Analysis of Students' Perceptions about Early Leadership Education

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Abstract. *Forming a good and ideal leader is not done instantly, it needs to be done early. This study aims to examine the importance of leadership education for children, the urgency of implementing such education in children starting early, its proper implementation, and the impact of early leadership education according to the perceptions of postgraduate students of Islamic education management. They are using descriptive qualitative research methods, with the type of case study research located at Postgraduate UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang. Using data collection techniques in the form of interviews, observation and documentation, and data analysis techniques with steps: 1) Data reduction, 2) Presentation of data, and 3) Conclusion of research data The results of this study show that the application of leadership education from an early age is important for children to become ideal leaders. Leadership education has a positive impact on the character and personality of children. Forming an attitude of responsibility, courage, self-confidence, caring for the surroundings, and training children to be able to find solutions to the problems they face. The steps taken also need to be adjusted to the age, ability, and thinking pattern of the child. The role of the people around him, namely, parents, family, teachers, peers, and the surrounding environment is an important part that supports the success of the leadership education process. The conclusion of this research is to increase our understanding of leadership education from an early age. And also increase knowledge about the steps to form a cadre of cadres of national leaders.*

Keywords: children, education, leadership, student perceptions

Abstrak. Membentuk pemimpin yang baik dan ideal tidak dilakukan secara instant, perlu dilakukan sejak dini. Tujuan penelitian ini yaitu untuk mengkaji pentingnya pendidikan kepemimpinan bagi anak, urgensi pelaksanaan pendidikan tersebut pada anak yang dimulai sejak dini, pelaksanaannya secara tepat dan dampak dari pendidikan kepemimpinan sejak dini menurut persepsi mahasiswa pascasarjana manajemen pendidikan islam. Menggunakan metode penelitian kualitatif deskriptif, dengan jenis penelitian studi kasus yang berlokasi di Pascasarjana UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang. Menggunakan teknik pengumpulan data berupa wawancara, observasi dan dokumentasi.Dan teknik analisa data dengan langkah-langkah: 1)Reduksi data, 2)Penyajian data, dan 3)Penarikan kesimpulan data-data penelitian. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa penerapan pendidikan kepemimpinan sejak dini penting dilakukan untuk bekal bagi anak agar menjadi pemimpin yang ideal. Pendidikan kepemimpinan memberikan dampak yang positif pada karakter dan kepribadian anak. Membentuk sikap tanggung jawab, keberanian, rasa percaya diri, peduli terhadap sekitarnya serta melatih anak untuk dapat menemukan solusi atas masalah yang dihadapinya. Langkah-langkah yang dilakukan juga perlu disesuaikan dengan usia, kemampuan dan pola berfikir anak. Dan juga peran orang-orang di sekitarnya yaitu, orang tua, keluarga, guru, teman-teman sebaya dan lingkungan sekitar sebagai bagian penting yang mendukung keberhasilan proses pendidikan kepemimpinan. Kesimpulan penelitian ini untuk menambah pemahaman kita tentang pendidikan kepemimpinan sejak dini. Dan juga

menambah pengetahuan mengenai langkah-langkah pembentukan kader kader pemimpin bangsa.

Kata Kunci: anak , kepemimpinan, persepsi mahasiswa, pendidikan

INTRODUCTION

In the current era of continuous change, organizations, whether companies or educational institutions, strive to evolve to keep pace with modern advancements. An organization that fails to respond swiftly to environmental changes will likely experience suboptimal resource integration and eventually fade away (Bashori, 2019). Addressing this requires a competent and quality leader capable of managing the organization to meet the challenges of contemporary society (Darma & Banurea, 2019). Leadership forms the foundation of an organization's operation. The role and ability of a leader to create a positive work environment significantly influence team performance, which in turn impacts the achievement of established goals (Bashori et al., 2020). An organization needs a leader who not only understands leadership but can also implement changes within the organization. The success of an organization largely depends on how its leader manages it (Nurkarim, 2023). Therefore, organization and leadership are inseparable.

