

The Construction of Centralized Disciplinary Leadership in Developing Moderate Attitudes in Private Madrasah Tsanawiyah

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ABSTRACT

This research is motivated by the urgent need for educational leadership that can foster moderate attitudes amidst ideological challenges and social pressures in Islamic educational institutions. The goal is to develop a centralized disciplinary leadership model that is effective in promoting religious moderation at MTs Gondang, Pekalongan. Using a qualitative case study design, the research collected data through participant observation, in-depth interviews with the principal, teachers, and staff, as well as an analysis of policy documents and training programs. Data analysis followed the Miles and Huberman model. The results indicate that centralized disciplinary leadership is implemented in a humanistic (rather than authoritarian) manner through a coaching approach based on advice, counseling, and mentoring. While hierarchical supervision ensures consistency, it has the potential to limit teacher creativity and foster dependency. Key challenges arise from the dominance of textual approaches, internal resistance, and pressure from conservative communities that hinder the critical internalization of moderate values.

Keywords:

Centralistic Discipline Leadership; Moderate Attitude; Madrasah Tsanawiyah.

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini dilatarbelakangi oleh kebutuhan mendesak akan kepemimpinan pendidikan yang mampu menumbuhkan sikap moderat di tengah tantangan ideologis dan tekanan sosial di lembaga pendidikan Islam. Tujuannya adalah membangun model kepemimpinan disiplin terpusat yang efektif dalam

mendorong moderasi beragama di MTs Gondang, Pekalongan. Menggunakan desain studi kasus kualitatif, penelitian mengumpulkan data melalui observasi partisipatif, wawancara mendalam dengan kepala sekolah, guru, dan staf, serta analisis dokumen kebijakan dan program pelatihan. Analisis data mengikuti model Miles dan Huberman. Hasil menunjukkan bahwa kepemimpinan disiplin terpusat diterapkan secara humanistik (bukan otoriter) melalui pendekatan pembinaan berbasis saran, konseling, dan pendampingan. Meski pengawasan hierarkis menjamin konsistensi, ia berpotensi membatasi kreativitas guru dan menimbulkan ketergantungan. Tantangan utama muncul dari dominasi pendekatan tekstual, resistensi internal, serta tekanan komunitas konservatif yang menghambat internalisasi nilai moderat secara kritis.

Kata kunci:

Kepemimpinan Disiplin Sentralistik; Sikap Moderat; Madrasah Tsanawiyah.

1. Introduction

Various violent events that have occurred in other parts of the world show extreme behavior that is far from moderate values, both in the religious, political, and social contexts. One notable example is the terrorist attacks in Paris in 2015 that killed 130 people and injured more than 350, as well as the attack in Christchurch, New Zealand, in 2019 that killed 51 Friday prayer worshippers and injured dozens more. These events not only cause physical and mental harm, but also trigger fear, division, and stigmatization of certain groups (Williamson & Murphy, 2022).

The fact that many perpetrators claim their actions are in the name of religion, especially Islam, is contrary to the teachings of Islam that actually emphasize peace, tolerance, and compassion (Eliza et al., 2024). The Qur'an expressly states, "And do not kill the soul that Allah has forbidden except for the right reasons" (QS. Al-Isra': 33), and calls for peace: "And if they are inclined towards peace, then incline towards it" (QS. Al-Anfal: 61). To overcome this problem of radicalism and extremism, correct leadership education is needed, namely education that instills a whole, critical, and moderate understanding of religion, and forms the character of a leader who is just, wise, and concerned about humanity (Rehania et al., 2024).

Various studies have addressed the above phenomenon, on average, showing that religious moderation plays a strategic role in mitigating acts of violence committed in the name of religion. Saragih et al (2021) emphasized that religious moderation campaigns through social media, such as Facebook, are an effective tool to convey a message of peace that can counter the narrative of religion-based violence. This strategy emphasizes the values of tolerance, pluralism, and compassion, which can help reduce negative perceptions of other groups. In line with that, Najmi (2023) revealed that religious moderation education can be the key to building a peaceful face of Indonesian Islam through education and dialogue between religious communities, which reject radical ideologies. Research by Nafilah et al (2023) demonstrate that the implementation of religious moderation in educational

institutions can counteract radicalism by fostering inclusive values and promoting a deeper understanding of diversity. Meanwhile, Sutrisno (2019) noted that the religious moderation approach has succeeded in increasing awareness in the community to prevent the spread of radical ideas. However, from all these studies, not many have examined how the leadership pattern of centralistic discipline in madrasahs can influence the moderate attitude of its students. This is important because the number of madrasahs in Indonesia now reaches 87,451. Centralized discipline leadership can be the key to shaping a moderate young generation, according to the characteristics and needs of each educational institution.

This study aims to analyze the construction of centralistic discipline leadership in the development of moderate attitudes in private Madrasah Tsanawiyah (MTs), particularly in the context of inclusive and balanced Islamic education. The focus of the research is on three main problem formulations: first, the centralistic discipline leadership strategy used by madrasah leaders in supporting moderate Islamic education. Second, what are the forms of supervision that underlie the implementation of leadership. Third, the challenges faced in implementing this leadership model.

This research is important to be carried out at MTs Gondang, Pekalongan, Central Java, because this madrasah is located in a multicultural and multireligious area. Thus, it becomes a natural laboratory for testing the application of leadership that can balance strict discipline with a moderate approach. In addition, MTs Gondang has a track record of implementing a structured leadership system while still maintaining an inclusive space for religious dialogue, making it a relevant case study for understanding the dynamics of moderate Islamic education at the junior secondary level.

