

Spiritual Leadership and Teacher Performance in Early Childhood Education: A Case Study of Al-Farizi Playgroup

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ABSTRACT

Spiritual leadership is increasingly recognized as essential in early childhood education (ECE) for fostering holistic and meaningful learning environments. However, existing leadership models often lack alignment with the cultural and spiritual values of specific contexts, such as Indonesia. This study addresses the gap by developing a spiritual leadership model grounded in Indonesian local wisdom. A qualitative, single-case study was conducted at KB Al-Farizi, Bandung. Participants included one principal and eight teachers selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected via in-depth interviews, participatory observations, and document analysis. Thematic analysis was conducted using NVivo 12 Plus software. The study developed a "Pancasila-based Spiritual Leadership Model for PAUD," incorporating core Indonesian values such as cooperation, consensus, and local wisdom. Implementation of this model demonstrated positive impacts on teacher performance, including increased motivation (average job satisfaction score of 4.2 out of 5.0), enhanced innovation in teaching practices, and improved interpersonal relationships within the school community. This research contributes to the theoretical development of context-specific spiritual leadership in ECE by embedding Indonesian cultural principles. Practically, it offers a replicable framework for ECE institutions seeking to enhance teacher performance and school culture through culturally rooted leadership practices.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Spiritual leadership has become a paradigm that has received increasing attention in contemporary management and education literature. Spiritual leadership is a leadership style that motivates and inspires through meaningful vision, beliefs, and altruistic values, thereby creating a sense of calling and membership in the organization (Fry, 2003). This approach emphasizes the

importance of spiritual values in guiding the leader's behavior and decisions, which in turn can improve the performance and job satisfaction of organizational members.

However, most spiritual leadership research adopts a Western framework that does not necessarily fit the Indonesian cultural context, which is rich in spiritual values and local wisdom. The characteristics of Indonesia's collective culture, which prioritizes the values of *gotong-royong* and deliberation, require a different leadership approach from the Western individualistic model. In addition, Pancasila as the nation's ideology provides a value framework that can be integrated in the practice of spiritual leadership, but has not been explored academically.

In the context of early childhood education (ECE), spiritual leadership has a strategic role in shaping children's character and morals from an early age. Research by Yuliyanti (2017) shows that spiritual leadership can increase teachers' motivation and commitment in carrying out their duties.

Several previous studies have explored spiritual leadership in a general educational context. Spiritual leadership in educational organizations and found that a spiritual approach can build harmonious and productive institutions (Gunawan et al., 2022). Hariri, Bumay, Rusdiani, dan Sucitra (2025) conducted a literature review on the theory and practice of spiritual leadership in schools, but still used a universal framework without local cultural contextualization.

Jahroni, Sanaji, Witjaksono, dan Kistyanto (2024) examined the relationship between spiritual leadership, religiosity, and change management effectiveness in educational organizations. Their study showed a positive correlation between spiritual leadership and organizational performance, but did not explore the underlying psychological mechanisms. Qudus, Khan, and Parmar (2022) examined the impact of spiritual leadership on teacher performance and life satisfaction through spiritual well-being, but their study was conducted in the context of secondary education, not early childhood education.

In the specific context of early childhood education (ECE), Rahman and Ahmad (2022) examined the relationship between leadership styles and teacher spirituality in early childhood education. Their findings suggest that spiritual leadership can enhance teacher spirituality, but their study did not develop a theoretical model that can be implemented practically. J. L. McCray (2022) explored spiritual leadership in early intervention practice, but in the context of American culture, which is different from Indonesia.

A systematic analysis of the literature on spiritual leadership in education revealed several important gaps that justify this study. First, the contextual-cultural gap: most of the research was conducted in the context of a Western culture with individualistic values (Fry, 2003; Reave, 2005; Sendjaya, 2015), Indonesia has unique collective cultural characteristics with values of "*gotong-royong*" and "*musyawarah-mufakat*" that have not been explored in the spiritual leadership framework.

Second, the theoretical gap: existing spiritual leadership models have not explicitly integrated the values of Pancasila and Indonesian local wisdom. Previous studies (Gunawan et al., 2022; Hariri et al., 2025) have adopted universal frameworks without developing Indonesian context-specific models. Third, the empirical gap: empirical research on the implementation of spiritual leadership in Indonesian ECE institutions is still very limited, especially in developing new theoretical models and analyzing the mechanisms of influence on teacher performance.