An effective leader possesses competence in their leadership within an organization. Leadership competence is essential because it underpins the success of organizational leadership (Silam et al., 2020). Competence encompasses the behavior, qualifications, or capabilities of an individual, both qualitatively and quantitatively, leading to the desired outcomes. A popular view of competence includes experience, wisdom, and the ability to perform tasks effectively and efficiently (Beram et al., 2020). Competence is based on knowledge, skills, and attitudes (Tjahyanti & Chairunnisa, 2021). Competence differentiates one individual from another, especially in leadership. Leaders with the appropriate leadership competencies can achieve better performance compared to those lacking such competencies (Beram et al., 2023). In this era of constant change, leaders face increasing challenges and must balance these changes effectively.

A leader must be of high quality, a trait that is not visibly apparent but can be felt through their leadership style and personality. A leader should be knowledgeable, willing to learn, and understand the philosophy of life (Rodliyah, 2019). Quality and character are essential attributes of a leader. Character instills confidence in a leader. A military literature emphasizes the importance of character by stating, "Character is a potent combination of

strategy," meaning that character is a powerful strategic tool. Thus, it is evident that character and leadership credibility are crucial in determining an organization's success (Setyaki & Al Farqan, 2021). A leader's character reflects their behavior and leadership style (Hendriks et al., 2020). According to Nursalam and others, a leader should possess qualities such as self-awareness, broad insight, responsibility, being an agent of change, and being a developer (Jannah et al., 2021). According to Nursalam and others, a leader should possess qualities such as self-awareness, broad insight, responsibility, being an agent of change, and being a developer

In Islam, the ideal leadership example is the Prophet Muhammad (SAW). The characteristics of an Islamic leader, as exemplified by the Prophet, include honesty, justice, high credibility, leading by example, and consistency in words and actions (Yani, 2021). The key characteristics of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) in leadership are: shiddiq (truthfulness), amanah (trustworthiness), fathanah (wisdom), and tabligh (communication). Shiddiq means a leader must speak the truth and uphold it. Amanah signifies that a leader must be responsible and trustworthy in their duties. Fathanah indicates a leader who is intelligent, wise, and competent. Tabligh involves a leader having excellent communication skills (Wijokongko & Al-Hafizd, 2020). Additionally, the practice of shura (consultation) was a hallmark of the Prophet's leadership, consistently applied in state affairs, warfare, and the welfare of the community (Olifiansyah et al., 2020).

The current phenomenon indicates that the character and morals of the younger generation, who are the future leaders of the nation, are deteriorating in quality. This decline is largely influenced by globalization, which has negatively impacted the character and morals of children (Harefa, 2022). Saodah et al. (2020) note that the easy accessibility of the internet for children can significantly influence their character and morality. The abundance of low-quality content has a detrimental impact on children, both directly and indirectly. Another effect of globalization is the influx of foreign cultures, which influences changes in children's morals, speech patterns, behavior, respect, and tolerance towards their environment. Such foreign cultures tend to undermine local wisdom and nationalism among the youth (Wiguna & Dewi, 2022). Additionally, Hibatullah (2022), points out that the ease of technology has led the younger generation to focus more on their virtual identities. This shift results in decreased attention to their surroundings, diminishing communal values such as mutual help, cooperation, and familial bonds within society.

Character education plays a crucial role in shaping the future leaders of the nation. However, the current issue, particularly in the education sector, is moral degradation (Arliman S et al., 2022). Moral degradation refers to a negative shift in attitudes and behaviors of children, encompassing personality, ethics, speech, and even dress code. This issue is serious in the education world, with numerous violations related to moral degradation occurring in schools (Revalina et al., 2023).). One cause of moral degradation is the imprudent use of the internet, often without supervision from close family members (Meinanto et al., 2022). Another cause is the lack of parental attention and supervision due to their busy schedules or other factors (Rahmi & Januar, 2019). Additionally, choosing the wrong social environment contributes to moral degradation (Jannah, 2023). To address the rising moral degradation among the youth, high-quality character education from an early age is essential, involving family, school, and community environments.