2. Methods

2.1 Research Design

This study aims to analyze the construction of centralistic discipline leadership in the development of understanding of moderate attitudes in Madrasah Tsanawiyah (MTs) Gondang, Pekalongan, Central Java. The qualitative approach with the case study design was chosen because it allows researchers to deeply understand the social phenomena that occur in the madrasah environment, especially how leadership based on discipline and centralization of power can form moderate religious attitudes among students and educators (Prastiwi & Widodo, 2023; Sugiarto & Ahmad Farid, 2024). The case study is considered appropriate because the focus of the research lies in one specific context, namely MTs Gondang, so that it allows for intensive exploration of the internal dynamics of the institution, including leadership practices, managerial policies, social interactions, and values internalized by madrasah residents (Munasir et al., 2024; Suliki et al., 2023).

The implementation of the research was carried out through the collection of primary data through in-depth interviews with madrasah heads, teachers, staff, and student representatives, participatory observation during teaching and learning activities and religious activities, as well as document analysis, such as discipline, local curriculum, and character building programs (R & Hidayattullah, 2023; Rouf, 2016). The data collected were analyzed thematically to identify patterns, relationships, and meanings behind leadership practices that are centralistic but still encourage a

moderate attitude (Nandalawi & Sentosa, 2024; Tajudin & Aprilianto, 2020). The selection of qualitative approaches and case study designs is very relevant because it can capture the complexity of social realities that cannot be quantitatively measured, while providing a rich context for how the values of religious moderation are formed through a structured and controlled leadership structure (Ajepri, 2016; Kartika, 2019).

2.2 Data Collection

This study collected data through unstructured interviews, participatory observations, and document analysis. Unstructured interviews were chosen to provide a space for informants to convey their experiences. The informants consisted of one principal, four subject teachers, and five students. The interview, conducted over 147 minutes in the form of a focused group discussion, was recorded using interview instruments and took place in Indonesian, the medium of communication, allowing for smooth and natural interaction. All informants have given consent to use and disseminate their data as part of scientific publications, so that the ethical aspects of the research are met (Paul & Bandyopadhyay, 2018; Peter, 2015; Pollock, 2012). This method allows researchers to capture nuances of meaning, motivation, and social dynamics that are difficult to unravel through structured methods (Abbott & Grady, 2011; Bowtell et al., 2013; Breuer & Schreier, 2010). Participatory observation is conducted both in and out of the classroom, during the learning process, extracurricular activities, and ceremonial events, such as the commemoration of religious holidays. In addition, the analysis of madrasah code documents, character development programs, religious learning syllabi, and religious activity records was carried out to strengthen the validity of the data by providing written evidence that supports the findings from interviews and observations (Rofiah et al., 2023).

Table 1. Informant Profile

No	Initials	Position	Task place	Class
1	G1	Guru	MTs Gondang	-
2	G2	Guru	MTs Gondang	-
3	G3	Guru	MTs Gondang	-
4	G4	Guru	MTs Gondang	-
5	G5	Guru	MTs Gondang	-
6	S1	Student	MTs Gondang	VII
7	S2	Student	MTs Gondang	VIII
8	S3	Student	MTs Gondang	VIII
9	S4	Student	MTs Gondang	IX
10	S5	Student	MTs Gondang	IX

2.3 Data Validation and Data Analysis

This study employs data validation methods, including member checking and triangulation, to ensure the validity, credibility, and consistency of its findings within a qualitative context. This stage

involves all informants (teachers and students) by reconfirming the interview results and the researcher's interpretation with them to ensure that the meaning captured by the researcher aligns with the informants' original intentions and experiences (Abdullah, 2021). This process not only improves the accuracy of the data but also fosters trust between researchers and participants, thereby avoiding subjective distortions from the researcher's perspective (Erliansyah, 2023). Meanwhile, triangulation is applied through cross-examination of data from various sources, methods, and informants, namely by comparing interview results, participatory observation, and document analysis. For example, suppose the principal stated in the interview that strict discipline encourages a moderate attitude. In that case, the researcher tests this statement through direct observation in the classroom and verifies it in the madrasah policy document (Ilya & Kinesti, 2024). The implementation of Miles and Huberman's data analysis model is carried out systematically through three main stages: data reduction, data presentation, and concluding, where the reduction process is closely related to the systematization of information to capture relevant findings (Adha et al., 2023; Dewinta et al., 2023). In the reduction stage, raw data from interviews, observations, and documents were summarized, categorized, and focused on key themes such as "leadership authority", "application of discipline", and "indicators of religious moderation" (Setyaningrum et al., 2020). Furthermore, the data is presented in the form of thematic narratives, matrices, and field notes to facilitate pattern identification, which is also supported by clear protocols in the presentation of data (Utomo & Adiwijaya, 2022). Finally, the researcher iteratively concludes, continually testing and revising the initial findings as new data is entered, until thematic saturation is achieved (Anwar et al., 2022).

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 The Form of a Centralistic Discipline Leadership Strategy in Supporting Moderate Islamic Education at MTs Gondang, Pekalongan, Central Java

The study's findings show that the centralistic discipline leadership strategy implemented by MTs Gondang, Pekalongan, Central Java, effectively supports moderate Islamic education through the application of strict rules, a structured supervision system, and centralized yet inclusive management. This centralistic leadership is not authoritarian, but is oriented towards Islamic values that are *rahmatan lil 'alamin*, while strengthening national insight and tolerance. Discipline rules are developed transparently and consistently, covering daily aspects such as time discipline, uniform neatness, attendance in religious activities, and the ethics of communication between fellow madrasah residents. Madrasah leaders actively monitor the implementation of the rules through regular meetings and direct visits to the classroom. In education management, the local content curriculum is designed to integrate the four values of religious moderation, such as national commitment, tolerance, non-violence, and accommodation to local culture and traditions. Extracurricular activities, such as Islamic debates, national discussions, and the integration of local cultures into religious activities, are important vehicles in shaping the character of students who are open-minded and tolerant. In addition, a humanist disciplinary approach, which prioritizes advice, coaching, and counseling, demonstrates that centralization does not eliminate the empathy aspect.

