SPIRITUALITY WORKS AS A MEDIATOR BETWEEN AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP AND TEACHER PERFORMANCE IN THE DIGITAL ERA

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Abstract

Teacher performance is an important element in the success of education. The higher the teacher's performance, the greater the chance of educational success that can be achieved. In this case, the role of authentic leadership is crucial. Authentic leadership is important in building a work climate that supports the spiritual values and professionalism of teachers. This study aims to analyze the impact of authentic leadership and work spirituality on teacher performance. In addition, this study explores whether work spirituality mediates the relationship between authentic leadership and teacher performance in the digital age. The approach used in this study is a quantitative approach by collecting data through questionnaires in google form which is distributed through social media platforms in the form of WhatsApp and analyzed using the SmartPLS 4 program. This research was conducted in all Madrasah Ibtidaiyah in Licin District with 52 respondents from all populations. The findings show that authentic leadership has a positive and significant effect on teacher performance, both directly and through the mediation of work spirituality. The direct influence of authentic leadership on teacher performance was 0.367 (P value = 0.014 < 0.05), while the direct influence of work spirituality on teacher performance was 0.606 (P value = 0.000 < 0.05). In addition, the spirituality of work mediating the relationship between authentic leadership and teacher performance was 0.388 (P value = 0.000 < 0.05). These findings reinforce the theory that authentic leadership can improve teacher performance through strengthening work spirituality. This research emphasizes the importance of the values of honesty, work meaning, and integrity in the context of education in the digital era.

INTRODUCTION | مقدمة

The rapid use of digital technology is now not only limited to economic sectors such as payment systems and delivery services but has penetrated the scope of work and other public services to the world of education. The digital era requires all sectors to be able to adapt to technological developments to improve efficiency, transparency, and service quality. In the context of education, digital transformation is no longer an option but a necessity. Digital transformation not only demands the integration of technology in the learning process but also demands a paradigm in leadership and management of human resources, especially teachers. Overall, it can be understood that the changes that occur are an improvement, transformation or renewal of the education system that includes all aspects or existing components (Ma'ayis & Haq, 2022).

The presence of digital technology requires teachers to prepare students to become more adaptive, creative, innovative individuals so that they are able to face new and more complex challenges in life (Amelia, 2023). This is important because school is not only a place for knowledge transfer but also a place where students' character and values are formed. In this case, teachers are an important parameter in becoming the quality of continuous education. However, improving teacher performance is not enough if approached only in terms of technical competence, it means that it is not enough to conduct skills training such as mastery of teaching methods, learning technology or administration, but there needs to be an internal or inner approach in teachers such as motivational values, meaning of life, and personal commitment, where these aspects are what actually drive the integrity and dedication of teachers in work. An inner approach is needed as a form of strengthening from within *(inner drive)* which makes teachers' performance remain good even when faced with pressure or challenges in their work. The figure who plays a role in the implementation of this approach is a leader.

Leaders not only play the role of administrative managers, but they also act as moral and spiritual role models (Muspiroh, 2018). Leaders have psychological and emotional influences, which can create a sense of trust and closeness which from that closeness can give rise to the perception that the teaching profession is a form of worship and devotion. In addition, leaders also have the authority to be able to foster personally. To be able to become a leader as well as a figure, a leader must have a leadership style that is not only technically directing, but also able to create emotional and spiritual relationships that are able to touch the inner consciousness of teachers in carrying out their duties. A leadership style that fits these criteria is an authentic leadership style.

Authentic leadership sets an example with sincerity and consistency between thoughts, words, and actions, not just being good at speaking without any action. Authentic leaders have a deep understanding of themselves including their emotional needs, personalities, and values so that they can be developed through experience, continuous training (Suhartini, 2020). Authentic leadership that is consistent in values and actions can foster a spirituality of work among teachers. Authentic leaders create a work atmosphere that values individual contributions, encourages self-reflection, and facilitates the search for meaning in work. This strengthens the spirituality of teachers' work, which ultimately has an impact on the quality of task implementation, innovation in learning, and professional commitment.

Departing from this reality, it is necessary to conduct research on how work spirituality can play a role as a link that strengthens the influence of authentic leadership on teacher performance. It is also hoped that this research can contribute to the development of authentic leadership theory in education and provide practical recommendations for managers of Islamic Education Institutions in improving the quality and professional competence of teachers through a more holistic approach that integrates aspects of leadership, spirituality, and adaptation to digital technology.

