

THE CHARACTER OF LEADERSHIP IN HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT: A CRITICAL REVIEW

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Abstract

Purpose of the study: This study aims at describing the concept of leadership, exploring the relationship between leadership and characters in human resource management, and analyzing critically how the character in leadership becomes an essential factor in developing the quality of human resources in an organization or in an institution.

Methodology: This article is descriptive qualitative research using observational data supported by literature studies. The data were collected by observing cases related to leadership character in human resources. Besides, online literature studies were also conducted to map supporting data related to leadership character in human resources. Data were analyzed using a descriptive critical review.

Main findings: This study showed three tendencies on the character of leadership in an organization. Those are, (a) Character understanding and implementation in leadership practice to manage human resources. The leader character becomes exemplary in managing the human resources in an organization. (b) A leader character is manifested in his leadership characters to manage the human resources of the organization. A leader's individual character has the potential to influence his employee's characters. (c) Character in leadership becomes the main factor in affecting the development of human resources quality in a certain organization. The exemplary and spiritual characters can be practiced by a leader to stimulate, motivate, influence, and to burn the human resources working spirit, while ethics character tends to bring up honesty, sincerity, and good norms for all human resources.

Implications: The development of human resources quality in an organization or in an institution could be well-established through the implementation of the three lead characters as found in this study, i.e., exemplary, spirituality, and ethics.

Novelty/Originality of this study: In fact, the three characters of the leadership; exemplary, spirituality, and ethics are not only becoming the major instruments in developing the quality of the human resources in an organization or in an institution and but also being the basic and the fundamental needs that a leader must have in organizing and leading an organization or an institution.

Keywords: Character, Leadership, Human Resources, Development, Organization.

INTRODUCTION

Leadership in an organization has an important role in the development of its resources. The development and progress of an organization depend on how the lead character is practiced. The character has an important influence on underlying leadership in an organization (Sarros et al., 2007). Furthermore, Service et al., (2017) stated that a leader has at least the character dimensions of universalism, transformation, and virtue. Various successes and failures in managing an organization depend on the character of leadership. One organization that requires leadership character is an educational institution. In addition to being a transfer of knowledge institution, it is required to provide examples of exemplary or transfer of behavior institutions. This article looks at the importance of leadership character in the management of human resources in an organization. The data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) shows the Open Unemployment Rate (TPT). In February 2019, Vocational High School (SMK) graduates were 8.63 percent, Primary School (SD) graduates dominated the working population in Indonesia. The portion reached 40.51 percent. The portion of new SMK graduates touched 11.31 percent and university graduates were 9.75 percent (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2019). These conditions need to get the attention of all parties carefully in order to increase the quantity and quality of the nation's human resources which is increasingly alarming. One of the efforts made is to instill character through leadership in educational institutions.

The importance of leadership character in organizations makes a lot of attention from practitioners and academics offering a theoretical and practical approach. The existing studies show three trends in perspective in seeing leadership in human resource management. The first perspective is theories, approaches, and principles of leadership (Clarke, 2013; Ingram, 2016), and leadership style (Robertson, 2011; Walia et al., 2015). The second perspective is leadership characteristics (Grahek et al., 2010; Sarros et al., 2007). The character must be considered in the role of corporate governance (Crossan et al., 2015; Gandz et al., 2013), and it even spiritually influences leadership (Burgess & Martin-Jones, 2020; Egel & Fry, 2017; Fry, 2016; Ulrich, 2018). The third perspective is the influence of leadership in organizational management (Danışman et al., 2015; Herrera et al., 2012; Pabbajah et al., 2020; Yıldız et al., 2014), and

transformational and transactional leadership on organizational effectiveness ([Rukmani et al., 2010](#)). The existing studies have shown that leadership is a concern of many perspectives.

Therefore, this study complements existing studies by photographing the character of leadership in the management of human resources of organizations or institutions. Accordingly, three research objectives which are going to be discovered in this research. They are: to describe the concept of leadership that is understood and practiced in the organization, to explore the relationship between leadership and characters in human resource management, and to analyze how a character in leadership becomes an essential factor in developing the quality of human resources in an organization. Those three objectives are going to be discussed and analyzed descriptively in this study.

