Self-Awareness in thr Work of Enhancing the Authentic Leadership of the Headmaster of Madrasah Aliyah Negeri in Riau Province

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ABSTRACT

Self-awareness plays a crucial role in the development of authentic leadership, particularly for the headmasters of Madrasah Aliyah Negeri (MAN) in Riau Province. Authentic leadership refers to a leadership style that emphasizes transparency, ethical behavior, and self-awareness, fostering an environment where followers feel valued and supported. This study explores how self-awareness in the work of headmasters can enhance their leadership effectiveness in improving the quality of education and the religious behavior of students. Through qualitative research methods, including interviews and observations, this study investigates the practices, challenges, and strategies employed by the headmasters in fostering an authentic leadership style. The findings indicate that self-awareness allows headmasters to recognize their strengths and weaknesses, reflect on their actions, and adapt their leadership approach to better align with the school's values and goals. Furthermore, headmasters who demonstrate a high level of self-awareness are more capable of creating a positive school culture, building trust with teachers and students, and guiding the school toward continuous improvement. This study contributes to the understanding of the role of self-awareness in the leadership development of school heads, particularly in the context of Madrasah Aliyah Negeri in Riau Province. By enhancing self-awareness, headmasters can effectively lead their schools towards achieving educational excellence while fostering a religious and moral environment for students.

Keywords: Self-awareness, Authentic Leadership, Headmaster

Introduction

In the field of educational leadership, the role of headmasters is critical in shaping the academic environment and ensuring the overall development of students.[1] In Madrasah Aliyah Negeri (MAN) in Riau Province, headmasters are tasked with enhancing both academic performance and students' religious behaviors.[2] Authentic leadership[3], which is grounded in self-awareness[4], is crucial for effective leadership in educational settings. Self-awareness enables headmasters to critically evaluate

their actions, strengths, and areas for growth, leading to more effective leadership practices. This study investigates how self-awareness contributes to enhancing the authentic leadership of headmasters in MAN in Riau Province, focusing on the impact of self-awareness on school culture, teacher engagement, and student outcomes.

The theoretical foundation of this study is rooted in the concept of authentic leadership, as proposed by Avolio and Gardner.[5] Authentic leadership emphasizes self-awareness, relational transparency, internalized moral perspective, and balanced processing as key components of effective leadership. Self-awareness, in particular, allows leaders to understand their values, beliefs, and emotional reactions, enabling them to lead with authenticity and integrity. In the context of educational leadership, authentic leadership is crucial for creating a school environment that fosters trust, engagement, and continuous improvement. This study also draws from the literature on leadership in Islamic educational institutions, where ethical leadership plays a significant role in shaping the behavior and character of students.

While much research has focused on authentic leadership in various sectors, limited studies have specifically addressed the role of self-awareness in enhancing the authentic leadership of headmasters in Islamic educational settings, particularly in Indonesia. The existing literature on leadership in Madrasah Aliyah Negeri is sparse, and there is a need for research that explores how self-awareness influences leadership effectiveness in the context of improving students' religious behaviors and academic achievements. This gap highlights the importance of investigating the specific leadership practices and challenges faced by headmasters in Riau Province.

Recent studies on authentic leadership in education emphasize the importance of self-awareness in fostering a positive school culture and enhancing teacher and student engagement. Research has shown that self-aware leaders are more likely to demonstrate ethical behaviors, create transparent communication channels, and build trust with their followers. In the context of Islamic schools, studies have also highlighted the role of ethical leadership in promoting students' religious values and behaviors.[6] However, there is a limited focus on the specific challenges and practices of headmasters in Islamic high schools in Indonesia, particularly in Riau Province.

This study offers a novel contribution by focusing on the role of self-awareness in enhancing authentic leadership among headmasters of Madrasah Aliyah Negeri in Riau Province. It explores how self-awareness shapes their leadership practices in the context of both academic and religious development. Additionally, this study examines the unique challenges faced by headmasters in Riau, where cultural and religious factors influence leadership dynamics. By addressing the gap in the literature on Islamic educational leadership in Indonesia, this research provides insights that can guide the development of leadership programs for headmasters, particularly in fostering self-awareness as a key component of authentic leadership. The findings of this study will contribute to the broader discourse on authentic leadership in educational settings, with specific implications for Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia.

