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Factors Contributing to Success: An Analysis of Programs and Initiatives at a Leading Islamic Vocational School in Indonesia

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
	This qualitative study examines the efficacy of flagship programs and moral enhancement initiatives at SMKS Muhammadiyah Salatiga, a prominent Islamic vocational school in Salatiga boasting the highest student enrollment. The research investigates the contribution of these programs to the school's success within the specific context of Islamic vocational education, acknowledging both challenges and opportunities. Data collection involved interviews, observations, and document analysis, with triangulation employed to ensure data validity and incorporate diverse perspectives. Key findings reveal that unique vocational partnerships, such as those with Daihatsu and Schneider, coupled with moral development initiatives including Tahfidz Quran memorization and women's empowerment classes, significantly contribute to the school's reputation and student recruitment. The analysis explores the alignment of these programs with Islamic values and offers practical implications for other Islamic vocational schools. The study concludes by emphasizing the importance of such integrated initiatives and recommends further research into long-term impact assessment and strategies to address persistent challenges.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Education plays a critical role in shaping a nation's future. According to Indonesia's National Education System Law No. 20 of 2003, education is defined as a conscious and planned effort to create a learning environment that enables learners to actively develop their potential in spiritual, religious, emotional, intellectual, and social domains to benefit themselves, society, and the nation [1]. This definition underscores the integral relationship between education and national development, a point also emphasized by Plato, who linked educational goals with the foundational objectives of a state [2]. In Indonesia, the educational landscape comprises schools under the Ministry of Education and Culture and madrasahs under the Ministry of Religious Affairs, highlighting a dual approach to education.

The increasing preference for Islamic-based schools, particularly among parents concerned about moral degradation, reflects a societal demand for educational models that seamlessly integrate general knowledge, religious education, and life skills. This trend signifies an urgent need for institutions that nurture not only intellectual growth but also emotional and spiritual intelligence[3]. The competitive landscape among educational institutions has intensified, with new schools emerging and offering innovative programs. In this context, schools must adapt by introducing distinctive offerings to attract students while maintaining high education standards [4].

An illustrative example is SMKS Muhammadiyah Salatiga, an Islamic-based vocational high school that has successfully positioned itself as a leading institution, boasting the highest student enrollment among Islamic-based high schools in the region. Despite its achievements, understanding the factors contributing to this success is crucial, particularly the impact of its flagship programs and moral development initiatives. Programs such as Bursa Kerja Khusus (BKK), which facilitates job placements for graduates, alongside various moral education activities like daily dhuha prayers, extracurricular Quranic studies, and specialized Islamic curricula, are central to this inquiry [5].

Previous research indicates that integrating religious and life-skill education significantly enhances a school's competitive advantage [6]. Programs like BKK provide vocational students with direct employment opportunities, a

vital factor in attracting both parents and students to Islamic-based schools. Moreover, initiatives focused on moral education address societal concerns regarding declining youth ethics, reinforcing the institution's commitment to holistic development [7], [8].

This study employs a qualitative descriptive methodology to analyze the impact of flagship programs and moral education initiatives at SMKS Muhammadiyah Salatiga. By uncovering the strengths, challenges, and opportunities these programs present, the research aims to foster competitiveness and maintain the school's reputation as a top choice for Islamic-based education in Salatiga. This research contributes a comprehensive analysis of how integrated academic and moral education programs enhance school competitiveness. By identifying effective strategies and potential challenges, it offers actionable insights for policymakers and school administrators seeking to improve the quality and appeal of Islamic-based schools, thereby enriching the existing literature on educational management and innovation within this context [9].

2. METHOD

This research employs a qualitative method to explore the flagship programs and moral enhancement at SMKS Muhammadiyah Salatiga [9], [10]. The approach used is descriptive, aiming to understand the phenomena present in the school environment and how these programs are implemented. The data sources consist of primary data obtained through interviews with the principal, teachers, and students, as well as secondary data drawn from relevant documents such as school reports and student statistics [11]. Data analysis is conducted by organizing and categorizing information from interviews and documents, then inductively analyzing it to identify relevant patterns and themes [12]. To ensure data validity, this study employs triangulation, which involves verifying information from various sources to ensure the consistency and accuracy of the data obtained [13].