In this study, the researchers argue that there are at least three aspects of leadership character in human resources development. First, good leadership will have an impact on health organization management, so that it is effective to produce good products. Second, leadership supported by the good character in managing an organization will create trust from human resources. Third, the leadership principle with a strong character dimension has a significant influence on the management of human resources in an organization. Likewise, the re-actualization of the characters; exemplary, spiritual, and morality that is embedded will become a strength of solidarity in the development and management of qualified and sustainable human resources. Thus, organizations are ready to compete professionally with various dynamic challenges faced in increasingly intense global competition.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Leadership Characters

Leadership is defined as a process for someone to make changes and improvements in an organization by influencing other people or pursuing processes in the organization. In contemporary leadership theory, leadership is a dynamic social process that is seen based on the quality of individuals ([Antes et al., 2016](#)). According to [Zaccaro \(2014\)](#) in leadership theory, leaders are experts, problem solvers, and assistants in meeting human needs. While, management is defined as a process for someone who holds a formal administrative role in an organization ([Hallinger, 2018](#)). Many kinds of literature discuss leadership and management then define them as a social mechanism where people achieve success through collective effort. According to [Kanki \(2019\)](#), effective leadership includes leaders who affirm or elaborate rules, norms, task boundaries which are the normative model and the organizational task environment. Leaders must establish clear authority dynamics, as well as technical, social, and managerial competence as well as required forms of hierarchical influence and work distribution ([Bush & Glover, 2016](#)).

Starting from the beginning of the 20th-century up-to-now, there have been several numbers of theoretical leadership models set. However, it is very hard to find specific theories or empirical researches that describe leadership models in an organization. All models of numerous researches increase the understanding of leadership in managing the organization in general. The focus of leadership at the beginning of the 20th century was centered on the required characteristics to be an effective leader. Many experts, such as [Mann \(1959\)](#) and [Stogdill \(1948\)](#) questioned the construct validity that was used as leadership characteristics to predict the effectiveness of being a leader. The big question of [Mann \(1959\)](#) and [Stogdill \(1948\)](#) caused the focus of leadership characteristics to move to the theme of leadership behaviors in predicting the effectiveness of being leaders.

Researches on the character of leadership are tried to be restudied by [Kenny and Zaccaro \(1983\)](#) showed that 48-82% of the variants exist in leadership characteristics were caused by the natures of the leaders. Besides, there are some other researchers who found relatively the same evidence that leadership characteristics used to predict leadership performance ([Avolio et al., 2012](#)). Models, based on leadership characteristics, were then formulated by [Robbins and Judge \(2007\)](#) with the following characteristics: charismatic leadership, transactional leadership, and transformational leadership ([Robbins & Judge, 2007](#)). Indeed, researches related to leadership started moving to the dimension of moral focusing on the dark sides of leadership or unethical leadership, ethical leadership, and characters of the leaders. Some researches on leadership which focused on the dimension of leadership morality were conducted by ([Barlow et al., 2003](#); [Brown et al., 2005](#); [Conger & Kanungo, 1998](#); [Sosik & Cameron, 2010](#)).

In the literature investigation, generally, leadership has three forms. The first is autocratic. It is a leadership system with a central authority or a strong leader figure. Autocratic leadership can effectively resolve social dilemmas by forcing members to invest in groups, but members may be less committed because leaders give few opportunities to voice opinions ([Van Vugt et al., 2004](#)). The second is democratic. It is known as a form of government by the people in whom civil power and responsibility are exercised by all adult citizens directly or indirectly through freely chosen representatives. It is considered almost universally as a form of good leadership ([Klein et al., 2011](#)). The third is a free-rein style. Leaders give full independence to subordinates in their operations. They allow their subordinates to set their own goals and to achieve them. The only task of a leader is to provide various materials and information requested by subordinates ([Marume & Jaricha, 2016](#)).