METHOD | منهج

This study uses a quantitative approach with a type of correlational path analysis mediation. Quantitative research is a research approach based on the philosophical view of positivism (Scott, 2020). The philosophy of positivism is an approach that believes that valid knowledge can only be obtained through empirical data and objectively measurable observations. Meanwhile, research with the type of correlational path analysis mediation is a

type of non-experimental quantitative research that aims to determine the relationship between variables, both direct and indirect influences (mediation) from one variable to another through a third variable or mediator. This approach was chosen because it is in accordance with the purpose of the research, which is to examine how the relationship between variables is through intermediate variables or mediation. The variables measured in this study include three elements, namely work spirituality, authentic leadership, and teacher performance. The relationship between these variables is formulated into several research objectives: 1) To test the influence of authentic leadership on teacher performance. 2) Analyze work spirituality in mediating the relationship between authentic leadership and teacher performance.

This research was conducted in several Ibtidaiyah Madrasas in Licin District, Banyuwangi, namely MI Nahdlatul Wathan, MI Miftahul Huda, MI Tarbiyatussibyan, MI Nahdlatuttulab, and MI Sunan Giri. Data is obtained through surveys disseminated through WhatsApp. The research sample is a teacher at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah. In selecting samples, researchers used a saturated sample technique where everyone in the population was sampled. From the results of the questionnaire distribution, this study obtained data from 52 teachers. In this study, there are three variables that will be measured, namely authentic leadership, teacher performance, and work spirituality. To calculate these three variables, the researcher designed a number of question items that were arranged based on theories that were appropriate and relevant to the focus of this research. The variables of authentic leadership are measured by the theories of Bruce J. Avolio and William L. Gardner which consist of four indicators: Self-awareness, Relational transparency, Balanced processing of information, and Internalized moral perspective. Which was then developed into 10 question items.

For the variables of teacher performance are measured by the Bernardin & Russell theory which states that performance is not only seen from the final result, but also from the process and behavior when a person performs his or her duties, which is then classified into five indicators: Learning planning, learning implementation, learning evaluation, responsibility and discipline, and professional development, which is then developed into 10 question items. Meanwhile, the variable of work spirituality is measured by the theory of Ashmos and Duchon which groups work spirituality into four main dimensions: Meaning and purpose in work, Connection with others, Awareness of transcendental/divine values, which are then developed into 10 question items.

RESULT │ نتائج

Figure 1 shows how the relationship between variables is depicted. From the image, it can be seen that there are four hypotheses formulated as follows:
H1. Authentic leadership affects teacher performance
H2. Authentic leadership affects work spirituality
H3. Work spirituality affects teacher performance
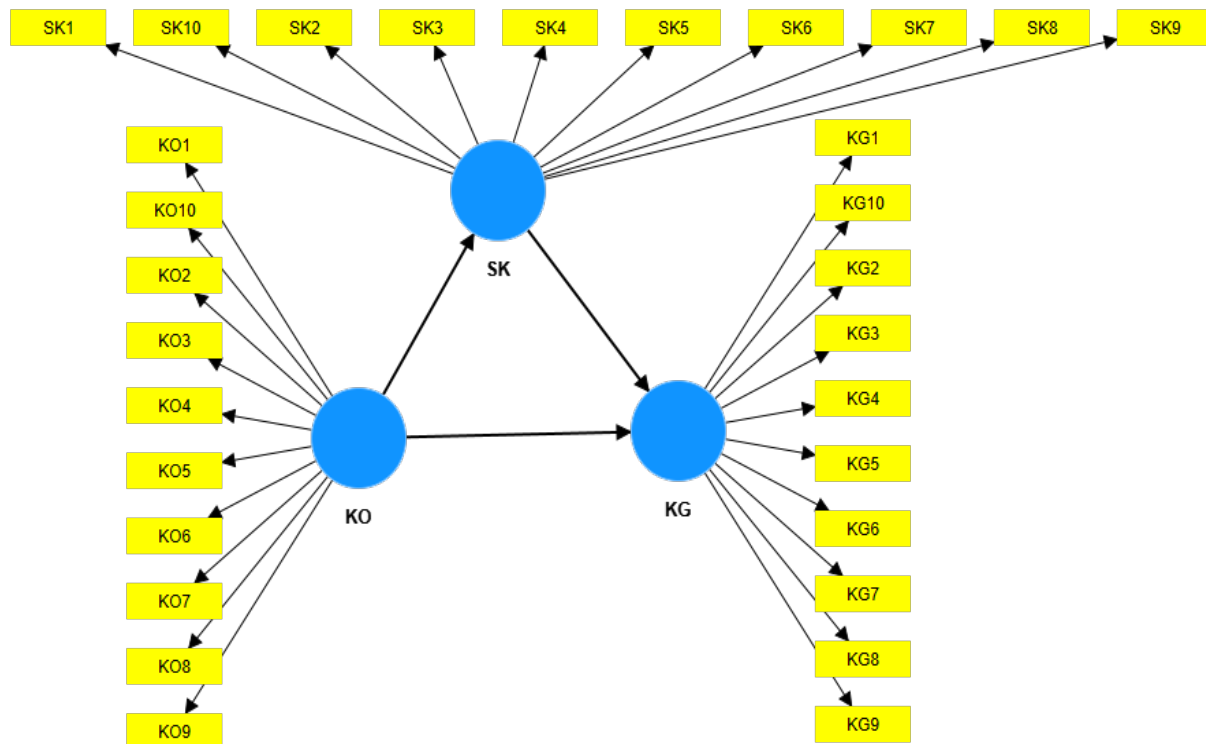H4. Work spirituality mediates the relationship between authentic leadership and teacher performance.

