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The Role of Servant Leadership in Improvement Efforts Strengthening Student Character Education

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Abstrak

Kata Kunci:

Character building;
Servant Leadership;
Moral Crisis.

Kepemimpinan melayani telah menjadi sorotan dalam konteks pendidikan sebagai pendekatan yang efektif dalam memperkuat pendidikan karakter peserta didik. Artikel ini menjelajahi peran penting kepemimpinan melayani dalam upaya penguatan pendidikan karakter, menyoroti urgensi pentingnya di tengah tantangan-tantangan modern dalam lanskap pendidikan global. Melalui tinjauan literatur yang menyeluruh, ditemukan bahwa praktik-praktik kepemimpinan melayani, seperti memberikan teladan, memfasilitasi pembelajaran moral, dan memperkuat hubungan interpersonal, berkontribusi signifikan dalam membentuk karakter yang baik pada peserta didik. Temuan-temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa pendekatan kepemimpinan melayani menciptakan kultur sekolah yang berorientasi pada pelayanan, saling menghargai, dan kolaboratif, yang mendukung pengembangan karakter yang positif pada peserta didik. Namun, tantangan-tantangan dalam mengimplementasikan pendekatan ini juga diidentifikasi, termasuk kebutuhan akan komitmen yang kuat, sumber daya yang memadai, dan pemahaman yang mendalam tentang konsep kepemimpinan melayani. Kesimpulannya, artikel ini menegaskan bahwa kepemimpinan melayani memiliki peran yang vital dalam upaya penguatan pendidikan karakter peserta didik. Dengan komitmen bersama dan strategi implementasi yang tepat, pendekatan ini memiliki potensi untuk memberikan kontribusi yang signifikan terhadap pembentukan individu yang berkarakter kuat, bertanggung jawab, dan berdaya dalam masyarakat. Penelitian lanjutan diperlukan untuk mengeksplorasi praktik-praktik kepemimpinan melayani yang paling efektif dan dampak jangka panjangnya terhadap pembentukan karakter dan kualitas lingkungan sekolah secara keseluruhan.

Abstract

Keywords: Character building; Servant Leadership; Moral Crisis.

Servant leadership has been in the spotlight in the educational context as an effective approach in strengthening students' character education. This article explores the important role of servant leadership in efforts to strengthen character education, highlighting the urgency of its importance amidst modern challenges in the global education landscape. Through a thorough literature review, it was found that servant leadership practices, such as setting an example, facilitating moral learning, and strengthening interpersonal relationships, contribute significantly to forming good character in students. These findings indicate that the servant leadership approach creates a school culture that is service-oriented, mutually respectful, and collaborative, which supports positive character development in students. However, challenges in implementing this approach were also identified, including the need for strong commitment, adequate resources, and a deep understanding of the concept of servant leadership. In conclusion, this article emphasizes that servant leadership has a vital role in efforts to strengthen students' character education. With joint commitment and the right implementation strategy, this approach has the potential to make a significant contribution to the formation of individuals with strong character, responsibility and empowerment in society. Further research is needed to explore the most effective servant leadership practices and their long-term impact on character formation and the overall quality of the school environment.

INTRODUCTION

The development of science and technology today presents several issues that need attention. It is undeniable that modern society has succeeded in developing knowledge and technology to be an alternative to solving everyday life problems. But in other conditions, advanced science and technology are less able to cultivate noble morality. Technological developments that occur in Indonesia today are followed by symptoms of moral decline that are very concerning. Noble morals such as

honesty, truth, justice, help, tolerance, and mutual love have begun to be eroded by misappropriation, deception, hostility, oppression, knocking each other down, fawning, taking the rights of others forcibly and at will, and other despicable deeds (Fitriani, 2019). The current moral crisis has not only hit adults, but has befallen students who are the next generation of the nation. Parents, teachers, and several parties involved in the educational, religious and social fields complain a lot about the behavior of some students who behave outside the limits of decency and decency, such as: drunkenness, brawls,

drug abuse, promiscuity and free sex, hedonistic lifestyles like Westerners, and so on (Fahdini et al., 2021). Thus, it becomes clear that the progress of science and technology also has a logical influence on the creation of conditions that reflect a moral crisis.

The moral crisis that occurs in Indonesia today can be overcome with relevant character education. Unbeknownst to our society, there is now a real and alarming crisis that has affected school-aged children and adolescents. The crisis referred to here is in the form of decreased responsibility, brawls between students, loss of creative power (creativity), decreased honesty, lack of manners, loss of respect, fading of tolerance, and so on which have contributed to the occurrence of conflicts at the lower level of the people and become social problems (Casika et al., 2023). There are so many factors that become the background, one of which is the education system in Indonesia.