Human Resources Development

Human resource development is now and continuously to be a major academic discipline and a major consideration for the workplace in the 21st century. In general, knowledge work requires employees to use their cognitive abilities, such as

high-level problem solving and perhaps creative thinking skills, to have conditions that are far greater than the one when the work consists mainly of routines and physical actions (Timonen & Paloheimo, 2008). In the existing theory and practice, issues such as steps of change, globalization, economic knowledge, and technological evolution highlight the central role of learning and development, skills and abilities, and the value of knowledge for the community, organizations, and individuals (Lepak & Snell, 2003). Human resource development involves managers and leaders in the process of describing critical perspectives to make connections between learning and their work experience. Human resource development organization is about manpower which is influenced globally and politically broadly (Garavan et al., 2007). Therefore, the conception of human resource development according to Garavan et al. (2007) must include political considerations, morality, and philosophy. McLean and McLean (2010) define human resource development as any process or activity that is good or in the long run, and that has the potential to develop adult knowledge, skills, productivity and job satisfaction, both for individuals or groups, for the acquisition of teams, or for the benefit of organization, community, nation, or ultimately, all human beings'.

The development of human resources to meet current and future market needs postulates the identification of competencies needed. Dauvin & Lorant (2015) define competency as a series of skills, abilities, knowledge, attitudes, and motivations needed by individuals to effectively deal with tasks and challenges related to work. Workforce competence has to do with the development of human resources. This is in line with Guest (2011) who states that there are three main areas of resource development, i.e. personal development (competence), team development (collaboration), and organizational development (structure and process). The staff competency development and qualifications interact as a continuous improvement cycle, while competency development aims to identify competencies needed and further assist critical gaps (Sung & Choi, 2014). Furthermore, Waris (2015) states that competency is a characteristic that underlies a person which is related to the effectiveness of individual performance on the job. Competence is an important factor in achieving individual and company performance. If the employee has good competence, he will work well in completing his work so that competence becomes one of the factors that affect a person's performance with that performance to be achieved by someone or the company will be achieved.

METHODOLOGY

The discourse on character implementation in leadership practices becomes the priority attention of practitioners and academics. This is indicated by many studies or researches related to the importance of character in leadership. This article departs from the discussion which conceptually has been conducted by several researchers; however, the concept of leadership in practice still has not run well. Meanwhile, the character of a leader has a significant impact on the management of human resources in an organization. Likewise, the character of leadership reflects an organization and the behavior of the human resources in it. This article looks back at the importance of the lead character in an organization that has an impact on human resources development.

This article is a qualitative one where data were collected by observing cases related to the character of leadership in human resources. To support observation data, online literature studies were also conducted to build a conceptual framework on the lead character in human resources development. Cases observation and review of related literature data were analyzed using a descriptive qualitative approach. Descriptive analysis approach was used to describe the concept of leadership that is understood and practiced in the organization, to explore the leadership and the character relation in human resource development, and to analyze how a character in leadership becomes an essential factor in developing the quality of human resources in an organization.

Data in this study were collected through observation and online literature study. The observation focused on the leader and the human resources character holistically and comprehensively. Online literature study, on the other hand, focused on the study of several kinds of literature related to leadership characters and human resources development. An online literature study was conducted to conceptualize and to support the analysis. Data were analyzed inductively using critical review interpretation. The analysis was conducted during and after data collection. Finally, the collected data were then categorized, mapped, described, analyzed, and interpreted.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Leadership Concept Understood and Practiced in an Organization

Human interest in organizational leadership has a significant impact that needs attention in the management of the institution or organization. This shows that leadership practices in an organization need to become a concern for a leader. In the aspect of regulation in organizations, for example, the perception of human resources tends to get injustice in a decision, so this needs to get the attention of the leadership in formulating regulations when making policy. Likewise, it will affect job satisfaction, management, division of labor, reward, and punishment that get the perception of human resources with sufficient judgment. In this case, moral decision making is not well predicted by the overall justice of the action but rather by the consequences of justice that follow directly (Coffman, 2011). However, the aspect of leadership performance will be felt directly by human resources, which of course is based on the development of a healthy organization both formally and informally.