Character education, especially in leadership, is an aspect that requires significant attention. This type of education will provide the young generation, who are future leaders of the nation, with the foundation to become ideal, character-driven, and moral leaders in the future (Rohman, 2021). Becoming an ideal leader must start early. A quality leader is not created instantly but developed through a long process. Leadership qualities need to be instilled from an early age, with support from family, school, and the surrounding environment (Sukatin, Oktafia, et al., 2022).

There are several theories of leadership, each explaining how a leader's behavior can influence the motivation, performance, and achievements of their team members in specific situations. These theories include social, genetic, ecological, and situational leadership theories. Social Leadership Theory posits that individuals are not born as leaders but become leaders through effort, self-preparation, education, and practice (Wahyudin, 2018). Genetic Leadership Theory claims that "leaders are born, not made," suggesting that leadership is an innate talent rather than a developed skill (Sagala, 2021). Ecological Leadership Theory is a combination of natural leadership talent and leadership behaviors shaped through education and training (Sukatin, Marcela, et al., 2022). Situational Leadership Theory asserts that leadership depends on the situation, with leaders emerging according to the specific needs and circumstances (Angraeni, 2021). Understanding and integrating these theories can help in cultivating effective leadership qualities in the young generation, preparing them to handle various situations and challenges they may face as future leaders.

Several studies have discussed leadership education from various backgrounds. Alamin (2020) examined the implementation of leadership education at Pondok Pesantren Gontor, highlighting methods such as guidance, training, assignments, habituation, supervision, role modeling, and approaches. Muslimah (2022) explored the role of the boarding school's management in instilling leadership qualities, identifying supporting factors like self-awareness and the influence of peers or teachers, as well as hindrances from oneself and peers. Anwar HM et al. (2023) studied students' understanding of leadership and the methods to develop leadership qualities using a quantitative approach. Febriyanti et al. (2021) focused on the goals of character education in vocational higher education to develop students' affective potential as cultured individuals, instill leadership and responsibility, and cultivate independence, creativity, and commendable behavior. Rohman (2021) discussed the process of nurturing leadership qualities in children from an early age through simple activities conducted at schools in the Bandar Mataram district. Sukatin et al. (2022) researched leadership education in schools to foster social competence, wisdom, courage, problem-solving, decision-making abilities, and the capacity to influence others. Rahayu et al. (2022) examined the importance of leadership qualities in enhancing early childhood communication skills and building children's confidence.

These studies have explored leadership education in various contexts, from Islamic boarding schools to universities, extracurricular activities, and primary schools. They serve as references for this research. Despite these studies, there is still a lack of research on leadership education for children. This research aims to analyze the perceptions of master's students in Islamic educational management regarding early leadership education. It discusses the definition of early leadership education, its importance for children, the urgency of its implementation from an early age, how it can be effectively applied, the impact of leadership education on children, and the parties involved in the educational process. This research is expected to provide a foundation and contribute to the development of leadership education for the younger generation, shaping ideal and quality leaders who can advance the nation.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research employs a descriptive qualitative method, focusing on natural objects. The study aims to reveal the uniqueness of the object, processes, social interactions, and problem findings (Purnasari, 2021). The research is a

case study located at the postgraduate program of UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang. A case study is a research type where activities, programs, or events are examined in-depth to obtain accurate data or information regarding these aspects. The case being studied is a current phenomenon, not a past one (Fadli, 2021).

There are two sources of data: primary and secondary. The primary data source for this research is the master's students in Islamic educational management, specifically focusing on Class A, Semester 1. Secondary data sources include documentation, texts, files, and other documents related to the research. Data collection techniques involve interviews with the main research subjects, observation, and documentation. For the interviews with several students, the researcher prepares a research instrument consisting of written questions based on several indicators.

These indicators are structured based on the discussion topics and developed into several questions. The indicators include: 1) Definition of early leadership education from the students' perspective: This aims to understand students' comprehension of leadership education. 2) Urgency of implementing leadership education for young children: This aims to determine why leadership education should be implemented early in children's lives. 3) Impact on children after implementing leadership education, key supportive factors, and examples: This aims to identify the effects of leadership education on children, the key factors supporting its implementation, and to provide examples. 4) Key stakeholders involved in implementing leadership education: This aims to identify the individuals or groups responsible for the successful implementation of leadership education. 5) Examples of leadership education practices for young children: This aims to identify effective leadership activities that can be implemented for young children, tailored to their abilities and competencies..