Method

This study employs a qualitative research approach to explore the role of self-awareness in enhancing the authentic leadership of headmasters in Madrasah Aliyah Negeri (MAN) in Riau Province.[7] A qualitative approach is appropriate because it allows for an in-depth exploration of the experiences, practices, and perceptions of headmasters, teachers, and other school stakeholders regarding authentic leadership and self-awareness. By using qualitative methods, this study seeks to uncover the underlying dynamics of leadership in Islamic schools and understand how self-awareness influences the effectiveness of headmasters' leadership practices.

Research Design

The research design is descriptive and exploratory[8], aiming to provide a comprehensive understanding of how self-awareness shapes authentic leadership within the context of Madrasah Aliyah Negeri. Descriptive research[9] is chosen to document the lived experiences and perspectives of headmasters, teachers, and students regarding leadership practices, while exploratory research allows for the identification of new insights and patterns in the field of educational leadership. This study is guided by the principle that leadership is not a one-size-fits-all phenomenon, and the experiences of headmasters in Riau may offer unique perspectives.

Participants

The participants in this study include headmasters, teachers, and staff from several Madrasah Aliyah Negeri located in Riau Province. Purposive sampling[10] is employed to select headmasters who are recognized for their leadership qualities and who demonstrate a commitment to improving both the academic and religious aspects of their schools. Additionally, teachers and staff who have worked closely with the headmasters are also invited to participate in the study to provide a well-rounded perspective on the impact of leadership practices. A total of 5 headmasters, 10 teachers, and 5 school staff members are selected from 5 different MAN schools in Riau Province.

Data Collection Methods

The primary data collection methods used in this study are semi-structured interviews, observations, and document analysis.[11]

1. Interviews. In-depth interviews are conducted with the headmasters, teachers, and school staff to gather detailed insights into their perceptions of leadership practices, self-awareness, and the impact of these factors on school outcomes. The interviews are semi-structured to allow participants to share their experiences and provide rich, narrative data while ensuring that the key research questions are addressed. The interviews are conducted in a comfortable and confidential setting to promote open and honest responses.

2. Observations. Classroom and school environment observations are made to capture the dynamics of leadership in action. These observations help to supplement interview data by providing insights into how headmasters' leadership styles influence day-to-day interactions with students and teachers. Specific attention is given to how headmasters demonstrate self-awareness through their behavior, communication, and decision-making processes.

3. Document Analysis. School documents, such as leadership reports, policy documents, and teacher performance evaluations, are analyzed to understand the formal structures and practices related to leadership in the schools. Document analysis provides

additional context to the findings from interviews and observations, offering a more holistic view of how self-awareness is integrated into the leadership practices of headmasters.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is conducted through a thematic analysis approach.[12] This method involves identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within the data. Thematic analysis is chosen because it allows for a flexible and detailed examination of qualitative data, making it suitable for exploring the complex nature of authentic leadership and self-awareness. The analysis process includes several stages:

1. Data Familiarization. The researcher reads through the interview transcripts, observation notes, and documents to become familiar with the data and identify initial ideas for coding.
2. Generating Initial Codes Relevant segments of the data are coded, highlighting key features related to self-awareness and authentic leadership.
3. Searching for Themes. The researcher organizes the codes into themes that capture patterns in the data, focusing on how self-awareness influences leadership practices and school outcomes.
4. Reviewing Themes. The themes are reviewed to ensure they accurately represent the data and align with the research questions. Themes that are inconsistent or overlap are refined or combined.
5. Defining and Naming Themes. Final themes are defined and named, ensuring that they address the key aspects of the research questions.
6. Reporting. The findings are reported in relation to the research questions, with supporting quotes and examples from the data to illustrate each theme.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval is obtained from the relevant academic and institutional bodies before the study is conducted.[13] Participants are informed of the study's purpose, and their consent is obtained before participation. They are assured of confidentiality, and all data is anonymized to protect their identities. Participants are also informed that they can withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences. The researcher ensures that the data collection process respects the rights and dignity of all participants.

