THE ROLE OF SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP IN MANAGING AI INTEGRATION: QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY

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Abstract: *This qualitative case study explores the role of spiritual leadership in managing the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) within organizational settings. The purpose of this manuscript is to examine how spiritual leadership values—such as integrity, purpose, compassion, and ethical responsibility—influence decision-making, employee engagement, and organizational readiness during AI adoption. The study employs an in-depth qualitative research design using a case study approach. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with organizational leaders and employees, complemented by document analysis and direct observation. Thematic analysis was applied to identify recurring patterns and key themes related to leadership practices and AI implementation processes. The findings reveal that spiritual leadership plays a critical role in addressing ethical concerns, reducing employee resistance, and fostering trust during AI integration. Leaders who emphasize shared meaning, transparency, and human-centered values are better able to balance technological efficiency with employee well-being. Additionally, spiritual leadership contributes to the development of ethical AI governance and responsible innovation. The study concludes that spiritual leadership serves as an important soft governance mechanism in managing AI integration, particularly in contexts characterized by uncertainty and rapid technological change. These findings highlight the need for organizations to incorporate value-based leadership approaches alongside technical strategies to ensure sustainable and ethical AI adoption.*

Keywords: *Spiritual Leadership, Artificial Intelligence, AI Integration, Ethical Leadership, Qualitative Case Study*

Introduction

In an organization, leadership plays a crucial role in guiding individuals and teams toward achieving common goals. Leadership is not solely about position or power, but rather about influence, values, and the ability to bring about meaningful change. Spiritual leadership serves as a foundation that emphasizes integrity, meaning, and moral responsibility in every decision. In the context of modern organizations, spiritual leadership helps leaders develop a vision that is oriented not only toward performance but also toward humanitarian values and sustainability.

As technology, particularly artificial intelligence (AI), advances, the role of leaders is not diminishing, but rather shifting. Leaders are required to orchestrate collaboration between humans and AI, establish ethical boundaries in decision-making, and coach employees in the wise adoption of technology. Digital leadership is the ability to leverage technology and digital resources within an organization to achieve business goals.(Rini et al., 2025) Spiritual leadership

is key in this process because it places awareness, empathy, and wisdom as the foundation for managing AI integration, so that technology does not replace the role of humans, but rather strengthens the quality of decision-making and teamwork.

In addition to technical skills, leaders in the AI era need to develop soft skills such as adaptability, effective communication, and complex problem-solving. Furthermore, leaders are also required to have a commitment to continuous learning, an understanding of ethics, and social responsibility in the use of AI. Spiritual leadership plays a crucial role in ensuring that AI integration is carried out responsibly, fairly, and oriented towards the common good, so that technological advancement aligns with human values and meaningful organizational goals.

This study aims to examine the role of spiritual leadership in managing the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) within organizations, particularly in addressing the shifting role of leaders in the digital era. Spiritual leadership is seen as a foundation that emphasizes integrity, human values, and ethical responsibility in guiding collaboration between humans and technology. Through strengthening soft skills, continuous learning, and awareness of the ethical and social implications of AI use, spiritual leadership is expected to ensure that AI integration not only improves organizational performance but also operates responsibly and is oriented towards the common good. This study uses a qualitative case study approach through direct interviews to gain an in-depth understanding of spiritual leadership practices in the context of AI integration.

Literature Review

Understanding Leadership

(Fiedler, 1967) states that leadership is essentially a pattern of relationships between individuals who use authority and control over a group of people to work together to achieve common goals.(Wahyudin & Salbiah, 2024). Leadership is a key factor in the decision-making process and the implementation of responsibilities for team members to achieve shared goals. A leader is required to have the ability to make sound decisions and think critically when faced with diverse opinions from members. Furthermore, leadership also includes the ability to understand and manage conflicts that arise within the work group.

Leaders play a role in building trust and inspiring members to motivate them to contribute optimally. This role demonstrates that leadership is not only results-oriented, but also focuses on the process of social interaction. Leadership serves as a provider of strategic direction in achieving the organization's vision. Furthermore, leaders act as facilitators of effective communication among members. Therefore, leadership also demands ethical role models as a basis for carrying out its functions and roles. Leadership should not be sought, let alone fought over, except under certain circumstances and for the greater good.(Primasatya et al., 2024).