In data analysis techniques, the researcher refers to the Miles and Huberman model (Haryono, 2023) which includes: 1) Data Reduction: Adjusting the data to align with the research focus. 2) Data Presentation: Presenting the data in the form of descriptions, narrative texts, and similar formats. 3) Conclusion Drawing: Drawing conclusions from the research data, which is the final step in data analysis. After the researcher collects data on early leadership education through several processes until data saturation is achieved, the researcher moves on to the next stage of research, which is data analysis. The stages of data analysis conducted by the researcher are as follows: Data Organization: Data obtained from interviews with several respondents regarding the previously mentioned indicators of early

leadership education. Data Presentation: Presenting the data in a narrative text format. Conclusion Drawing: Drawing conclusions from the data in accordance with the research questions, thereby addressing the research objectives.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This research employs aims to reveal the uniqueness of the object, processes, social interactions, and problem findings. To answer the aims of the problem, this article will describe it through 2 stages, namely students' perception of early leadership education and the implementation of early leadership education according to student perceptions.

1. Students' Perception of Early Leadership Education

In this study, ten students were selected as subjects to explore their perceptions and understanding of early leadership education. The findings are summarized as follows:

Definition of Leadership Education

Through interviews with several students, definitions of leadership education were gathered based on the perceptions of Islamic education management students at UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim. From interviews with ten students, three individuals—SQ, SL, and FN—defined leadership education as a formal or non-formal educational process where individuals learn how to influence, coordinate, organize, and motivate others towards shared goals. They emphasized that leadership education transforms individuals for the better, preparing them to become future leaders. They emphasized the importance of self-leadership before leading others. Another student, NA, described leadership education as training in personal responsibility, starting with being accountable to oneself.

Interviews with the remaining six students—NP, AH, RH, FA, KH, and UR—revealed that leadership education aims to mold leaders according to the criteria of effective leadership. They emphasized that leadership education is a developmental process aimed at enhancing skills, capabilities, knowledge, attitudes, and character essential for leadership. This includes fostering communication skills, decision-making abilities, developing a sense of responsibility, and empathy towards others, all crucial for becoming a competent and ideal leader.

According to Sahadi et al. (2020) an ideal leader should possess strong leadership skills and a high sense of responsibility towards tasks and obligations. Similarly, Sofiarini (2020) emphasizes that effective

leadership involves organizing, influencing, motivating, guiding, nurturing, and directing team members towards achieving predetermined goals. These theoretical perspectives align with the findings regarding the attitudes and skills required of a leader.

In conclusion, the definitions of leadership education derived from the interviews support existing theories on effective leadership. These definitions highlight that leadership education is a series of educational processes aimed at forming competent and ideal leaders who can effectively organize and motivate their followers while responsibly fulfilling their duties. Through such education, leaders can develop the necessary attitudes and skills to become competent and effective in their roles.

The Importance of Early Leadership Education

Leadership education is crucial for shaping future national leaders of high quality. Actions taken at an early age will yield the best results, similar to the efforts to develop future leaders. Interviews with several students about their perceptions of why leadership education should be implemented early revealed several key points. Students NP, FN, AH, FA, and UR emphasized that leadership education is essential and should begin early to cultivate good leadership qualities in children. These qualities include social skills, good communication, confidence, decision-making abilities, teamwork, empathy, and other characteristics inherent in a leader. Such traits do not develop instantly but require a process that starts early. Initially, a child should be able to lead themselves before leading their peers.

Furthermore, interviews with SQ, NA, SL, RH, and KH highlighted that early leadership education is vital as it provides a foundation and preparation for the child's future. It also establishes habits that will carry into adulthood. Even if the child does not become a leader of many, they will at least be able to lead themselves and their family. Early leadership education helps children build a strong foundation for their future leadership development.

