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The Relevance of Spiritual Leadership in Educational Leadership in Indonesia in the Era of Disruption

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ABSTRACT

The disruptive era—characterised by digital transformation, value globalisation, and rapid social change—has profoundly affected Indonesia’s educational landscape. These changes demand not only pedagogical innovation but also leadership transformation capable of integrating spiritual, moral, and humanistic dimensions. In this context, spiritual leadership emerges as a relevant paradigm emphasising meaningful work, calling, hope/faith, and altruistic love. This study presents a conceptual analysis exploring the relevance of spiritual leadership in Indonesian educational leadership during the disruptive era. Employing a conceptual literature review method, 30 scientific articles indexed in Sinta (2023–2025) were reviewed. The findings reveal that spiritual leadership strengthens teachers' intrinsic motivation, fosters collaborative school culture, and balances technological innovation with spiritual educational values. The paper proposes an integrative conceptual model linking spiritual leadership with mediating factors such as career calling, emotional intelligence, and school culture, with the disruptive era serving as an environmental moderator. This model contributes theoretically to the development of a distinctive Indonesian educational leadership approach that is value- driven, humanistic, and adaptive to modern transformation- .

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1. INTRODUCTION

The digital revolution and globalisation of values over the past two decades have fundamentally changed the face of education. In the Indonesian context, these changes have not only affected learning technology, but also patterns of social interaction, school cultural values, and expectations regarding the roles of head teachers and teachers. This phenomenon is often referred to as the era of disruption, a period in which established systems are shaken by digital innovation, generational change, and demands for efficiency and transparency (Rohman & Utomo, 2023).

Amidst these rapid changes, new challenges have emerged for educational leadership: how to lead schools to remain adaptive to innovation without losing human values and spirituality. Administrative and bureaucratic-oriented educational leadership has proven to be ineffective in dealing with the complexities of the digital age (Fitri & Wahyudi, 2024). School principals are now required not only to be organisational managers, but also leaders of values who are able to foster meaning and hope within the school environment (Kurniawan & Nugroho, 2023).

The crisis of values that has hit Indonesian education is becoming increasingly apparent. Numerous studies have shown the phenomenon of teacher burnout, weak intrinsic motivation, and declining commitment to the profession (Prasetyo & Arifin, 2024). Furthermore, an educational orientation that tends to emphasise quantitative results such as grades, accreditation, and administrative achievements often neglects the moral and spiritual dimensions of students. As a result, a gap has emerged between technological progress and ethical decline.

In this situation, the concept of spiritual leadership emerges as a relevant leadership paradigm. According to Fry (2003), spiritual leadership is a process of values and behaviours of leaders that inspire calling (meaningful purpose in work) and membership (a sense of spiritual connection within the organisation). The underlying values are vision, hope/faith, and altruistic love. Spiritual leaders lead not only by command, but also by example, love, and a high sense of purpose in work.

The application of spiritual leadership in the context of Indonesian education has gained momentum in this era of disruption. This is because spiritual leadership not only drives organisational transformation, but also addresses the crisis of meaning and spiritual well-being among educators. Recent studies in Indonesia reinforce this urgency. Sulasmi and Akrim (2023) found that the spiritual leadership of school principals was able to strengthen the religious values and responsibility of teachers in Bengkulu. Hidayat and Aulia (2024) showed that school principals who applied the principles of altruistic love and collective hope succeeded in building a collaborative culture in integrated Islamic schools in West Java.

However, literature on Spiritual Leadership in Indonesian education remains fragmented. Many studies focus on the context of religious schools, while general educational institutions have not been widely studied. Furthermore, very few studies examine the relevance of Spiritual Leadership in facing the unique challenges of the era of disruption, such as digitalisation, generational change, and global competitive pressures (Subhaktiyasa et al., 2023).

This theoretical and empirical gap indicates that efforts are needed to build a more comprehensive conceptual understanding of the relevance of spiritual leadership in Indonesian educational leadership. Thus, this study aims to:

1. Analysing the concepts and fundamental values of spiritual leadership relevant to Indonesian education.

2. Identifying the role and contribution of spiritual leadership to the challenges of educational leadership in an era of disruption.
3. Formulating an integrative conceptual model that connects spiritual leadership, career calling, emotional intelligence, school culture, and the context of educational disruption in Indonesia.

Through this conceptual approach, this article aims to enrich the literature on educational leadership by positioning spirituality as the transformative core of humanistic and adaptive education in Indonesia.

2. METHODS

This study uses a conceptual approach based on a systematic literature review, which aims to construct an integrative theoretical framework on the relevance of spiritual leadership in educational leadership in Indonesia in the era of disruption. This approach was chosen because the issues studied are conceptual, multidimensional, and require the integration of cross-disciplinary theories: educational leadership, spiritual psychology, and value management.