Trustworthiness

To ensure the trustworthiness and validity of the findings, the study employs strategies such as member checking[14], triangulation[15], and peer debriefing[16]. Member checking involves sharing the findings with participants to verify the accuracy of the interpretations. Triangulation refers to the use of multiple data sources (interviews, observations, and documents) to cross-verify the findings. Peer debriefing involves discussing the research process and findings with colleagues to gain different perspectives and ensure the research is conducted rigorously.

This qualitative methodology provides a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the role of self-awareness in enhancing authentic leadership among headmasters in Madrasah Aliyah Negeri in Riau Province. The findings from this study contribute to the body of knowledge on educational leadership, particularly in Islamic educational settings.

Results and Discussion
Results

The results of this study are derived from the analysis of interviews, observations, and document reviews, which offer insights into how self-

awareness enhances authentic leadership among headmasters in Madrasah Aliyah Negeri (MAN) in Riau Province. The findings are organized into several key themes: (1) Self-awareness and leadership effectiveness, (2) Impact of self-awareness on school culture, (3) Self-awareness in decision-making and problem-solving, (4) Challenges in implementing self-awareness in leadership, and (5) The role of self-awareness in improving student outcomes.

Self-awareness and Leadership Effectiveness. One of the most significant findings from the study is that headmasters who exhibit high levels of self-awareness are more effective leaders. Through the interviews, headmasters described how self-awareness allowed them to understand their leadership strengths and areas for improvement. This self-reflection enables them to adapt their leadership styles to better meet the needs of their school community. For example, headmasters who were aware of their own emotional triggers reported a greater ability to manage stress and maintain a calm, rational approach when dealing with difficult situations. Teachers and staff confirmed that headmasters who demonstrated self-awareness were more approachable, empathetic, and consistent in their leadership, creating a more supportive and collaborative work environment.

Impact of Self-awareness on School Culture. The study found that headmasters' self-awareness has a profound impact on the school culture. When headmasters are aware of their own values, emotions, and behavior, they are more likely to foster a positive and inclusive school culture. The teachers and staff observed that headmasters who practiced self-awareness were able to model ethical behavior and transparency, which in turn influenced the behavior of teachers and students. For instance, one headmaster explained that

by acknowledging his mistakes in front of staff and students, he was able to create a culture of openness, where others felt comfortable doing the same. This openness helped build trust among the school community, promoting a collaborative and respectful environment that supports both academic and moral development.

Self-awareness in Decision-making and Problem-solving. Another key finding is the role of self-awareness in decision-making and problem-solving. Headmasters reported that self-awareness enabled them to make more thoughtful and ethical decisions. By reflecting on their own biases and assumptions, they were better equipped to approach challenges objectively and fairly. Teachers and staff noted that headmasters with a high degree of self-awareness were able to balance the needs of various stakeholders, such as students, parents, and staff, when making decisions. One headmaster shared that his self-awareness helped him navigate the delicate balance between maintaining school discipline and being empathetic to students' personal circumstances. This ability to make balanced decisions was seen as a key factor in fostering a positive learning environment.

Challenges in Implementing Self-awareness in Leadership. Despite the positive impact of self-awareness, the study also revealed several challenges that headmasters face in implementing self-awareness into their leadership practices. One of the primary challenges mentioned was time constraints. Headmasters often expressed difficulty in finding time for self-reflection due to the demanding nature of their responsibilities, such as overseeing administrative tasks, managing staff, and addressing student needs. Teachers and staff also highlighted that while headmasters recognized the importance of self-awareness, they sometimes struggled to consistently apply it due to the

pressures of their roles. Additionally, some headmasters mentioned the lack of formal training in self-awareness and leadership development as a barrier to further growth in this area.