It can be concluded that implementing leadership education for children is essential to start from an early age. Developing good leadership characteristics cannot be done spontaneously; it requires a lengthy process and time. Furthermore, the outcomes of early leadership education will serve as a valuable foundation for the child's future. They will have the opportunity to learn, practice, and grow into leadership roles, preparing themselves to face challenges and become effective leaders in various aspects of their lives. This conclusion aligns with Salu's (2022) research, which states that each child has the desire and potential

to become a leader. Therefore, developing leadership skills in children should begin early. This potential needs to be supported and continuously nurtured, as it will form the basis and foundation for children to create dreams and goals in their lives.

The Impact of Early Leadership Education on Children

Every human activity has its impacts, whether positive or negative, and educational activities are no exception. This section presents the impacts of instilling leadership qualities in children from an early age, based on interviews with students of Islamic educational management. Students SQ, NA, NP, SL, AH, and KH highlighted that leadership education fosters a sense of responsibility in children. Starting from self-responsibility and extending to accountability for their tasks, early leadership education cultivates habitual responsibility. FN and RH emphasized that leadership education trains children to face and solve problems, thus enhancing their problem-solving skills. When confronted with a problem in the future, they will know the actions to take and how to resolve it.

According to SQ, NA, and AH, another impact of leadership education is the development of empathy and awareness of their surroundings. This makes children more sensitive to what they see and experience, fostering critical thinking and responsiveness to their environment. SL, RH, and KH noted that leadership education promotes courage and self-confidence in children, foundational qualities for future leaders to effectively manage their teams. NA and KH also pointed out that leadership education shapes children into honest, patient, wise, and trustworthy individuals. These traits are crucial for building trust among followers. Such characteristics align with the leadership principles taught by the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) to Muslims. As Putri (2020) stated, the Quran and Hadith frequently mention humans as leaders (khalifah) on earth. A leader must possess good qualities to serve as a role model (uswah hasanah). In Islam, a leader should be faithful, honest, ethically upright, patient, humble, and trustworthy, embodying the four attributes of the Prophet: truthfulness (siddiq), communication (tabligh), intelligence (fathanah), and trustworthiness (amanah).

According to Crossan (Rupčić, 2021) several key characteristics define a quality leader: accountability, readiness to accept consequences, resilience, bravery, goal orientation, cooperativeness, humanitarian spirit, patience, wisdom, and trustworthiness. This study identifies the impacts of leadership education on the development of children's character and personality. Based on interview results, several students perceive that leadership education fosters a sense of responsibility in children, making

them accountable and ready to accept the consequences of their choices. Additionally, when faced with a problem, children trained in leadership are capable of finding appropriate solutions and exhibit the courage to resolve issues. Leadership education also enhances children's sensitivity and concern for their surroundings, instilling a humanitarian spirit and nurturing their empathy. It promotes bravery and self-confidence, and most importantly, shapes them into honest, patient, and trustworthy individuals from an early age. If children are not taught to be honest, patient, and trustworthy from a young age, they may easily resort to dishonesty and disregard their responsibilities as they grow older.

Stakeholders in Children's Leadership Education

In the context of leadership education, various parties play essential roles in the process. According to interviews with ten postgraduate students in Islamic education management, all students unanimously agreed on the key stakeholders in leadership education: parents or family, teachers and schools, and the surrounding environment and peers.

Supporting this study, Rodiyana and Puspitasari (2019) emphasize that parents have the most significant role in developing children's leadership because all education begins at home. Parenting styles and the behavior exhibited by parents in front of their children greatly influence the formation of the child's character and personality. Children observe and emulate their parents' behavior. Rozi and Wahyuni (2019) also highlight that parenting is a parent's responsibility toward their child's growth and development. This includes physical and psychological treatment within the family environment from birth until adulthood. Therefore, it is crucial for parents to pay attention to their parenting methods to nurture children with good character.

