

Being A Kind Leader: Actualization of Kind Leadership in *Sirah Nabawiyyah* Learning

Habib Al Fattah¹, Djono Djono², Musa Pelu³

^{1,2,3}Postgraduate study of Historical Education, Universitas Sebelas Maret, Jl. Ir. Sutami 36 Kentingan, Jebres, Surakarta, Indonesia 57126

Corresponding author: ¹habibalfattah94@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Kindness in leadership creates many benefits in contemporary organization. It creates healthy relationships, increases organizational effectiveness, and minimizes destructive leadership issue. Considering the positive impact of kind leadership, this article tries to actualize the values of kind leadership in the modern era which are reflected in the discipline of *Sirah Nabawiyyah*. This was done since *Sirah Nabawiyyah* is an important part of character education in Islam and it is mandatory to always update it with contemporary issues. This article used literary study as the main method of research. Researcher collected data from credible journals and books related to kind leadership and *Sirah Nabawiyyah* and then analyzed the data. The results of data collection and analysis showed that there are six capacities that must be acquired to build kind leadership. The six capacities are compassion, integrity, gratitude, authenticity, humility, and humor. These six capacities are portrayed in the leadership pattern of Prophet Muhammad, both in classical and contemporary *Sirah Nabawiyyah* studies. The analysis of Prophet Muhammad's leadership also showed that each capacity is connected and supported on one another. The article's findings are expected to be able to support further studies, especially on kind leadership study which is still unpopular. The findings are also expected to strengthen studies related to historical education-based character education. This study is also expected to be able to continuously update the issues discussed in *Sirah Nabawiyyah* learning.

Keywords: *Sirah Nabawiyyah*, kind leadership, Islamic education, leadership

INTRODUCTION

The concept of leadership is closely related to ideas about relations and influences. Bass (1990) described leader as an agent who influences and brings changes to the group. He also defined leadership as the process of a leader in changing the motivation and competence of the group. Similarly, Kotter (2001), saw leadership as a process to bring the community in achieving certain goals without resorting to violence. Rost (1993) emphasized that the changes that leaders and members want to achieve must reflect their shared goals. A leader, for Yukl (2010), must not only be able to influence his members, but also able to facilitate their efforts in achieving common goals.

In the process, a leadership does not always go as idealized. A leader can be fallen into a harmful leadership, such as destructive leadership and toxic leadership. A destructive leader destroys the work patterns of an organization through sabotaging goals, tasks, resources, even the motivation of followers (Pelletier, 2010). He also uses domination, pressure, and manipulation to achieve goals (Steele, 2011). Another form of harmful leadership is toxic leadership, in which a leader with impaired behavior also tries to expand the fault to his followers, organization, and even the outsider. A toxic leader also attempts to lower the morale, motivation, and self-esteem of others (Lipman-Blumen, 2005-2010).

To prevent the harmful leadership from emerging, the competence of kindness and compassion are necessary for leaders. Haskins and Johri (2018) discovered, in describing the values and competencies of a leader, kindness is rarely mentioned. On the contrary, leader competence emphasizes other attitudes such as integrity, respect, collaboration, and teamwork. This lack of attention to kindness opens up opportunities for a harmful thoughts such as "leaders have to take hard decisions", "it is kind to be tough" and "kindness is a sign of weakness." (Mayer, 2018).

Powell (2012) refuted this perception. He emphasized that being kind doesn't mean being soft. Kindness is not a sign of weakness, rather it is a sign of confidence. A leader with kindness may reassures followers, holds their confidence, and connects with other human being in a bond of mutual respect. Baker and O'Malley's (2008) findings showed that leading with kindness is effective in optimizing organization performance, building high commitment workplace cultures. Kindness in leadership also holds important role in maximizing organizational productivity without neglecting the member's right. Kind leadership also has an important function to limit the excesses of power (Mayer, 2017), preventing the emergence of harmful and destructive leadership.

The concept of kind leadership also emerged along with the increasing concern for emotional intelligence in modern organizational climate. The trend of the old model of leadership with a transactional characteristics has shifted towards transformational leadership (De Vries 2006). This shift creates a new perspective, seeing a good leader not merely from his ability to achieve predetermined targets, but also his ability to empathize with other people and members in achieving common goals (Baker and O'Malley, 2008).

