Jurnal Ilmiah Ilmu Administrasi
Volume 15 Nomor 2 Tahun 2025 : 311-318
http://ejournal.unis.ac.id/index.php/JIIA
DOI: 10.33592/jiia.v15i2.7907

p-ISSN 2477-5088
e-ISSN 2716-2621

Public Leadership Ethics: A Study at Universitas Islam Syekh-Yusuf, Tangerang, Indonesia

M. Rosul Asmawi
Administrasi Publik, Universitas Islam Syekh-Yusuf Tangerang, Kota Indonesia
Email: mrosul@unis.ac.id

(Diterima: 12-12-2025; Ditelaah: 12-12-2025; Disetujui: 31-12-2025)

ABSTRACT

Public leadership ethics serves as a crucial foundation for establishing fair, transparent, and accountable governance, particularly within higher education institutions grounded in Islamic values. In the context of Islamic universities, leaders are expected not only to demonstrate administrative professionalism but also to embody moral and spiritual integrity. This study aims to analyze the practice of public leadership ethics at Universitas Islam Syekh-Yusuf (UNIS) Tangerang, focusing on the ethical values upheld by university leaders, the dynamics of decision-making, and the challenges encountered in implementing these ethical principles. This research employs a qualitative approach with a case study design. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with university leaders, observations, and institutional document analysis. The findings reveal that values such as honesty, responsibility, justice, and accountability serve as the core foundations of leadership at UNIS. Nevertheless, several ethical challenges arise in practice, particularly in strategic decision-making processes involving both institutional and individual interests. This study provides a theoretical contribution to the development of a public leadership model rooted in Islamic ethics, while also offering practical implications for improving governance within higher education institutions. It is expected that the results of this research will serve as a reference for strengthening an ethical and accountable organizational culture in Islamic universities.

Keywords: *Leadership Ethics, Public Leadership, Islamic University*

A. *INTRODUCTION*

This study employs a case study approach to examine the implementation of public leadership ethics at Universitas Islam Syekh-Yusuf (UNIS) Tangerang. The uniqueness of this research lies in its contextual focus on UNIS as one of the long-established Islamic higher education institutions in Banten Province, which operates at the intersection of public accountability demands and Islamic ethical values. Compared to several other Islamic universities in Banten, which have increasingly formalized ethical guidelines through standardized governance frameworks, preliminary observations suggest that UNIS demonstrates distinctive leadership dynamics shaped by its historical background, organizational structure, and local institutional culture. These characteristics provide a

valuable basis for exploring how ethical principles are interpreted, negotiated, and practiced by university leaders in daily decision-making processes. By positioning UNIS within the broader landscape of Islamic higher education in Banten, this study offers a nuanced understanding of ethical leadership implementation that cannot be fully captured through comparative or survey-based studies alone.

Ethics in public leadership constitutes a fundamental foundation for creating governance and organizational management that is just, accountable, and service-oriented. Leadership that focuses not only on administrative outcomes but is also grounded in moral principles and social responsibility serves as a vital pillar in building public trust and institutional integrity (Cooper, 2006; Denhardt & Denhardt, 2015). In the public sector, leadership ethics is not merely a normative construct; it functions as an everyday practice that shapes the quality of relationships between leaders, organizations, and society.

Within higher education institutions—particularly State Islamic Higher Education Institutions (PTKIN) and Private Islamic Higher Education Institutions (PTSI)—demands for ethical leadership have become increasingly complex. This is due to the dual function of these institutions as centers of academic development and as guardians of Islamic values. Leaders in Islamic universities are expected not only to be competent in managerial capacities but also to embody the moral and spiritual integrity that characterizes Islamic education (Syafi'i, 2019). However, in practice, various ethical challenges persist, including conflicts of interest, lack of transparency in decision-making, and preferential treatment in academic or structural policies.

Universitas Islam Syekh-Yusuf Tangerang (UNIS), as one of the oldest Islamic higher education institutions in Banten, presents noteworthy leadership dynamics for scholarly investigation. With its strong Islamic identity and strategic role in human resource development, understanding how leadership ethics is practiced by university leaders becomes a significant issue. : Preliminary observations and a review of recent empirical studies indicate that ethical leadership practices have not yet been fully institutionalized within higher education institutions, particularly in areas related to strategic decision-making and the development of organizational culture. Several studies on university governance report that ethical values are often articulated at the normative level but are inconsistently translated into formal policies, decision-making mechanisms, and everyday leadership practices, resulting in fragmented ethical implementation across institutional units. This condition is further evidenced by findings in the literature that highlight weak ethical standardization, limited ethical oversight mechanisms, and varying interpretations of ethical principles among university leaders, especially in faith-based higher education institutions., particularly in areas related to strategic decision-making and the cultivation of organizational culture.