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
3.1. Result

This research was conducted at SMKS Muhammadiyah Salatiga, which is listed on the KEMENDIKBUD website as of 2023 as an Islamic-based vocational school with the highest student enrollment in Salatiga, totaling 438 students. The researcher is interested in examining the impact of the outstanding programs and character development initiatives implemented at SMKS Muhammadiyah Salatiga, which enable it to compete and maintain its status as the largest Islamic school in Salatiga. Interviews were conducted with informants including the Principal, an Arabic Language Teacher, an Electronics Vocational Teacher, and students.

3.1.1. Outstanding Programs of SMKS Muhammadiyah Salatiga as a Reflection of the School's Vision and Mission

The achievement of the vision and mission of SMKS Muhammadiyah Salatiga has a significant influence on the implementation of superior programs designed to achieve the goal of becoming an Islamic vocational school/high school with the largest number of students. The school's vision and mission not only provide clear direction and goals, but also form a framework for all activities and programs carried out. Programs that are carried out consistently will provide trust from the surrounding community to send their children to school. This will certainly affect the number of students [1].

According to the Principal, the vision and mission are not just ideal statements, but operational guidelines that must be implemented through ongoing programs. This is illustrated by superior programs such as tahfidz and female studies designed to develop students' morals, as conveyed by the Arabic Language Teacher. These programs not only focus on academic aspects but also shape character, in line with the holistic education goals emphasized by. The Electrical Vocational Teacher emphasized the importance of equipping students with faith and piety, so that the education provided is useful not only in the world but also in the hereafter. According to several students, each vocational program has a specific flagship program, reflecting the school's commitment to providing relevant education according to students' interests and talents. With consistent and quality program implementation, the school hopes to build public trust, which will ultimately increase the number of student enrollments.

The vision of SMKS Muhammadyah "Creating superior graduates who are qualified, innovative, Islamic, skilled and able to answer the demands of the times" and the mission of SMKS Muhammadyah to improve the faith, piety, and professionalism of all school personnel provide clear direction and goals. To realize this vision and mission, flagship programs are prepared. The flagship programs, such as tahfidz and female studies, not only focus on academic aspects but also on developing students' morals, in line with the holistic education goals emphasized by the Electrical Vocational Teacher. These programs are designed to shape and strengthen students' character based on Islamic values, as well as provide technical and vocational skills training that is relevant to the needs of industry and the world of work. With consistent and quality program implementation, the school hopes to build public trust, which will ultimately increase the number of student enrollments.

3.1.2. Excellent programs at SMKS Muhammadiyah Salatiga

The excellent programs that are designed are not only a manifestation of the school's Vision and Mission, but also have implications for the importance of curriculum design to create quality education and learning in preparing students' mental and spiritual selves so that they are ready for use in their community [2].

According to the Principal, the excellent programs at SMKS Muhammadiyah Salatiga include consistent habits such as 5S, tahfidz, and congregational prayer which are applied at school, home, and the surrounding environment, aiming to shape students' character. Then each department of expertise certainly has different excellent programs to improve student competence, such as inviting guest teachers who are competent in practice. The Arabic language teacher added that other excellent programs are the implementation of Dhuha prayers together every morning and a women's study program. The Electrical Vocational Teacher also mentioned cooperation with international companies such as SCHNEIDER for international classes and entrepreneurship programs, such as assembling lamps for sale. Students highlighted religious activities and vocational programs, reflecting the school's efforts to integrate moral values with technical skills, so that students are ready to face challenges in the world of work with a strong moral foundation.

SMKS Muhammadiyah Salatiga has a flagship program that aims to create quality education with a focus on developing students' character and skills. The moral development program includes the habit of praying dhuha, praying in congregation, religious lectures, women's programs, and tahfidz classes, all of which are designed to strengthen Islamic values and form noble morals. On the other hand, the flagship vocational program provides technical skills training that is relevant to industry needs, such as the SCHNEIDER international class, entrepreneurship class, cooperation with DTECH-ENGINEERING, and programs with automotive companies such as Daihatsu. The combination of these two programs ensures that students are not only academically prepared, but also have a strong moral foundation, so that they can face challenges in the world of work with integrity. Thus, SMKS Muhammadiyah Salatiga creates competent and moral graduates, ready to contribute positively to society.

