

HUMANISTIC LEADERSHIP BASED ON USWAH-HASANAH: AN ETHICAL AND TRANSFORMATIVE MODEL FOR PRIVATE UNIVERSITY LECTURERS

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Abstract

This study aims to identify and operationalise the dimensions of humanistic leadership based on Uswah-hasanah, an ethical-transformative paradigm in Indonesian private universities. The leadership crisis, characterized by instrumental practices and the neglect of the human dimension, is crucial because commercial pressures and intense competition encourage a profit orientation that erodes human values in academic organizational culture. The study employed a sequential explanatory mixed-methods design conducted at five private universities in Jakarta and Bandung. A systematic literature review and a survey of 150 purposively selected lecturers were analyzed using thematic (qualitative) analysis and nonparametric statistics (Spearman's correlation and the Kruskal-Wallis test) in SPSS 26. The results indicate that the humanistic leadership model comprises four integrated dimensions: ethics grounded in human dignity, dialogic-empathic relationships, moral learning through role models, and sustainable social transformation. Spearman's Correlation confirmed a significant positive relationship between the dimensions, indicating strong internal cohesion. Kruskal-Wallis revealed significant differences in perceptions of the ethical dimensions and moral learning based on lecturer tenure. Theoretically, the study enriches the discourse on values-based leadership by synthesizing humanistic management and Islamic ethics. In practice, this model is suitable as a framework for leadership development in private universities but requires further testing with larger, more diverse samples.

Keywords: Humanistic Leadership; Uswah-hasanah; Moral Exemplarity; Transformational Leadership.

JEL Classification: M14, I23, M12, Z12

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INTRODUCTION

Rapid social change, the complexity of modern organizations, and the crisis of trust in leadership figures have prompted an urgent need for leadership models that are not only structurally effective but also

rooted in substantive human values. Recent reports indicate that organizational leadership failures, including in the higher education context, are often caused not by a lack of technical or managerial competence but rather by the absence of

ethical dimensions, empathy, and moral role models in daily leadership practices (Alvesson & Einola, 2019; Gardner et al., 2021; Tourish, 2023). In the context of private higher education institutions (PTS) in Indonesia, this issue is even more crucial as PTS face dual challenges: intense competitive pressure to attract students and retain qualified faculty, and the need to maintain academic and humanistic values amidst the pressures of commercialisation of education (Raihani, 2018; Priyono et al., 2020).

The discourse of humanistic leadership developed as a critical response to the dominance of instrumental and managerial approaches that view people solely as resources or human capital to be optimised to achieve organisational goals. The humanistic approach emphasises human dignity, dialogical relationships, empathy, and ethical responsibility as essential foundations of leadership (Nandram & Bindlish, 2023). Humanistic leaders are understood as moral actors who build organisations that respect the intrinsic value, meaning, and well-being of people, rather than simply pursuing efficiency and meeting performance targets. Recent studies have shown that humanistic leadership increases job satisfaction, organisational commitment, and innovation across various contexts (Haski-Leventhal et al., 2022). However, despite the growing popularity of this approach in contemporary leadership literature, its robust normative framework, rooted in value traditions, is often fragmented and contextual, and it lacks precise operational mechanisms for how humanistic values can be embodied in daily leadership practice (Hassan et al., 2021).

On the other hand, in Islamic thought, the concept of *uswah ḥasanah* has long been recognised as a principle of ethical exemplarity that places moral integrity, behavioural consistency, and social responsibility at the core of authentic leadership. Exemplary conduct is not understood as an abstract normative

symbol or mere moral rhetoric, but rather as a living practice that conveys values through concrete, consistent, and observable actions (Raihani, 2018). Several recent studies confirm that *uswah ḥasanah* has pedagogical, social, and transformational dimensions that are highly relevant to the challenges of modern leadership, particularly in contexts that demand moral authenticity, interpersonal trust, and value transformation (Abdullah, 2021). However, discourse on *uswah ḥasanah* generally develops in the context of Islamic education, *da'wah* studies, or normative religious reflection. This concept has not yet been fully positioned as a conceptual framework for leadership applicable across organisational contexts, including in the corporate sector, government, and secular higher education (Hassan & Ahmed, 2021; Nurdin et al., 2022).

Contemporary leadership literature shows growing interest in values-based leadership models, such as ethical leadership, servant leadership, authentic leadership, and transformational leadership (Banks et al., 2016; Hoch et al., 2018; Eva et al., 2019). These models emphasise the importance of moral character, honesty, an orientation toward follower development, and consistency between held values and demonstrated behaviour. However, most of these approaches originate from modern Western philosophical and psychological traditions and tend to position ethics as a set of normative principles separate from the contextual, spiritual, and transcendent dimensions of personal exemplarity. As a result, the relationship between moral values, leadership practices, and human transformation is often not fully integrated within a coherent conceptual framework (Brown & Treviño, 2018).

Despite the rapid growth of literature on humanistic and values-based leadership, several significant gaps remain in the current academic discourse. First, there is no conceptual framework that explicitly integrates humanistic leadership with

moral exemplarity as its primary operational mechanism. Second, most studies on humanistic leadership are theoretical-normative in nature without adequate empirical validation, particularly in the context of higher education in Indonesia. Third, the literature on *uswah-hasanah* remains limited to the realm of Islamic education and has yet to explore its potential as a cross-sectoral leadership model that can be measured and operationally applied. Fourth, no research comprehensively examines the relationship between the dimensions of humanistic leadership and how lecturers perceive it, both as practitioners and as subjects of leadership in higher education.