Education which is a conscious and planned effort carried out in order to create a learning atmosphere and learning process so that students actively develop their potential to have religious spiritual strength, self-control, personality, noble moral intelligence, and skills needed by themselves, society, nation and state. It should be able to prevent the occurrence of the above problems. Because if it is in accordance with Law No. 20 Year 2003 concerning the National Education System, the function of education is to develop the

ability and shape the character and civilization of a dignified nation in order to educate the life of the nation, aiming to develop the potential of students to become human beings who believe and fear God Almighty, have noble character, healthy, knowledgeable, capable, creative, independent, and become democratic citizens and responsible (Law of the Republic of Indonesia No. 20 of 2003).

Character education is a conscious effort that is planned and directed through a learning environment for the growth and development of all human potentials who have a good personality, moral-moral character, and have a constructive positive effect on nature and society (Kurniawaty et al., 2022). Referring to the above understanding, character education has a basic function to develop a person's potential in order to live his life by being good. Within the scope of formal education, character education in schools serves to shape the character of students to become individuals who are noble, moral, tough, well-behaved, and tolerant (Triana, 2022). Zubaedi (2011) suggests three functions of character education in schools, including; function of formation and development of potential, function for strengthening and repair, filter function. Character education is used so that people can choose and sort out their own nation's culture, can filter other nations' cultures that are not in accordance with the character values and culture of their own virtuous nation.

To realize character education, principals as leaders in schools must be able to apply their leadership effectively, one of which is to be able to mobilize subordinates (principals, education staff, and students) to implement their main duties and functions in accordance with established competency standards (Nasution, 2023). In mobilizing followers (subordinates) the principal has leadership behavior as a diverse leadership style (style of leadership). One of the newest leadership styles today and much in demand by researchers is about servant leadership styles (Pala'langan, 2021).

One measure of a person's leadership capacity is his or her ability to manage change. This is important as future leaders are required to be pioneers of environmental change. Therefore, in order to become an ideal leader, he must first be able to lead himself, so that he is obeyed and respected by his followers or those he leads (Rahayu & Benjamin, 2020). Leadership is not actually a power but a trust, although each leader is given the power to govern and direct his followers in the achievement of common goals. Leadership as a mandate contains great responsibility in it and must be carried out effectively. Viewed in an Islamic perspective, it is a mandate and responsibility that is not only horizontally and formally accountable to the person it leads, but will also be accounted vertically-morally before Allah Almighty (As'Ad et al., 2021). This study aims to determine the Role of

Servant Leadership in this case the principal in an effort to improve the strengthening of student character education.

RESEARCH METHODS

The research method used is a literature review. A literature review is a systematic approach to reviewing and synthesizing relevant literature from a variety of sources to develop a deep understanding of a research topic. In the context of this article, the literature review will be used to investigate previous studies related to the role of servant leadership in strengthening student character education. This approach allows researchers to evaluate and present significant findings from the relevant literature to support arguments and conclusions in journal articles.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The phenomenon of moral crisis

The era of globalization facilitates the entry of outside cultures into our country, both positive and negative cultures. The entry of foreign culture is very influential on the behavior and morals of the Indonesian nation. Indirectly, it can cause a moral crisis in society. The most vulnerable to moral crisis are adolescent children. Teenagers who experience a moral crisis will usually ignore the applicable rules and violate the norms in their environment. The most influential thing in this adolescent moral crisis is the social environment and the

development of the times. Other factors that can affect the decline in adolescent morale are the teenager's family, the environment where he lives, the school environment and friends. (Bahri, 2015) Technological developments that occur in Indonesia today are followed by symptoms of moral decline that are very concerning. Noble morals such as honesty, truth, justice, help, tolerance, and mutual love have begun to be eroded by misappropriation, deception, hostility, oppression, tearing each other down, fawning, taking the rights of others forcibly and at will, and other despicable deeds. The current moral crisis has not only hit adults, but has befallen students who are the next generation of the nation. Parents, teachers, and some parties involved in the educational, religious and social fields complain a lot about the behavior of some students who behave outside the limits of decency and decency, such as: drunkenness, brawls, drug abuse, promiscuity and free sex, hedonistic lifestyle like Westerners, and so on. Thus, it becomes clear that the progress of science and technology also has a logical influence on the creation of conditions that reflect a moral crisis.