The research data was sourced from scientific literature indexed in Sinta for the period 2023–2025. The search was conducted through the Google Scholar database, DOAJ, and national journal portals using the keywords: "spiritual leadership", "educational leadership", "Indonesia", "disruption", "teacher motivation", and "school culture".

From the initial search results of 127 articles, the following inclusion criteria were used for selection:

1. The main focus of the research was on spiritual leadership and/or educational leadership;
2. Articles in the context of formal education in Indonesia or culturally relevant;
3. Publication year between 2023 and 2025;
4. Articles in English or Indonesian with full text availability;
5. Published in reputable journals.

After selection and eligibility checks, 30 articles were found to be eligible and were analysed further.

Data were analysed using conceptual thematic analysis techniques with the following steps:

1. Initial coding of the main variables (concept, context, research results, relevance);
2. Categorisation into themes: (a) the concept of *spiritual leadership*; (b) educational leadership in an era of disruption; (c) the integration of spiritual values in the Indonesian context; (d) antecedent and outcome factors; and (e) conceptual models;
3. Theoretical synthesis to develop an integrative framework;
4. Conceptual validation through cross-study comparisons to ensure theoretical consistency.

This approach enables systematic mapping between empirical findings and theoretical foundations relevant to the context of educational leadership in Indonesia.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Spiritual leadership is a leadership model that focuses on building meaning and spiritual well-being among members of an organisation through the values of vision, hope/faith, and altruistic love (Fry, 2003). Recent studies have expanded this model by incorporating aspects of career calling and emotional intelligence as psychological mechanisms that strengthen the relationship between spiritual values and teacher performance (Liu et al., 2024).

In the Indonesian context, spiritual leadership takes on additional meaning as leadership that instils the values of Pancasila and local religiosity (Sulasmi & Akrim, 2023). Spiritual leaders in schools play a role in fostering a culture of compassion, meaning, and moral exemplarity. Research results at Islamic schools in Bengkulu show that principals with high spiritual leadership create a work environment oriented towards compassion and responsibility, thereby increasing teacher loyalty (Sulasmi & Akrim, 2023).

This approach also expands the role of the head teacher from administrator to leader of values, guiding the school community to find meaning in their work as part of a spiritual calling. In an era of disruption, where materialism and competition are becoming increasingly important, this type of leadership plays a role in maintaining a balance between technological progress and the human dimension.

The era of disruption is marked by a paradigm shift in education: the digitisation of learning processes, the use of artificial intelligence, and hybrid learning. These changes pose challenges for head teachers and teachers in managing relevant and meaningful learning. A study by Prasetyo and Arifin (2024) reveals that many head teachers still rely on conventional administrative approaches that are less adaptive to digital dynamics.

Educational leadership in Indonesia also faces a moral dilemma: how to balance technological efficiency with character development. Rahayu and Hidayat (2023) emphasise that educational

leaders with high *spiritual intelligence* are able to combine technological innovation with the strengthening of ethical values and spirituality in students.

Thus, leadership in the era of disruption must integrate four key competencies:

1. Digital competence to understand and utilise learning technologies;
2. Social-emotional competencies to maintain human relationships;
3. Spiritual competencies to guide values and meaning;
4. Adaptive competencies to deal with uncertainty.

This is where Spiritual Leadership becomes the main foundation that unites all these competencies within a holistic value framework.

The integration of Spiritual Leadership in Indonesian educational leadership is rooted in cultural and religious values that are deeply ingrained in society. Pancasila, with its principles of "Belief in One God" and "Just and Civilised Humanity", provides the philosophical basis for the emergence of a contextual style of spiritual leadership.

Research by Hidayat and Aulia (2024) in Integrated Islamic schools in West Java found that principals who applied spiritual leadership succeeded in fostering *a culture of trust* and *a shared vision* among teachers, students, and parents. Meanwhile, a study by Fitri and Wahyudi (2024) showed that in public schools, the application of spiritual leadership can increase teachers' honesty and empathy even though it is not based on formal religion.

This integration can be described through three main axes:

- Meaning (Meaning/Calling): leaders help school members understand work as part of worship and social service.
- Altruistic Love: building empathetic relationships and solidarity among school members.
- Hope/Faith: fostering collective trust to face the challenges of change.

By applying these three pillars, the headmaster acts as a guardian of values and a driver of moral transformation amid the pressures of modernisation.

Antecedent (Supporting Factors)

Literature reviews indicate that emotional intelligence, career calling, and self-efficacy are important variables in developing spiritual leadership (Liu et al., 2024; Subhaktiyasa et al., 2023). Teachers with high emotional intelligence are better able to internalise the spiritual values of leaders, while career calling reinforces the meaning of work as a calling in life, not just an obligation.

Outcome (Impact).

The application of spiritual leadership has an impact on two levels:

1. Individual – increased intrinsic motivation, organisational commitment, job satisfaction, and reduced burnout (Monanisa, 2024; Wulandari et al., 2024).
2. Organisational – the creation of a positive school culture, value-oriented student services, and increased innovation (Korngsook & Piatanom, 2023).