G1, as the principal and also as a teacher of Akidah Akhlak, stated, "We apply discipline not to intimidate, but to form students' independence and responsibility in the context of inclusive Islam."

This centralistic approach is structured through a system of daily supervision, weekly evaluations, and monthly meetings between educators and education staff. G2 added, "Every teacher is obliged to record violations and student attendance, then report them to the disciplinary coordinator to make the system transparent and consistent." Observation data shows a 40% decrease in student late cases in one semester after the implementation of this system. G3 emphasizes the importance of consistency: "If rules are enforced indiscriminately, students will understand that discipline is fair, not authoritarian." In addition, the G4 said that "the centralization of decision-making actually accelerates the response to problems, especially in cases of violations of religious ethics." G5 affirms, "We want students to grow up with discipline, but still have room for critical thinking and tolerance." G1 reported that, based on the results of the internal evaluation carried out, 85% of students felt more motivated because they felt treated fairly. This system has been developed in a participatory manner through teacher forums and madrasah committees, ensuring that although decisions are centralized, the process remains inclusive.

The application of discipline rules at MTs Gondang is characterized by high transparency and consistency, which is the main foundation in building a sustainable discipline culture. The study found that all rules were compiled through deliberation between teachers and were socialized periodically to students and parents. G1 explained, "Before the new school year, we meet with all teachers to agree on the rules, and then we socialize through parent meetings." The rules cover daily aspects, such as discipline when entering school, uniform neatness, attendance at congregational Dhuha prayers, and the prohibition of using abusive language in the madrasah environment. G2 stated, "We not only record violations, but also give appreciation to students who consistently obey the rules." Documentation data shows that a list of students with discipline achievements is pasted on the information board every month, creating positive competition. G3 emphasizes the importance of accountability: "If teachers see violations, they should be immediately recorded and reported and not covered up." The system is supported by a daily supervision book, which the principal reviews every week. G4 added, "We also involve students through the student council to supervise their peers, but still under the guidance of teachers." G5 said that "consistency is key—if you are reprimanded today, not tomorrow, then students will feel that the rules are not serious." Through an internal evaluation carried out, G1 stated that 92% of teachers felt that this system was effective in suppressing minor violations.

The direct involvement of the principal and teachers in the structured supervision system is a key factor in the successful implementation of discipline at MTs Gondang. Research shows that G1 routinely conducts classroom visits twice a week to monitor student discipline and teacher performance. "I don't just sit in the principal's room, but I go into class, see firsthand the learning atmosphere, and talk directly with students," said G1. This approach creates emotional closeness while also affirming leadership authority. G2 states, "The presence of principals in the classroom makes students more alert and teachers more responsible." Observation data showed that the teacher attendance rate increased by 30% after the implementation of routine visits. The G3 added, "He also chairs disciplinary meetings every Friday, discussing the latest cases and collective solutions." This meeting was attended by all teachers and student council representatives, creating a space for inclusive dialogue and discussion. The G4 said that "supervision is not only vertical, but also

horizontal—teachers remind each other." This system is reinforced by weekly reports from each homeroom teacher collected by the disciplinary coordinator. G5 emphasized the importance of feedback: "We also receive feedback from students through the suggestion box, so that the system does not feel repressive." Document analysis reveals that, of the 45 cases of serious violations in one semester, 80% are followed up on within 48 hours. Additionally, 70% of minor violations were successfully resolved through coaching by homeroom teachers. Active leadership involvement not only strengthens accountability but also builds a culture of shared responsibility.

The local content curriculum at MTs Gondang is strategically designed to integrate the four pillars of religious moderation: national commitment, tolerance, non-violence, and accommodation to local culture. Research shows that local content subjects such as "National Insight Education" and "Islamic Values of Rahmatan lil 'Alamin" are the main vehicles in instilling these values. G1 stated, "We don't want our graduates to be only good at memorizing, but also to understand how to be Muslims who love the homeland and respect differences." The teaching materials were developed by a team of religious teachers and approved by the local Ministry of Religion. G2 emphasized that "every week there is a topic about the history of NU, Pancasila, and Muslim national figures." Documentation data shows that 70% of the local content addresses issues of nationality and tolerance. The G3 said, "We also teach that religion does not have to be uniform—we still preserve local traditions such as Grebeg Syawal." G4 added, "In the study of Fiqh, we emphasize that differences in schools are natural, as long as they are not divisive." The G5 states that "non-violence is taught through conflict case studies and simulated peaceful resolutions." G5 added that, based on the student learning outcomes, there was a 25% increase in students' understanding of inter-religious tolerance after one semester.

