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Spiritual Leadership And Autonomous Motivation On Teachers' Innovative Work Behavior

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the relationship between Spiritual Leadership, Autonomous Motivation, and Innovative Behavior of Teachers in schools. The research sample consisted of 150 teachers in Kendari City with diverse demographic characteristics based on gender, age, education level, working period, and marital status. The majority of respondents are female teachers who are in the middle career stage with adequate academic qualifications and sufficient professional experience, making it relevant to examine the influence of leadership and motivation on learning innovation. Data analysis was carried out using Structural Equation Modeling. The results of the study showed that all relationships between variables were positive and significant. Autonomous Motivation has a strong influence on Teachers' Innovative Behaviors, which affirms that intrinsic motivation plays an important role in encouraging the creation and implementation of new ideas in learning. Spiritual Leadership has a strong influence on Autonomous Motivation and has a direct influence on Innovative Behavior. These findings suggest that value-based leadership is able to strengthen teachers' internal motivation, which ultimately increases their innovation capacity. This research confirms the importance of developing spiritual leadership and strengthening intrinsic motivation to encourage sustainable educational innovation.
Keywords: Spiritual Leadership, Autonomous Motivation, Innovative Behavior of Teachers

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis hubungan antara Kepemimpinan Spiritual, Motivasi Otonom, dan Perilaku Inovatif Guru di sekolah. Sampel penelitian terdiri dari 150 guru di Kota Kendari dengan karakteristik demografis yang beragam berdasarkan jenis kelamin, usia, tingkat pendidikan, masa kerja, dan status perkawinan. Mayoritas responden adalah guru perempuan yang berada di tahap pertengahan karir dengan kualifikasi akademik yang memadai dan pengalaman profesional yang cukup, sehingga relevan untuk meneliti pengaruh kepemimpinan dan motivasi terhadap inovasi pembelajaran. Analisis data dilakukan menggunakan Structural Equation Modeling. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa semua hubungan antar variabel bersifat positif dan signifikan. Motivasi Otonom memiliki pengaruh yang kuat terhadap Perilaku Inovatif Guru, yang menegaskan bahwa motivasi intrinsik memainkan peran penting dalam mendorong penciptaan dan implementasi ide-ide baru dalam pembelajaran. Kepemimpinan Spiritual memiliki pengaruh yang kuat terhadap Motivasi Otonom dan memiliki pengaruh langsung terhadap Perilaku Inovatif. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa kepemimpinan berbasis nilai mampu memperkuat motivasi internal guru, yang pada akhirnya meningkatkan kapasitas inovasi mereka. Penelitian ini menegaskan pentingnya mengembangkan kepemimpinan spiritual dan memperkuat motivasi intrinsik untuk mendorong inovasi pendidikan yang berkelanjutan.
Kata kunci: Kepemimpinan Spiritual, Motivasi Otonom, Perilaku Inovatif Guru

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INTRODUCTION

The changing educational landscape of the 21st century presents increasingly complex demands on the role of teachers in school organizations. Teachers are not only expected to be able to deliver learning materials effectively, but are also required to develop creative, adaptive, and innovative methods (Rahimi and Oh 2024). The development of digital technology, changes in the national curriculum, and increasing expectations for the quality of graduates encourage the importance of

innovative work behavior in the teaching profession. Innovative behavior includes the ability to generate new ideas, promote those ideas to colleagues, and implement them in learning practices (Widmann et al., 2016). The education management literature places individual innovation as a key factor in improving the competitiveness and quality of educational institutions.

In an effort to understand the factors that drive teachers' innovative behavior, academic attention is increasingly focused on leadership aspects and intrinsic motivation. *Spiritual leadership* develops as a value-based leadership approach that emphasizes the meaning of work, integrity, and emotional well-being of organizational members (Mathews, 2021; Fry et al., 2017). This approach is considered relevant in an educational environment that is loaded with moral values and social goals. On the other hand, *autonomous motivation* as the main concept in self-determination theory explains internal motivation that comes from individual personal interests and values (Palmer et al., 2020). The integration of spiritual leadership and autonomous motivation in explaining teachers' innovative work behavior is an important issue that has theoretical and practical urgency.

Spiritual leadership has a strategic role in organizations because it is able to create an inspiring vision and build interpersonal relationships based on beliefs and values (Meng 2016). Fry et al. (2017) explained that spiritual leadership develops *the dimension of calling* and *membership*, which strengthens the sense of belonging and meaning of work. Mathews (2021) adds that spiritual leadership contributes to emotional well-being and organizational commitment. In the school environment, school principals who apply spiritual leadership can build an ethical, supportive, and collaborative work culture. Zhu et al. (2022) show that spiritual leadership has a significant influence on autonomous motivation through the creation of an environment that values integrity, empathy, and justice. These findings confirm that spiritual leadership serves as a foundation in forming psychological conditions that support teacher performance and innovation.