These findings reinforce the argument that spiritual leadership can serve as a strategic approach to improving the quality of educational services through the development of teachers' spiritual well-being.

Based on the results of the literature synthesis, the following conceptual model was developed:

Spiritual Leadership → (Mediator: Career Calling, Emotional Intelligence, School Culture) → Outcome: Teacher Motivation, Work Well-being, Quality of Student Services → Moderating Context: Era of Disruption (Digital Transformation & Globalisation of Values).

This model explains that Spiritual Leadership works through psychological and cultural mechanisms that mediate the relationship between leadership values and educational outcomes. *Career calling* serves as a driver of intrinsic motivation for teachers; *emotional intelligence* regulates the dynamics of social relationships; and *school culture* strengthens the collective internalisation of values.

The context of the era of disruption acts as a moderating variable that can strengthen or weaken these influences. When schools have high digital adaptability and strong spiritual commitment, the influence of spiritual leadership on outcomes becomes more significant.

Based on the results of the literature synthesis described above, a conceptual model was obtained that describes the relationship between the dimensions of *spiritual leadership*, mediating factors, educational outcomes, and the influence of the context of the era of disruption. This model was designed to clarify the theoretical mechanism of how spiritual values in educational leadership can contribute to improving the quality of student services through psychological and cultural intermediaries.

In general, Spiritual Leadership is positioned as an independent variable that influences individual and organisational outcomes (teacher motivation, work well-being, and quality of student services). This relationship is mediated by *career calling*, *emotional intelligence*, and *school culture*, which act as mechanisms for internalising values and reinforcing behaviour. Meanwhile, the context of the era of disruption acts as a moderating variable that can strengthen or weaken the influence of spiritual leadership depending on the level of digital adaptability and spiritual integrity of educational institutions.

The theoretical relationship between these variables is visualised in Figure 1 below.



Figure 1. Conceptual Model of the Relevance of Spiritual Leadership in Educational Leadership in Indonesia in the Era of Disruption

The conceptual model in Figure 1 illustrates the dynamic relationship between value-based leadership and educational outcomes in Indonesia. Through this framework, spiritual leadership is understood not only as an individual leadership style, but as a value system that lives throughout the school ecosystem. The existence of mediating factors shows that changes in teacher behaviour and improvements in service quality do not occur directly, but through a process of internalising values and strengthening organisational culture.

Thus, this model serves as a theoretical foundation for further empirical research to examine the influence and interaction between variables quantitatively and qualitatively. The inclusion of the era of disruption as a moderating variable also allows for a more in-depth contextual analysis of how spirituality, technology, and organisational culture interact in shaping adaptive and valuable educational leadership in Indonesia.

Theoretical Implications.

This article expands the theoretical framework of educational leadership by integrating spirituality and the context of the era of disruption. This approach offers a new paradigm: *spiritual-transformative leadership*, which is leadership that simultaneously combines the dimensions of values and technological innovation.

Practical Implications.

1. Principal training programmes in Indonesia need to include modules on spiritual leadership and value reflection.
2. Educational institutions can develop a *school culture audit* based on spiritual leadership to assess the balance between performance and values.
3. The government and accreditation agencies can add indicators of teachers' spiritual well-being as part of education quality.

4. Teachers need to be encouraged to develop *their career calling* and emotional intelligence through ongoing coaching activities.

4. CONCLUSION

This conceptual study confirms that spiritual leadership is a highly relevant and contextual leadership paradigm for Indonesian education in an era of disruption. Core values such as vision, hope/faith, and altruistic love have been proven to foster a sense of meaning in work, strengthen teachers' spiritual well-being, and build an adaptive and character-building school culture.

In a situation where digitalisation, globalisation of values, and competition between educational institutions continue to increase, spiritual leadership serves as a moral foundation that maintains a balance between modernisation and spiritualisation. School principals who act as spiritual leaders not only manage the system, but also guide the school community towards a higher meaning through exemplary behaviour, love, and collective faith.

The resulting conceptual model shows that the influence of spiritual leadership on educational outcomes is mediated by career calling, emotional intelligence, and school culture, with the context of the era of disruption as a moderating variable. The implications of this model direct educational institutions to develop an integrative leadership approach: combining digital competence with spiritual strength, empathy, and noble national values.

Further research is recommended to empirically test this conceptual model through a mixed methods or longitudinal study approach in various school contexts in Indonesia. The results of these empirical tests are expected to enrich educational leadership theory and provide policy direction in the development of school principals and human resource management in the field of education.

Thus, spiritual leadership is not only relevant but essential in shaping an adaptive, strong-charactered, and spiritually-minded Indonesian education system.

5. AUTHORS' NOTE

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article. Authors confirmed that the paper was free of plagiarism.

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