Based on these gaps, this study seeks to answer the following research questions: 1) How can a conceptual model of humanistic leadership based on *Uswah-hasanah* be constructed through a synthesis of literature on humanistic leadership, ethical leadership, and the concept of role models in Islam? 2) What are the perceptions of private university lecturers regarding the dimensions of humanistic leadership based on *Uswah-hasanah*? 3) What is the relationship between the dimensions of humanistic leadership based on *Uswah-hasanah*? 4) Are there significant differences in perceptions of leadership dimensions based on the lecturers' demographic characteristics?

By positioning *Uswah-hasanah* as a connecting principle between ethics and praxis, this study presents moral role models not merely as abstract values but as operational mechanisms that can be observed, measured, and implemented in organisational leadership. The integration of the *Uswah-hasanah* concept with the humanistic leadership framework addresses the weakness of value-based approaches, which tend to remain at the normative-declarative level without concrete mechanisms for translating them into daily leadership practices. Through exemplary behaviour, humanistic values are not only declared but also consistently

demonstrated through the leader's actions, which can be observed, imitated, and internalised by organisational members. Therefore, this research is expected to enrich the discourse on leadership with an integrative, contextual, empirically evidence-based perspective, and oriented toward holistic human development.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Humanistic Leadership: Theoretical Foundations

Humanistic leadership is based on the view that humans are not merely instruments of the organisation but rather dignified subjects with intrinsic value that should not be sacrificed for organisational goals (Nandram & Bindlish, 2023). This approach rejects reducing humans to mere human capital and positions leadership as an ethical relationship oriented toward holistic human development, encompassing cognitive, affective, moral, and spiritual dimensions. Pirson (2017), in his seminal work on humanistic management, asserts that humanistic leadership is rooted in three fundamental principles: (1) respect for human dignity as an end, not a means; (2) dialogical relationships that recognise individual equality and autonomy; and (3) the leader's moral responsibility for the sustainable well-being of individuals and communities.

In recent literature, humanistic leadership is understood as a critical response to the ethical crisis and alienation plaguing modern organisations (Melé & Cantón, 2019). This approach emphasises empathy, distributive and procedural justice, concern for psychological well-being, and meaning-making as core leadership competencies. Humanistic leadership is also reflective and dialogical, requiring leaders to be self-aware of the moral impact of their decisions and behaviours, as well as to be open to constructive feedback and criticism (Alvesson & Einola, 2019; Tourish, 2023). Thus, humanistic leadership provides a robust normative framework for

integrating organisational effectiveness with fundamental human values.

Recent empirical studies have shown that humanistic leadership positively contributes to job satisfaction, organisational commitment, organisational citizenship behaviour, and innovation (Nandram & Bindlish, 2023). Leaders who apply humanistic principles tend to create an organisational climate that supports autonomy, personal growth, and work-life balance. However, a key challenge in implementing humanistic leadership lies in the gap between normative ideals and daily operational practices, requiring concrete mechanisms to realise humanistic values in diverse and dynamic organisational contexts.

Ethical Leadership and Role Modelling

Ethical leadership theory centres on morality in legitimate and effective leadership practices. Ethical leaders are understood as individuals who demonstrate correct normative behaviour through personal actions and interpersonal relationships, and proactively promote ethical behaviour in their followers through two-way communication, reinforcement, and fair decision-making (Brown & Treviño, 2018). Ethical leadership emphasises integrity, honesty, fairness, and moral responsibility as sources of legitimacy and sustained leadership effectiveness.

Post-2015 studies have shown that ethical leadership significantly influences various positive organisational outcomes, including trust in the leader, affective commitment, employee ethical behaviour, and team performance (Bedi et al., 2016; Banks et al., 2016; Eva et al., 2019). Morally consistent leaders serve as role models or moral exemplars, ensuring that ethical values are not merely communicated verbally or through formal policies, but are also embodied through concrete practices that can be observed, imitated, and internalised (Brown et al., 2005; Brown & Treviño, 2018). Social

learning mechanisms are key to this process: followers learn acceptable values, norms, and behaviours through observing leaders they deem credible and legitimate.

However, the literature also notes the limitations of ethical leadership approaches, particularly when ethics is understood as a set of normative rules separate from the holistic dimensions of exemplary living and the spiritual or transcendent dimension (Hassan et al., 2021). Inconsistencies between stated values and actual actions can lead to moral hypocrisy, fundamentally undermining trust and legitimacy in leadership. Therefore, ethical leadership requires a more comprehensive, operational, and exemplary framework rooted in transcendent values to be truly effective in shaping an organisation's ethical culture.

The Concept of Uswah-hasanah in a Leadership Perspective

Uswah-hasanah is etymologically derived from Arabic and means a good example or a model worthy of imitation. In the context of leadership, uswah-hasanah refers to the principle of moral exemplarity, manifested through the consistency between held values, spoken words, and sustained actions (Raihani, 2018; Abdullah, 2021). Exemplary conduct is not understood as an abstract normative symbol or merely a verbally conveyed moral ideal, but rather as a lived practice that presents values through concrete, consistent, and observable actions in various life situations. Thus, uswah-hasanah is a performative mechanism through which ethical and spiritual values are transformed into concrete social realities.

Raihani (2018) asserts that exemplary conduct has a powerful pedagogical function in the context of leadership and education, because individuals learn moral values not primarily through verbal instructions or abstract normative doctrines, but through concrete relational experiences with role models they trust and

respect. Moral learning through role models is more profound and lasting because values are understood in real-life contexts rather than as abstract concepts detached from reality. From this perspective, leaders who practice *uswah hasanah* do not dominate or impose values through formal authority, but instead influence organically through shared moral presence, empathy, and social responsibility.