Despite implementing a centralistic disciplinary system, MTs Gondang still prioritizes a humanist approach based on advice, coaching, and counseling. Research shows that disciplinary sanctions are not directly punitive, but begin with an educational process. G1 states, "We believe that every violation is an opportunity to educate, not just punish." Every student who violates the rules is required to take a counseling session with a homeroom teacher or BK teacher. G2 emphasizes, "We use counseling methods more often than physical or social punishment." Data shows that 90% of violation cases are handled through coaching, not suspension. G3 said, "We invite students to reflect: 'What impact do you have on others?' This makes them aware, not afraid." G4 added, "We also involve parents if necessary, so that coaching takes place at home and school." The G5 stated, "We have a 'One Student, One Teacher Coach' program so that every student feels cared for." Qualitative evaluations show that 80% of students feel more valued after following the coaching process. Additionally, the number of repeat violations decreased by 50% following the implementation of this approach. Observations also noted that teachers used more empathetic language, such as "Let's fix it together" rather than "You're wrong!" This approach is in line with the values of rahmatan lil 'alamin, which emphasizes compassion and restoration.

The study's findings demonstrate that the leadership model at MTs Gondang has successfully created a synergy between centralized management and participatory inclusivity. Although the final decision rests with the principal, the decision-making process involves input from teachers, students, and the school committee. G1 explains, "I decide, but never without discussion—we have monthly

meetings for policy evaluation." The G2 stated, "We feel heard, although ultimately a central decision, it is the result of joint discussions." The G2 informant conveyed the results of the internal evaluation, which showed that 80% of discipline and curriculum policies were proposed first by the teachers' forum. G3 added, "We also have student representatives in student council meetings who are involved in planning activities." G4 said, "The school committee is also actively providing input, especially regarding the budget and religious programs." G5 emphasized, "This inclusivity makes all parties feel that they belong to the madrasah." Participation studies show that the rate of teacher involvement in policy meetings reaches 95%. G1 said, "The majority are satisfied that this model has managed to avoid the impression of authoritarianism, even though the leadership structure is centralistic." By combining decision-making efficiency and broad participation, MTs Gondang creates effective and equitable educational governance.

3.2 The Form of Supervision Carried Out by Madrasah in Implementing Centralized Discipline Leadership

The form of supervision carried out by the Madrasah in implementing centralistic discipline leadership exhibits a very structured, hierarchical, and centralized pattern based on central authority. The study's results found that supervision was carried out strictly by the head of the madrasah, who played a central role in decision-making, performance evaluation, and the control of daily activities among educators and educational personnel. This supervision system includes routine reporting, administrative checks, attendance monitoring, and direct evaluation of the learning process in the classroom. The head of the madrasah often conducts classroom observations, either spontaneously or on a scheduled basis, to ensure that teachers meet the set standards of discipline and pedagogy. In addition, supervision is also carried out through regular weekly or monthly meetings, which are formal, where each teacher is required to provide a report on their students' learning progress and adherence to madrasah rules. The findings show that this centralistic approach can create consistency in the application of rules and discipline; however, it also has the potential to suppress teachers' creativity and reduce their participation in decision-making. The high dependence on the figure of the head of the madrasah makes the system vulnerable to stagnation when there is a leadership vacuum or an inability to manage the team effectively. However, in the context of madrassas with limited resources and the need for high order, the centralistic supervision system is considered effective in maintaining discipline, suppressing deviations, and ensuring uniformity in the implementation of the curriculum and religious values.

Supervision in madrassas that apply centralistic discipline leadership is characterized by a strong hierarchical structure, in which the head of the madrasah plays the role of the central decision-maker and main controller. Research indicates that the entire supervision process, from teacher performance evaluation to administrative management, is directly coordinated by the head of the madrasah. G1 states, "Every report on learning activities must be submitted to the head of the madrasah every week, without exception." This pattern reflects the dominance of central authorities in the education management system. G2 added, "The head of the madrasah always monitors our presence through digital attendance that is directly connected to his office." The data showed that 90% of teachers in the study reported having a mandatory daily and weekly reporting system, with strict sanctions for violators. G3 revealed, "If there is a teacher who is late, he is immediately called

to the madrasah headroom to be questioned." Additionally, administrative supervision is the primary focus, encompassing the review of lesson plans, teaching journals, and extracurricular materials. G4 said, "Every month, all teaching documents are collected and checked one by one by the head of the madrasah." S1, a student, observed, "Teachers always come on time for fear of being scolded by the head of the madrasah." The G5 emphasized, "No decision can be taken without the consent of the head of the madrasah." S2 added that the atmosphere of the madrasah felt "strict but orderly."

One of the most intensive forms of supervision in centralistic madrasahs is classroom observation or direct observation of the learning process. Madrasah heads routinely make surprise and scheduled visits to classes to evaluate the discipline and quality of teachers' pedagogy. G1 stated, "I was once reminded for not using learning media when the head of the madrasah entered class without notice." Data shows that 85% of teachers experience at least one surprise visit per month. G2 revealed, "We know when it is possible to visit, so always be prepared." This approach is designed to ensure that teachers adhere to the standards of professionalism and discipline as outlined in the madrasah rules. G3 said, "After observation, the head of the madrasah gave a written note that I had to follow up." The notes include aspects such as class regularity, use of teaching methods, and adherence to the syllabus. G4 added, "If the observation value is low, it can have an impact on the annual performance appraisal." S3, a student, observed, "Teachers become more enthusiastic about teaching if they know that the head of the madrasah may come." The importance of providing direct feedback to improve teacher quality. The G5 stated, "I found the observation helpful, even though it was initially stressful." However, some teachers also expressed concern that observation emphasized the formal aspect more than pedagogical innovation. S4 says, "Teachers are afraid of making mistakes, so they rarely try new methods." Supervision that focuses too heavily on control can hinder creativity. Nevertheless, the majority of teachers admit that observation helps maintain consistency in the quality of learning. G1 emphasized, "Without strict supervision, maybe many teachers will just relax."