Like an organization that has a structure, the world of education as we can find in many education institutions also has a leadership system and lead management that is discussed a lot conceptually. The concept of educational leadership and management systems first emerged as a formal field of inquiry in America during the mid-20th century ([Hallinger & Chen, 2014](#)). The concept of character leadership has influenced others to achieve goals in the context of education. It can be seen as a system that has a rationale, which requires input/resources, that has a process to achieve results and that takes place in the environment/context that accompanies it ([Connolly et al., 2017](#)). Similarly, historical, cultural, and unconscious factors, paradoxically, can make us find that local values have not been accommodated in leadership practices that are generally ignored ([West, 2019](#)). This was confirmed in [Bush's \(2018\)](#) study about management of educational leadership that emphasizes hierarchy with vertical accountability, division of labor based on specialist knowledge, strict rules and regulations, and impersonal relationships that are very formal. It is as shown on how the concept of leadership is practiced in the management of private tertiary institutions. Therefore, the graduates cannot only compete on the international market, but also have the necessary intellectual, moral, and spiritual competencies to work collectively and create social harmony ([Pabbajah et al., 2020](#)). Human resources provide perceptions about leadership effectiveness such as job satisfaction, commitment, stress, and status in the organization and a greater focus on how leadership and management affect the performance of existing human resources in an organization.

The Relationship of Leadership with Characters in Human Resource Management

In a leadership process, it is not only management that needs attention, but also the character and personality of a leader. This is considered that a leader has the potential to influence the behavior of employees and the organization they lead. In other words, it is called leadership effectiveness to achieve organizational goals whose assessment is carried out by superiors, co-workers, or subordinates ([Judge et al., 2002](#)). Personality here is analogous to the character that forms the basis of consistent thought and behavior of an individual who is stable over time and who is relatively consistent in various situations ([Özbağ, 2016](#)). Character and leadership are two things that are interrelated because of the leaders' socio-political intelligence, the ability to understand the dynamics of group politics, and the extent to which leaders are seen to have integrity ([Hogan & Judge, 2013](#)). In addition, personality information can be obtained at three levels: 1) disposition traits; 2) adaptation of characteristics (i.e., motives, goals, and values); and 3) integrative life stories ([Hamid et al., 2016](#)). These personality traits include self-control, emotional stability, awareness, and conformity. Specifically, individuals characterize leaders who are similar to themselves as ideal examples ([Marsiglia, 2005](#)). The principles of character building include responsibility, discipline, patience, and perseverance. Family is considered as the earliest and most effective domain in instilling character values ([Hyoscyamina, 2011](#); [Suarmini et al., 2016](#); [Subianto, 2013](#)).

In general, personality and character have important influences in the leadership process. The further explanation is stated in the Big Five Personality consisting of (1). Extraversion, when a leader is creative, he can change people and organizations to push into the vision that he inspires. He will encourage followers to express ideas about how to solve problems facing the organization; (2). Agreeableness, it declares that hospitality as a level where someone can get along with others by being kind, cooperative, forgiving, merciful, understanding, and trusting; (3). Conscientiousness, is awareness as the level where someone is responsible, reliable, persistent, and achievement-oriented. A person whose conscience focused on a number of goals is pursued in a deliberate manner; (4). Neurotic, it is a kind of leader who is emotionally stable, handles stress well, who is able to handle criticism, and who generally does not make mistakes and failure personally. They generally have lower self-confidence and may explode in emotional outbursts when stressed or criticized; (5). Openness is a kind of leader who is an open person. He or she is someone who has broad and imaginative interests, who is creative, and who is willing to consider new ideas. These people are intellectually curious and often seek new experiences through travel, art, film, extensive reading, or other activities. ([Yahaya et al, 2011](#); [Alkahtani et al., 2011](#); [Aidt & Rauh, 2018](#)). This leadership character can answer the needs of human resources and provide space in organizational management that is open and transparent, without having to show emotional reactive in the leadership process.