Figure 1. Research design models and hypotheses

1. Validity and Feasibility Test

The outer loading section shows the validity of the indicator item if the value obtained > 0.7. From the results of the analysis that the researcher has carried out as stated in table 1, there are several items with a value of less than 0.7 such as KG 4, KG 6, KG 7, KO 8, SK 1, SK 8, SK 10. To overcome this, the usual way for researchers is to remove or replace these items.

However, in this study, these items were still maintained by referring to the AVE value provision. The AVE value should be equal to 0.5 or > 0.5. In the AVE value column, it can be seen that the seven variables are 0.552 – 0.698, this shows that the value has met the validity requirements of the construct.

Meanwhile, to measure the reliability of the indicator, it can be seen from Cronbach's alpha, rho_A, and composite reliability, where the three categories are considered to have good reliability if the significance value > 0.7 (Ghazali & Latan, 2015).

Tabel 1. Factor loading, Cronbach's alpha, rho_A, Composite reliability, dan AVE

Dimension	Factor Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted
KG1	0,788				
KG10	0,865				
KG2	0,723				
KG3	0,842				
KG4	0,510	0,907	0,922	0,923	0,552
KG5	0,750				
KG6	0,602				
KG7	0,640				
KG8	0,838				
KG9	0,787				
KO1	0,929	0,950	0,957	0,958	0,698
KO10	0,919				

KO2	0,716				
KO3	0,917				
KO4	0,893				
KO5	0,872				
KO6	0,836				
KO7	0,845				
KO8	0,670				
KO9	0,701				
SK1	0,643				
SK10	0,668				
SK2	0,859				
SK3	0,900				
SK4	0,868	0,928	0,942	0,939	0,611
SK5	0,795				
SK6	0,762				
SK7	0,760				
SK8	0,652				
SK9	0,854				

From the table above, it shows that the values of the three categories > 0.7. Cronbach's Alpha values range from 0.907-0.950. The values rho_A between 0.922-0.942. And the Composite Reliability values are between 0.923-0.958. All of these values exceed 0.7.

2. Inner Model

To find out the magnitude of the influence of authentic leadership variables on teacher performance variables, the researcher referred to the R-squared value. Based on the results of the analysis, the values as stated in the following table are obtained.

Tabel 2. R-squared value

Dimension	R-square	R-square adjusted
Teacher Performance	0,787	0,778

The results of the analysis showed that the R-squared value was 0.787, which means that the influence of authentic leadership on teacher performance is relatively high. This means that there are 78.7% of authentic leadership and work spirituality are able to influence teacher performance.

3. Uji Hypothesis

To evaluate significance, it is important to examine the T-Statistic and P-Values between independent and dependent variables. The research hypothesis is said to be accepted if the T-Statistic > 1.96 and the P-Values < 0.05 (Iba & Wardhana, 2023).

Table 3. Results of line coefficient analysis with SmartPLS

Dimension	Original sample	Sample mean	Standard deviation	T statistics	P values
KO -> KG	0,367	0,362	0,149	2,464	0,014
KO -> SK	0,640	0,669	0,082	7,792	0,000
SK -> KG	0,606	0,607	0,140	4,335	0,000

Based on the results in table 3 above, it shows that the hypothesis proposed is acceptable. Therefore, the test results for each hypothesis are as follows:

Answering the first hypothesis regarding the influence of authentic leadership on teacher performance, it can be seen in table 3 that the P value is 0.014 < 0.05 and the T-Statistics value reaches 2.464, where this value > 1.96. This indicates that authentic

leadership variables have a positive and significant influence on teacher performance. Therefore, H1 was accepted.