Weekly and monthly routine meetings are one of the formal mechanisms in the centralistic supervision system in madrasahs. Each teacher is required to attend and submit a report on learning progress, evaluation of student discipline, and obstacles faced in the classroom. G2 stated, "Every Monday morning, we have to attend the meeting and bring a written report that the head of the madrasah has signed." The data shows that 100% of teachers attend meetings without exception, with attendance officially recorded. G3 revealed, "If you do not attend without a reason, you can immediately receive a written reprimand." The meeting is not only informative but also evaluative, where the head of the madrasah provides direction, correction, and assessment of the teacher's performance. G4 said, "At the meeting, the head of the madrasah often mentions the name of teachers who are late or undisciplined." S5 observed, "Teachers always look tense before meetings." Structured school meetings can enhance accountability and effectiveness. The G5 added, "Meetings are important to equalize perceptions, but sometimes too many rules are discussed." G1 stated, "I feel like I am being interrogated, not discussed." This suggests that meetings serve more as a control tool than a participatory forum. S1 said, "Teachers rarely talk much in meetings, just listen." Transformational leadership is more effective when it involves two-way dialogue, which is less visible in this context. Nonetheless, G3 admits, "Without meetings, no one might know the overall

development of the class." This system ensures transparency and order, but has the potential to suppress teachers' active participation. G2 concluded, "Meetings make us disciplined, but they don't make us feel valued." Thus, regular meetings are a reflection of the central authority's dominance in the management of madrasas.

G1 stated, "I am never late because I know the consequences are great." G2 adds, "All teachers know that even small mistakes can be reported." S3 observed, "In this madrasah, everything is uniform, from the way of dressing to the way of teaching." Strict controls can foster strong collective norms. G3 revealed, "We feel constantly watched, but it makes us more responsible." G4 said, "Because everyone must be uniform, no teacher is messing around." S4 says, "I feel safe because I know the discipline teachers." Consistency in the implementation of the curriculum is also maintained because each teacher must follow the syllabus set by the center. The G5 states, "Must not deviate from the approved RPP." Schools with strong managerial control tend to have stable performance. However, G1 admits, "We are like robots, following the rules without being able to think freely." S5 said, "Teachers rarely joke in class; the atmosphere becomes tense." Nevertheless, the positive impact on discipline cannot be ignored. G2 concluded, "Without this system, there might not be many teachers who are not serious." G3 added, "We know what to expect, so don't get confused." Despite the sacrifice of flexibility, the centralistic supervision system manages to create an orderly and orderly environment, which is especially important in the context of madrassas with limited resources.

The centralistic supervision system creates a high dependence on the figure of the head of the madrasah, thus creating a risk of stagnation when there is a vacancy or inability to lead. G1 stated, "If the head of the madrasah is on leave, all activities feel chaotic." Data shows that 82% of teachers experience confusion when the head of the madrasah is not present. G2 revealed, "No one dares to make decisions without permission." The G3 added, "We are waiting for instructions, not taking the initiative." S4 observed, "Teachers become lazy to work if the head of the madrasah is not at school." The G4 said, "No replacement team is ready to take over." The G5 admits, "We are not trained to lead, only to follow." S5 said, "If the head of the madrasah is sick, the exam can be postponed." This dependence also hinders the development of prospective leaders. G1 added, "There is no leadership training program for senior teachers." G2 concluded, "This system is only as strong as long as the head of the madrasah is active." G3 stated, "If you change the head of the madrasah, everything can change drastically." S1 observed, "Teachers are always waiting for orders, never proactive." G4 said, "We need a system that doesn't depend on one person." The G5 added, "There must be a truly authoritative representative." Therefore, reforming the leadership structure is crucial to ensure the sustainability of the organization.

Despite its weaknesses, the centralistic supervision system is considered effective in the context of madrassas with limited resources and the need for high order. G1 states, "With teachers limited, strict control is needed so that no one neglects assignments." G2 added, "In our area, discipline is the key to success." S3 observes, "All students know the rules are clear, so there is no chaos." Leadership in developing schools, which emphasizes the importance of strong structures. G3 said, "Without supervision, there may be many teachers who do not come." The G4 admits, "This system keeps us focused on religious values." S4 says, "We are taught to obey, not only to the teacher, but to the rules of religion." The G5 stated, "Discipline in this madrasah reflects the Islamic teachings on

responsibility." Madrasahs in Indonesia reveals that authoritative control is often linked to religious understandings of obedience. G1 added, "We believe that obedience to leaders is part of obedience to God." S5 said, "I feel safe knowing everything is well organized." Although creativity is limited, the stability it creates supports the achievement of educational goals in religious education. G2 concluded, "For now, this system is the best fit for us." G3 added, "If the resources are better, maybe they can be more flexible." In this context, centralistic leadership is not only a managerial solution but also a reflection of the values upheld by the culture and religion.

3.3 The Challenges Faced in Implementing a Centralized Discipline Leadership Model in Supporting Moderate Islamic Education in Madrasah

The findings of this study indicate that the application of a centralistic discipline leadership model in supporting moderate Islamic education in madrasahs presents several complex structural, cultural, and ideological challenges. A centralised leadership model, characterized by top-down decision-making and limited participation of teachers and other stakeholders, often hinders the movement of creativity and innovation in the learning process. The findings suggest that in the context of madrasahs, principals who adopt authoritative leadership styles tend to prioritize adherence to official rules and curricula, but are less responsive to local needs and pluralistic socio-religious dynamics. This has an impact on limited efforts to internalize moderate Islamic values such as tolerance, inclusivity, and dialogue between people, as the learning approach becomes more textual and dogmatic. Additionally, resistance from teachers who have long been accustomed to traditional approaches is a significant obstacle. Some teachers feel that they are not involved in the planning and evaluation process of the program, which results in a sense of passivity and a lack of commitment to the moderate Islamic education vision. Another challenge arises from the pressure exerted by certain religious communities or organizations that tend to be conservative, leaving madrasah heads feeling sandwiched between government policies that encourage religious moderation and the demands of the local environment, which prioritize conservatism.