The Character of Leadership in Human Resources Development

Human resource development is now and continuously to be a major academic discipline and a major consideration for the workplace in the 21st century. In general, knowledge work requires employees to use their cognitive abilities, such as high-level problem solving and perhaps creative thinking skills, to reach goals that are far greater than the ones of the work that mainly consists of routines and physical actions ([Timonen & Paloheimo, 2008](#)). One philosophy of the development of education in the future is that education is organized as a cultural process and the empowerment of resources that lasts throughout life. Education is also organized by giving an example, building a will, developing the creativity of students in the learning process ([Nafis et al., 2019](#)). This needs to become a concern because competition between state and private universities in Indonesia currently not only faces competition with local, regional, and national universities but also has entered international scale competition ([Widyanti, 2019](#)). The notes of the Ministry of Research in Technology and Higher Education (*Kemenristek-Dikti*) shows that the number of Private Universities (PTS) in Indonesia based on data in the Higher Education Database in 2019 was 4,113 PTS, consisting of 3,131 PTS under the Ministry of Research and Technology and Higher Education ([Pabbajah et al., 2020](#)). It shows that tertiary institutions have a sizable amount of resources in quantity, as well as being demanded to produce quality human resources that are ready to compete in the global world.

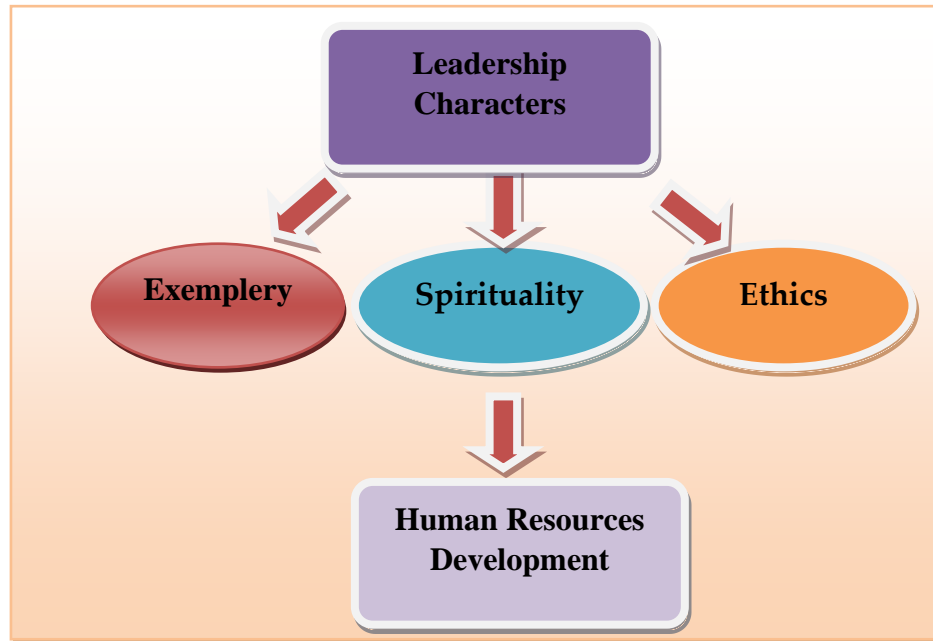


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of Leadership Character on Human Resources Development

Source: Description by Researchers, 2020

Therefore, the reactivation of leadership character is needed in the development of human resources. In this article, there are three approaches. First, the example of a leader in the main capital in running the leadership system in an organization. Without the exemplary, a leader will result in a poor assessment by human resources. It can even become a bad example of human resources owned. The example here is shown by giving a good example for all human resources in an organization. The leadership style adopted is based on conscience, norm values, ethics, freedom, trust, supervision, ready to accept criticism, constructive suggestions, firm, and respect for creativity, innovation, and motivation ([Suwarno & Bramantyo, 2019](#)). In this case, exemplary is an element created to hegemony the agents in it. Here it is needed an understanding that the leader is not the ruler who always shows the character of the ruling, but rather a good role model for the human resources around him.