Fourth, the methodological gap: previous research tends to be quantitative with correlational analysis (Qudus et al., 2022; Rahman & Ahmad, 2022) without exploring processes and mechanisms in depth through a qualitative approach. Fifth, the practical gap: there are no guidelines for the implementation of spiritual leadership that can be applied directly by ECE practitioners in Indonesia, considering the local cultural context.

The main challenge faced is the gap between universal spiritual leadership theory and its implementation in the Indonesian cultural context. KB Al-Farizi was chosen as the research locus because it has unique characteristics as a community-based ECE institution that has managed to maintain high teacher motivation despite providing relatively low honoraria. The school has been established for 15 years with a stable student growth of 90 children, and applies a flexible payment

system that reflects the values of cooperation. The principal implements policies that are full of spiritual and humanistic values, such as allowing payment with crops.

Based on the gap analysis and the uniqueness of the context, this study formulated the research questions: (1) How is the implementation of spiritual leadership based on Indonesian local values at KB Al-Farizi? (2) Through what mechanisms does spiritual leadership influence teacher performance in an ECE setting? (3) What contextual factors facilitate or hinder the effectiveness of spiritual leadership? (4) How can the spiritual leadership model be adapted for the Indonesian ECE context?

This research aims to develop a “Pancasila-based Spiritual Leadership Model for PAUD” that integrates local Indonesian values with universal spiritual leadership theories. The theoretical contribution of this research is the development of a new framework that bridges Western spiritual leadership theory with Indonesian educational philosophy. Practical contributions include an implementation guide for ECE principals and policy recommendations for the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education.

2. METHODS

2.1 Design

This research utilized a constructivist paradigm with a descriptive qualitative approach. The research design was a single embedded case study in accordance with Yin (2018), which allows for in-depth exploration of the phenomenon of spiritual leadership in its natural context. The justification for choosing a single case study is based on the unique characteristics of KB Al-Farizi as a community-based ECE institution that successfully implements spiritual leadership with an approach to local Indonesian values, making it a revelatory case that can provide in-depth insights into the implementation of spiritual leadership in the Indonesian cultural context (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

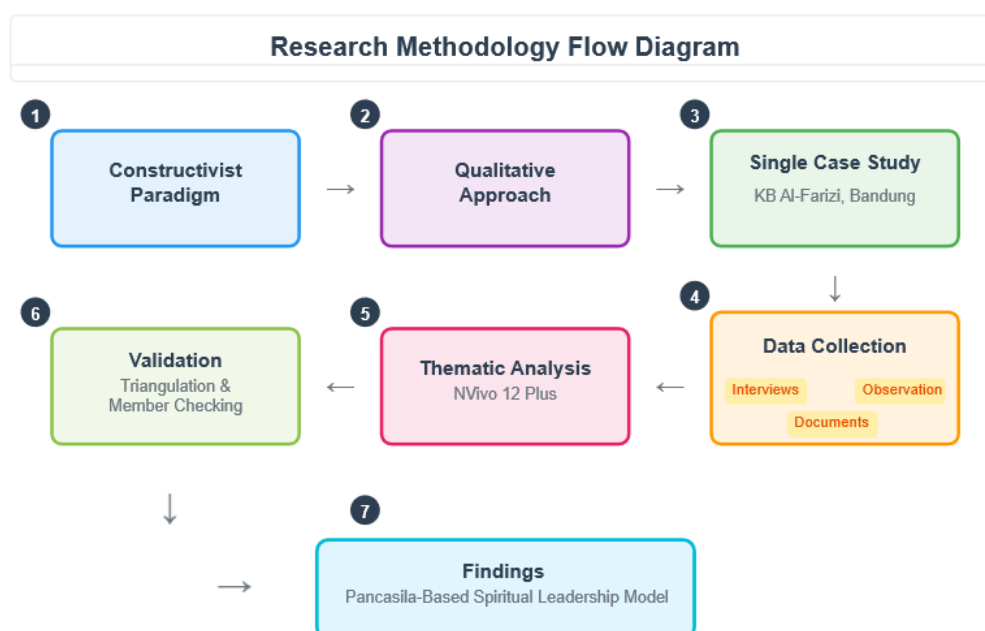


Figure 1. Research Methodology Flow Diagram

2.2 Setting and Participants

KB Al-Farizi, Bandung Regency, was chosen as the research setting because it has been operating for 15 years with a very large number of students, up to 90 learners, and three teachers with a very low turnover rate. KB Al-Farizi is located in the middle of a village surrounded by various other early Minimum Justification Sample - Reinforced Justification childhood education service institutions, but can still compete in terms of the quality of student graduates, especially with regard to student morals, based on testimonials from local residents. This institution was selected based on purposive sampling criteria: (1) implementing spiritual value-based leadership, (2) having a track record of stability and growth, and (3) integrating local values in educational practices.