Autonomous motivation and innovative work behavior also have significant uses in educational organizations. Brandon et al. (2021) state that autonomous motivation increases individual creativity and freedom of thought. Autin et al. (2022) found that intrinsic motivation strengthens commitment and perseverance in facing professional challenges. Zhang and Yang (2021) show that autonomous motivation is positively correlated with an individual's innovative behavior. In the context of education, teachers who are autonomously motivated are more motivated to explore new learning methods and improve the quality of interaction with students. Recent literature confirms that organizations that integrate value-based leadership and intrinsic motivation have a higher capacity for innovation than organizations that rely solely on external incentives.

Various studies have examined the relationship between spiritual leadership and organizational performance as well as between autonomous motivation and innovative behavior (Zhang and Yang 2021). Money et al. (2019) found that spiritual leadership has a positive effect on individual innovative behavior. Palmer et al. (2020) emphasized the importance of autonomous motivation in increasing creativity. However, most of the research was done on the business sector and non-educational

organizations. Studies that comprehensively test the integrative model between spiritual leadership, autonomous motivation, and innovative work behavior in teachers are still limited.

In addition, solutions that are widely researched in improving teacher innovation focus more on structural approaches such as technical training, reward systems, or administrative policies. This approach has not fully explained the psychological mechanisms based on values and the meaning of work. Dewantoro (2017) shows that the alignment of individual and organizational values increases commitment, but the integration of the concept with autonomous motivation and innovation has not been extensively tested empirically. This theoretical gap shows the need for a model capable of explaining the psychological pathways that link value-based leadership to teachers' innovative behaviors.

This research model offers a conceptual mechanism that places autonomous motivation as a mediator in the relationship between spiritual leadership and innovative work behavior. Spiritual leadership builds work meaning, value alignment, and emotional support that meets the basic psychological needs of individuals. This process reinforces teachers' autonomous motivation because they feel valued and have a clear purpose in the work. This intrinsic motivation is the main driver in developing creativity and the courage to take risks in learning.

The core concept of this research emphasizes that teacher innovation does not only depend on structural policies, but also on the quality of value-based leadership and the power of intrinsic motivation. Spiritual leadership creates an ethical and collaborative environment that allows for the exchange of ideas as well as learning experiments. Autonomous motivation strengthens commitment, perseverance, and continuous learning (Zhang et al., 2021). The integration of these two variables is expected to be able to explain how teacher innovation can develop sustainably through positive psychological processes.

This research was carried out on teachers in Kendari City. This region has a dynamic education that continues to develop, including demands to improve the quality of learning and the use of educational technology. Schools in Kendari City strive to develop a culture of innovation in learning to improve the quality of student learning outcomes. School principals play a key role in building a value-based work climate and collaboration. This study aims to analyze the influence of spiritual leadership on autonomous motivation, test the influence of spiritual leadership on innovative work behavior, and evaluate the influence of autonomous motivation on teachers' innovative work behavior. This study also examines the mediating role of autonomous motivation in the relationship between spiritual leadership and innovative behavior. The contribution of this research is theoretical and practical. Theoretically, this study expands the literature on spiritual leadership and motivational theory in the education sector by presenting an integrative model based on psychological mechanisms. Practically, the research findings are expected to provide recommendations for the development of value-oriented school leadership and strengthening intrinsic motivation to encourage sustainable learning innovation.

METHODS

This study applies a quantitative approach with the Structural Equation Modeling analysis method based on Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) to test the relationship between Spiritual Leadership, Autonomous Motivation, and Innovative Teacher Behavior. This approach was chosen because it allows for systematic testing of cause-and-effect relationships through numerical data analysis and is able to accommodate latent constructs measured by various indicators. SEM-PLS is considered appropriate because it can analyze complex research models, including testing the role of mediation simultaneously, while still providing stable results at medium sample sizes and data that do not fully meet the assumptions of normality. The study involved 150 teachers in Kendari City who were determined through purposive sampling techniques with the criteria of having a minimum working period of two years and being actively involved in school development activities. The data collection instrument was a structured questionnaire with a five-level Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree, to capture respondents' perceptions of each research variable. The distribution of questionnaires was carried out directly or through online media to increase respondent participation. The collected data was analyzed using SmartPLS software through two main stages, namely testing the measurement model to ensure the validity and reliability of the construct, and testing the structural model to assess the significance of the relationship between variables and testing the mediating effect through the bootstrapping procedure so that an accurate and accountable empirical model was obtained.