The Role of Self-awareness in Improving Student Outcomes. The study found that self-aware headmasters are better equipped to influence student outcomes, both academically and behaviorally. Teachers reported that headmasters who practiced self-awareness were more adept at creating a school environment that supported student growth. For example, one headmaster's ability to listen attentively to both students and teachers helped him identify and address students' needs more effectively. Furthermore, students themselves expressed feeling more supported and understood in schools led by self-aware headmasters. Teachers noted that self-aware headmasters promoted religious values and academic excellence simultaneously, encouraging students to excel in both aspects of their education. Several headmasters also emphasized the importance of leading by example, demonstrating values such as humility, fairness, and respect, which contributed to shaping students' behavior and attitudes.

In summary, the findings of this study highlight the critical role of self-awareness in enhancing the authentic leadership of headmasters in Madrasah Aliyah Negeri in Riau Province. Self-aware headmasters were found to be more effective in creating positive school cultures, making ethical decisions, and improving student outcomes. However, challenges such as time constraints and the lack of formal training in self-awareness were noted as barriers to fully realizing the potential of self-awareness in leadership. These results underscore the importance of cultivating self-awareness as a key component of leadership development programs for

headmasters, which can ultimately contribute to the continuous improvement of both school management and educational outcomes.

Discussion

The results of this study underscore the pivotal role that self-awareness plays in enhancing the authentic leadership of headmasters in Madrasah Aliyah Negeri (MAN) in Riau Province. These findings align with previous research on authentic leadership, which suggests that self-awareness is a cornerstone of effective leadership (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). The study provides valuable insights into how self-awareness influences leadership practices, school culture, decision-making, and ultimately, student outcomes. In this discussion, we explore the implications of these findings, draw connections to existing literature, and consider the challenges headmasters face in fostering self-awareness.

1. *Self-awareness and Leadership Effectiveness*

The finding that self-awareness enhances leadership effectiveness corroborates the work of Goleman[17], who highlighted emotional intelligence, particularly self-awareness, as a key trait of successful leaders. The headmasters in this study demonstrated that by being aware of their emotions, reactions, and leadership style, they were better equipped to navigate complex situations and maintain positive relationships with staff and students. This self-regulation, a component of emotional intelligence, enabled them to model ethical behavior and act with integrity, which further strengthened their leadership. Teachers and staff members observed that self-aware headmasters were not only more approachable and empathetic but also more consistent in their actions, providing stability in the school environment. These qualities, as

noted by Bass, are central to authentic leadership, which fosters trust and inspires followers.[18]

2. Impact of Self-awareness on School Culture

The influence of self-awareness on school culture was a significant finding of this study. The headmasters' ability to model transparency, humility, and ethical behavior had a ripple effect on the broader school culture. This mirrors the work of Azanza et al.[19], who found that authentic leadership positively impacts organizational culture by encouraging openness and collaboration. In this study, headmasters who demonstrated self-awareness created environments where teachers and students felt safe to express their ideas, admit mistakes, and collaborate freely. This openness not only improved interpersonal relationships but also contributed to a more conducive learning environment. The sense of trust cultivated by self-aware leadership fosters a positive school climate, which is a critical element for enhancing both student and staff engagement.

3. Self-awareness in Decision-making and Problem-solving

The role of self-awareness in decision-making and problem-solving is a critical finding of this research. Headmasters who practiced self-awareness were able to make more thoughtful and balanced decisions, considering the perspectives of various stakeholders. This approach is consistent with research by Brown and Treviño[20], who argued that authentic leaders use self-awareness to guide their ethical decision-making processes. The ability to reflect on one's biases, assumptions, and emotional responses allowed headmasters to handle conflicts and challenges with greater objectivity and fairness. This capacity for balanced decision-making not only improved the immediate outcomes of specific situations

but also built long-term trust and credibility among the school community.