The second character of leadership is spiritual. Spiritual leadership character is leadership that brings the worldly dimension to the spiritual dimension (divinity). Spiritual values in leadership tend to be associated with representing God as a true leader who inspires influences, serves, and moves the conscience of His servants in a very wise way through ethical and exemplary approaches. Therefore, spiritual leadership is also called leadership based on religious ethics. The attitude of one's religiosity can influence the decision to build relationship with the institution, so it needs to be used as a record and reflection in the continuity of management ([Pabbajah et al., 2019](#)). Leadership that can inspire, awaken, influence, and mobilizes through example, service, compassion, and the implementation of values and other godly attributes in leadership goals, processes, culture, and behavior ([Rafsanjan, 2017](#)). Spiritual moral leadership is also a comprehensive leadership that combines several approaches simultaneously as the driving force of leadership ([Baharuddin, 2018](#)).

Third, ethics is a commitment that a leader needs to have although, in the practice of leadership, the implementation of the leader's personal moral commitment has not gone well. Morality is generally defined as an assessment of what is right and what is wrong, what is good and what is bad that is produced at the meeting points between personal values, beliefs, standards and negotiations in social settings ([West, 2019](#)), which functions as a system of rules to get people to play collectively in a stable and productive way ([Smyth, 2016](#)). Morality refers to norms about the attitudes and behavior of others, especially those that forbid actions that benefit oneself but also harm others such as lying, not keeping promises, taking advantage of others, stealing and misleading, distorting, disguising, obscuring and confusing that becomes ethical habits are hereditary in society ([James, 2015](#)) so that morality can make human life go well ([Elizondo, 2016](#)).

In some cases, we still often find that behavior does not reflect good morals. Even it tends to ignore the moral values of a leader. In terms put forward by [Monin & Merritt \(2011\)](#), this is the same as moral hypocrisy, which is understood as a lack of integrity or sincerity ([Monin & Merritt, 2011](#)). In contrast, moral behavior is described by [Lindenberg et al., \(2018\)](#) in their study. They link moral commitment to sincerity. [Lindenberg et al. \(2018\)](#) show that people look sincere when they display a commitment to the norms they adhere to. However, a form of hedonic hypocrisy arises when such people believe in a good norm for all and display their commitment to the spirit of the common good, but they do not contribute significantly to the common good ([Lindenberg et al., 2018](#)). The moral of leadership ability to "accommodate" broad differences and inequalities are sorely needed ([Abdullah et al., 2019](#)). Thus, morality emphasizes more on the

aspect of sincerity in working for the common good, and in possessing responsibility without always bringing down others.

CONCLUSION

The character of leadership is an essential factor in developing human resources competence and quality. Good leadership characters lead to good human resources quality. The practice of leadership characters in human resources development indicates three emerging things; *firstly*, the concept of leadership understanding and practice becomes the basic foundation in building human resources in an organization. Leadership practice affects the organization's performance and quality. *Secondly*, a lead character has a great influence on the leadership practice of an organization. A good and strong leader individual character is a modal in managing and developing human resources. *Thirdly*, the quality development of human resources is determined by a leader character practiced in an organization or in an institution. Therefore, the lead character is required indeed to develop human resources quality and performance by practicing exemplary, spiritual, and ethical character. In short, those three leadership characters support the development of the quality and performance of human resources of an organization or institution in this competitiveness era.

LIMITATION AND STUDY FORWARD

Since this study is a qualitative study, it is recommended for further study using quantitative data with a more holistic and comprehensive approach. Likewise, comparative studies are also needed by involving several cases to provide results with a high degree of accuracy.

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AUTHORS CONTRIBUTION

This article discusses the relationship between leadership characters and human resources development using a critical review approach. It was written together with a diverse approach in accordance with the field of study of each author. Wide Fajar Widyatmoko's concerns on the perspectives of leadership and human resources development; Mustaqim Pabbajah focuses on the characters' values including exemplary, spirituality, and ethics; Ratri Nurina Widyanti concerns on organizational management in an institution.

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