Revised Version: This study aims to explore how public leadership ethics is implemented at Universitas Islam Syekh-Yusuf Tangerang. The primary focus is on understanding how university leaders perceive the principles of public ethics and identifying which ethical values are most dominant in leadership processes and decision-making within the institution. This research is considered urgent in light of increasing public scrutiny of leadership accountability, transparency, and integrity within higher education institutions, particularly in the context of Islamic universities that are normatively expected to uphold

ethical and moral values as foundational principles of governance. In practice, however, ethical challenges such as conflicts of interest, administrative discretion, and institutional pressures often complicate the realization of ethical leadership. This gap between ethical ideals and leadership practices constitutes a critical research problem that necessitates systematic investigation. The findings of this study are expected to contribute to the development of a contextual and value-based ethical leadership model for Islamic higher education institutionsis implemented at Universitas Islam Syekh-Yusuf Tangerang. The primary focus is on understanding how university leaders perceive the principles of public ethics and identifying which ethical values are most dominant in leadership processes and decision-making within the institution. The findings of this study are expected to contribute to the development of a contextual and value-based ethical leadership model for Islamic higher education institutions.

Concept of Public Leadership Ethics

Public leadership ethics is a branch of administrative ethics that emphasizes the moral responsibility of leaders in managing public interests with fairness, honesty, and accountability. Ethics functions not merely as a normative guideline but as a personal and professional commitment to exercising authority in a moral manner (Cooper, 2006). Etzioni (1991) posits that leadership ethics requires a balance between individual and communal interests, as well as an integration of personal values with institutional values.

Denhardt and Denhardt (2015) argue that public leadership should be grounded in the principle of "serving, not steering," which signifies that leaders must act as facilitators of societal values rather than merely technocratic decision-makers. Within this framework, ethics serves as the primary guide for maintaining public trust, institutional integrity, and the social accountability of public leaders. Terry Cooper (1998) strengthens this perspective by asserting that leaders in the public sector must integrate personal morality with administrative responsibility, ensuring that administrative actions align with universal ethical values such as justice, truthfulness, and empathy.

Value-Based and Moral Leadership Theories

Value-based leadership and moral leadership emphasize the importance of integrity, ethical commitment, and consistency between a leader's words and actions. According to Burns (1978), transformational leadership not only influences followers to achieve goals but also elevates the moral character of both leaders and followers. Bass and Steidlmeier (1999) critique manipulative forms of transformational leadership and propose the concept of authentic transformational leadership—leadership that fosters trust, honesty, and fairness in an authentic manner. In practice, value-based leaders are expected to serve as moral exemplars who consistently embody ethical principles across all organizational situations (Brown & Treviño, 2006).

Ethical Values in Islamic Educational Organizations

Islamic educational organizations position religious ethical values as an integral part of leadership and governance systems. Values such as amanah (responsibility), 'adl (justice), shiddiq (honesty), and tabligh (transparency) form the foundational principles of decision-making in leadership (Al-Attas, 1999). In the context of Islamic higher education, leaders serve not only administrative functions but also moral and spiritual guidance roles. Syafi'i (2019) asserts that leadership in Islamic educational institutions is the embodiment

of akhlāq al-karīmah—moral character expressed consistently in everyday leadership practices. Therefore, leaders in Islamic universities are expected to symbolize integrity and justice while carrying out the institution's scientific and Islamic vision.

Previous Studies on Leadership Ethics in the Public Sector and Higher Education

Several previous studies highlight the importance of leadership ethics in both the public sector and higher education. For instance, Thakhin, Ariratana, and Sapsirin (2015) found that the success of higher education institutions in Thailand is significantly influenced by ethical leadership that upholds social responsibility and academic accountability. Similarly, a study by Purwanto (2020) in Indonesia reveals that moral crises within educational institutions can disrupt organizational stability and weaken academic culture. In the context of Islamic universities, Wekke (2017) emphasizes that successful institutional transformation depends on leaders who are capable of integrating Islamic values with the demands of modern professionalism.

B. *METHOD*

Research Site and Subjects

The study was conducted at Universitas Islam Syekh-Yusuf Tangerang, Banten. The site was selected purposively based on thematic relevance and accessibility to data. Research subjects comprised strategic campus leaders, including: The Rector; Vice Rectors; Director of the Postgraduate Program; Deans; Heads of Study Programs (Program Chairs); Senior lecturers with leadership experience or involvement in policy-making.