Considering the important role of kindness, as well as kindness – based leadership, it is necessary for Islamic education units to conjointly take part in promoting kindness leadership. Moreover, the concept of modern kindness leadership is very contextual with Islamic education that is not only concerned with intellectual development or materialistic view (Hussain, Ashraf, 1979). Islamic education, with the main goal of bringing prosperity and happiness to the world and the hereafter (Sheikh Ali 2019), places moral and spiritual development in an important position (Ismail, 2017) with the hope of creating a complete human being who is intellectually, emotionally and spiritually balanced (Ismail, 2017; Ghulam, 1996)

This urgency is backed by the concept of kindness which is basically already known and becomes an intact part of Islamic teachings known as *ihsan*. The concept of *ihsan*, according to Alpyagil (2013), even become one of the key concepts of Islamic ethics besides generosity and justice. Derived from the Arabic root *hasanun* which means “beautiful” and “good”, the concept of *ihsan* is closely related to the concept of goodness and benefits others (Hourani, 2007). In more detail, Izutsu (2002), reveals that *ihsan* reflects a loving attitude that is based on generosity towards others.

One of the ways to instill kind leadership in Islamic education is through actualizing the values of kind leadership in *Sirah Nabawiyah* or the Prophet's biography. *Sirah Nabawiyah* discusses the history of the Prophet Muhammad from his birth until his death (Abdurrozaq, 2011), along with conflicts and changes in the social order of Islamic society at that time (Kister, 1983), as well as various amazing events in the life of the Prophet (Chalil, 2008). The complexity of the scope of *Sirah Nabawiyah* discipline makes it an important position in Islamic education, not only as an academic study, but also to build a full understanding of Islam (Al - Buthy, 2008). The role of the Prophet Muhammad as *uswatun hasanah* or the best role model also made *Sirah Nabawiyah* a means of transmitting his ideas and principles across generations (Thohir, 2014).

Therefore, the actualization of modern issues such as kind leadership is needed, so that *Sirah Nabawiyah* is always ready to answer the modern challenges. In this paper, the author tries to examine how kindness leadership is reflected in *Sirah Nabawiyah*, so that it can be a consideration in the implementation of *Sirah Nabawiyah* learning, especially in Islamic education in Indonesia.

METHODS

This article used literary study as the main method. The research conducted by literary study is limited to written sources. Data for literature study can be taken from written sources or documents (Melfianora, 2017). Supriyadi (2016) pointed out four characteristics of the literary study. First, literary study particularly deals with the documents, not with the real or existing phenomena in the field. Second, the data for literary study is ready-to-use, so the researchers do not need to collect data in the field. Next, literary study data are mostly secondary data, this means that the data obtained is

not portraying the real - time data in the field. Fourth, since the data is in the form of written works or documents, literary study data is not restricted by space and time like field data.

FINDINGS

Concept of Kindness

The term "kind" and "kindness" are rooted in the old English "*Cynd*" which means "family, type, or origin" and may have a link with the German word "kinder" which means child. The usage of the word has implications for the attitude of nurture (Andreyev, 2005). How this word has changed seems to be influenced by the entry of new meanings in the Victorian era that linked the term kindness with "open - heartedness", a feeling of sympathetic expansiveness linked to other people (Phillips & Taylor, 2009), which then created a new meaning for kind. As noted in etymonline (nd), since the 1300s, the term kind has not only been defined as "family", "lineage", or "origin", but also as a behavior, quality, or state that expresses a sense of "benign, compassionate", loving, full of tenderness". This new meaning is further expanded by modern dictionaries, such as Merriam-Webster which lists kind as a sympathetic, helpful, gentle, affective, calming and loving nature, or the meaning by Cambridge Dictionary (nd) which gives the attributes of being generous, helpful, and caring to other people's feelings.

Academics also interpreted the terms "kind" and "kindness" broadly. Phillips and Taylor (2009) include several qualities at once to describe the nature of kind, such as sympathy, generosity, altruism, compassion, humane, compassion, and empathy, as well as aligning the nature of kind with the concepts of philanthropy (loving humanity), and caritas (brotherhood). Other academics gave a more concise, but more practical, meaning. Kerr, O'Donovan, and Pepping (2014) described kindness as a combination of emotional, behavioral, and motivational components that create beneficial or enjoyable behavior for others. A similar view was expressed by Baldwin and Baldwin (1970) that kindness arises through someone's motivation to help or benefit others. Long (1997) stated that kindness is strongly influenced by compassion, which means kindness appears in every behavior that is based on compassion. Peterson and Seligman (2004) emphasized that the power of kindness lies in its ability to encourage people to be kind to others, be compassionate, care about the welfare of others, do goods and help those in trouble. Other attributes were added by Eisenberg (1986) to kindness, that the kindness voluntary and not based on external factors such as rewards or punishments. In essence, Mathers (2015) emphasizes that the nature of kindness is not only in one's sensitivity to the distress of others, but also in one's positive actions to help those in distress.