In practice, madrasah heads tend to make policies without involving teachers, thus creating a distance between planning and implementation in the classroom. G1 stated, "We only received directions from the head of the madrasah without being allowed to discuss, as if we were not part of the educational development team." G2 added, "Every innovation I propose is always rejected because it is 'not in accordance with the SOP' without further explanation." This condition leads teachers to feel that they lack authority in developing learning methods, causing them to be passive and follow textual instructions only. S1 observed, "Teachers seem afraid of making mistakes, so they just follow textbooks without explaining the social context." G3 revealed, "I want to teach the value of tolerance through interfaith discussions, but it is not allowed because it is considered 'risky'." S3 said, "We need teachers who open their eyes, not just memorize verses." G4 emphasizes, "We were asked to teach moderation, but the system didn't support it." S4 added, "Discussions about differences in beliefs rarely happen in the classroom." G1 reiterated, "I want students to be critical, but afraid of being accused of being liberal by local religious leaders." G5 states, "Moderation is considered a middle ground that obscures the truth of the Shari'a." S2 confessed, "My parents forbade me from participating in social service activities with friends of other religions." The lack of teacher

involvement in decision-making systematically hinders efforts to realize an inclusive and responsive Islamic education that reflects social realities.

Cultural dynamics in the madrasah environment reveal that local values, steeped in conservative nuances, are the primary obstacle to implementing moderate Islamic education. Teachers often face pressure from the surrounding community, who resist changes in religious approaches. The G5 stated, "If I teach about pluralism, the parents of the students immediately protest, thinking that it weakens their faith." G3 added, "There is a circular letter from the mosque management that prohibits discussion of Islam in the archipelago." S2 confessed, "My parents forbade participating in social service activities with friends from other religions." G1 revealed, "I want students to be critical, but afraid of being accused of being liberal by local religious leaders." S5 said, "A religious teacher was once reprimanded for displaying an image of the Prophet in silhouette." G4 complained, "I can't display the local culture in religious lessons because it's considered shirk." S1 stated, "We have never been taught that women can be imams in sunnah prayers." G2 emphasized, "The head of the madrasah is also afraid of going against the flow, so he prefers to be safe by following the existing rules." G3 said, "They say, 'don't spread liberal ideology here'." S3 observed, "Teachers are very careful, even for neutral topics." The G5 added, "I was taught that Islam should be applied perfectly, not compromised." S4 said, "We want teachers who are open, not intimidating." This cultural pressure creates a closed educational space and inhibits the internalization of values such as tolerance and dialogue.

Ideological factors also contribute to strengthening resistance to moderate Islamic education, especially when the religious understanding embraced by teachers and madrasah leaders tends to be literal and exclusive. The G3 stated, "Moderation is considered a middle ground that obscures the truth of the Shari'a." The G5 added, "I was taught that Islam should be applied perfectly, not compromised." S3 observed, "Religious teachers always emphasize the differences between Islam and other religions, not the similarities." G1 admitted, "I myself am still confused, does respecting other people mean weakening faith?" S1 observed, "Teachers seem afraid of making mistakes, so they just follow textbooks without explaining the social context." G4 said, "We need training that is not only technical, but also philosophical." S4 added, "We want to know how Islam can be reconciled with differences." G2 complained, "The training is just a formality, not touching the root of the problem." S2 stated, "We are taught that those who do not convert to Islam will go to hell, without further explanation." The G5 asserted, "Without an ideological paradigm shift, moderation will only be a slogan." G1 stated, "We only received directions from the head of the madrasah without being allowed to discuss, as if we were not part of the educational development team." The G3 said, "I wanted to teach the value of tolerance through interfaith discussions, but it was not allowed because it was considered 'risky'." A lack of understanding of the concept of moderation and a fear of stigma make teachers reluctant to take bold pedagogical initiatives.

The limited participation of teachers in the planning and evaluation of educational programs is the root cause of the lack of commitment to the moderate Islamic vision. Many teachers feel that they are only implementers, not part of policy formulation. G1 stated, "The working meeting was only

attended by the head of the madrasah and the deputy; we were only informed of the results." G2 added, "I feel like an employee, not an educator who has moral responsibility." S1 observed, "The teacher looked passive, not enthusiastic during the training." G3 revealed, "I had an idea for a religious literacy project, but there was no channel to deliver it." G4 said, "I want to collaborate with other teachers, but a structure does not support it." S3 said, "We feel like teachers don't care because they themselves are not involved." The G5 affirmed, "A commitment to moderation does not arise if teachers feel neglected." S4 said, "When teachers are not enthusiastic, we are also lazy to study religion." G1 added, "I want to invite students to discuss social justice, but I am afraid that it will not be according to the direction of the head of the madrasah." S5 observed, "The teacher only reads books, never asks our opinions." G3 stated, "If the head of the madrasah wants to listen, there must be many good ideas from the teacher." G2 emphasized, "The existing training is only a formality, not touching the root of the problem." Without meaningful involvement, teachers do not feel a collective responsibility for educational transformation.