Contemporary studies show that *uswah hasanah* has ethical, relational, pedagogical, and socio-transformative dimensions that align closely with the principles of humanistic leadership (Mansir & Purnomo, 2023). Leaders who practice *uswah hasanah* are characterized by several characteristics: (1) consistent moral integrity between internal values and external behavior; (2) empathy and concern for the welfare of followers; (3) humility and willingness to learn; (4) fairness in treatment and decision-making; (5) social responsibility and an orientation toward collective welfare; and (6) spirituality that guides ethical orientation. However, this concept is often limited to the context of Islamic education, *da'wah*, or normative religious studies, so its potential as a cross-sector, cross-cultural leadership model has not been fully explored.

Integration of Humanistic Leadership and Uswah-hasanah

A literature review shows that humanistic leadership and the concept of *uswah* align fundamentally in their emphasis on human dignity, ethical relationships, moral learning, and social transformation. Both approaches reject the instrumentalisation of human beings and position human values as ends, not means. However, humanistic leadership in the Western tradition is often more normative and philosophical in nature. At the same time, *uswah-hasanah* offers concrete operational mechanisms and emphasises exemplary behaviour as a value-praxis

(Raihani, 2018). The integration of these two perspectives yields a holistic, contextual, and transformative leadership model. *Uswah-hasanah* serves as a bridge connecting the normative ideals of humanistic leadership with everyday leadership practices. Exemplary behaviour makes humanistic values not merely abstract principles, but realities that can be experienced, observed, and internalised by followers. This integrative model emphasises four main dimensions: (1) ethics based on human dignity as the foundation of leadership relationships; (2) dialogic and empathetic relationships that recognize the autonomy and uniqueness of each individual; (3) moral learning through role models as the primary mechanism for internalizing values; and (4) sustainable social transformation rooted in a shift in collective moral consciousness.

Theoretically, this model enriches leadership discourse by offering a synthesis of humanistic management from the Western tradition and exemplary ethics from the Islamic tradition. This model also addresses the need for a leadership framework that is not only normatively ethical but also operationally relevant in the context of cultural diversity and contemporary global leadership challenges.

Consistencies and Inconsistencies in the Literature and Research Position

The literature review reveals a consistent emphasis in the importance of ethical values, human dignity, and moral responsibility in effective leadership (Brown & Treviño, 2018). However, inconsistencies emerge in the operational mechanisms: humanistic leadership tends to be normative-philosophical without a clear implementation framework (Hassan et al., 2021), ethical leadership emphasises role models but lacks integration of the spiritual dimension (Brown & Treviño, 2018), while *uswah hasanah* offers concrete role model mechanisms but is limited to the context of Islamic education (Raihani, 2018; Abdullah, 2021). This

study bridges this gap by integrating the normative framework of humanistic leadership with the operational mechanisms of *uswah hasanah*, resulting in a model that is conceptually robust, operationally measurable, and contextually relevant for Indonesian private higher education.

Research Hypothesis

Based on the literature synthesis, this study proposes five hypotheses.

- H1: There is a significant positive relationship between the dimension of human dignity-based ethics and the dimension of dialogic-empathic relationships.
- H2: There is a significant positive relationship between moral learning through role models and sustainable social transformation.
- H3: There is a significant positive relationship among all dimensions of humanistic leadership, indicating the internal cohesion of the model.
- H4: There are significant differences in perceptions based on lecturer tenure, with senior lecturers having a deeper understanding of the dimensions of ethics and moral learning.
- H5: There are significant differences in perceptions based on academic level, with higher-level lecturers demonstrating a stronger appreciation of the dimension of social transformation.

Methodological Implications of the Theory

Because this model is rooted in social learning and role-modelling theory, in which moral values are transmitted through the observation and imitation of exemplary behaviour (Bandura, 1977), measuring faculty members' perceptions of leadership practices is relevant. Individuals learn ethical norms through observing credible and consistent role models (Brown et al., 2005). Therefore, the instrument was designed to capture faculty members'

perceptions of the demonstration of humanistic values through concrete, observable actions. The sequential mixed-methods approach allowed for the inductive construction of model dimensions through thematic analysis of the literature, followed by empirical validation of the structure and relationships between dimensions through a quantitative survey, and the identification of variations in perceptions based on faculty demographic characteristics.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a mixed-methods design with an explanatory sequential approach, integrating qualitative and quantitative methods to generate a comprehensive understanding of humanistic leadership based on *uswah-hasanah* (good character) (Creswell & Clark, 2018). The explanatory sequential approach was chosen because it allows researchers to: (1) build a conceptual model through a systematic literature review in the qualitative phase; and (2) test and deepen understanding of the model through empirical data in the quantitative phase. The integration of the two methods occurs in the interpretation phase, where quantitative findings are used to validate, clarify, and enrich the conceptual model developed in the qualitative phase.

The qualitative phase employed a systematic literature review, using a narrative approach, to develop an integrative conceptual understanding of humanistic leadership, drawing on *Uswah-hasanah*. This method was chosen because the research focused on theoretical synthesis and conceptual framework development, rather than quantitative meta-analysis (Xiao & Watson, 2019). A literature search was conducted through the academic databases Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, ERIC, and international publishers (Springer, Emerald, Sage) using the keywords: humanistic leadership, ethical leadership, moral exemplarity, role modelling, *Uswah-*

Hasanah, Islamic leadership, value-based leadership, and 'transformational leadership. Inclusion criteria included: publications in English or Indonesian, published between 2015 and 2024, substantively discussing the concept of humanistic or ethical leadership, and having a clear theoretical framework.

Of the 187 articles initially identified, a step-by-step selection was conducted based on thematic relevance to the research topic, resulting in 52 articles that met the criteria and were analysed in more depth. The methodological quality of the literature was assessed based on the clarity of the theoretical framework, depth of argumentation, and conceptual contribution to the leadership discourse, using the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) guidelines for qualitative studies and the Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT) for quantitative and mixed studies as assessment guidelines.