For the second hypothesis regarding the influence of authentic leadership on work spirituality, it can be seen that the P values are 0.000 < 0.05 and the T-Statistics value reaches 7.792, where this value > 1.96. This indicates that the variables of authentic leadership have a positive and significant influence on the spirituality of work. Therefore, H2 is accepted.

Furthermore, the third hypothesis regarding the influence of work spirituality on teacher performance, the results in the table are P values of 0.000 < 0.05 and T-Statistics values reach 4.335, where this value > 1.96. This indicates that the work spirituality variable has a positive and significant influence on teacher performance. Therefore, H3 was accepted.

It can be concluded that, directly authentic leadership affects teacher performance directly by 0.367. Authentic leadership affected work spirituality directly by 0.640, and work spirituality directly affected teacher performance by 0.606.

Table 4. Indirect Influence Hypothesis Testing

Dimension	Original sample	Sample mean	Standard deviation	T statistics	P values
KO -> SK -> KG	0,388	0,407	0,111	3,488	0,000

For testing the indirect influence hypothesis, the results in table 4 show that authentic leadership indirectly affects teacher performance through work spirituality. The magnitude of the influence is 0.388, which means that teacher performance can increase by 38.8% through authentic leadership variables, either directly or through the mediation of work spirituality. This shows that the higher the quality of authentic leadership that teachers feel, the higher the work spirituality they feel, which ultimately has a positive impact on improving teacher performance.

DISCUSSION | مناقشة

The results of the study show that authentic leadership has a positive and significant effect on teacher performance, both directly and indirectly through spirituality working as a mediator. This is evidenced by the results of the statistical test of Authentic Leadership (X) on Teacher Performance (Y) which obtained t-count results (2.646) > t-table (1.96), and the original sample value of 2.367, where there was a positive and significant influence between authentic leadership on teacher performance in MI in Licin District. And work spirituality has been shown to significantly mediate the influence of authentic leadership on teacher performance. This is evidenced by the results of the statistical test of Authentic Leadership (X) on Teacher Performance (Y) through Work Spirituality as a mediator who obtained t-count results (3.488) > t-table (1.96), and the original sample value of 0.388, where indirectly authentic leadership affects teacher performance through work spirituality in MI throughout Licin District.

These findings are in line with previous research conducted by Fatimatus, et al. which showed that authentic leadership can be a path to sustainable organizational success. By practicing authentic leadership, leaders can create an organizational culture that focuses on employee well-being, innovation, and high quality work. Not only that, but authentic leadership can also increase employee engagement and loyalty, which contributes to higher productivity and good workforce retention (Zahroh et al., 2023).

In this study, authentic leadership characterized by honesty, integrity, and work values is able to increase teachers' intrinsic motivation, strengthen work engagement, and encourage more optimal performance in the digital era. This is in line with the theory by Avolio and Garner (2005), that authentic leadership is defined as a leadership style that develops from positive psychological qualities and an ethical organizational climate and open relationships, where leaders encourage self-awareness, strong morality, objective decision-making, and honest communication to support the positive development of oneself and members (Walumbwa et al., 2008). An authentic leader is seen as an individual who is aware of who he or she is and his or her values such as strengths and weaknesses and is able to evaluate the impact of his actions on others.

Bruce J. Avolio and William L. Gardner affirm that there are 4 main characteristics of authentic leadership (Walumbwa et al., 2008) namely: 1) Self-awareness. Self-awareness refers to understanding how a person understands and interprets personal values. A leader must be able to understand what strengths, weaknesses, and emotions can be that affect the way he thinks, acts, and interacts. That understanding is the main foundation in authentic leadership. By knowing themselves deeply, a leader can act more honestly, consistently, and be able to create trusting relationships with their members. 2) Relational transparency. This leads to openness in interpersonal relationships and honest communication, where a leader shows who he is without manipulation. Openness and honest communication can build trust between leaders and their members. When trust has been built it can create an emotionally safe atmosphere or work environment and encourage active and collaborative participation. 3) Balanced processing of information. A leader first analyzes information objectively before making a decision. This is done so that the decisions taken are based on careful consideration accompanied by relevant data and not just on emotions or personal interests. A leader has a commitment to be able to act fairly, rationally, and unbiasedly. That way, the resulting decisions are more accountable. 4) Internalized moral perspective. This aspect refers to a form of internalized and integrated self-regulation. This results in decision-making and behavior that is consistent with internalized values. Leaders who have a strong and consistent moral compass are able to make ethical decisions even in difficult situations.