The concept of kindness which often overlaps with other traits, as explained in Phillips and Taylor (2009), makes kindness something that is easy to feel but hard to explain (Jeffrey, 2016). Haskins and Thomas (2018) unraveled this tangle by attributing kindness to two things that they considered are closest conceptually: compassion and empathy. Compassion, rooted in Latin "*compati*" literally means "to suffer together" (etymonline, n.d.). Conceptually, Gilbert (2009) positioned compassion as basic kindness. Someone with compassion will have a deep concern for the misery that befalls others with a strong desire to help reduce the misery. The next concept, empathy, stems from the Latin *empateia* which means "to feel", later transliterated into German by Lotze (1858) to become *einfuhlung*, or "being feeling" (etymonline, n.d.). This attitude of empathy is imaginatively allegorized by Krznaric (2014) as if we were to use other people's "shoes". Through this, we try to understand the feelings and perspectives of others as a measurement for the actions we will take. One thing that distinguishes empathy from compassion is that a person's lack of involvement with other people's problems (Keen, 2007) makes his status only as an observer (Zinn, 1993).

How this conception of kindness grows and develops in human civilization still being a debate in various disciplines. The debate of kindness motives in philosophy worldview, summarized by Haskins & Thomas (2018), is quite fierce and contradictory. Auguste Comte and Jacques Rousseau view kindness is intrinsic to humanity, Thomas Hobbes views kindness as a tool to achieve personal human goals,

Immanuel Kant cynically considers kindness as a community demand, and Adam Smith sees kindness as a reflection of altruism and a means of creating trust – based relationship. Another discipline, social anthropology, estimates that kindness is the result of the evolution of human cognitive and language system to maintain larger networks (Trivers, 1971). Emphasize this, Sussman and Chapman (2004) argued that humans and animals have biological elements to support these social relations. The view of kindness, in an economist’s perspective, arises from the conception of game theory, that policies that show generosity can bring more benefits in the long term (Axelrod, 1984). Finally, the neurologist considers attitudes such as kindness and benevolence are the elements that embedded in the brain and develop along with human evolution (Keltner, 2004). Another opinion, from Hamilton (2010) and McGill (2017), associated kindness with oxytocin. They argued that interactions showing kindness can increase oxytocin levels. On the other hand, oxytocin also becomes trigger for someone to put forward attitudes like kindness, empathy, and gratitude.

Kind Leadership

The free market-based capitalism that emerged along with globalization has been proven to bring various side effects, including the emergence of a competitive - individualist climate that revokes the humanistic elements, under the excuse of freedom (Phillips & Taylor, 2009). Worline and Dutton’s (2017) interview results show the same indication. Current modern climate, especially those related to business, creates an impersonal and dehumanizing environment. Humans are seen in terms of function and treated like disposable objects. This creates a widespread of demotivation in society.

However, Haskins and Thomas (2018) reported that for the past 25 years there have been movements to change this inhumane climate. Campaigns promoting the importance of emotional intelligence, mindfulness, and compassion in organizations are starting to be echoed. However, Haskins and Thomas acknowledged that the idea of raising kindness in leadership is still not as popular as other ideas, even though some findings show that kindness has a good impact on the organization.

Cameron’s (2011) findings showed that incorporating kindness into organizational values can improve productivity and financial performance. Another finding, by Worline and Dutton (2017) of eighteen downsized organizations, shows that organizations that promote kindness have higher profits, productivity and loyalty. Armstrong (2015) also emphasized that members of organizations that promote kindness are happier, more aware of their tasks, more enthusiastic and boost their teamwork. This is in line with the research by Barsade and O’Neil (2016) which showed a raise in motivation and commitment from organizational members who apply kindness in leadership. A kind leader is also seen as able to increase trust and innovation (Seppala, 2016).

The thing that cannot be ignored from implementing kind leadership is the cost when a leader is committed to carry out kindness in leadership. Armstrong (2015) reminds that carrying out leadership with kindness does not necessarily increase profit, nor it is about pursuing self-satisfaction through good deeds. Citing Aristotle, Cameron (2011) emphasizes that essentially, kindness is the objective itself, not means. Therefore, Haskins and Thomas (2018) warned that leading with kindness is not a leisure. It requires courage, resilience, and stamina. Establishing an emotional connection also means providing oneself with emotional intelligence, wisdom, and readiness to deal with other people’s issues.