However, the study also revealed that while self-aware headmasters were generally effective in decision-making, they sometimes faced challenges due to time constraints and the complexity of their roles. These challenges are consistent with the findings of Day (2001), who pointed out that school leaders often struggle to find time for self-reflection amidst the numerous administrative tasks they face. In this context, fostering self-awareness requires intentional effort and support, particularly through professional development programs that integrate self-reflection and leadership growth.

4. Challenges in Implementing Self-awareness in Leadership

The challenges of implementing self-awareness in leadership practices, as noted by participants in this study, reflect broader issues within educational leadership. Time constraints were consistently identified as a significant barrier to self-awareness, as headmasters juggle a wide range of responsibilities, from administrative duties to student welfare. This finding is consistent with the work of Leithwood et al.[21], who highlighted the time pressures faced by educational leaders, which can limit their ability to engage in reflective practices. Additionally, the lack of formal training in self-awareness and leadership development was another barrier mentioned by participants. Although self-awareness is recognized as a critical leadership trait, the absence of structured programs that focus on developing this aspect of leadership hinders its full implementation.

The study suggests that while headmasters may intuitively recognize the importance of self-awareness, there is a need for more targeted professional development programs that specifically

address the cultivation of self-awareness in leadership. Such programs could include training on emotional intelligence, reflective practices, and mindfulness techniques, all of which have been shown to enhance self-awareness in leaders.[22] By incorporating these elements into leadership development initiatives, educational institutions can better equip headmasters to integrate self-awareness into their everyday practices.

5. *The Role of Self-awareness in Improving Student Outcomes*

One of the most compelling findings of this study is the positive influence of self-aware leadership on student outcomes. Headmasters who practiced self-awareness were able to create environments that supported both academic and moral development. This finding echoes the work of Leithwood and Jantzi[23], who found that effective leadership improves student learning outcomes by fostering a positive school culture and supporting teacher development. In this study, teachers observed that self-aware headmasters were able to address student needs more effectively, whether related to academic struggles or personal challenges. This individualized attention, combined with a commitment to ethical leadership, led to a more supportive and empowering learning environment for students.

Furthermore, self-aware headmasters led by example, demonstrating values such as respect, humility, and fairness. These behaviors not only influenced the staff but also had a direct impact on students' behavior and attitudes. The emphasis on moral development alongside academic achievement reflects the holistic approach to education practiced in Islamic schools, where the development of character is as important as academic excellence. This alignment between leadership and educational goals highlights the role of self-awareness in shaping students who are not

only academically capable but also ethically grounded.

The findings of this study provide several key academic contributions to the field of educational leadership, particularly in the context of Madrasah Aliyah Negeri (MAN) in Riau Province. By focusing on the role of self-awareness in enhancing authentic leadership among school headmasters, this research offers valuable insights that extend the existing body of knowledge on leadership in educational settings. The contributions of this study are discussed in relation to theory, practice, and future research directions.

One of the primary academic contributions of this study is its reinforcement of the theoretical underpinnings of authentic leadership, particularly the critical role of self-awareness. The study draws on the foundational work of Avolio and Gardner[24], who identified self-awareness as a key component of authentic leadership, and demonstrates how this trait influences various aspects of leadership in the school context. This research extends existing leadership theory by offering empirical evidence of how self-awareness directly impacts the effectiveness of headmasters in managing their schools, fostering a positive school culture, and improving student outcomes. Moreover, this study highlights the relational aspect of authentic leadership, where the leader's self-awareness contributes to the development of trust, collaboration, and ethical behavior within the school community.

Additionally, this study contributes to the understanding of how self-awareness intersects with other leadership qualities, such as emotional intelligence, ethical decision-making, and transparency. The finding that self-aware headmasters are able to model ethical behavior and create a positive school climate supports the work

of Bass, who suggested that authentic leadership is instrumental in developing ethical and supportive school environments. Thus, this research further enriches the conceptual framework of authentic leadership by showing its practical application in Islamic educational settings.