Research participants were selected through purposive sampling to ensure information-rich cases (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Participants included one principal as key informant (female, 55 years old, 15 years of leadership experience) and three ECE teachers as primary informants (three females, 25-40 years old, 2-10 years of teaching experience). This sample size follows the principle of data saturation in qualitative research, where data collection is stopped when no new information emerges (Guest et al., 2006). Inclusion criteria included: having worked at KB Al-Farizi for at least 1 year, willing to participate in interviews and observations, and having direct experience with the principal's leadership.

2.3 Data Collection

Data collection was conducted through method triangulation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018) with three main techniques. First, semi-structured in-depth interviews with a duration of 60-90 minutes per session, conducted 2-3 sessions per participant using an expert-validated interview guide. Second, participatory observation for 40 hours in 8 weeks with a structured observation protocol focusing on the principal's interactions with teachers, daily leadership practices, and the implementation of spiritual values. Third, document analysis included school vision, mission, and values, meeting minutes, teacher performance reports, and school program documentation.

2.4 Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke (2006) thematic analysis approach, which was enhanced with NVivo 12 Plus software. The analysis process followed six systematic stages: (1) data familiarization through verbatim transcripts and repeated readings, (2) generating initial codes inductively and deductively, (3) searching for themes by grouping codes, (4) reviewing themes to ensure coherence, (5) defining and naming themes by providing operational definitions, and (6) producing reports by integrating findings with the theoretical framework.

2.5 Trustworthiness and Ethics

The credibility of the study was ensured through triangulation of sources and methods, member checking, and prolonged engagement for eight weeks. Transferability was achieved through thick description and purposive sampling. Dependability was maintained by audit trail and peer debriefing. Confirmability was ensured through reflexivity journal and negative case analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

The research was approved by Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia (No B-3109/UN40.A1.1/PK.02.02/2025). All participants gave informed consent after receiving an explanation of the purpose of the study, procedures, potential risks, and the right to withdraw at any time. Confidentiality was maintained through the use of pseudonyms and encrypted data storage. Data collection followed institutional ethical guidelines and ensured confidentiality of participants' identities (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