In the madrasah or school environment, authentic leaders encourage teachers to find deeper meaning in their profession as educators so that teachers' performance can continue to improve. Teachers with good performance quality will be able to create a conducive learning environment, be able to deliver material effectively, and be able to assess and develop students' potential optimally. This is in line with the performance theory by Bernardin and Russell (1993) which states that performance results from a specific job function that can be measured through various dimensions of work behavior (Bernardin & Russell, 1993). They state that performance is not only seen from the end result, but also from the process and behavior when a person performs his or her duties. In the context of teacher performance, this means that teacher performance is not only assessed from the final result in the form of student grades or the number of teaching hours met, but also assessed by how teachers carry out their roles and duties and responsibilities in a comprehensive, professional, effective manner, and in accordance with educational standards. This opinion is also in line with the opinion of Rivai (2005), who said that teacher performance is a record of the results of a teacher's real behavior that reflects the teacher's professionalism. This performance includes three main aspects, namely pedagogic competence, professional competence, and managerial skills in classroom management as well as the interaction relationship between teachers and students.

In the relationship of indirect influence between authentic leadership and teacher performance, work spirituality has been shown to be significantly a mediator between the two. This is evidenced by the results of the statistical test of Authentic Leadership (X) on Teacher Performance (Y) through Work Spirituality as a mediator who obtained the results of t-count (3.488) > t-table (1.96), and the original sample value of 0.388, where indirectly authentic leadership affects teacher performance through work spirituality in MI throughout Licin District. This means that teachers who feel spiritual values in work tend to show better performance, including in the aspects of responsibility, creativity, collaboration, and adaptation to technology in the digital era. These findings support the view of Ashmos and Duchon who define work spirituality as an individual experience that involves a sense of meaning and purpose in work, a feeling of connection with others, and a belief that work has a transcendental dimension (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000). Elkins et al. (1988) mentioned that spirituality comes from the Latin spiritus, which means "breath of life". This means that with spirituality, one will easily find the meaning of life more deeply. Widyarini (2008) said that all traditions that exist in religion at a certain stage encourage a complementary life, meaning that in the search for meaning and purpose as well as direction in life is a priority and living in social peace is seen as very important (Nurtjahjanti, 2010). Work spirituality is an important part that cannot be separated from individual development (Liwun & Prabowo, 2015).

In the context of education, spirituality discusses the awareness of the meaning and purpose of life as well as the relationship between noble values (Nadhiroh & Zein, 2025). Spirituality is an important value that must be possessed, especially by teachers. Teachers as teachers and educators must understand the importance of lifelong learning (Musfah, 2012). Inevitably, teachers must be ready for the presence of changes in the world of education. Teachers must not only be competently prepared but also mentally and emotionally ready. Monotonous, repetitive job stereotypes tend to cause boredom, frustration, and anxiety at work (Krishnakumar & Neck, 2002). With spirituality, teachers realize that their duties are not only to teach but also to be responsible for the development of students so that they reach the level of maturity and are able to fulfill their duties as servants of God (Alexandro et al., 2021). Without spiritual values, an educator can no longer distinguish between good deeds and bad deeds so that they can fall into things that violate ethics (Arwani, 2013). Rego and Cunha concluded that when a person instills spirituality in work, they will have a feeling of commitment and loyalty and they consider that working is not only out of obligation but there is a sense of emotional attachment to the place where they work. This has a positive impact on the performance of individuals as well as the organization or agency itself (Arifin & Imron, 2017).

Third, the results of this study also provide empirical evidence that in the context of the digital era, leadership success is not only determined by mastery of technology, but also by the ability of leaders to build the values of authenticity and spirituality in the organization. In the midst of the challenges of digital change, teachers need leaders who are able to provide direction honestly, build trust, and facilitate meaning and inner connection at work.

CONCLUSSION | خاتمة

Authentic leadership has an important role in improving teacher performance in the digital age. Authentic leadership is characterized by honesty, integrity, transparency, and being able to create a positive and meaningful work atmosphere. Work spirituality has proven to be a factor that strengthens the relationship between authentic leadership and teacher performance. Teachers who have high work spirituality values tend to be more committed, motivated, and

ready to adapt to the demands of the digital era. The teacher does not only carry out his duties formally, but there is a sense or spiritual meaning in his work. Work spirituality is also an important foundation that supports emotional stability, ethics, and professional dedication in the midst of a challenging digital era. In other words, work spirituality acts as a bridge that connects authentic leadership styles with improving the quality of teachers' work. Therefore, this study confirms that the success of leadership in the world of education is not only determined by managerial strategies, but also by the ability to build meaningful spiritual values in teachers. By strengthening work spirituality, authentic leadership is able to have a more significant impact on improving teacher performance, especially in facing the dynamics of education in the digital era.

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