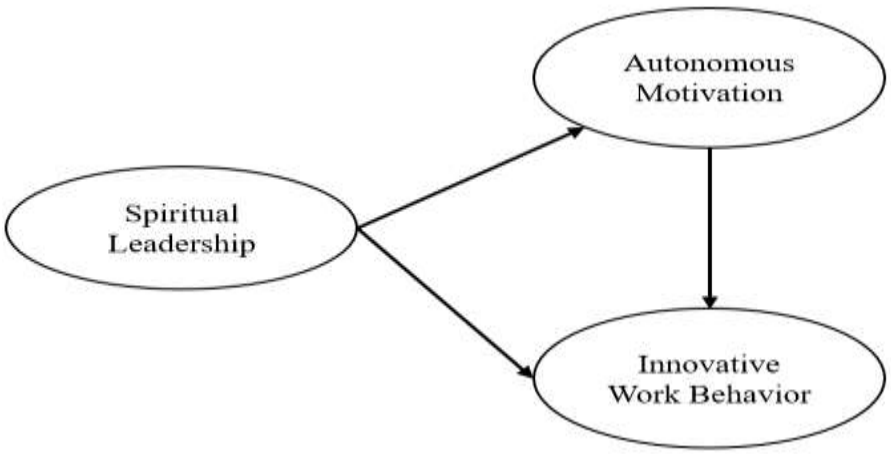

Figure 1. Research Model

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

It is known from 150 teachers in Kendari City who were the research sample, focusing on gender, age, education level, working period, and marital status. The composition of respondents shows that the majority of teachers are women (64%), while men number 36%, reflecting the general tendency of the teaching profession to be dominated by female educators. Based on age range, most respondents were in the age group of 31–45 years (58%), which represents a middle career phase with high levels of

productivity and professional responsibility. In terms of education, the majority of teachers have a Bachelor's (S1) qualification of 72%, followed by Master's (S2) graduates of 18%, and the rest Diploma or equivalent of 10%, which shows that respondents have adequate academic capacity in carrying out pedagogical tasks and developing learning innovations. Judging from the service period, most teachers have served for more than 10 years (55%), while 30% have a service period of 5–10 years and 15% less than 5 years, illustrating a relatively mature level of professional experience. In addition, 88% of respondents were married, which indicates that family responsibilities go hand in hand with professional demands as educators. This profile shows that the respondents are experienced, educated, and productive career educators, so it is relevant to examine how spiritual leadership and autonomous motivation play a role in encouraging innovative behavior of teachers in the school environment.

Table 1. Recapitulation of Testing Validity and Reliability

Variables	Items	Loading	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability	Average variance extracted
Spiritual Leadership	X1.1	0,857	0,834	0,849	0,668
	X1.2	0,730			
	X1.3	0,825			
	X1.4	0,851			
Autonomous Motivation	Y1.1	0,866	0,916	0,921	0,798
	Y1.2	0,893			
	Y1.3	0,939			
	Y1.4	0,875			
Innovative Work Behavior	Y2.1	0,819	0,967	0,969	0,774
	Y2.2	0,903			
	Y2.3	0,870			
	Y2.4	0,793			
	Y2.5	0,934			
	Y2.6	0,821			
	Y2.7	0,938			
	Y2.8	0,945			
	Y2.9	0,891			
	Y2.10	0,867			

Based on the results of the recapitulation of validity and reliability testing in Table 1, all constructs in this study have met the feasibility criteria of the measurement model. The Spiritual Leadership variable shows that the outer loading value of each indicator ranges from 0.730 to 0.857, all of which are above the minimum limit of 0.70 so that it meets the convergence validity requirements. Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.834 and Composite Reliability of 0.849 indicate a good level of internal consistency, while an Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value of 0.668 indicates that the construct is able to explain more than 50% of the variance of the indicator. The Autonomous Motivation variable had a higher loading value, which was between 0.866 and 0.939, with Cronbach's Alpha 0.916 and Composite Reliability 0.921, indicating very strong reliability and AVE of 0.798 indicating excellent convergent validity. Furthermore, the Innovative Behavior variable showed very high consistency with loading values ranging from 0.793 to 0.945, Cronbach's Alpha of 0.967 and Composite Reliability of

0.969, and AVE of 0.774. These values confirm that all indicators have a strong contribution in reflecting their respective constructs, so it can be concluded that the measurement model in this study has met the requirements for validity and reliability and is feasible to proceed to the structural model testing stage.