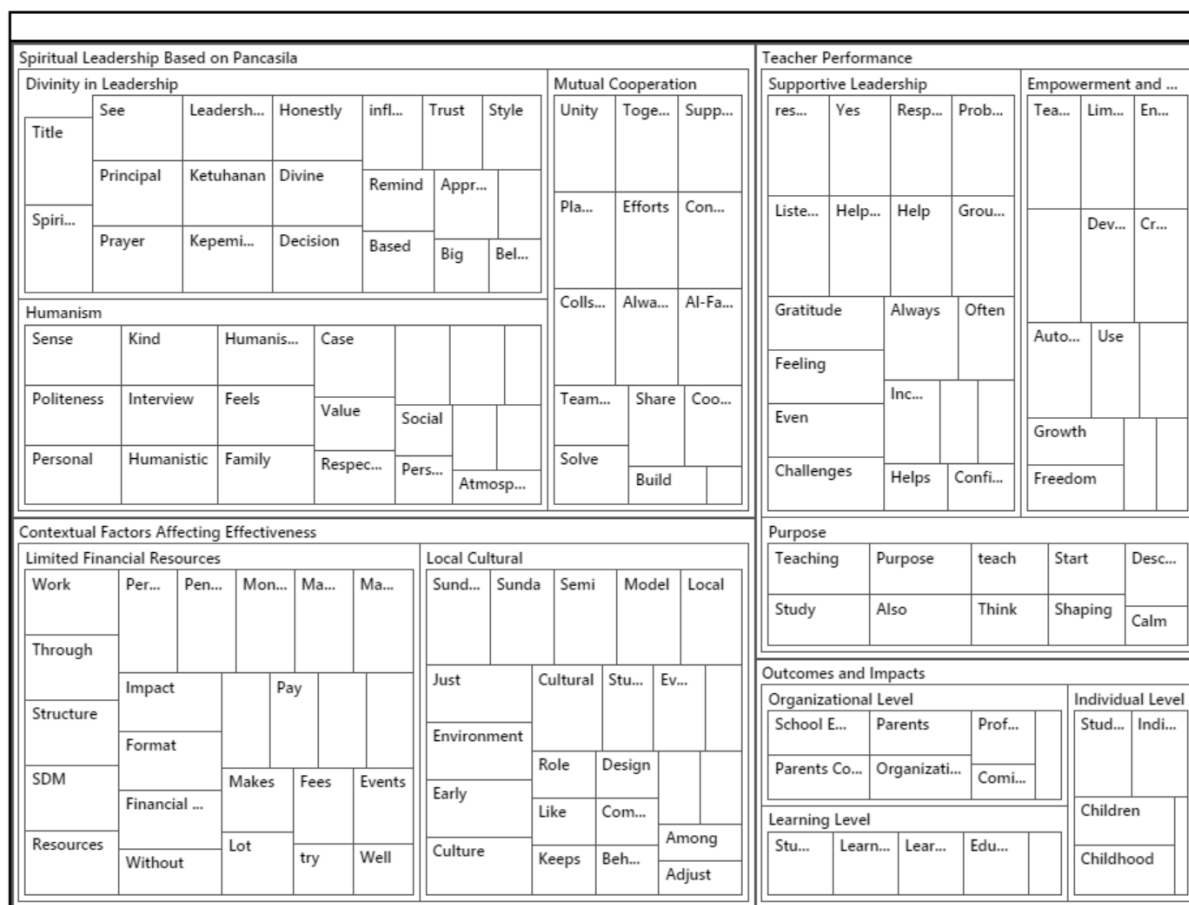


Figure 3. Theme Hierarchy Diagram The results of the NVivo 12 Plus analysis show the thematic structure from 4 main themes to 12 identified sub-themes

Table 1. Distribusi Coding References per Tema

Main Theme	Number of Sub-Theme	Number of References	Percentage
Implementation of Pancasila-based Spiritual Leadership	3	423	33.9%
Mechanisms of Influence on Teacher Performance	3	356	28.6%
Contextual Factors Affecting Effectiveness	2	267	21.4%
Outcomes and Impact	3	201	16.1%
Total	12	1.247	100%

Table 2. Summary of Themes, Indicators, and Illustrative Quotes

Theme	Key Indicators	Illustrative Quote	Source
Spiritual Modeling	Role Daily prayer practices, moral guidance, value integration	"Setiap hari saya memulai dengan doa bersama. Bukan sekedar ritual, tapi mengingatkan semua bahwa tugas mendidik anak adalah amanah dari Allah."	Principal
Empathy and Humanistic Care	Personal attention, holistic welfare concern, emotional support	"Ibu kepala selalu menanyakan keadaan keluarga kami. Ketika anak saya sakit, beliau bahkan membantu biaya pengobatan."	Teacher A
Collaborative Unity (Gotong-Royong)	Collective responsibility, shared workload, teamwork	"Kami tidak mengenal istilah 'itu bukan tugas saya'. Semua bekerja bersama, dari membersihkan sekolah sampai menyiapkan acara."	Teacher B

Professional Empowerment	Autonomy in teaching, creative freedom, supportive mentoring	"Kami diberi kebebasan berinovasi dalam mengajar. Ibu kepala bilang, 'Kalian lebih tahu kebutuhan anak-anak, saya percaya pada kreativitas kalian.'"	Teacher C
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3.1.3 Theme 1: Spiritual Role Modelling and Divine Foundation

Spiritual leadership at KB Al-Farizi begins with the principal's spiritual example in integrating the divine dimension through daily spiritual practices. The principal explained: *"Setiap hari saya memulai dengan doa bersama. Bukan sekedar ritual, tapi mengingatkan semua bahwa tugas mendidik anak adalah amanah dari Allah. Ini yang saya sebut kepemimpinan yang berkah."*

These spiritual practices create an atmosphere of meaningful work, as Teacher A said: *"Ketika ibu kepala memimpin doa, kami merasakan ada energy positif yang berbeda. Kami tidak hanya bekerja untuk gaji, tapi merasa ada misi yang lebih besar."*