The Urgency of Character Education

The term character comes from the Greek, *charassein*, meaning to engrave. Thus, forming a character is likened to carving on a stone whose implementation is not easy. From this original meaning then the understanding of character develops into a special sign

or pattern of behavior (Suyadi, 2013). In the Big Dictionary Indonesian, character is defined as character; psychological, moral or ethical qualities that distinguish a person from others; character (KBBI, 2008). According to Scerenko (Samani, 2012) defines character as attributes or traits that form and distinguish personal traits, ethical traits, and mental complexity of a person, group or nation. Character according to (Bahri, 2022) is a relatively stable personal trait in individuals that is the basis for the appearance of behavior in high standards of values and norms.

Education is an effort to mature humans to create a condition desired by society. From the understanding of education and character above, the concept of character education emerged. According to (Prabandari, 2020) character education is "an effort to educate children to make wise decisions and practice them in everyday life, so that they can make a positive contribution to their environment". Character education is the process of providing guidance for participants/students to become whole people (Mawikere, 2020) Without us realizing it, there is currently a real and worrying crisis even it has affected children and adolescents who are still of school age. The crisis referred to here is in the form of decreased responsibility, brawls between students, loss of creative power (creativity), decreased honesty, lack of manners, loss of respect, fading of tolerance, and so on which have contributed to the occurrence of

conflicts at the lower level of the people and become social problems. This condition shows that character education in schools, which has been developed through religious education and civic education, has failed to form students with character. Because religious and civic education only touches on the level of recognition of norms or values, and not yet at the level of internalization and concrete actions in everyday life. In other words, religious and civic education emphasizes cognitive aspects and tends to ignore affective and psychomotor aspects that are precisely at the core of value learning. If this is allowed to persist then the gap between knowledge and behavior widens. The phenomenon of multidimensional crisis and weak religious and civic education indicates that strengthening character education is absolutely necessary so that the next generation of young people to lead the nation can be saved from moral damage and multidimensional crisis.

Character education has a basic function to develop a person's potential in order to live his life by being kind.

Within the scope of formal education, character education in schools serves to shape the character of students in order to become individuals who are noble, moral, tough, well-behaved, and tolerant. Zubaedi (2011) suggests three functions of character education in schools, including:

1. The function of formation and development of potential. So that learners are able to develop their

potential to think well, have a good conscience, behave well, and be virtuous.

2. Functions for reinforcement and repair. Improve and strengthen the role of individuals, families, educational units, communities, and governments to carry out their responsibilities and participate in developing the potential of groups, agencies, or society in general.
3. Filter function. Character education is used so that people can choose and sort out their own nation's culture, can filter other nations' cultures that are not in accordance with the character values and culture of their own virtuous nation.

Servant Leadership

Leadership is a person's ability to influence others which is generally through motivation to work in accordance with applicable goals and objectives. As a manager or leader, it is commonly known that the leadership style carried out will greatly affect how the behavior of employees / subordinates works to get to the goals or goals that have been made. Being a leader of the "present age" is very different from leading in the era of the 1970-2000s. A leader not only uses his power, but also uses influence to move others. In carrying out his role, a leader will be faced with all kinds of characters, behaviors and levels of personality maturity of his subordinates.

Leadership caters to a leadership style that emphasizes the importance of aspirations for the organization rather than ambitions for specific people, collaboration, humility and working towards positive results. It is that in leadership serving not only looks at leadership style, but philosophy of life. (Bakry & Syamril, 2021) Servant leadership is a paradoxical approach to leadership, because it challenges traditional beliefs about leadership and influence. Servant leadership emphasizes that leaders should pay attention to the needs of followers, help students develop their full capacities and empower students. (Muhtadi & Kusumastuti, 2020) Servant leadership can embody effective leadership. Researchers indicate that servant leaders can actually be formed or nurtured through various training and experiences over a period of time in their lifetime. (Gandolfi & Stone, 2018), revealed that: "a leader who is not someone who has been born for it, but it takes hard work and the right environment to be able to learn and grow into an effective leader". This means that personality behavior can be learned and continue to be developed with strong determination. Servant leadership is a leadership that arises sincerely from the heart to serve (Nasaruddin, 2018). Choices that arise because of the voice in the heart will shape the desire to become a leader. The difference in manifestations given to perform a service is to ensure that the needs of others can be met effectively,

then make subordinates become individuals who have maturity, health, freedom, and autonomy who later these students can become servant leaders (servant leadership) next.