3.1.3. Impact of Flagship Moral Development Programs on Students' Character

The program designed by the principal together with the teachers as one form of implementing the school's vision, namely having good morals. A religious program will have implications for the development of students' morals to be more positive [3].

The Principal explained that religious habits applied in daily activities help build a foundation of positive values for students, especially those who are in their teenage phase and facing various challenges. This is important because good morals can strengthen students' abilities in dealing with the pressures and temptations that often arise during this period. The Arabic Language Teacher emphasized the importance of habits such as praying dhuha and dhuhur prayers in congregation, which make students aware of their religious obligations. Communication with parents was also carried out to monitor the development of students' morals, and feedback from parents showed a positive response to the changes. The Electrical Vocational Teacher added that good morals have a positive effect on students' attitudes in the workplace, making them calmer and more consistent. According to the Student, highlighting various religious activities, such as praying in congregation and religious lectures, which not only shape character but also improve the skills of reading the Qur'an. All of these activities contribute significantly to the development of students' morals, making them more noble and skilled in religious aspects.

The leading moral development program at SMKS Muhammadiyah Salatiga significantly influences the character of students by building a foundation of positive values through religious habits, such as dhuha prayer and congregational prayer. Religious activities and regular studies not only increase students' awareness of religious obligations, but also help them develop skills, such as reading the Qur'an. Positive feedback from parents and regular monitoring ensure that students' moral development is well monitored, making them calmer and more consistent. With continuous coaching, this program is committed to forming students who are not only academically competent but also have high moral integrity until they graduate from school.

3.1.4. Strategies and Impact of Flagship Programs in Attracting Students and Parents

Each school has different programs to provide a distinctive character and also a branding strategy for the school to attract students [4]. SMKS Muhammadiyah Salatiga's strategy in attracting parents and students focuses on excellent programs and quality services.

The Principal explained that promotion was carried out through the distribution of brochures and introduction programs in various schools, while good communication with parents, including clarification of absence issues, helped create positive relationships that encouraged parents to recommend the school. The Arabic Language Teacher added that good service and communication regarding children's development improved the reputation of the school, which also accepted students from various backgrounds, including non-Muslims. The Electrical Vocational Teacher emphasized the importance of promotion through social media and word of mouth, emphasizing that SMKS Muhammadiyah graduates were not only competent but also had good morals. According to the Students, these programs attracted the interest of parents and students, because the school not only prepared students for the world of work but also equipped them with moral values. By not implementing a zoning system, SMKS Muhammadiyah is

able to reach more students from various regions, so that a promotional strategy that focuses on comprehensive service and education increases the appeal of this school.

SMKS Muhammadiyah Salatiga's strategy in attracting the attention of students and parents focuses on quality flagship programs and good service, making it a distinctive feature that distinguishes this school from others. Promotion is carried out through the distribution of brochures and introduction programs in various schools, carried out with effective communication with parents to create positive relationships, including explaining the issue of absence. This school also collaborates with local and international companies, providing opportunities for students to improve their competencies and work experience, so that graduates are ready to face the world of work. By not implementing a zoning system, SMKS Muhammadiyah is able to reach students from various regions, attracting the interest of parents who want an education that not only prepares students academically, but also equips them with moral values. The success of alumni and the school's good reputation strengthen this appeal, making SMKS Muhammadiyah the main choice for parents who are concerned about the development of their children's character and morals. The excellent programs that focus on developing morals, technological skills, arts, or sports provide value for students and differentiate this school even more amidst the competition, so that more and more parents and students choose SMKS Muhammadiyah Salatiga.