Informant selection employed purposive sampling with the following criteria: occupying strategic decision-making roles, possessing an understanding of institutional values, and actively engaged in the implementation of campus governance**.**

Research Focus

The research focuses on four main aspects that form the basis of the results and discussion:

1. Ethical Values in Campus Leadership

   This aspect examines ethical principles such as honesty, responsibility, justice, and integrity that are believed in and practiced by university leaders at Syekh-Yusuf Islamic University (UNIS) Tangerang.

2. Ethics in Strategic Decision-Making

   This aspect explores how ethical values are integrated into strategic decision-making processes, including administrative, academic, and institutional policy decisions within UNIS Tangerang.

3. Ethical Challenges in Public Campus Leadership

   This aspect identifies ethical dilemmas and conflicts of interest encountered by campus leaders in carrying out their leadership roles, including structural and cultural constraints.

4. Organizational Culture and the Internalization of Ethics

   This aspect analyzes the role of campus organizational culture in reinforcing or hindering ethical leadership practices, as well as the extent to which Islamic values are internalized in institutional governance.

These focal areas are designed to provide a comprehensive picture of how leadership ethics is actualized within an Islamic higher-education context and the real challenges in its implementation.

Data Collection Techniques

Data were collected using three complementary techniques to obtain rich, contextually grounded information:

1. In-depth Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with campus leaders (Rector, Vice Rectors, Deans, Program Chairs, and senior lecturers). Interviews aimed to explore informants' understanding of ethical leadership principles and their direct experiences applying those values in policy and organizational practice. Interview topics included transparency, justice, accountability, and social responsibility.

2. Workplace Observation

Participant observation was carried out to capture leadership dynamics in both formal settings (meetings, policy discussions) and informal interactions (everyday communication). Observation sought to compare espoused values with enacted behaviors.

3. Documentary Study

Documents analyzed included the university's vision and mission statements, codes of ethics for faculty and leaders, governance manuals, and minutes of strategic meetings. Documentary evidence provided the normative and administrative basis for the ethical values institutionalized at the campus.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis followed an interactive model adapted from Miles and Huberman (1994), comprising three principal stages:

1. Data Reduction. Selecting, simplifying, and transforming raw data into thematic categories through coding and grouping of ethical leadership issues that emerged from interviews and observations.
2. Data Display. Presenting data in narrative form, thematic matrices, and descriptive summaries that illustrate relationships among actors, leadership actions, and the associated ethical values.
3. Conclusion Drawing and Verification. Drawing inductive conclusions through triangulation of data sources (interviews, observation, documentation). Validity was enhanced by cross-checking among informants and by performing member checking to confirm findings.

C. *RESULT AND DISCUSSION*

Result

Ethical Values Upheld by University Leaders

The study reveals the dynamics of public leadership ethics at Universitas Islam Syekh-Yusuf (UNIS) Tangerang based on in-depth interviews, workplace observations, and document analysis. The findings are organized into four major themes representing values, practices, challenges, and cultural contexts that shape ethical leadership in an Islamic higher-education institution. Most informants emphasized that ethical values such as honesty, integrity, responsibility, and justice form the core foundation of leadership practices. Honesty was reflected in transparent budgeting processes, the allocation of teaching workloads, and the selection of structural positions. One Dean noted: "We always strive to be transparent with all parties, especially in financial decisions and academic policies. That is part of our amanah."

Integrity was defined by informants as consistency between words and actions, including a firm commitment to rejecting gratuities and external interference in university decisions. Responsibility was manifested in the willingness of leaders to bear the consequences of policies they enacted. Meanwhile, justice was practiced through fair distribution of tasks, financial allocations, and academic opportunities for the entire academic community. These findings align with the theory of moral leadership (Burns, 1978), which posits that authentic leaders elevate ethical standards not only for themselves but also for their followers.

Ethical Considerations in Strategic Decision-Making

In strategic decision-making processes, UNIS leaders consistently applied principles of information transparency, consultation, and accountability. Information regarding new policies was disseminated through open meetings, circular letters, and academic discussion forums. As one Vice Rector remarked: "We cannot make unilateral decisions. We must involve deans, program heads, and senior lecturers because these decisions affect the future of the institution." This consultative pattern reflects deliberative leadership, where leaders act not as sole authorities but as facilitators of collective aspirations (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2015). Accountability was also reinforced through annual reports and performance evaluations presented openly to the university senate.

Ethical Challenges and Tensions

Despite a strong ethical orientation, leaders at UNIS experienced several ethical tensions. First, conflicts of interest occasionally emerged in the appointment of structural positions, where personal closeness sometimes overshadowed objective criteria. Second, bureaucratic pressure from the foundation occasionally conflicted with Islamic values that emphasize consultation (musyawarah) and transparency. As one program head expressed: "Sometimes we face dilemmatic situations—between maintaining good relations with the foundation and upholding organizational ethics."