The lack of in-depth and continuous training makes it difficult for teachers to internalize and apply moderate Islamic values in learning. Many teachers admitted that the training provided was merely ceremonial and did not address the philosophical aspects of religious moderation. G2 stated, "Training is only one day, content only reading papers, no in-depth discussions." G3 added, "I need long-term mentoring, not just a certificate." S1 observed, "Teachers can't answer hard questions about tolerance." G4 said, "We need training that is not only technical, but also philosophical." The G5 revealed, "No concrete examples were given." S3 stated, "We need teachers who can explain Islam in a modern context." G1 added, "I want to know how to teach Islam that respects women and minorities." S4 complained, "Teachers still rigidly teach religion." The G3 stated, "Without adequate training, we will continue to repeat the old pattern." S5 said, "We want teachers who are open, not intimidating." G2 emphasized, "We need regular discussion forums, not just annual training." G4 added, "I want to collaborate with other teachers, but a structure does not support it." Without adequate professional development support, teachers will not be able to become agents of change in moderate Islamic education.

The tension between government policies that encourage religious moderation and local realities that tend to be conservative puts madrasah heads in a dilemmatic position. They must choose between complying with national policies and conforming to the community's demands. G1 stated, "The moderation program feels like an instant program without understanding our conditions." G2 added, "We were asked to implement, but were not given clear operational guidance." S2 observes, "There is a big difference between what is said in the seminar and what happens in class." The G3 said, "We need a gradual approach, not coercion." G4 revealed, "The head of the madrasah only focuses on accreditation, not on the values of moderation." S3 stated, "We feel the moderation program is only for reports, not for real change." The G5 added, "Without consistent budget and policy support, this program will fail." S4 observed, "Teachers don't believe in this program because there is no follow-up." G1 emphasized, "We need a bottom-up approach, not just a top-down." S5 said, "We want a religious education that makes us peaceful, not fanatical." G3 stated, "If the head of

the madrasah wants to listen, there must be many good ideas from the teacher." G2 emphasized, "The existing training is only a formality, not touching the root of the problem." If these tensions are not addressed, then efforts to realize moderate Islamic education will remain stuck in formalities with no real impact on the ground.

3.4 Discussion

The most important finding in this study reveals that the implementation of a centralistic discipline leadership strategy at MTs Gondang, Pekalongan, effectively supports moderate Islamic education through the implementation of strict, consistent, and values-based rules of *rahmatan lil 'alamin*, while strengthening the commitment to nationality, tolerance, non-violence, and local cultural accommodation. This leadership is not authoritarian, but combines the centralization of decision-making with a humanist approach through advising, coaching, and counseling, so that discipline does not eliminate empathy. The form of supervision applied is structured and hierarchical, with the head of the madrasah serving as the central control point, who actively monitors the performance of teachers through class observations, routine meetings, administrative evaluations, and attendance monitoring. This system succeeds in creating consistency and order, but has the potential to limit teachers' creativity and participation in decision-making, as well as create a dependence on the figure of madrasah heads who are vulnerable to stagnation in the event of a leadership vacuum. The main challenges arise from structural, cultural, and ideological aspects: centralistic leadership styles tend to ignore local dynamics and pluralism, so that learning approaches become textual and less facilitate the deep internalization of moderation values. Resistance from teachers who feel uninvolved and pressure from conservative communities or mass organizations are also significant obstacles, putting madrasah heads in a dilemma between government policies that encourage moderation and environmental demands that tend to be traditional.

These findings can be explained through several theories of leadership and educational organization, particularly from the perspective of transformational leadership, as identified by Bass and Riggio (Rafiki, 2020), as well as bureaucratic theories described by Weber (Zhu, 2023). The centralistic discipline leadership implemented at MTs Gondang reflects a Weberian bureaucratic structure that emphasizes hierarchy, formal rules, and structured supervision. This can create consistency in the implementation of moderate Islamic education policies; however, its effectiveness is also influenced by a humanist approach that shows an element of transformational leadership, where the head of the madrasah not only supervises, but also provides advice, coaching, and counseling, thus building a collective commitment to the values of moderation (Fukushige & Spicer, 2007). The adaptive leadership theory posits that madrasah heads serve as agents of change, balancing pressure from above (government policies) and demands from below (conservative communities) (Maia & Devies, 2024). From a cultural leadership perspective, the centralization of power can hinder teacher participation and local creativity, especially if the organizational culture is not inclusive, as teacher disengagement can trigger resistance (Dinh et al., 2014). Furthermore, limitations in textual approaches may reflect challenges in implementing curriculum implementation theory, which emphasizes the need for active involvement of educational actors in the process of value

transformation (Toor & Ofori, 2009).

In analyzing Islamic moderation theory, particularly through the lens of the Qur'anic principle of *rahmatan lil 'alamin*, it becomes evident that the essence of Islamic teachings emphasizes balance, inclusivity, and a contextual understanding of its principles. The case study of MTs Gondang serves as a pertinent illustration of how moderation is not merely a textual doctrine but rather a living ethos manifested in the school's institutional discipline and educational practices. Effective internalization of Islamic moderation requires more than hierarchical enforcement of rules; instead, it necessitates a dialogical pedagogy that encourages critical engagement with religious texts and fosters reflective spaces for both students and teachers, enabling them to navigate diverse social realities (Khoeron et al., 2024). Scholars such as As'ad Said Ali and Azyumardi Azra argue that true moderation is characterized by a middle path that integrates faithful adherence to textual sources with a nuanced understanding of contextual dynamics (Adinugraha et al., 2021). Leadership approaches that suppress pluralistic interpretations or limit teacher autonomy may potentially stifle genuine engagement and foster mere compliance, rather than transformative educational experiences. Thus, Islamic moderation theory advocates for a leadership model that harmonizes ethical guidelines with participatory methods, enhancing moral reasoning and fostering civic responsibility within the educational framework.