Table 2. Discriminant Validity Testing

	1	**2**	**3**
Autonomous Motivation			
Innovative Work Behavior	0,816		
Spiritual Leadership	0,798	0,719	

Based on the results of the discriminant validity test in Table 2, it can be seen that each construct in the research model has an adequate degree of difference from each other. The correlation value between Autonomous Motivation and Innovative Behavior of 0.816 indicates a strong relationship, but remains within acceptable limits and does not indicate a problem of multicollinearity or overlapping constructs. The correlation between Spiritual Leadership and Autonomous Motivation of 0.798 also shows a fairly high relationship, which is conceptually relevant because spiritual leadership plays a role in shaping the teacher's autonomous motivation. Meanwhile, the relationship between Spiritual Leadership and Innovative Behavior of 0.719 showed a moderate to strong relationship. Although there is a fairly close relationship between variables, these values still show that each construct has unique characteristics and does not reflect each other identically Thus, the results of this test indicate that the validity of the discriminant has been met, so that each variable in the model can be empirically differentiated and is worthy of further analysis at the structural model testing stage.

Table 3. R Square

	R-square
Autonomous Motivation	0,51
Innovative Work Behavior	0,617

Based on the results of the determination coefficient (R-square) test in Table 3, an R-square value of 0.51 was obtained for the Autonomous Motivation variable and 0.617 for the Innovative Work Behavior variable. The R-square Autonomous Motivation value of 0.51 indicates that 51% of the variation in teachers' autonomous motivation can be explained by Spiritual Leadership in this study model, while the remaining 49% is influenced by other factors outside the unexamined model. This value falls into the moderate category, which indicates that spiritual leadership has a fairly strong explanatory ability to form the teacher's autonomous motivation. Furthermore, the R-square value of Innovative Behavior of 0.617 indicates that 61.7% of the variation in teachers' innovative behavior can be explained by Spiritual Leadership and Autonomous Motivation simultaneously, while the remaining 38.3% is explained by other variables outside the model. This value is quite strong and reflects that the combination of spiritual leadership and autonomous motivation has good predictive power in explaining

teachers' innovative behavior. These findings confirm that the developed structural model has adequate ability to explain the relationships between the variables studied.

Table 4. Hypothesis Test Results

	Original sample	P values
Autonomous Motivation -> Innovative Work Behavior	0,614	0,000
Spiritual Leadership -> Autonomous Motivation	0,714	0,000
Spiritual _Leadership -> Innovative Work Behavior	0,218	0,003

Based on the results of the hypothesis testing in Table 4, all relationships between variables in the research model showed positive and statistically significant results. The relationship between Autonomous Motivation and Innovative Behavior has a coefficient value of 0.614 with a significance value (P-values) of 0.000. This value shows that Autonomous Motivation has a strong and significant influence on improving teachers' innovative behavior. The relatively high coefficient indicates that the higher the level of autonomous motivation that teachers have, the greater their tendency to generate, develop, and implement new ideas in the learning process.

The influence of Autonomous Motivation on Innovative Behavior reflects that intrinsic motivation plays a key psychological factor in driving creativity and innovation. Teachers who work on the basis of interests, personal values, and a sense of internal responsibility tend to be more courageous to take initiative and are not afraid to try new learning methods. Motivation that comes from within also strengthens commitment and perseverance in facing innovation challenges, so that the process of developing ideas does not stop at the planning stage, but continues until real implementation in the classroom.

Furthermore, the relationship between Spiritual Leadership and Autonomous Motivation showed a coefficient of 0.714 with a P-value of 0.000. These results indicate that Spiritual Leadership has a very strong and significant influence on the formation of teachers' autonomous motivation. This coefficient is the highest among the other relationships in the model, so it can be said that spiritual leadership plays a dominant role in building the teacher's intrinsic drive. Leaders who instill values, work meaning, and demonstrate integrity and empathy are able to create an environment that supports teachers' psychological needs, thereby strengthening their internal motivation.

The direct relationship between Spiritual Leadership and Innovative Behavior also showed a positive and significant influence with a coefficient of 0.218 and a P-value of 0.003. Although the coefficient value is smaller than that of other pathways, these results still show that spiritual leadership directly contributes to teachers' innovative behavior. This means that principals or leaders who practice spiritual values can encourage innovation through the creation of an ethical, supportive, and collaborative work culture, although most of those influences work through increased autonomy.

Overall, the results of this hypothesis test show a pattern of relationships consistent with the conceptual model of the research, where Spiritual Leadership not only has a direct effect on Innovative

Behavior, but also provides an indirect influence through Autonomous Motivation. The magnitude of the influence of Spiritual Leadership on Autonomous Motivation, as well as the strong influence of Autonomous Motivation on Innovative Behavior, indicate a substantial mediating role. These findings reinforce the argument that teacher innovation is not only influenced by organizational structural factors, but also by the quality of value-based leadership and the intrinsic motivational power that develops in the school environment.