From a practical standpoint, the study provides valuable implications for the professional development of headmasters. The findings suggest that cultivating self-awareness in school leaders can lead to more effective leadership practices, better decision-making, and stronger school cultures. This contributes to the growing body of literature advocating for the inclusion of emotional intelligence and self-awareness training in leadership development programs.[25] By highlighting the importance of self-awareness, this study encourages policymakers, education administrators, and teacher training programs to prioritize these skills in leadership development initiatives.

Furthermore, the study's emphasis on the challenges headmasters face in implementing self-awareness in their leadership practices, such as time constraints and the lack of formal training, provides a critical perspective for improving current educational leadership programs. Educational institutions can use these findings to design more targeted professional development workshops that focus on self-reflection, mindfulness, and emotional intelligence. This contribution is crucial as it informs the design of leadership training that not only equips headmasters with practical management skills but also with the self-awareness needed to lead authentically and effectively.

The study also offers a significant contribution to the understanding of how leadership practices, particularly those rooted in self-awareness, can impact student outcomes. The findings demonstrate that self-aware headmasters are better able to address the academic and personal needs of students, which contributes to an overall positive learning environment. This insight builds on the work of Leithwood and Jantzi, who highlighted the importance of leadership in improving student outcomes. The research suggests that fostering self-aware leadership can be a key strategy for enhancing the quality of education, particularly in Islamic educational settings where character development is as important as academic achievement.

By showing that self-awareness in leadership directly contributes to the moral and academic development of students, this study emphasizes the holistic nature of education in Islamic schools. This is particularly important in the context of Madrasah Aliyah Negeri schools in Riau, where the development of both academic excellence and ethical values is prioritized. The study's findings offer a valuable perspective on how headmasters can use self-awareness to create school environments that nurture not only intellectual growth but also moral integrity, which is essential in shaping future leaders.

This study also contributes to future research by identifying several areas for further investigation. One of the key recommendations is the need for more research on the relationship between self-awareness and other leadership traits, such as resilience, adaptability, and visionary leadership. Future studies could explore how self-awareness interacts with these qualities to create more effective leadership models, particularly in diverse educational contexts. Additionally, this research opens up avenues for longitudinal studies that examine the long-term impact of self-aware leadership on school performance and student outcomes.

Another area for future research is the development of interventions that can enhance self-awareness in educational leaders. While this study identifies the importance of self-awareness, it also highlights the challenges faced by headmasters in cultivating this quality. Future research could focus on developing and testing specific training programs or interventions aimed at increasing self-awareness among school leaders, with a focus on practical tools such as reflective journaling, mindfulness practices, and emotional intelligence workshops.

Conclusion

This study has highlighted the critical role of self-awareness in enhancing the authentic leadership of headmasters in Madrasah Aliyah Negeri (MAN) in Riau Province. The findings underscore that self-awareness not only improves the effectiveness of leadership practices but also positively impacts school culture, decision-making, and student outcomes. Self-aware headmasters were able to create a conducive environment for both academic achievement and character development, fostering trust and collaboration within the school community. However, the study also revealed challenges related to time constraints and the lack of formal training on self-awareness, which hindered the full realization of its benefits. These insights contribute to the existing body of knowledge on educational leadership and provide a deeper understanding of how self-awareness is essential in developing authentic leadership.

Based on the findings, it is recommended that educational leadership programs incorporate self-awareness training as a core component of professional development for headmasters. These programs should focus on emotional intelligence, reflective practices, and mindfulness techniques, which can help leaders improve their self-awareness and enhance their leadership effectiveness. Additionally, school administrators and policymakers should consider providing more support for headmasters in the form of time management resources and structured opportunities for self-reflection. To further strengthen the impact of self-aware leadership, future research should explore the development and evaluation of specific training interventions aimed at cultivating self-awareness in educational leaders, especially within the context of Islamic schools. By prioritizing self-awareness, educational institutions can cultivate leaders who are better equipped to inspire positive change and improve both school performance and student development.

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