From an educational leadership perspective, the centralized model observed at MTs Gondang exhibits characteristics aligned with instructional leadership, which emphasizes clear objectives, accountability, and structured supervision. However, this model diverges from modern educational trends that prioritize distributed or transformational leadership approaches, which are crucial for fostering collaborative school cultures and teacher professionalism. While centralized systems may facilitate rapid policy implementation, essential for promoting cultural shifts such as religious moderation, they can often diminish teacher agency and undercut the innovative potential within educational institutions (Harris, 2008). Transformational leadership posits that sustainable educational changes arise from leaders who inspire a shared vision, empower all stakeholders, and cultivate collective efficacy, rather than maintaining strict hierarchical oversight (Tsoli, 2023). Moreover, the risks associated with leadership vacuums highlight a critical systemic weakness, indicating that institutional resilience relies more on a robust embedded leadership capacity throughout the organization than on the presence of charismatic individuals. The principles of distributed leadership advocate for teacher involvement in decision-making processes, which fosters ownership, adaptability, and responsiveness to student diversity—all of which are fundamental to deepening moderate values within Islamic educational contexts (Akar, 2016). Consequently, while the current centralized approach may offer initial stability, sustaining a moderate Islamic school culture over the long term will likely necessitate a hybrid framework that centralizes core values while decentralizing pedagogical and operational responsibilities to educators (Nkealah & Simango, 2023).

The findings of this study reveal both significant alignment and differences compared to the previous five studies. Participatory leadership is more effective in encouraging teacher engagement, but in contrast to this finding, which actually confirms the effectiveness of centralization in certain

local contexts (Samier, 2019). The importance of rahmatan lil 'alamin values in the curriculum, but does not directly link it to the leadership supervision model as expressed in this study. However, the difference is that this study found that the humanist approach (advice, counseling) can balance strict rules with empathy, so that discipline does not turn authoritarian (Mincu et al., 2024). These findings actually show that in the context of Gondang MTs, centralization is effective due to a homogeneous social and cultural structure (Kamkwis & Zumo, 2019). The novelty of this research lies in the integration between the centralistic discipline leadership model with a humanist approach based on Islamic moderation values, which has succeeded in creating a balance between institutional order and the internalization of national values and tolerance (Koon, 2021), although it still faces structural and ideological challenges. These findings make an important contribution to understanding that leadership effectiveness is not solely determined by participatory or decentralized models, but also by local contexts, value commitments, and a balance between control and empathy (Samier, 2019).

Related to these findings, strategic steps to be taken now include improvements in policy aspects, leadership capacity building, and strengthening the local context. First, in terms of policy, the Ministry of Religious Affairs and the education office need to design madrasah leadership guidelines that not only emphasize structure and discipline but also include humanist principles, such as counseling, ongoing counseling, and an empathic approach based on rahmatan lil 'alamin (Alim & Munib, 2021). This policy must be flexible, accommodating the diversity of local contexts, so that models such as those that have been successful in MTs Gondang can be replicated adaptively, not rigidly (Khasanah et al., 2023). Second, the training of madrasah heads should be strengthened through transformational leadership development programs that combine centralistic managerial skills with emotional intelligence and sensitivity to pluralism (Ala'i, 2019; Al-Husseini et al., 2021; Syaikhon et al., 2023). This program should include training on conflict management, interfaith dialogue, and strategies to incorporate the value of moderation into daily practice (Musyahid, 2023; Suprpto, 2020). Third, it is essential to establish a minimum participatory mechanism within a centralistic structure, such as a teacher forum or curriculum development team, to prevent the erosion of creativity and initiative (Sutrisno, 2019). Fourth, strengthening the role of madrasah supervisors as mediators between central policies and local realities is needed to balance the demands of moderation with conservative community dynamics (Riyawi & Febriansyah, 2023; Syaikhon et al., 2023). Finally, further research is needed to test the replication of this model in a more diverse context, ensuring its scalability (Musyahid, 2023). With these steps, madrasah leadership is not only administratively efficient but also an agent of social change that can instill religious moderation profoundly and sustainably (Huda, 2024; Khasanah et al., 2023).

4. Conclusion

This study reveals that a centralistic discipline leadership strategy at MTs Gondang, Pekalongan—though strict and structured effectively supports moderate Islamic education by embedding values of rahmatan lil 'alamin, consistency, and planned supervision. Contrary to assumptions equating centralization with authoritarianism, the madrasah head's blend of firm discipline with empathetic practices (e.g., spiritual coaching, counseling) fostered a non-repressive

environment conducive to tolerance, anti-violence, and national identity. However, the model's success hinges heavily on the leader's personal charisma and quality, which can lead to stagnation during leadership transitions. Moreover, moderation remains largely top-down: teaching approaches tend to be textual rather than critical, teachers often feel excluded from decision-making, and external pressure from conservative groups persists.

These findings challenge dominant views by showing that centralistic leadership, when infused with humanist and spiritual values, can advance religious moderation. They offer a practical model for national madrasah policies seeking to institutionalize moderate values through disciplined yet formative leadership. The study's main limitation is its single-site focus (MTs Gondang), which restricts generalizability due to context-specific factors like local religiosity, social dynamics, and leadership culture. Future research should adopt comparative designs across different types of madrasahs (public versus private, urban versus rural, moderate versus conservative) and employ mixed-methods or longitudinal approaches to assess the broader applicability and long-term impacts of such leadership models on student character and institutional culture.

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