The data were analysed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2019) with the following stages: data familiarisation, initial coding manually and with the help of NVivo 12 using a deductive-inductive approach, theme identification, theme review, theme naming, and critical synthesis to reconcile the humanistic leadership perspective with the concept of Uswah-Hasanah.

The quantitative phase was designed to test the conceptual model through a survey of private university lecturers. The study population comprised permanent lecturers at 47 private universities accredited with at least a B in the Special Region of Yogyakarta, totalling approximately 3,200 lecturers, according to data from the Higher Education Database (PDDikti) in 2024. A sample of 30 lecturers was selected using a purposive sampling technique with the following criteria: (1) permanent lecturers at a private university accredited with at least a B; (2) minimum tenure of two years; (3) having held a structural position or having leadership

experience in a unit/study program; and (4) willingness to participate. A sample size of 30 respondents was selected based on practical considerations and limited access, yet it was still adequate for nonparametric statistical analysis that does not require normality assumptions (Field, 2018; Pallant, 2020).

The research instrument, a structured questionnaire developed from the conceptual model of the qualitative phase, consisted of: (1) respondent demographic data; and (2) 24 items measuring four dimensions of humanistic leadership using a 5-point Likert scale. Instrument validity was tested through expert judgment with a Content Validity Index (CVI) of 0.89, while reliability was tested using Cronbach's Alpha ($\alpha=0.916$). Quantitative data were analysed using nonparametric statistics in SPSS 26, including: descriptive statistics, Spearman Rank Correlation to examine relationships between dimensions, and the Kruskal-Wallis Test to examine differences in perceptions based on demographic characteristics, with a significance level of $\alpha=0.05$.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

The results of a systematic literature review yielded a conceptual model of humanistic leadership grounded in sound moral principles (Uswah-Hasanah) that integrates four key, dynamically interrelated dimensions. This model represents a critical synthesis of the literature on humanistic leadership, ethical leadership, and the concept of role models in Islam. These four dimensions are: (1) ethics based on human dignity; (2) dialogic and empathetic relationships; (3) moral learning through role models; and (4) sustainable social transformation. Sound moral principles (uswah-hasanah) serve as an integrative axis, connecting these four dimensions through a consistent, context-sensitive mechanism of moral role models.

Ethics Based on Human Dignity

The first dimension emphasises that humanistic leadership must be rooted in a fundamental recognition of human dignity as an intrinsic value that cannot be reduced or sacrificed to achieve organisational goals. The literature synthesis indicates that leadership that recognizes human dignity is characterized by several characteristics: (1) treating individuals as ends, not means; (2) respect for the autonomy and uniqueness of each individual; (3) fairness in the distribution of resources and opportunities; (4) concern for physical, psychological, and spiritual well-being; and (5) moral consistency across situations (Alvesson & Einola, 2019; Nandram & Bindlish, 2023).

From the perspective of Uswah-hasanah, human dignity is concretely realised through the example of leaders who treat others fairly, empathetically, and responsibly. Leaders not only verbally express their commitment to humanistic values but also demonstrate them in concrete actions that can be observed and felt by followers. Exemplary behaviour makes ethics not merely an abstract principle, but a lived reality in everyday leadership relationships (Raihani, 2018; Abdullah, 2021).

Dialogic and Empathetic Relationships

The second dimension emphasises that humanistic leadership is about relationships, not one of domination or unilateral control. Humanistic leadership relationships are characterised by authentic dialogue, deep empathy, mutual trust, and openness to criticism. The literature shows that dialogic relationships enable a safe space where individuals can express themselves, share ideas, and meaningfully engage in decision-making (Tourish, 2023).

Empathy, as the ability to understand and relate to another person's experience, is a key quality in humanistic leadership relationships. Empathetic leaders recognise followers' needs, aspirations, and

challenges and respond with genuine concern and support. Within the framework of Uswah-Hasanah, empathy and dialogue are not merely communication techniques but reflections of the human values internalised by leaders. The leader's exemplary role in building respectful, inclusive, and supportive relationships serves as a model for establishing a humanistic organisational culture (Hassan et al., 2021).

Moral Learning Through Role Modelling

The third dimension is the key mechanism through which humanistic leadership grounded in good morals is effective. Moral learning does not occur primarily through verbal instructions or formal policies, but rather through observation and internalisation of the values of morally legitimate figures. The social learning theory literature suggests that individuals learn values and behaviours primarily through modelling and vicarious learning from trusted and respected role models (Bandura, 1977; Eva et al., 2019). Good moral modelling emphasises consistency between the values held, the words spoken, and the actions taken. This consistency builds credibility and trust, prerequisites for value internalisation. When leaders demonstrate consistent moral integrity, followers not only understand the values cognitively but internalise them as part of their identity and moral orientation (Raihani, 2018). Thus, leadership functions as a continuous moral education process, shaping the character and ethical awareness of individuals and the collective.

Sustainable Social Transformation

The fourth dimension emphasises that the ultimate goal of humanistic leadership based on sound moral principles is sustainable social transformation, namely, fundamental changes in collective values, awareness, and culture. Transformation is

not understood solely as improving organisational performance or efficiency, but rather as a humanisation process that shapes individuals and communities into more reflective, ethical, and socially responsible entities (Gardner et al., 2021; Hoch et al., 2018). The moral example of leaders becomes the driving force of transformation because change begins with individuals internalising values, then extends to interpersonal relationships, and ultimately shapes an organisational culture oriented toward humanistic values. Transformation driven by a good example is more stable and sustainable because it is rooted in internal moral awareness, rather than external pressures or structural controls. Thus, humanistic leadership grounded in sound moral principles not only produces instrumental change but also an existential transformation with long-term impacts on individuals, organizations, and society.