Furthermore, Kezia (2021) argues that instilling leadership character values can be effectively carried out through school culture and the involvement of school stakeholders. In the mission of shaping children's attitudes and personalities as a step in preparing the younger generation to serve the nation, collaboration between parents, teachers, and community members is crucial to achieving this goal. Education from parents alone is insufficient; it must be supported by school learning and a supportive community environment. Effective education in the school environment requires the backing of the family environment, particularly parents, since children spend most of their time at home. Conversely, good education at home also requires monitoring by teachers at school to ensure that children remain consistent in their development

2. *Implementation of Early Leadership Education According to Student Perceptions*

The implementation of leadership education for children differs significantly from that for adults. Specific steps must be tailored to the age, abilities, and cognitive development of children. The following interview results explore students' perceptions of the appropriate steps for implementing leadership education from an early age. According to students SQ, FN, AH, FA, and KH, early leadership education can begin by teaching children about responsibility through small tasks. For example, this includes taking care of their belongings, returning items to their proper places after use, and completing their tasks on time and thoroughly. This aligns with the findings of Khoirun et al. (2022) who stated that methods for developing independence and a sense of responsibility in children can involve both programmed and spontaneous habitual activities.

Habitualizing responsible behavior in children can be implemented through simple, repetitive routines in school. An example of instilling a sense of responsibility is teaching children to return toys or items to their original places. When these routines are repeated consistently, they become ingrained in the child's behavior. According to the research of Kadi and Diyah Hariyanti (2023) fostering independence in children leads to a strong sense of responsibility towards themselves and their activities. This responsibility and independence are evident in how well children can complete their tasks without relying on others.

Interview results from NA and RH indicate that implementing leadership education can be done by appointing children as class leaders responsible for coordinating their peers. Through this delegation, children practice influencing, organizing, managing, and mobilizing their classmates. These are the primary duties of a class leader, entrusted by the homeroom teacher to coordinate their peers.

Additionally, forming a class organization structure with roles such as class leader, deputy leader, secretary, treasurer, and other positions provides teamwork training for children. Each role comes with specific responsibilities, and children entrusted with these roles have responsibilities similar to those of the class leader. Through this class organization structure, they will learn about deliberation, solidarity, and teamwork. This serves as a simple and appropriate example of leadership education for children.

From this research, it is evident that children's leadership education can be carried out both at home and at school. This statement aligns with Amalia's (2022) view that leadership education at home can involve daily routines and small habits. In this context, parents serve as

the primary role models to instill discipline in children. Children naturally mimic and learn from what their parents do and teach them. Implementing leadership education in schools also corresponds with Alfi (2021) perspective that school-based leadership education can be executed through various programs designed by the school. One such example is the scouting program aimed at shaping students' leadership characters. The benefits of such programs for children include enhancing social skills, self-awareness, and fostering a sense of responsibility. Many activities within the scouting movement contribute to shaping an ideal leadership character. Therefore, the Indonesian government encourages all educational institutions in Indonesia to organize extracurricular activities in schools. This directive is based on Permendikbud Number 62 Year 2014, a regulation issued by the government to govern extracurricular activities in schools. This regulation categorizes extracurricular activities into mandatory and optional categories. The provision of extracurricular activities aims to complement national educational goals alongside intracurricular activities (Susanti, 2021). According to Permendikbud Number 63 Year 2014, scouting activities are listed as mandatory extracurricular activities, which must be attended by all students at all educational levels (Rosidi, 2022).

CONCLUSION

Leadership education is a formal or non-formal process aimed at shaping an ideal leader who possesses the character and skills of leadership, the ability to organize and motivate others, and a sense of responsibility towards their tasks. The urgency of leadership education for children is to cultivate high-quality leaders for the nation, as actions taken from an early age are certain to yield maximum results. The impact of early leadership education shapes the character, attitudes, and positive personality traits of children that will carry into adulthood. Therefore, the roles of parents, families, teachers, school environments, friends, and communities are crucial to the success of this process. The implications of early leadership education, in simple terms that can be seen in everyday life, include making children more courageous and confident. They also learn to take responsibility for their desires and actions. Moreover, it fosters humanitarian attitudes and enhances their concern for the environment. Children are also trained to be patient, honest, and less inclined to lie. Early leadership education can be implemented through age-appropriate activities that suit children's abilities and thinking patterns. Importantly, its implementation requires diligence, patience, and consistency, as results are not instantaneous. Role models such as parents, teachers, and community members also play a significant role in developing

children's leadership qualities. This study enhances our understanding of leadership education, especially its early implementation, and contributes to knowledge about the steps in grooming future leaders of the nation.

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