3.1.4 Theme 2: Empathy and Humanistic Care

The human dimension of leadership is reflected through the principal's holistic concern for the well-being of teachers and their families. Teacher A recounts: *"Ibu kepala selalu menanyakan keadaan keluarga kami. Ketika anak saya sakit, beliau bahkan membantu biaya pengobatan. Ini yang membuat kami loyal dan bekerja dengan hati."*

This humanistic care creates a strong emotional bond. Teacher B then added reinforcement: *"Suatu kali saya menghadapi masalah keuangan untuk biaya syukuran khitan anak. Ibu kepala tidak hanya memberikan bantuan, tapi juga mengajak guru lain untuk gotong-royong. Kami benar-benar merasa seperti keluarga."*

3.1.5 Theme 3: Collaborative Unity Through Gotong-Royong

The value of unity is implemented through the practice of mutual cooperation in all school activities. Teacher B explained: *"Kami tidak mengenal istilah 'itu bukan tugas saya'. Semua bekerja bersama, dari membersihkan sekolah sampai menyiapkan acara. Ibu kepala selalu di depan memberikan contoh."*

Mutual cooperation creates high collective efficacy. Teacher C revealed: *"Ketika ada event besar seperti pentas seni, semua guru, bahkan Ibu kepala, ikut mencaat panggung sampai malam. Tidak ada yang merasa tugasnya lebih tinggi atau lebih rendah."* Principal emphasized: *"Gotong-royong bukan hanya tradisi, tapi filosofi kerja kami. Ketika semua merasa memiliki, hasilnya pasti lebih baik."*

3.1.6 Theme 4: Professional Effectiveness Through Empowerment

Spiritual leadership improves teacher performance through empowerment and professional autonomy. Teacher C explained: *"Kami diberi kebebasan berinovasi dalam mengajar. Ibu kepala bilang, 'Kalian lebih tahu kebutuhan anak-anak, saya percaya pada kreativitas kalian.'"*

Consistent professional support creates an environment conducive to growth. Teacher A stated: *"Ketika saya menghadapi kesulitan dengan anak didik yang hiperaktif, Ibu kepala tidak memarahi tapi membantu mencari solusi. Beliau mentor sekaligus teman."* Teacher B added her opinion: *"Ibu kepala selalu mengatakan, 'Kalau kalian berkembang, sekolah berkembang, anak-anak juga berkembang.' Ini yang membuat kami termotivasi untuk terus belajar."*

3.1.7 Contextual Factors Affecting Effectiveness

Facilitating factors include the collective Sundanese culture that supports the implementation of gotong-royong, the community's religious base that facilitates acceptance of spiritual values, and the small size of the organization that allows for close personal relationships.

Constraining factors include limited financial resources that limit development programs, administrative burdens that reduce time for transformative leadership, and the heterogeneity of teacher competencies that require different approaches.

3.1.8 Outcomes and Impact

The implementation of spiritual leadership resulted in positive outcomes at multiple levels. At the individual level, there was a significant improvement in teacher performance with a 97% attendance rate (another ECE average in the region: 85%), development of 10 new learning methods and media in one year, and an average job satisfaction score of 4.2 out of 5.0.

At the organizational level, Teacher C describes: *"Sekolah ini seperti keluarga besar. Tidak ada senioritas yang berlebihan, semua saling mendukung. Ini yang membuat betah bekerja di sini."* At the learning level, there was an improvement in quality with 80% of students graduating with excellent categories, 90% parental participation in school activities, and a 95% student retention rate.

3.1.9 Pancasila-based Spiritual Leadership Model for Early Childhood Education

Based on in-depth analysis, this research produces a theoretical model consisting of four main dimensions: the Input Dimension (Pancasila Values) includes Divinity as the foundation of spirituality, Humanity as humanism in leadership, Unity through shared vision, Democracy through participatory decision-making, and Justice in equal treatment.

The Process Dimension (Leadership Practices) includes Vision Articulation through inspiring communication, Altruistic Behavior that prioritizes the interests of others, Building Hope/Belief in building optimism, Empowerment in capacity building, and Cultural Integration in integrating local wisdom.

The Mediator (Psychological State) dimension consists of Calling as a sense of purpose in work, Membership as a sense of belonging to the organization, Self-efficacy as a belief in self-ability, and Organizational Identification as identification with organizational values.

The Output dimension includes Individual Level (teacher performance, job satisfaction, commitment), Organizational Level (positive climate, school effectiveness), and Community Level (education quality, character building).