Servant leadership was conceived by Robert Greenleaf, a former AT&T executive (1904-1990) called servant leadership. Servant leadership is built from two terms are "leader and servant (servant)". The two terms are "Oxymoron" because playing two different roles at one time is "serving and leading". Service leadership is one way of connecting others to serve needs and promote personal growth, while also strengthening the organization. (Hoch, Bommer, Dulebohn, & Wu, 2018) states that servant leadership is a leadership that starts from a sincere feeling that arises from the heart that wants to serve, is to be the first party to serve. That choice that comes from a heart then presents a desire to be a leader. From this opinion, it shows that servant leadership is an attitude of leaders who serve, love and prioritize the interests of their subordinates rather than their interests, in order to create a more caring and more effective organization. Leadership (Sallis, 2014) servant leadership, leaders influence and move subordinates to have responsibilities or commitments, establish and maintain effective relationships by upholding human values, have a spirit of service, willing to listen to criticism and suggestions of others, be empathetic, build subordinate morale in achieving organizational goals.

According to Spears, leaders who put service first begin with a person's natural sense of wanting to serve and to put service first. Furthermore, consciously, this choice brings aspiration and encouragement in leading others. In addition to influencing how employees behave, managers must certainly master things such as management that is usually needed to overcome complexity by making rules by preparing formal plans, designing a strict organizational structure, then monitoring the results that have been done by comparing them with previously established plans. Then the management style in terms of leading and serving in harmony, and there is interaction with the environment. A servant leader is someone who has the strength to serve and lead, the most important thing is to be able to combine the two to strengthen each other positively (Trompenaars and Voerman).

From some of the above understandings, there are ten characteristics of servant leadership (Spears, 2002: 27-29), which are as follows:

1. Listening. Servant leaders listen attentively to others, identify and help clarify the wishes of the group, as well as listen to their own inner voice;
2. Empathy. Servant leaders are those who seek to understand colleagues and are able to empathize with others;
3. Servant leaders are able to create emotional healing and connection with themselves, or relationships with others, because relationships are a force for transformation and integration;
4. Awareness. Awareness to understand issues involving ethics, power, and values. View the situation from a balanced position that is more integrated;
5. Servant leaders seek to convince others rather than force obedience. This is one of the most distinguishing things between traditional authoritarian models and servant leadership;
6. Conceptualization The ability to see problems from a conceptualization perspective means thinking long-term or visionary on a broader basis;
7. Observant or meticulous foresight in understanding lessons from the past, current realities, and possible consequences of decisions for the future;
8. Openness (stewardship). Emphasize openness and persuasion to build trust from others;
9. Commitment to the growth of people. Responsibility to make efforts in improving the professional growth of employees and the organization;
10. Building a community. Identify ways to build community.

Thus, the main characteristic that distinguishes servant leadership from other leadership models is that the

desire to serve is present before the desire to lead. Furthermore, those who have leadership qualities will become leaders. While the first and foremost priority of servant leadership is on the development of subordinates who produce added value for customers, then the creation of customer satisfaction followed by continuous success.

CONCLUSION

Servant leadership has been proven to have a significant role in efforts to strengthen student character education. Within this framework, this approach offers a holistic and sustainable approach to shaping individuals who have strong moral and ethical values. Through the literature review conducted in this article, it can be concluded that servant leadership promotes a school culture that is service-oriented, respectful, and collaborative, which supports positive character building in students. Findings from the literature suggest that servant leadership practices, such as setting an example, facilitating moral learning, and strengthening interpersonal relationships, can help create an educational environment that supports the development of good character in learners. However, challenges in implementing this approach were also identified, including

the need for commitment from all stakeholders, adequate resources, and a deep understanding of the concept of servant leadership. Thus, to maximize the impact of leadership serving in strengthening character education, integrated and sustainable strategies are needed. This includes training and developing school leaders and staff in the concepts and practices of servant leadership, as well as strengthening cooperation between schools, families, and communities in support of character education. In this context, future research may involve more in-depth empirical studies to identify the most effective serving leadership practices in the context of character education. This research can also explore the long-term impact of a servant leadership approach on the character building of learners and the quality of the school environment as a whole. Thus, the conclusion of this article confirms that servant leadership plays an important role in efforts to strengthen student character education. Through shared commitment and strategic implementation, this approach has the potential to make a significant contribution to the formation of individuals with integrity, responsibility, and empowerment.

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