute to the development and reformation of society, the nation, and the ummah, thereby achieving well-being in this world and the Hereafter (Umar, Musa, & Ibrahim, 2020).

The DPRK framework outlines seven objectives through nine core values, which are believed to guide Kelantan toward a fully Islamized education system (Yusoff,Ibrahim,&Jaafar,2018).The nine principles include knowledge for Allah, prioritization of knowledge and understanding, the nurturing of noble individuals, practice and dissemination of knowledge, continuous learning and research, societal development and reform, collective responsibility, alignment with contemporary reality, and knowledge sustainability (YIK, 2018).

Beyond routine teaching and learning(T&L)tasks,YIK teachers are also responsible for shaping students' character, behavior, and Islamic environment (*bi'ahsolehah*)(Umar, Musa,& Ibrahim, 2020).

Strong *'aqidah*is the foundation of life that influences the development of a Muslim's identity. According toal-Buti(2000),ProphetMuhammad(peacebeuponhim) was sent by Allahtopreach in Makkah, emphasizing'aqidahamongthefirstgenerationofMuslims(Jannah&Osman,2022). Yusuf al-Qardawi (1993) identified three fundamental principles of a life based on *'aqidah*or *tauhid*: faith, knowledge, and practice (Zin & Mohammad, 2018). Al-Ghazali emphasized that educators must act upon their knowledge, ensuring their actions align with their words ;knowledge is recognized by the heart, while deeds are evident to the eye (Ramlie&Hussin, 2017).

Leadership Based on '*Aqidah Tauhid*

Tauhid is the knowledge that affirms Allah as the One and Only, incomparable and Almighty (Muzaqi et al., 2018). It forms the basis of a Muslim's life and serves as the spiritual foundation guiding all actions, whether positive or negative (Halim, Ghani, & Bakar, 2019). Studies (Halim et al., 2019; Sarif, 2014) highlight *tauhid* as the foundation of Muslim leadership, known as the "Tauhid Paradigm," prominent in Islamic leadership. This paradigm integrates Islamic teachings into organizational activities and systems, ensuring all tasks are performed as acts of worship seeking Allah's pleasure.

The *tauhid* paradigm builds confidence grounded in the testimony of faith (*syahadah*), shaping understanding,emotions,thoughts,actions,anddecisions(Halimetal.,2019).Inprinciple,*tauhid* is the declaration and belief that there is no God but Allah and Muhammad is His Messenger (Afrizal, 2018). This *syahadah*—the first pillar of Islam—expresses exclusive devotion to Allah, recognizing that creation and the Creator cannot be equated (Hamidah, 2021; Siddiqi, 1979).

According to Ismail (1987) and Osman Bakar (2008), *tauhid* relates to one's relationship with Allah(*hablminAllah*)andwithfellowhumansandtheenvironment(*hablminal-nas*)(Hamidah, 2021). The world was created for human benefit under Islamic law, and while people are free to manage worldly resources, they must abide by Allah's rules, preventing corruption and destruction (Borhan, 2000).

Affandi Hassan (1992) stressed that *tauhid* serves as the core of a Muslim's '*aqidah*in planning, organizing, implementing, and evaluating management, as every action reflects one's faith (Hassan, 1992). Thus, organizations must be built on *tauhid*-based systems. With strong *tauhid*, individuals will fulfill their responsibilities sincerely, striving for excellence to attain Allah's pleasure (Hamidah, 2021). Furthermore, *tauhid* upholds justice within organizational systems, ensuring fairness in rights and responsibilities, regardless of rank or position (Mohamed, Ghani, & Basir, 2015).

Islamic Leadership

In any organization, especially Islamic ones, the principle of '*aqidah*must be embedded in administration and management (Takwil, 2020). Islamic leadership refers to leadership practices groundedin'*aqidah*,asprescribedintheQur'anandSunnah(NorS.F.,2022).IsmailNoor(2000) highlightedthreefoundationsofIslamicleadershipaspracticedbyProphetMuhammad(peacebe upon him): consultation (*syura*), justice, and freedom of speech (Mohammad et al., 2008).

Yasin, Ghani, and Jalal (2014) outlined six qualities of Prophet Muhammad's leadership: endurance and patience, noble character, justice in giving rights, self-control, courage, and physical and mental preparedness (Abedin,2021).The Prophet is the best model in all aspects of life, including leadership and administration, and remains a timeless guide for Muslims (A.Hamid & Sharif, 2020).