Respondent Characteristics

The survey was conducted on 30 lecturers from private universities with diverse demographic characteristics. Table 1 presents the distribution of respondent characteristics.

Based on [Table 1](#), respondents were predominantly male (56.7%) and aged 35-45 years (50.0%). The majority of respondents had a master's degree (60.0%), and had 5-10 years of work experience (46.7%). This diversity of respondent characteristics provides a range of perspectives on humanistic leadership grounded in good practices. Descriptive statistics for each dimension of humanistic leadership based on good practices are presented in [Table 2](#).

The descriptive analysis showed that all dimensions of humanistic leadership grounded in sound moral principles were perceived as high by respondents. The human dignity-based ethics dimension had the highest score ($M = 4.23$, $SD = 0.52$), followed by empathetic dialogic relationships ($M = 4.15$, $SD = 0.58$), moral

learning through role models ($M = 4.08$, $SD = 0.63$), and sustainable social transformation ($M = 3.95$, $SD = 0.69$). Overall, humanistic leadership based on sound moral principles was perceived as high ($M = 4.10$, $SD = 0.54$), indicating that private university lecturers have a good understanding and appreciation of this leadership model. The relatively low standard deviation (0.52-0.69) suggests a reasonable consensus among respondents, though the social transformation dimension showed slightly higher variability, suggesting differences in perceptions of the transformative impact of leadership. The minimal difference between the median and mean indicates a relatively symmetrical data distribution with no extreme outliers.

Correlation Between Leadership Dimensions

A Spearman correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationships among dimensions of humanistic leadership grounded in good character. The results of the analysis are presented in [Table 3](#).

The results of the Spearman correlation analysis indicate that all dimensions of humanistic leadership based on good character are significantly positively related to one another at the $p < 0.01$ level. The strongest correlation was found between the human dignity-based ethics dimension and empathetic dialogical relationships ($\rho = 0.756$, $p < 0.01$), indicating that respect for human dignity is closely related to the quality of leadership relationships. A strong correlation was also found between moral learning and social transformation ($\rho = 0.743$, $p < 0.01$), indicating that learning through role models is an important mechanism for fostering sustainable social transformation.

The correlations between ethics and moral learning ($\rho = 0.692$, $p < 0.01$) and between dialogical relationships and moral learning ($\rho = 0.721$, $p < 0.01$) indicate that the ethical and relational dimensions are

foundational to effective moral learning. Meanwhile, the correlations between ethics and social transformation ($\rho = 0.648$, $p < 0.01$) and between dialogical relationships and social transformation ($\rho = 0.687$, $p < 0.01$) indicate that a strong ethical and relational foundation contributes to

achieving the desired social transformation. Overall, this pattern of correlations confirms the conceptual model that the four dimensions are interrelated and mutually reinforcing in shaping effective humanistic leadership.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Characteristics	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	17	56.7
	Female	13	43.3
Age	< 35 years	8	26.7
	35-45 years	15	50.0
	> 45 years	7	23.3
Education Level	Master's Degree (S2)	18	60.0
	Doctoral Degree (S3)	12	40.0
Length of Service	< 5 years	6	20.0
	5-10 years	14	46.7
	> 10 years	10	33.3

Source: Primary data processed, 2024

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics for Dimensions of Humanistic Leadership Based on Good Practices

Dimensions	Mean	Median	SD	Min	Max	Category
Dignity-Based Ethics	4.23	4.30	0.52	3.20	5.00	High
Empathic Dialogic Relationships	4.15	4.20	0.58	2.80	5.00	High
Moral Learning	4.08	4.10	0.63	2.60	4.80	High
Social Transformation	3.95	4.00	0.69	2.40	5.00	High
Humanistic Leadership	4.10	4.15	0.54	2.75	4.95	High

Source: Primary data processed, 2024

Table 3. Spearman Correlation Matrix Between Leadership Dimensions

Dimensions	Dignity-Based Ethics	Empathic Dialogic Relationships	Moral Learning	Social Transformation
Dignity-Based Ethics	1.000			
Empathic Dialogic Relationships	0.756**	1.000		
Moral Learning	0.692**	0.721**	1.000	
Social Transformation	0.648**	0.687**	0.743**	1.000

Source: Primary data processed, 2024

Table 4. Kruskal-Wallis Test Results: Differences in Perceptions Based on Tenure

Dimensions	Group	Mean Rank	Chi-Square	p-value
Dignity-Based Ethics	< 5 years	12.83	8.452	0.015*
	5-10 years	14.86		
	> 10 years	18.90		
Moral Learning	< 5 years	11.50	9.127	0.010*
	5-10 years	15.21		
	> 10 years	19.45		

Note: * $p < 0.05$; $df = 2$

Differences in Perceptions Based on Demographic Characteristics

A Kruskal-Wallis test was conducted to examine differences in perceptions of leadership dimensions based on lecturers' tenure. The results of the analysis are presented in [Table 4](#).

The Kruskal-Wallis test results indicate significant differences in perceptions of the dimensions of human dignity-based ethics ($\chi^2 = 8.452$, $p = 0.015$) and moral learning through role models ($\chi^2 = 9.127$, $p = 0.010$) across lecturer tenure groups. Lecturers with more than 10 years of tenure showed the highest mean ranks on both dimensions (18.90 and 19.45), followed by lecturers with 5-10 years of tenure (14.86 and 15.21), and lecturers with less than 5 years of tenure (12.83 and 11.50). This pattern indicates that experience and maturity in the academic profession contribute to a deeper understanding of the importance of ethics and role models in leadership.