Considering the heavy burden that will be carried by a kind leader, a special capacity is needed to carry it. Baker and O’Malley (2008) detailed six capacities that an effective kind leader must possess. These values are:

1. Compassion, as a member’s reinforcement, especially when there are personal problems or obstacles at work
2. Integrity, provides assurance in the interpersonal interactions of a leader
3. Gratitude, giving awareness that there is something valuable in everyone
4. Authenticity, the sincerity of the leader determines the authentic quality of a leader

5. Humility, keeping the leader humble to everyone
6. Humor, a leader's sense of humor shows the qualities of flexibility and openness

In addition, Baker and O'Malley emphasized that these six capacities are mandatory for effective kindness leadership, so it is not possible to only partially fulfill them.

A kind leader should also be a servant leader, as a complement to the former six capacities. Servant leader, coined by Greenleaf (1970), places the leader role as a servant for others. A servant leader will make sure the others needs are fulfilled first. The focus of a servant leader is on the growth and welfare of the organization or community he leads. Servant leadership will promote virtue in leadership and encourage more effective and meaningful working relationships within the organization.

Lastly, courage is also critically needed by a kind leader. Kindness must be supported by courage, which in this context means being brave to strive for the sake of the organization. Courage is important because leading with kindness means more contact with diverse types of people and their issue (Frost, 2016).

Kind Leadership in Sirah Nabawiyyah

Sirah Nabawiyyah comes from Arabic, *As - Sirah*, which literally means path, or behavior. In terms, *As - Sirah* is interpreted as a way of life or someone's history. Thus *Sirah Nabawiyyah*, when *As - Sirah* is associated with *Nabawiyyah* or prophethood, then the word conceptually means as a way of life or life history of the prophet (Helmi, 2016). The *Sirah Nabawiyyah* covers the entire life history of the prophet, from his birth to his death (Abdurrozaq, 2011). Not only that, the *Sirah Nabawiyyah* also discussed various changes in social order and the dynamics of conflict in Islamic society at that time (Kister, 1983). *Sirah Nabawiyyah* also summarizes events that are considered amazing and extraordinary throughout the life of the Prophet Muhammad (Chalil, 2008).

Sirah Nabawiyyah, emphasized by Al-Buthy (2008) is not just a historical-academic study, but also as a means for Muslims to build their understanding toward Islam. *Sirah Nabawiyyah*, described by Az - Zaid (2019), covers at least four Islamic disciplines: aqidah, law, morals, and da'wah. *Sirah Nabawiyyah* also acts as a means of transmitting the values and teachings of Prophet Muhammad to generations after him (Thohir, 2014). This is what makes *Sirah Nabawiyyah* as a means of character education in Islam, based on good values, to live kindly, and manifested in good actions (Chaer & Wahyuna, 2020).

In the context of leadership education, *Sirah Nabawiyyah* contains teachings about ideal leadership in Islam through the figure of the Prophet Muhammad. Hart (2000) emphasized that the leadership effectiveness of the Prophet is reflected in his role as a religious figure and statesman who is able to bring Islam from the remoteness of the desert to be a considerable power in the world. The key to this achievement, detailed Watt (1961), was thanks to the Prophet Muhammad's keen sight on opportunities, as well as his ability to create solid leadership institutions.

Contemporary leadership studies also showed that the leadership value portrayed by Prophet Muhammad crossed the boundaries of time. For example, a study by Mirzal and Ninglasari (2021) showed how situational leadership was applied by the Prophet Muhammad, as seen from the different leadership approaches in the pre-hijrah and post-hijrah phases. Another example, a study by Sulaeman (2020) revealed how the leadership of the Prophet Muhammad met the criteria of servant leadership, that urges leader to serve, and transformational leadership, that accommodates the growth and development of its members.