Every aspect of Islamic leadership must be guidedbyShari'ah, as stated in the Qur'an:

"Oyou who have believed, obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those in authority among you. And if you disagree over anything, refer it to Allah and the Messenger, if you should believe in Allah and the Last Day." (Qur'an 4:59)

Thereare four main principles in Islamic leadership: first, obedience to Allah; second, obedience

totheMessenger;third,obediencetoleadersaslongastheydonotviolateIslamiclaw;andfourth, referring to the Qur'an and Sunnah as the primary sources of legislation (Razak et al., 2020; Abidin, Noor, &Jaapar, 2021).

Muslim leaders must maintain a strong relationship with Allah while nurturing harmonious relations with people (AkademiPengurusanYaPEIM, 2010; A. Hamid & Sharif, 2020). The Islamic Leadership Model by Egel and Fry (2017) illustrates Islamic leadership principles, with the pillars of Islam as its foundation.
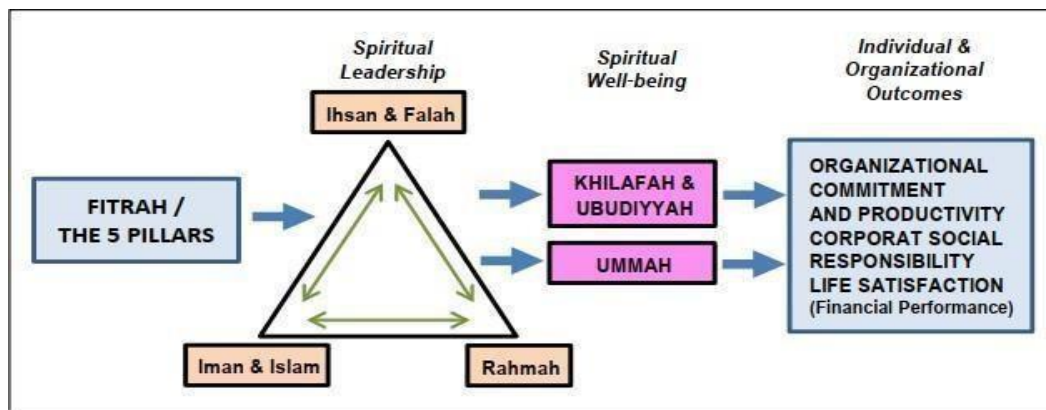
Islamic Leadership Model(Egel&Fry, 2017)

AmongtheIslamicqualitiesthatshouldbeinstilledinschooladministratorsarestrongfaith,deep and solid knowledge, a personality that can influence others, integrity (*siddiq*), trustworthiness (*amanah*), wisdom (*fatanah*), conveying the truth (*tabligh*), justice, farsightedness, and perseverance (Talib, 2020; Zin & Mohammad, 2018). An administrator must possess characteristics that encompass Islamic values, such as understanding and in ternalizing the sources of Islam—namely the Qur'an, Sunnah, *Ijma'* (consensus), and *Ijtihad* (independent reasoning); upholding the pillars of Islam; and believing in the six pillars of faith (*iman*) (Hassan, Muhamad, Abdullah, & Adham, 2011).

Leadership from al-Ghazali's Perspective

Al-Ghazaliplaces particular emphasis on teach erleadership, as teachers bear the responsibility of guiding and educating students to become useful and righteous individuals. According to al-Ghazali, leadership is a process of mobilizing a group of people toward a defined direction without coercion (Mohamad&Sahad, 2014).

Inhiswork*al-Iqtisadfial-I'tiqad*,al-Ghazalistated thatreligion and leadership are twin brothers that cannot be separated. Religion is the foundation, while leadership serves as its guardian (al-Ghazali, 2008; Razali et al., 2020). He strongly emphasized teachers' leadership in terms of manners (*adab*) and moral qualities in education (Aris & Mohamad, 2020). Educators must cultivate praiseworthy traits (*mahmudah*), embody both outward and inward *adab*, avoid blameworthy traits (*mazmumah*), and maintain a good relationship with Allah so that they may serve as role models for students (Marlina,2017).Al-Ghazali's thoughts here resemble trait theory, behavioral theory, and situational theory (Mohamad&Sahad, 2014).

Further more,al-Ghazali(1987) stated that Muslimshaveaduty to appoint administrators who lead based on *shari'ah*, rather than relying solely on rational intellect (Zakaria, 2019). A committed administrator will strive to resolve arising issues while also seeking advice from scholars.

Accordingtoal-Ghazali,administratorsmustinternalizespiritualelements—*al-ruh*(soul),*al-qalb*(heart),*al-'aql*(intellect),and *an-nafs*(self)(Suriani,2016)—which are interconnected andGod-centered, placing faith and religion as the primary goal while not neglecting material and human needs (Zin & Mohammad, 2018).