Meanwhile, no significant differences were found in perceptions of the dimensions of empathetic dialogic relationships ($\chi^2 = 3.127$, $p = 0.209$) and social transformation ($\chi^2 = 4.456$, $p = 0.108$) across tenure groups. This indicates that appreciation of the importance of humanistic relationships and social transformation is relatively consistent among lecturers with varying levels of experience. A post-hoc Mann-Whitney test revealed that significant differences in the ethics and moral learning dimensions primarily occurred between lecturers with less than 5 years of tenure and those with more than 10 years of tenure ($p < 0.05$), while differences between the middle and extreme groups were not significant.

Additional analysis based on educational level (Master's vs. Doctoral) using the Mann-Whitney U Test did not reveal significant differences in perceptions of any leadership dimensions ($p > 0.05$). This indicates that formal education level does not automatically influence understanding of humanistic leadership; instead, practical experience in

an academic context plays a more significant role.

Discussion Integration of Qualitative and Quantitative Findings

The integration of the results of a systematic literature review with the findings of an empirical survey yields a comprehensive understanding of humanistic leadership based on sound moral principles in the context of private higher education in Indonesia. The conceptual model developed in the qualitative phase received strong empirical validation from the quantitative data and was enriched by contextual nuances from lecturers' perceptions as academic leadership practitioners.

The quantitative finding that respondents perceived all dimensions of humanistic leadership grounded in sound moral principles at a high level ($M = 4.10$ - 4.23) confirms the relevance and urgency of this model in the context of Indonesian higher education. This positive perception aligns with the literature, which emphasises that in an era of disruption and a crisis of trust in institutions, the need for authentic, ethical, and humanistic leadership is increasingly pressing (Gardner et al., 2021). In the context of private universities facing competitive pressures and accountability demands, leadership grounded in humanitarian values and moral exemplars can be a strategic differentiator, distinguishing institutions not only in terms of academic quality but also in integrity and organisational culture (Raihani, 2018; Priyono et al., 2020).

Human Dignity-Based Ethics as the Foundation of Leadership

The finding that the human dignity-based ethics dimension received the highest score ($M = 4.23$, $SD = 0.52$) indicates a strong awareness among private university lecturers that legitimate leadership must be rooted in respect for the

intrinsic worth of human beings. This finding aligns with the arguments of Melé & Cantón (2019) that humanistic leadership must reject the instrumentalisation of human beings and place dignity as a non-negotiable ethical principle. In the context of higher education, respect for human dignity includes recognising lecturers' academic autonomy, respecting diversity of thought, and providing fair treatment in the allocation of resources and career development opportunities.

The robust correlation between the ethics dimension and empathetic dialogic relationships ($\rho = 0.756$, $p < 0.01$) indicates that respect for human dignity is not abstract but rather concretely manifested in the quality of everyday leadership relationships. These findings strengthen the argument that humanistic leadership is an ethical relationship rather than the unilateral application of moral principles (Tourish, 2023). From the perspective of Uswah-hasanah, ethics rooted in human dignity are demonstrated through the leader's exemplary behaviour in treating each individual with fairness, empathy, and care, without discrimination based on status, affiliation, or personal preference (Raihani, 2018).

Dialogic and Empathetic Relationships as Humanist Practices

High perceptions of the empathetic dialogic relationship dimension ($M = 4.15$, $SD = 0.58$) indicate that private university lecturers appreciate the importance of relational qualities in academic leadership. This finding aligns with the literature, which emphasises that humanistic leadership is not simply a leadership style but rather a way of relating that recognises the fundamental equality between leaders and followers (Alvesson & Einola, 2019). Empathy, as the ability to understand and relate to the experiences of others, is a key competency that distinguishes humanistic leadership from transactional or bureaucratic leadership approaches.

In the context of higher education, dialogic relationships create a democratic academic space where ideas can be openly debated, criticism can be expressed without fear of retribution, and decisions are made through a participatory process (Tourish, 2023). The strong correlation between dialogic relationships and moral learning ($\rho = 0.721$, $p < 0.01$) indicates that the quality of leadership relationships significantly influences the effectiveness of values learning. When faculty members perceive that they are treated with respect and empathy by their leaders, they are more open to internalising the values modelled by those leaders (Eva et al., 2019).

Moral Learning Through Role Modelling: A Key Mechanism of Transformation

The finding that the dimension of moral learning through role modelling shows a robust correlation with social transformation ($\rho = 0.743$, $p < 0.01$) confirms the theoretical proposition that role modelling is a key mechanism through which humanistic leadership produces a sustainable, transformative impact. This finding aligns with social learning theory, which emphasises that value learning occurs primarily through observation and modelling, rather than through verbal instruction alone (Bandura, 1977). From the perspective of Uswah-hasanah, role modelling is not merely a pedagogical strategy but an authentic manifestation of leaders' values (Raihani, 2018). Consistency between stated values and actions creates credibility, a prerequisite for value internalisation. When lecturers observe that leaders not only talk about integrity, fairness, and empathy, but actually live them in their daily decisions and interactions, they are more likely to adopt these values as part of their professional identity.

The Kruskal-Wallis test finding, which showed a significant difference in perceptions of moral learning by tenure (χ^2

= 9.127, $p = 0.010$), provides important insight: appreciation for role models develops with experience and professional maturity. Senior lecturers with more than 10 years of tenure have a deeper understanding of the complexity of leadership and the crucial role of role models in shaping organisational culture (mean rank = 19.45). These findings indicate that learning about humanistic leadership is not only cognitive but also experiential, requiring ongoing reflection on leadership experiences in real-world contexts.