Reviewing how contemporary leadership values are in harmony with Prophet Muhammad leadership values, the author tries to examine and actualize the values of kind leadership, which mostly neglected in contemporary leadership (Haskins & Thomas, 2018), in *Sirah Nabawiyyah*. The author relies on the six values of Baker and O'Malley's kind leader (2008) in conducting the analysis. The followings are the results of the analysis of kind leadership competencies in *Sirah Nabawiyyah*

1. Compassion

The nature of compassion is inseparable from the character of the Prophet Muhammad throughout his life and leadership journey. He showed compassion to anyone, even those who were considered uncommon in his day, such as children, servants, even people who hated him. To the children, the Prophet not only showed affection, but also provided protection for them. The Prophet strictly forbade the tradition of burying baby girls which was commonly practiced in Arabia that day (Chaudhry, 2016). The Prophet also gave an example of getting used to being close to children, as well as giving affection in the form of hugs and kisses to children, which was an odd thing for men those days (Bunyamin, 2014). To the servants, Prophet Muhammad also showed compassion and did not treat them as second-class being (Salahi, 2013). This can be seen from his attitude that never got angry even when his servant neglect their duties. The Prophet was also recorded for personally paying his last respects to a slave who was never even cared by others. Lastly, the prophet also shows compassion to those who hate him. This is recorded in the expulsion of the Prophet from the Taif area. The Taif people's hostility towards the Prophet was so fierce that it even hurt him, but the Prophet chose to pray for their goodness and guidance instead of praying for destruction (Topbas, 2013).

2. Integrity

The integrity of the Prophet Muhammad had been well known in the community since his youth (Salahi, 2013). The grant of title Al-Amin (the trusted one) to him by the community shows the integrity and trust he holds. This integrity was also what makes the Prophet believed to be the mediator in the feud of the tribal leaders when placing Hajar Aswad on the newly renovated Kaaba. Another reflection of integrity that existed even before the prophethood could be seen from Khadijah's trust in entrusting her trading caravan to be led by the Prophet on his journey to Syria.

3. Gratitude

As a prophet and leader, the Prophet Muhammad always made it customary to give thanks to Allah. This is a form of humility of the Prophet Muhammad. There are several records that show how he was so attached to the concept of gratitude. First, Prophet Muhammad never missed night worship, even until his feet were swollen. This is explained by the Prophet himself as a form of gratitude to Allah, even though his sins have been forgiven (Salahi, 2013). This gratitude was also seen during the conquest of the city of Mecca, where in his sermon, he as the victor first gave thanks to Allah, showing his humility (Ibnul Jauzi, 2005).

4. Authenticity

The authentic leadership attitude of the Prophet Muhammad, described by Bahzar (2019), is constructed by four prophetic traits: *sidiq* (truthful), *tabligh* (advocacy), *amanah* (trustworthy), and *fathanah* (wisdom). The truthful and trustworthy nature is reflected in the attitude of the prophet who was trusted (*Al - Amin*) during his life. The nature of advocacy is reflected in its commitment to teaching goodness whatever the hindrance is. Meanwhile, the attitude of wisdom is reflected in his ability to become a role model and lead his people to a civility.

5. Humility

The greatest example of the humility of the Prophet Muhammad is seen in the event of the conquest of Mecca (Topbas, 2013). Prophet Muhammad entered Mecca to calm the worried people. He emphasized that he came to Mecca not as a conquering king, but merely as the son of a woman who ate beef jerky. Another humility attitude of the Prophet can be seen from his daily work in doing his own household matters, such as sewing clothes and milking goats (Ibnul Jauzi, 2005) and sometimes the prophet himself helps the affairs of his servants (Salahi, 2013).

6. Humor

Being a prophet and a leader does not make Prophet Muhammad a rigid character. He still made jokes and kids with his companions. His companions also said that he is a funny person

who likes to joke but still within the limits that the joke does not contain lies. He also competed and played with his wife and companions, such as doing running contest (Ibnul Jauzi, 2005).

CONCLUSION

Kindness is often overlooked in discussions of leadership, because it is mistakenly associated with weakness. In fact, existing researches showed kindness has a big role in controlling leadership so that there is no abuse of power. Kind leadership also has a big impact in creating a healthy organizational climate. Considering the benefits of kindness leadership in this modern era, it is necessary for Islamic education units to take part in promoting kind leadership for the character education. One means of inculcating this character can be done through actualization of kind leadership in *Sirah Nabawiyah* learning, considering the central position of *Sirah Nabawiyah* for values and character inculcation in Islamic education. This study reveals that the six capacities of kind leader are reflected in the *Sirah Nabawiyah*. The six capacities of kind leaders are compassion, integrity, gratitude, authenticity, humility, and humor. All of the kind leadership capacities are portrayed by Prophet Muhammad both in classical and contemporary *Sirah Nabawiyah* literature. This article also revealed that each capacities of kind leadership support and affect one another. As it is shown in this article, authenticity was assembled by other traits like gratitude and integrity. This also happened to gratitude that was heavily influenced by humility of the leader.

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