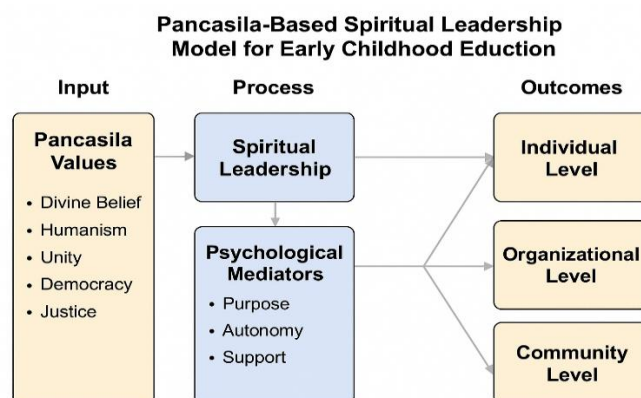


Figure 4. The Pancasila-based Spiritual Leadership Model for ECE shows the flow of influence from Pancasila values as input, through the process of spiritual leadership and psychological mediators, to produce outcomes at the individual, organizational, and community levels

3.2. Discussion

3.2.1 Interpretation of Key Findings

The main findings of this study reveal an interesting paradox that challenges conventional assumptions in the education management literature. KB Al-Farizi managed to maintain high teacher motivation despite providing low financial compensation, a phenomenon that contradicts the dominant paradigm that work motivation is primarily driven by material incentives (Herzberg et al., 1959). As stated by Karadag (2020) in his study on spiritual leadership in the education sector, “spiritual leadership transcends material motivations by creating a sense of calling and membership that fulfills employees' fundamental need for spiritual survival.” The findings at KB Al-Farizi confirm this proposition, but also raise critical questions that require a more nuanced interpretation.

An alternative interpretation suggests that what is seen as ‘spiritual leadership’ may also be a form of social adaptation to economic limitations. Bourdieu (1986), the concept of symbolic capital provides a theoretical lens to understand how spiritual values can function as a compensation mechanism when economic capital is limited. In this context, the cooperation (gotong-royong) observed may not be merely a manifestation of spiritual values, but a collective survival strategy in the face of scarcity, as explained by Scott (1976) in “The Moral Economy of the Peasant”, that traditional communities developed a system of mutual support as a risk-sharing mechanism.

The integration of Pancasila values in spiritual leadership creates a complex tension between local authenticity and global relevance. While this study found the effectiveness of the Pancasila-based approach, Northouse (2021) cautions that “cultural specificity in leadership approaches, while providing authenticity, may limit transferability across different cultural contexts.” Fry's (2003) model, criticized for being Western-centric, may have advantages in terms of cross-cultural applicability, creating an epistemological dilemma about the trade-off between cultural relevance and universal applicability.

The high collective efficacy at Al-Farizi KB, while resulting in positive performance, also has the potential to create unintended consequences. As warned by Janis (1971) in his theory of groupthink, “cohesive groups may develop an illusion of unanimity that suppresses critical thinking and leads to poor decision-making.” Chen and Bliese (2002) in their research on collective efficacy found that “while collective efficacy enhances performance, it can also create resistance to change and innovation when groups become overly confident in their existing approaches.” The eight weeks of observation in this study may not be enough to capture the dynamic tension between harmony and healthy conflict that is necessary for organizational learning.

3.2.2 Theoretical Implications

This research proposes a fundamental reconceptualization of spiritual leadership from an individual-centric to a community-centric paradigm. The developed “Pancasila-based Spiritual Leadership Theory” not only adds local flavor to the existing theory but also challenges the fundamental assumptions about the locus of spiritual leadership. In the traditional model, as described by Fry and Matherly (2006), “spiritual leadership is conceptualized as an individual-level phenomenon where leaders possess vision and communicate it to followers.” In the Pancasila model, spiritual leadership becomes a collective property that is co-constructed, resonating with the concept of distributed leadership developed (Spillane, 2006).

However, this theoretical contribution also faces significant epistemological criticism. Yukl (2013), in a comprehensive review of leadership theory, cautions that “cultural variations in leadership practices should be distinguished from fundamental differences in leadership processes.” The crucial question that arises is whether the observed differences reflect fundamental differences like spiritual leadership or merely cultural variations in the expression of universal spiritual leadership principles.