The principles of Islamic leadership are guided by the Qur'an and Sunnah, drawing from exemplaryleadershiptraitssuchas*shura*(consultation),authority,freedomofexpression,justice, ethics,transparency,communication,andpersonalmorality(al-Ghazali,2009;Suhana,2016;Zin & Mohammad, 2018). Moreover, al-Ghazali stressed that administrators must use their authority for the benefit of society rather than personal interests. Power, if misused, can lead to arrogance, greed, and even *shirk*. For al-Ghazali, leadership in education is a sacred trust (*amanah*) when carried out with responsibility and with the ultimate goal of attaining Allah's pleasure (Takwil, 2020).
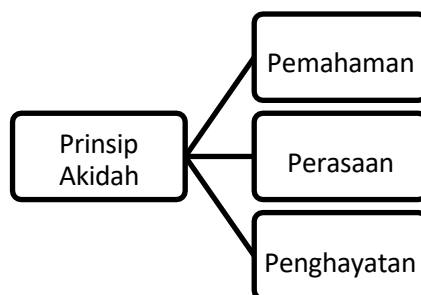
ThePrinciple of'AqidahModel

The Qur'an declares (al-Nur 24:52; al-An'am 6:162) that Islamic leadership must be founded on the principle of *aqidah* (faith) and *tauhid* (monotheism). Therefore, organizational leadershipmust understand how to apply this principle inadministration and management inorder to earn Allah's pleasure in this world and the Hereafter (Nor, 2022).

Several past studies support the concept of leadership based on *aqidah*and show that faith significantly influences the leadership quality of Muslim individuals and their subordinates. For example, the findings of Arkoubi (2008), Adnan (2007), and Elseigany (2005) revealed that organizations which applied *aqidah*-based leadership wereable to establish righteous institutions whileenhancing theirmembers'understanding and practiceof Islam (Mohamad,Safar,Embong, &Azahar,2014).Apiousadministratorshouldstrivefororganizationaldevelopmentinlinewith Islamic principles, ensuring societal well-being. Even small improvements in quality should be prioritized, as they can bring about major positive changes in the organization (Yusof & Sari, 2017).

Other research by Ahmad, Ajmain, Wan Hassan, and Zairus (2014) found that leadership in *SekolahMenengahKebangsaan Agama* (SMKA, National Religious Secondary Schools) successfully implemented *aqidah*principles by organizing various activities for the entire school community. Both school leadership identity and students' character were enhanced through the incorporation of *aqidah*principles and the introduction of Islamic ways of life (Mohamad, Safar, Embong, & Azahar, 2014).

According to Wan Liz Ozman Wan Omar (1996), adopting a *tauhid*-based approach in administration yields positive impacts such as open-mindedness, acting upon faith in Allah, building self-worth and confidence, humility, and patience (Ngadimana, Yacoobb, & Wahid, 2019).

A study by Zakaria et al. (2022) on the relationship between Islamic leadership and principals' self-efficacy revealed that principals 'Islamicleadership practices were at a moderate level,and there was a significant positive relationship between their leadership style and self-efficacy, albeit atalowlevel(Zakaria,Hamid,&Othman,2022).Sabarok's(2021) research also highlighted that Islamic leadership based on *shari'ah*rests upon three principles: the principle of vicegerency (*khalifah*), faith in leadership success, and obedience to *ulilamri*(legitimate authority) in governance (Mubarok, 2021).

According to Yunus (2008), an Islamic administrator can influence others and provide guidance toward achieving goals while striving for Allah's pleasure and success in this world and the Hereafter(Rahim, Norhayate,Zainol,& Ismail,2015). Islamic leadership is regardedas an act of worship,withProphetMuhammad(peacebeuponhim)astheultimateexample,anditsfoundation lies in *aqidah* (Aris&Mohamad, 2020).

Conclusion

In essence, the principle of *aqidah* emphasizes faithand belief in the unseen, particularly concepts ofsin, reward, paradise, hell, and other mattersofthe unseen. Thus, administrators who internalize *aqidah*will exercise greater caution and responsibility, avoiding injustice and unfairness toward subordinates. The principle of *aqidah*nurtures administrators who are just, understanding, and compassionate, with the awareness that every action in this world will be held accountable in the Hereafter. This conviction strengthens administrators to act fairly, pursue righteousness, develop strong character, and enhance subordinates' self-efficacy.

Asaresult,leadershiprootedin*aqidah*encouragessharedresponsibilityandtrustinsubordinates, allowing organizations to function effectively. Previous studies show that most administrators practice *aqidah*-based leadership well, though some—as noted by Zakaria et al. (2022)—still fall short in fully implementing it. More research linking *aqidah*with leadership theory is needed to find the best solutions for nurturing outstanding Islamic administrators, successful both in this world and the Hereafter.

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