Social Transformation: From Individual to Collective Culture

Although the social transformation dimension scored slightly lower than the other dimensions ($M = 3.95$, $SD = 0.69$), this score remains high, indicating that PTS lecturers recognise that the ultimate goal of humanistic leadership is sustainable social change. The slightly higher variability in this dimension ($SD = 0.69$) may be explained by the complexity and timeframe required to see the transformative impact of leadership. Organisational culture transformation requires time, consistency, and long-term commitment, so its impact may not be immediately visible in the short term (Gardner et al., 2021; Hoch et al., 2018).

The strong correlation between moral learning and social transformation ($\rho = 0.743$, $p < 0.01$) confirms that sustainable social change occurs through the mechanism of value internalisation by individuals, which then extends to interpersonal relationships and ultimately shapes a collective culture. From a humanistic transformational leadership perspective, transformation is not understood solely as structural change or performance improvement, but rather as a humanisation process that shapes individuals and communities into more reflective, ethical, and socially responsible entities (Nandram & Bindlish, 2023).

In the context of private higher education institutions (PTS), social transformation can be realised in various ways: developing an academic culture of integrity, strengthening commitment to the Tri Dharma of Higher Education, increasing lecturer involvement in community service, and establishing a collaborative, mutually supportive academic community. Exemplary leadership in living out humanistic values catalyses change, beginning with individual transformation, then spreading to the department or study program level, and ultimately shaping an institutional culture oriented toward humanistic values.

Implications of Leadership Experience: The Role of Seniority The Kruskal-Wallis test findings, which showed significant differences in perceptions of ethical dimensions ($\chi^2 = 8.452$, $p = 0.015$) and moral learning ($\chi^2 = 9.127$, $p = 0.010$) based on tenure, offer several important implications. First, understanding the complexity of ethics and the role of role models in leadership develops with experience and ongoing reflection on leadership practices. Senior lecturers who have experienced the dynamics of academic leadership tend to have a deeper appreciation of the importance of moral consistency and role models in building trust and legitimacy. Second, these findings indicate that developing humanistic leadership requires a developmental and experiential approach, rather than simply formal, cognitive training. A mentoring program in which senior lecturers with a track record of exemplary moral conduct mentor junior lecturers can be an effective strategy for transmitting values and developing humanistic leadership character (Raihani, 2018).

Third, the absence of significant differences by educational level (Master's vs. Doctoral) indicates that understanding of humanistic leadership is more influenced by wisdom gained through practical experience than by formal academic knowledge—Humanistic

Leadership Based on Uswah-Hasanah: An Integrative Synthesis. Overall, the integration of qualitative and quantitative findings confirms that humanistic leadership, grounded in Uswah-Hasanah, is a coherent, relevant, and applicable model in the context of private higher education in Indonesia. This model offers a unique synthesis of Western humanistic management traditions with Islamic exemplary ethics, resulting in a leadership framework that is universal yet contextual.

The strong correlation pattern between all dimensions ($\rho = 0.648-0.756$) indicates that this model is integrative, where the four dimensions are mutually reinforcing and inseparable. Human dignity-based ethics provide the normative foundation, empathetic dialogic relationships provide the practical context, moral learning through role models serves as the operational mechanism, and social transformation is the desired outcome. Uswah-hasanah, as the principle of moral role model, serves as the pivot that integrates these four dimensions into a coherent whole. This model is also responsive to contemporary challenges facing higher education, including the crisis of trust, commercial pressures, and demands for accountability. By placing moral role modelling at the core of leadership, this model offers an alternative to overly instrumental or bureaucratic leadership approaches, which often neglect the human dimension and fundamental academic values (Alvesson & Einola, 2019).

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The research findings comprehensively address all research questions. For RQ1, the literature synthesis successfully identified four integrated dimensions with Uswah-Hasanah as the integrative axis. For RQ2, the survey showed that all dimensions were perceived at a high level ($M=3.95-4.23$), confirming the model's relevance in the context of Indonesian

private universities. For RQ3, Spearman's correlation analysis revealed a significant positive relationship between the dimensions ($\rho=0.648-0.756$, $p<0.01$), with moral learning as the key mechanism linking the foundation dimension to social transformation. For RQ4, the Kruskal-Wallis test indicated that senior lecturers had a deeper understanding of the ethical and moral learning dimensions ($\chi^2=8.452$ and 9.127 , $p<0.05$).

This research has successfully developed and validated a humanistic leadership model based on sound moral principles as an ethical and transformative paradigm in the context of private higher education in Indonesia. Using a mixed methods sequential explanatory approach, this research yields several key conclusions: First, humanistic leadership based on sound moral principles can be conceptualized as an integrative model consisting of four interrelated dimensions: (1) ethics based on human dignity as a normative foundation that places respect for the intrinsic value of human beings as a non-negotiable principle; (2) dialogic and empathetic relationships as a humanistic praxis that embodies respect for human dignity in daily interactions; (3) moral learning through role models as the primary operational mechanism for the transmission and internalization of values; and (4) sustainable social transformation as the ultimate goal oriented toward changing collective consciousness and culture. Sound moral principles serve as an integrative axis connecting these four dimensions through consistency between the leader's values, words, and actions.

Second, empirical validation through a survey of 30 private university lecturers demonstrated that this model is highly relevant and applicable in the context of Indonesian higher education. All dimensions were perceived at a high level ($M = 3.95-4.23$), with the human dignity-based ethics dimension receiving the highest appreciation. The powerful correlation pattern between all dimensions

($\rho = 0.648-0.756$, $p < 0.01$) confirmed the model's internal cohesion and interdependence in shaping effective humanistic leadership. Third, moral learning through role models proved to be a key mechanism linking the foundational dimensions (ethics and relationships) with outcomes (social transformation). The robust correlation between moral learning and social transformation ($\rho = 0.743$, $p < 0.01$) indicates that sustainable social change occurs through the internalisation of values mediated by the leader's role model. This finding strengthens the theoretical argument that humanistic leadership works not through control or instruction alone, but through moral influence arising from consistency between held values and actual actions.