In the context of digitalization, transformational leaders play a central role in creating a collaborative, innovative, and resilient work climate against technological disruption.(Integration of Leadership, Emotion, and AI in Educational Transformation, 2025).However, most previous research still focuses on the context of Western education based on secular values. Studies that integrate the spiritual dimension in leadership, especially transformational leadership, are still relatively limited. The theory of transformational leadership based on spiritual values explicitly integrates Islamic principles with the four dimensions of transformational leadership. The contributions of this research to the development of science include: (1) the development of a new conceptual framework that enriches the theory of transformational leadership with the dimensions of Islamic spirituality; (2) documentation of best practices of transformational leadership based on spiritual values that can serve as a model for other madrasas; and (3) the provision of an instrument for evaluating the effectiveness of spiritual leadership in the context

of Islamic education.(Zaini, 2025)There is a theoretical gap related to the lack of leadership models that incorporate Islamic spiritual values in the madrasah context. Previous research tends to emphasize solely managerial and organizational aspects. However, spirituality can be a fundamental foundation for leadership practice. Leadership is essentially a multidirectional relationship of influence, unlike management, which emphasizes a one-way relationship of authority. Thus, leadership involves the process of developing shared goals and coordinating activities to achieve organizational success.

Leadership theories are several theories that cover topics related to leadership. Some early leadership theories focused on the leader (trait theory) and how the leader interacts with group members (behavioral theory).(Tolitoli, 2023) The following are leadership theories:

1. Great Man Theory

The Great Man theory views leadership as natural and inherent from birth. This theory is based on the assumption that great leaders are individuals who possess extraordinary traits and special qualities not possessed by most people. Leadership, from this perspective, cannot be learned or developed through education and experience. Individuals considered leaders are those who are naturally destined to lead in various organizations. Leadership success is associated with innate talent and personal charisma. Successful leaders, according to this theory, tend to be respected and honored by their subordinates. Therefore, leadership is seen as a result of hereditary factors. This view became the initial foundation for the study of classical leadership theory.

2. Trait Theory

Trait theory is a development of the Great Man Theory, emphasizing individual characteristics as determinants of leadership. This theory assumes that leaders can be identified through certain traits or characteristics innate. Leadership is assessed based on an individual's physical characteristics, intelligence, social skills, and personality. Some traits often associated with effective leadership include technical skills, intelligence, emotional control, charisma, and social skills. However, research shows that not all individuals with these traits are capable of becoming effective leaders. Conversely, the absence of certain traits does not necessarily preclude someone from becoming a leader. This demonstrates the limitations of trait theory in comprehensively explaining leadership. Thus, leadership cannot be fully explained solely through an individual's innate characteristics.

3. Behavioral Theory

Behavioral theory emphasizes the actions and behaviors demonstrated by leaders in carrying out their roles. This theory's primary focus is on how leaders delegate tasks, communicate, and motivate their subordinates. Unlike previous theories, behavioral theory assumes that leadership can be learned and developed through experience and training. Leadership is viewed as a process of social interaction between leaders and organizational members. Leadership success is determined by the quality of relationships and behavioral patterns displayed by leaders. From an Islamic perspective, leadership aims not only to influence but also to provide direction and vision based on spiritual values. Tasmara (2006) emphasizes that an ideal leader is a role model who inspires subordinates through visionary leadership. Leadership is also based on principles and values that lead to happiness in this world and the hereafter.

Leaders often use digital platforms to share information, hold virtual discussions, and encourage cross-team collaboration.(Saputra & Fadhilah, 2025).Intellectual stimulation in transformational leadership is seen as a crucial factor in fostering organizational innovation and creativity, particularly in facing the challenges of the digital era. Transformational leaders encourage organizational members to think critically, challenge existing assumptions, and explore new ideas and approaches to problem-solving.

Managing AI (Artificial Intelligence)

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is a technology designed to enable machines or computers to mimic human cognitive abilities. AI systems are capable of understanding, learning, and thinking in a limited way through data processing and specific algorithms. These capabilities include pattern recognition, prediction making, and complex problem solving. AI applications have expanded across various fields, such as business, healthcare, and entertainment. AI encompasses a variety of supporting technologies, including machine learning, deep learning, and natural language processing. Machine learning enables systems to learn from data without the need for explicit programming. Natural language processing plays a role in enabling machines to understand and process human language. These developments make AI a crucial component in the advancement of modern information technology.