Third, tensions arose between academic professionalism and personal loyalty to superiors. Several informants stated that criticism toward leaders was often misinterpreted as disobedience rather than an expression of intellectual responsibility. These challenges indicate that leadership ethics is not linear, but must navigate the realities of power, networks, and institutional interests (Terry, 1998).

Organizational Culture and Collective Ethics

Organizational culture at UNIS significantly influences the internalization of ethical leadership values. Traditions of consultation, open forums, and the reinforcement of Islamic values such as amanah (trustworthiness) and tabligh (transparency) remain evident. However, a paternalistic culture still emerges at times, wherein decisions depend more on central figures than on collective mechanisms. Islamic values play a crucial role in shaping leaders' ethical awareness. Most informants viewed leadership responsibilities as a moral accountability before God. This reflects the concept of spiritual public leadership, where religion serves not only as a personal ethic but also as a structural framework guiding organizational behavior (Syafi'i, 2019). A strong organizational culture can support collective ethics when such values are systematically institutionalized, rather than relying on individual leaders' personal morality.

D. *CONCLUSION*

This study highlights the importance of applying public leadership ethics within the context of Islamic higher education institutions, particularly at Universitas Islam Syekh-

Yusuf (UNIS) Tangerang. The findings indicate that key values upheld by university leaders include honesty, integrity, responsibility, and justice, all of which are reflected in their daily leadership practices. Leadership ethics serve not only as normative guidelines but also shape the quality of university governance, especially in decision-making processes, conflict management, and the development of an ethical and inclusive organizational culture. Consultative practices, information transparency, and policy accountability are among the primary indicators of ethical commitment at the structural level.

Nevertheless, the study also identifies several challenges, such as conflicts of interest, external bureaucratic intervention, and tensions between professionalism and personal loyalty, all of which may hinder the consistent implementation of ethical principles. On the other hand, Islamic values embedded within the organizational culture of UNIS play a significant role in strengthening moral awareness and social responsibility among leaders. Therefore, strengthening public leadership ethics within Islamic higher education institutions is essential not only to ensure sound governance but also to support the institutional mission of cultivating morally upright and socially responsible future leaders.

Recommendations

Several recommendations can be formulated as follows:

1. Strengthening Ethical Leadership Training. Regular training programs are needed for campus leaders at both structural and functional levels, emphasizing public ethics, Islamic leadership principles, and value-based decision-making.
2. Integrating Ethical Values into Institutional Policies. Ethical values must be formally institutionalized into internal policies, including recruitment systems, promotion mechanisms, and performance evaluations, ensuring that ethical practices do not depend solely on individual leaders.
3. Conducting Periodic Evaluations of Leadership Practices. Periodic evaluations of ethical leadership should be carried out by the senate or internal oversight bodies to ensure that transparency, accountability, and justice remain upheld throughout institutional governance processes.

REFERENCES

Al-Attas, S. M. N. (1999). The concept of education in Islam. Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC.

Bass, B. M., & Steidlmeier, P. (1999). Ethics, character, and authentic transformational leadership behavior. The Leadership Quarterly, 10(2), 181–217.

Brown, M. E., & Treviño, L. K. (2006). Ethical leadership: A review and future directions. The Leadership Quarterly, 17(6), 595–616.

Burns, J. M. (1978). Leadership. New York: Harper & Row.

Cooper, T. L. (2006). The responsible administrator: An approach to ethics for the administrative role. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Denhardt, R. B. (2007). Theories of public organization (5th ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Denhardt, R. B., & Denhardt, J. V. (2015). The new public service: Serving, not steering. New York: Routledge.

Etzioni, A. (1991). The moral dimension: Toward a new economics. New York: Free Press.

Purwanto, A. (2020). Krisis etika kepemimpinan dalam dunia pendidikan tinggi. Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam, 5(1), 23–34.

Schein, E. H. (2010). Organizational culture and leadership (4th ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Syafi'i, A. (2019). Etika kepemimpinan dalam perspektif pendidikan Islam. Jurnal Ilmiah Kependidikan Islam, 8(2), 123–136.

Terry, L. D. (1998). Administrative leadership, neo-managerialism, and the public

management movement. Public Administration Review, 58(3), 194–200.

Thakhin, A., Ariratana, W., & Sapsirin, S. (2015). Ethical leadership and organizational sustainability in higher education. Procedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences, 186, 1163–1169.

Wekke, I. S. (2017). Leadership in Islamic higher education: Between values and professionalism. Journal of Education and Learning, 11(4), 465–472.