3.1.5. SMKS Muhammadiyah Salatiga's strategy to answer challenges in facing future challenges

SMKS Muhammadiyah Salatiga's strategy in facing future challenges focuses on developing student competencies and forming strong characters to face technological changes and increasingly complex job market dynamics. The Principal explained that the school conducts socialization about the wise use of social media by inviting resource persons, such as experts and police, to provide students with an understanding of good media use. Checking students' cellphone content is done with their consent to maintain positive use. In addition, teachers receive national and international training and education to improve knowledge and skills, which are then conveyed to students. By adopting this comprehensive and adaptive strategy, SMKS Muhammadiyah Salatiga is committed to preparing students with qualified competencies and good morals, so that they are ready to face challenges in the digital and industrial world.

3.2. Discussion

Based on the results of research conducted by researchers at SMKS Muhammadiyah Salatiga, it turns out that these superior programs are in line with research [9], [14], [15], [16], [17], [18], namely implementing each vocational program and moral improvement program as a superior program. In line with research [19], [20] that to achieve a school's vision and mission is through a program that has been prepared, namely the superior program. Through a program that is carried out consistently, the school's vision and mission will indirectly be achieved.

Vocational schools should have superior programs in each department so that they become an attraction for the community. SMKS Muhammadyah Salatiga with a private vocational school based on Islam located in Salatiga has excellent programs both in terms of Islam and vocational which are similar to other private vocational schools based on Islam in Salatiga such as SMKS Diponegoro Salatiga, SMKS Al Falah Salatiga and SMAS Muhammadiyah (Plus) Salatiga. Like the Islamic program in private vocational schools based on Islam is congregational dhuha prayer, congregational dhuhur prayer and reading the Qur'an together, but at SMKS Muhammadiyah has an excellent program based on Islam to improve morals is the tahfidz class. Where this tahfidz class is intended for students who have the skills to read the Qur'an or want to learn to read the Qur'an more deeply.

In addition, another excellent program to improve morals is the women's class which discusses the rights and privileges of women which are not yet available in private Islamic vocational schools in Salatiga. This makes it a separate branding in the eyes of the public. Because with this, the community will think that by entrusting their children they will gain competence in the world and in the hereafter. This is also in line with research [21] The superior moral improvement program will indirectly affect the behavior, character and morals of students. Habituation is an effective way to shape the morals of students. This is because the moral improvement program as through habituation is an educational method in the growth and development of children will form upright morals and ethics. By getting used to religious values, students will grow into individuals with noble morals, faith, and piety.

In the expertise or vocational program, Muhammadiyah Vocational School has been applied in other vocational schools such as collaborating with other companies, having its own entrepreneurship. But what distinguishes vocational schools in general from Muhammadiyah Vocational School is that it has an expertise program that collaborates with large national and even international companies such as the Daihatsu class and the SCHNEIDER international class which collaborates with the SCHNEIDER lamp company from France, entrepreneurship classes such as assembling lamps to be marketed.

With the existence of the leading program at SMKS Muhammadiyah Salatiga, it becomes an icon in itself. This will indirectly affect the number of students in the school. This is in line with [22], [23] that the leading program is a branding strategy to increase the number of students.

4. CONCLUSION

The results of this study indicate that the flagship programs and moral improvement programs at SMKS Muhammadiyah Salatiga have been implemented, both in the vocational and moral improvement fields, in line with previous studies that emphasize the importance of program consistency to achieve the school's vision and mission. SMKS Muhammadiyah Salatiga has flagship programs based on Islam, such as tahfidz classes and special classes for women, which are a special attraction compared to other schools. In addition, in the vocational program, this school stands out with collaborations with national and international companies such as Daihatsu and SCHNEIDER classes. These flagship programs not only shape students' character and competence holistically, but also act as an effective branding strategy to increase the number of students. This proves that the school's initial goal of becoming an Islamic-based school with the largest number of students in Salatiga can be achieved through the implementation of these programs. This study also opens up opportunities for further development. Prospects for developing research results include additional exploration of technology integration in flagship programs, increasing global collaboration, and strengthening educational character to answer future challenges. In addition, further research can concentrate on long-term evaluation of the impact of these programs on alumni or the development of similar models in other schools to increase the competitiveness of Islamic-based education.

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