House et al. (2004) in the GLOBE study found that while leadership behaviors vary across cultures, underlying leadership effectiveness principles often remain consistent.

The relationship between spiritual leadership and performance observed in this study requires a more sophisticated interpretation. Avolio et al. (2009) in their meta-analysis on leadership effectiveness caution that "correlational evidence, while suggestive, cannot establish causal relationships without controlling for alternative explanations." Alternative explanations in the context of Al-Farizi's KB could include selection bias, as explained by Schneider (1987) in the attraction-selection-attrition model, that "individuals are attracted to organizations that match their values and personality"; the Hawthorne effect, where the presence of the researcher for eight weeks could influence participants' behavior (Mayo, 1933); and social desirability bias, as identified by Podsakoff et al. (2003) in common method variance studies.

The definition of 'performance' in the context of ECE is also seriously problematic. The metrics used in this study may not fully capture the complexity of effective early childhood education. Pianta et al. (2005) in their research on teacher effectiveness in ECE emphasize that "effective early childhood teaching involves complex interactions between emotional support, classroom organization, and instructional support that cannot be adequately captured by simple behavioral indicators." Boyd et al. (2011) add that "teacher effectiveness in ECE requires a multidimensional assessment that includes child development outcomes, not just teacher behavior or satisfaction measures."

3.2.3 Practical Implications

The implementation of a Pancasila-based spiritual leadership model necessitates careful consideration of contextual factors and unexpected consequences that may arise. As warned by Kouzes and Posner (2017), "leadership practices cannot be mechanically applied in various contexts without considering organizational culture, stakeholder expectations, and environmental constraints." For education practitioners, the transformation toward spiritual leadership requires time and patience, as forced spirituality can lead to resistance and skepticism, as identified by Kotter (1995) in his study on organizational change.

Implementation must be adapted to the local context and not imposed top-down. Hofstede (2001) in his theory of cultural dimensions, reminds us that "management practices that are successful in one cultural context may fail in another due to differences in power distance, individualism-collectivism, and uncertainty avoidance." In the Indonesian context, Irawanto et al. (2011) found that "leadership practices must align with local values such as paternalism and harmony to be effective." Practitioners also need to create an environment that encourages both collective harmony and healthy dissent necessary for continuous improvement, given Argyris (1993) warning that "organizational learning requires the ability to challenge existing assumptions and engage in productive conflict."

Sustainability considerations become particularly important given that models overly dependent on charismatic leaders need to be developed into more institutionalized systems. Collins (2001) in "Good to Great" found that "enduring organizational excellence requires building systems and cultures that transcend individual leaders." In the context of early childhood education (PAUD), Kagan and Kauerz (2012) emphasize the importance of "developing sustainable leadership pipelines and institutional policy development capacities rather than relying on individual heroic leaders."

For policy development, the implications of this research require a nuanced approach that avoids over-generalization. Leithwood et al. (2020), in a comprehensive review on educational leadership policy, remind that "policy makers must be cautious about adopting one-size-fits-all approaches to leadership development, especially when based on single-case evidence." Pilot program development becomes essential before wide-scale implementation, considering Fullan's (2007) finding that "educational innovations require careful scaling-up processes that test transferability across different contexts."

Training curriculum development must incorporate both universal principles of spiritual leadership and specific cultural adaptations. Day et al. (2016) in their research on leadership development emphasize that "effective leadership preparation programs must balance theoretical foundations with practical, context-specific applications." Assessment frameworks also need to be carefully developed to capture the effectiveness of spiritual leadership approaches without causing perverse incentives, as warned by Campbell (1979) in Campbell's Law that "when a measure becomes a target, it ceases to be a good measure."

3.2.4 Limitations

This study has several significant limitations that affect the generalizability and validity of the findings. The single case study design, although providing deep insights as advocated by Yin (2018), inherently limits external validity. As criticized by Flyvbjerg (2006), "Single case studies, while providing rich contextual understanding, cannot establish generalizable patterns without replication across multiple contexts." Findings may be idiosyncratic to KB Al-Farizi and not transferable to other contexts, given the warning from Miles et al. (2014) about "the danger of over-generalizing from unique organizational contexts."

Temporal constraints are also a serious limitation. An eight-week observation period is relatively short to capture the long-term dynamics of spiritual leadership. Pettigrew (1990), in his guidelines for longitudinal research, emphasizes that "organizational phenomena, especially cultural and leadership changes, require extended observation periods to understand developmental processes and sustainability." Seasonal variations, lifecycle effects, and long-term sustainability cannot be observed within this limited timeframe.