The development of Artificial Intelligence began in the 1950s with Alan Turing's ideas about machines that could think like humans. Turing introduced the Turing Test as a method for evaluating a machine's intelligence. The term Artificial Intelligence was officially introduced at the 1956 Dartmouth Conference, marking a milestone in the development of AI as a scientific field. In the 1980s, AI advanced through the development of expert systems. These systems are designed to provide recommendations based on pre-programmed knowledge. Expert systems are widely used in the medical and business sectors. Entering the 2000s, advances in computing and the availability of large amounts of data further fueled the rapid development of AI.

Artificial intelligence offers significant benefits in increasing efficiency and productivity across various sectors. AI can automate routine tasks, reducing the human workload. It can assist with routine tasks that previously required human intervention, such as data processing, reporting, and database management, thereby saving time and reducing errors.(Anshori et al., 2025).

Furthermore, AI can analyze large amounts of data with a high degree of accuracy. This capability helps organizations make more informed, data-driven decisions. Successfully leveraging AI for innovation requires careful planning, starting with accurate needs assessments, developing predictive analytics, improving R&D processes, and implementing and scaling effective AI solutions.(Aurino Djamaris & Dita Nurmadewi3, 2024)The primary goal of implementing AI is to improve the effectiveness of work processes and the quality of services. AI is also used to enhance the user experience through personalized digital services. However, the use of AI poses risks such as job losses and threats to data privacy. Therefore, the implementation of AI must be accompanied by ethical policies and adequate oversight.

The Role of Leadership in Managing AI

Transformational leaders create a powerful vision, motivate subordinates in profound ways, and influence cultural change within the organization.(Meilinda Ade Prastiwi & Agus Widodo, 2023)Leadership plays a strategic role in managing the implementation of Artificial Intelligence (AI) within an organization. Leaders are responsible for establishing the vision and direction for AI use to align with organizational goals. Leadership decisions determine the extent to which AI is utilized effectively and responsibly. Ensuring the responsible and ethical use of

AI is crucial to avoiding risks and unintended negative consequences.(Aurino Djamaris & Dita Nurmadewi3, 2024). Furthermore, leaders play a role in ensuring human resource readiness for AI-based transformation. Adaptive leadership can foster a culture of innovation and continuous learning. Without strong leadership, AI implementation can potentially face internal resistance. Leaders also serve as key decision-makers in AI technology investments. Therefore, leadership is a key factor in successful AI management.

In addition to strategic aspects, leadership plays an important role in managing the risks and ethics of AI use. Digital leadership is a leadership style that focuses on implementing digital transformation in an organization.(Tulungen et al., nd)Leaders must ensure that the use of AI does not violate ethical principles and human values. Oversight of data security and user privacy is the responsibility of organizational leadership. Leaders need to establish internal policies and regulations regarding the use of AI. This aims to prevent misuse of technology and unethical decision-making. Responsible leadership balances innovation and control. With this approach, AI can be used safely and sustainably. Therefore, ethical aspects are an integral part of AI leadership.

According to Fisk (2002) digital leaders are visionaries, motivators of change, able to combine ideas in business for projects, and build connections through creating new opportunities for partnerships/joint ventures/outsourcing and other forms of collaboration. Pearl Zhu (Zhu, 2015) defines digital leadership criteria as consisting of 5 characteristics:

a. Thinking, namely the ability to face market changes and competition
b. Creative, namely a digital leader who has a creative and innovative mindset to formulate new ideas into reality.
c. Visionary, namely a digital leader who has the ability to provide direction and act as an orchestrator in transforming digital businesses.
d. Curiosity, namely utilizing complex ecosystems and moving forward due to Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, and Ambiguity (VUCA) factors. A digital leader must have the ability to learn.
e. Profound Leader, namely a digital leadership style that can lead in complex situations by having in-depth knowledge and understanding, and using this knowledge for interpretation, synthetic thinking to make decisions.

The role of a leader in making decisions includes broad and challenging responsibilities, where they must be able to understand the basic principles of decision-making, rely on intuition and experience, and have the ability to analyze facts and the courage to take steps for the good of the organization.(Nabilla et al., 2025)The role of leadership also encompasses competency development and collaboration within the AI ecosystem. Leaders need to encourage digital skills development for employees to enable them to adapt to AI technology. Human resource training and development are priorities in the era of digital transformation. Furthermore, effective leadership encourages collaboration between humans and AI systems. Leaders must ensure that AI is used as a supporting tool, not a complete replacement for humans. This approach can improve productivity and the quality of decision-making. Visionary leadership can leverage AI to create a competitive advantage. Therefore, the role of leadership is crucial for the overall success of AI management.