Discussion

The discussion of the results of this study shows that the relationship between the tested variables is in line with the theoretical framework that has been developed previously. Autonomous Motivation has proven to be a very decisive factor in encouraging teachers' Innovative Behavior. Conceptually, autonomous motivation refers to internal impulses that stem from individual interests, values, and enjoyment in carrying out their duties (Palmer et al., 2020). Teachers who work on the basis of self-awareness and will tend to be more creative, open to new ideas, and dare to take initiative. These findings are in line with Brandon et al. (2021) who assert that intrinsic motivation increases creativity because individuals feel they have the psychological freedom to explore new ideas without external pressure.

The influence of Autonomous Motivation on Innovative Behavior can also be explained through aspects of professional commitment and perseverance. Autin et al. (2022) stated that individuals with autonomous motivation have a stronger commitment to their work because they find meaning in the activities they do. In the context of education, teachers who have an intrinsic drive will be more persistent in developing and implementing new learning methods despite facing challenges. Zhang et al. (2021) added that autonomous motivation encourages continuous learning and professional development, which is an important foundation for the birth of learning innovations in schools.

The results of the study also show that Spiritual Leadership has a strong effect on Autonomous Motivation. Theoretically, spiritual leadership emphasizes the meaning of work, moral values, and the emotional well-being of the organization's members (Mathews, 2021). Fry et al. (2017) explained that spiritual leaders build meaningful visions and create interpersonal relationships based on trust and care. In the school environment, principals who are able to present values, empathy, and integrity will create a work atmosphere that supports the psychological needs of teachers. Zhu et al. (2022) affirm that spiritual leadership can increase autonomous motivation because individuals feel valued and understood, so their intrinsic drive is stronger.

The alignment of values between teachers and organizations is also an important mechanism in this relationship. Dewantoro (2017) explained that value conformity increases individual involvement and commitment to the organization. Teachers who feel that their personal values align with the school's vision will work with a stronger internal awareness. The sense of belonging and sense of community built through spiritual leadership also strengthens autonomous motivation, as teachers feel an important part of a meaningful professional community.

In addition to autonomous motivation, Spiritual Leadership also has a direct influence on Innovative Behavior. Wang et al. (2019) stated that value-based leadership is able to inspire individuals to find a more effective and creative way of working. Terzı et al. (2020) emphasized that a supportive and non-judgmental work environment encourages individuals to experiment and take innovative risks. Msila (2020) added that ethical examples from leaders can inspire organizational members to think outside the box and find meaningful solutions to the challenges faced. These findings show that Spiritual Leadership not only creates a positive organizational culture, but also becomes a psychological foundation for the growth of teacher innovation. Some of the influence of spiritual leadership on innovation works through the strengthening of Autonomous Motivation, while others arise directly through the creation of a supportive and collaborative work environment. The integration between value-based leadership and intrinsic motivation strengthens the role of teachers as agents of change in the education system. This model confirms that innovation in schools is not only determined by structural policies, but also by leadership qualities and the power of internal motivation that develops within teachers.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that Spiritual Leadership has a strategic role in improving teachers' Innovative Behavior, both directly and through strengthening Autonomous Motivation. Leadership based on values, work meaning, integrity, and concern has been proven to be able to build the intrinsic motivation of teachers in carrying out their professional duties. Autonomous Motivation is the main psychological mechanism that encourages teachers to be more creative, proactive, and brave in implementing new ideas in learning. The practical implications of these findings emphasize the importance of developing a school leadership model that is not only oriented to administrative achievement, but also to the formation of a culture of meaningful work and the strengthening of intrinsic motivation. Schools need to encourage value-based leadership training and create a collaborative environment that supports freedom of expression and pedagogical experimentation.

This research has several limitations, including the use of a quantitative approach with a cross-sectional design that has not been able to capture the dynamics of innovative behavioral change longitudinally. In addition, the research was only conducted on teachers in one region, so the generalization of the findings is still limited. The variables studied were also focused on leadership and motivation aspects, so other factors such as organizational culture, technology support, or innovation climate have not been analyzed in depth. The next research is suggested to use a longitudinal design or mixed approach to gain a more comprehensive understanding, expand the research location at various levels and educational areas, and add other variables such as organizational climate, psychological empowerment, or digital competence to enrich the conceptual model and increase the explainability of teachers' innovative behaviors.

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