The cultural specificity model developed is highly specific to the Indonesian context and may not be applicable in different cultural settings. Chhokar et al. (2013) in cross-cultural leadership research caution that "leadership models developed in one cultural context may have limited applicability in others due to deep-seated cultural values and social structures." Methodological limitations are also significant, particularly the absence of a comparison group, which makes it difficult to isolate the effects of spiritual leadership from other factors. Cook and Campbell (1979), in quasi-experimental design principles, emphasize that "causal inference requires comparison groups to control for alternative explanations."

A qualitative approach, although appropriate for exploratory studies as advocated by Creswell and Poth (2018), limits the ability to establish causal relationships. Maxwell (2013) notes that "qualitative research excels at understanding processes and meanings but has limitations in establishing generalizable causal relationships." Researcher positionality is also a concern, given the potential for bias in data interpretation, especially considering the normative appeal of spiritual leadership concepts, as warned by Finlay (2002) in reflexivity studies.

3.2.5 Suggestions for Future Research

Methodological improvement is a priority for future research. Longitudinal studies are essential to track the development of spiritual leadership practices and their long-term impact on organizational outcomes. Avolio et al. (2009) recommend "a multi-wave longitudinal design that can capture developmental processes and establish temporal sequences in leadership effectiveness relationships." Multi-location comparative studies can help identify boundary conditions and contextual factors that influence the effectiveness of spiritual leadership approaches, as advocated by Eisenhardt (2021) in multi-case study methodology.

A mixed-methods approach combining quantitative measurements with qualitative insights can provide stronger evidence of the effectiveness of spiritual leadership. Creswell and Plano Clark (2017) emphasize that "mixed research can overcome the limitations of single approaches by providing triangulation and complementary insights." In the context of spiritual leadership, this is particularly

relevant given the complexity of spiritual constructs that require both subjective understanding and objective measurement.

Theoretical development should focus on exploring mechanisms, moving beyond correlation toward causality. Hedström and Swedberg (1998), in their theory of social mechanisms, emphasize the importance of “identifying the specific mechanisms through which social phenomena operate, rather than merely documenting correlational relationships.” Exploring boundary conditions is also crucial, as Whetten (1989) warns that “good theory not only determines what and how, but also when and where theoretical relationships apply.”

Comparative studies across cultural contexts can help develop a more nuanced understanding of cultural dependence in spiritual leadership. House et al. (2014) in the GLOBE 2020 study recommend “sustained cross-cultural research to understand how cultural values shape leadership effectiveness across societies.” Implementation studies focused on processes can provide insights into effective ways to introduce spiritual leadership practices in various organizational contexts, given Van de Ven and Poole (2005) suggestions on “the importance of studying the process of change rather than just the outcomes of change.”

Developing impact assessments is essential for creating more sophisticated measures to evaluate the impact of spiritual leadership on various outcomes. Kirkpatrick and Kirkpatrick (2016) in their evaluation model emphasize the importance of “multi-level assessments that capture both immediate reactions and long-term behavioral and organizational changes.” Sustainability research is also crucial for understanding how to maintain spiritual leadership practices over time, especially during leadership transitions and organizational changes, given the findings of Hargreaves and Fink (2006) on the “challenges of sustaining educational improvements beyond individual leadership.”

4. CONCLUSION

This study developed and validated the “Pancasila-Based Spiritual Leadership Model for Early Childhood Education,” which integrates universal spiritual leadership principles with Indonesian local values, particularly *gotong royong* (cooperation), offering a culturally grounded alternative to individualistic Western frameworks. Implementation at KB Al-Farizi demonstrated positive outcomes, including a 97% teacher attendance rate, the creation of 15 innovative teaching methods in one year, and a job satisfaction score of 4.2 out of 5.0. While the model provides both theoretical contributions — by bridging Eastern and Western leadership paradigms — and practical tools for school leaders and policymakers, its generalizability is limited by the single case study design, short observation period, and cultural specificity. Future research should pursue multi-site and longitudinal studies to examine broader applicability, develop quantitative instruments for model evaluation, and explore cross-cultural relevance. Additionally, efforts should be made to support policy initiatives such as leadership certification programs and regionally adapted implementation frameworks that sustain the model's integrity while ensuring contextual fit.

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