Method

This study uses a qualitative approach, conducted through data analysis on the role of leadership in managing AI integration through a qualitative case study. The qualitative approach was used to determine the role of leadership in managing AI. The data used in this study is primary data. The primary data in this study is in the form of interviews with individuals who

have leadership qualities. The aim is to determine how spiritual leadership role values, such as ethical responsibility, can influence decisions, member involvement, and organizational readiness to adopt AI.

Result and Discussion

Interviews with Harfin indicate that Artificial Intelligence (AI) is value-neutral, meaning its impact on organizations depends heavily on the character, orientation, and ethics of the leader. AI has no intrinsic moral capabilities or purpose; it merely reflects the intentions and vision of the leaders who manage it. Therefore, leadership is a key factor in determining the direction of AI utilization, whether to strengthen collective well-being or exploitative interests. The future of an organization is not solely determined by technological sophistication, but by the integrity, values, and strategic policies of its leaders. Ethical leaders can ensure that AI is used to support fairness, efficiency, and organizational sustainability. Without visionary leadership, AI implementation has the potential to generate negative impacts, internal resistance, and misuse of the technology. Therefore, AI integration must always be accompanied by responsible and long-term leadership.

Spiritual leadership has emerged as a crucial approach to AI governance, emphasizing ethical and transcendental dimensions. Spiritual leaders view AI not simply as a productivity tool, but as a means to fulfill social and humanitarian responsibilities. Within this framework, AI can be positioned as a "tool of social worship" that strengthens justice and benefits society at large. Spiritual leadership requires leaders to consider the psychological, social, and moral impacts of every AI-based decision. This approach facilitates the fair, transparent, and well-being-oriented use of AI. A leader's values, empathy, and moral awareness are key determinants of the effectiveness of an organization's digital transformation. Therefore, spiritual leadership serves as an ethical compass that guides AI toward supporting humanitarian goals.

The research findings indicate that the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into organizations places leaders as central actors in determining the direction and impact of technology utilization. In the context of leadership theory, these findings demonstrate the limitations of classical leadership theories such as Great Man Theory and Trait Theory, which emphasize individual innate characteristics. The use of AI does not automatically reflect a leader's personal superiority; rather, it is influenced by leadership behavior in establishing policies, establishing communication, and managing relationships between humans and technology. This aligns with behavioral theory, which views leadership as a process that can be learned and developed. Leaders play a role in directing the use of AI through concrete actions, such as strategic decision-making, providing ethical guidance, and establishing an organizational culture that is adaptive to digital change.

Beyond the ethical dimension, leadership also plays a strategic role in AI implementation and human resource development. Leaders are responsible for establishing the vision, policies, and direction for AI utilization to align with organizational goals. Leadership decisions determine the extent to which AI is utilized effectively, efficiently, and sustainably. Leaders also ensure team members' readiness for digital transformation, including competency enhancement and technology adaptation. Adaptive leadership fosters a culture of innovation, human-AI collaboration, and continuous learning. Without strong leadership, AI integration can face internal resistance and the risk of misuse of the technology. Therefore, successful AI management relies heavily on visionary, ethical, and human-centric leadership.

Conclusion

Based on the literature review and interview results, it can be concluded that leadership plays a crucial role in managing the implementation of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in organizations. AI is value-neutral, so its impact depends heavily on the integrity, vision, and ethical orientation of leaders. Leaders are responsible for establishing the direction, policies, and strategies for AI utilization to align with organizational goals, improve efficiency, and maintain sustainability. Adaptive leadership enables organizations to overcome internal resistance, foster a culture of innovation, and ensure the readiness of human resources for digital transformation. In addition to strategic aspects, leaders must also manage risks and ethics, including data security, privacy, and preventing technology misuse. Thus, the quality of leadership determines the effectiveness and responsibility of AI use in the long term. Without visionary and ethical leadership, AI integration has the potential to have negative impacts and organizational failure.

Furthermore, the spiritual leadership approach emphasizes the importance of human values, ethics, and social responsibility in AI management. Spiritual leaders position AI as a means for the common good, not simply a tool for productivity or exploitation. This requires leaders to consider the social, psychological, and moral impacts of every AI-based decision. With this approach, AI can be leveraged to improve fairness, collaboration, and the quality of decision-making within organizations. Ethical and visionary leadership serves as a moral compass that directs the use of AI for more humane and sustainable purposes. Therefore, the success of an organization's digital transformation depends heavily on the leader's ability to integrate AI with human values. In conclusion, leadership is a key determinant of the success of effective, responsible, and human-centered AI management.

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