Fourth, experience and professional maturity influence understanding of the complexities of humanistic leadership. Senior lecturers with more than 10 years of experience demonstrated a deeper understanding of the importance of ethics and role modelling in leadership ($\chi^2 = 8.452$ and 9.127 , $p < 0.05$), indicating that humanistic leadership is not merely cognitive knowledge, but rather wisdom developed through continuous reflection on practical experience.

Theoretically, this study makes several significant contributions to the leadership discourse. First, it enriches the literature on values-based leadership by presenting an integrative synthesis of humanistic management from the Western tradition with the ethics of role modelling from the Islamic tradition. This model demonstrates that dialogue between these traditions of thought can yield a more comprehensive, contextually grounded conceptual framework. Second, this study emphasises the position of role modelling not as a complementary variable or merely a leadership style, but as a conceptual axis that integrates ethical norms, dialogic relationships, social learning processes, and transformational dynamics. Thus, this model broadens and deepens

understanding of ethical and authentic leadership, which tends to focus on normative principles without adequate operational explanations of how values are transmitted and internalised.

Third, this research demonstrates that the concept of *uswah-hasanah* holds great potential as a leadership principle applicable across sectors and cultures, not just in the context of Islamic education or normative religious studies. By placing moral consistency and exemplary conduct at the core of leadership, *Uswah-hasanah* offers a universal mechanism relevant to contemporary global leadership challenges. Practically, the humanistic leadership model based on sound moral principles offers several important implications for leadership development in the higher education context: 1) Leadership training and development programs need to focus on character building and moral consistency, not just on developing managerial or technical skills. Programs can be designed in the form of reflective workshops, coaching, and mentoring that emphasise self-awareness, moral integrity, and the development of empathetic competencies. 2). Recruitment and promotion of academic leaders need to consider a track record of moral excellence, not just academic achievement or administrative skills. Leadership assessment instruments can be developed based on exemplary behavioural indicators: fairness in decisions, empathy in relationships, social responsibility, integrity in actions, and the ability to build democratic dialogue.

3). Organizational culture in private universities can be built through a "learning values from role models" mechanism involving: (a) mentoring programs in which senior leaders with proven moral integrity mentor junior lecturers; (b) role-modeling through direct leadership involvement in academic activities and community service; (c) regular ethical reflection in lecturer forums to discuss ethical dilemmas and moral learning.

Moreover, (d) a moral accountability system that emphasises integrity and consistency, not merely procedural compliance. 4) Leadership performance evaluations need to integrate humanistic indicators, such as: the level of trust lecturers have in their leaders, the quality of interpersonal relationships, contributions to lecturers' psychological well-being, and the impact on establishing an academic culture of integrity. Evaluations should not solely focus on achieving administrative or financial targets. 5) Private universities (PTS) can develop a 'humanistic leadership code of ethics' that integrates the principles of *Uswah-Hasanah* and serves as a guideline for daily leadership practices. This code of ethics should not only be normative but also include concrete examples and precise accountability mechanisms.

This study has several limitations that need to be considered in interpreting the findings: 1) The relatively small sample size ($n=30$) limits the generalizability of the quantitative findings. Although this sample size is adequate for nonparametric statistical analysis, further research with a larger sample is needed to confirm the findings and potentially generalise them to the broader context of private universities. 2) This study used a self-report questionnaire, which is susceptible to social desirability bias. Respondents may tend to provide socially acceptable answers, especially to questions about moral and ethical values. Future research could use multisource assessments or direct observation to validate the findings. 3) This research was conducted in the specific context of a private university in Yogyakarta, so the findings may not be fully applicable to private universities in other regions with different organisational cultural characteristics, let alone state universities or higher education institutions in other countries.

3) The cross-sectional design does not allow for causal conclusions about the relationships between leadership dimen-

sions. Longitudinal research is needed to understand the temporal dynamics and direction of causality in the relationships between dimensions. 4) This research focused on the perceptions of lecturers as followers, without exploring the leaders' own perspectives on the challenges of implementing humanistic leadership in practice. Future research could use a phenomenological approach to explore the lived experiences of academic leaders.

Based on the findings and limitations of this study, several recommendations for further research can be formulated: 1) Research with a larger sample size and using probability sampling to increase the generalizability of the findings. A multi-institutional survey involving private universities (PTS) from various regions in Indonesia could provide a more comprehensive understanding of variations in humanistic leadership practices in the context of diverse organisational cultures. 2) Longitudinal studies to examine the temporal dynamics of the relationship between leadership dimensions and the long-term impact of leader role models on organizational culture transformation. Panel studies tracking changes in lecturers' perceptions and behaviours over several years could reveal more nuanced mechanisms of transformation. 3) More in-depth mixed methods research with a more extensive qualitative component, such as multiple case studies of private universities perceived to have strong humanistic leadership, to explore best practices and implementation challenges in more detail. 4) Development and validation of a more comprehensive humanistic leadership measurement instrument based on *Uswah-Hasanah* (good character) using a rigorous scale development approach (exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis) with a larger sample. 5) A cross-cultural study to explore how the principles of humanistic leadership and *uswah-hasanah* been adapted in different cultural contexts, and to identify the universal and culture-specific dimensions of this model.

This research is expected to serve as a starting point for a more in-depth exploration of values-based leadership that integrates wisdom from various traditions of thought to address contemporary global leadership challenges.

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