# THE MEANING OF PSYCHOLOGICAL EMPOWERMENT IN BUILDING PROFESSIONALISM AMONG MADRASAH EMPLOYEES: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY AT MAN 1 NGAWI

**Hafids Haryonno [1] \*, R. Slamet Santoso [2]**

[1,2] Diponegoro University, Indonesia
\* hafidsharyonno@gmail.com

## Abstract

Psychological empowerment has become a crucial factor in enhancing employee professionalism within public organizations, including faith-based educational institutions. However, the meaning of psychological empowerment is often limited to structural or managerial aspects, while the subjective experiences of employees remain underexplored. This study aims to understand the meaning of psychological empowerment in fostering employee professionalism at Madrasah Aliyah Negeri (MAN) 1 Ngawi . A qualitative phenomenological approach was employed, with data collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation involving ten key informants consisting of teachers, administrative staff, and school leaders. Data analysis followed the stages of reduction, presentation, and interpretation of essential meanings using an interpretative phenomenological model. The findings reveal that psychological empowerment is perceived not solely as organizational trust but as recognition of the spiritual, moral, and social values embedded in employees' professional identity. Professionalism emerges through three core meanings: (1) a sense of ownership and moral responsibility toward the institution, (2) self-efficacy in performing religious and administrative roles, and (3) commitment to service grounded in religious values. This study concludes that psychological empowerment in public madrasah institutions is rooted in the synergy between organizational trust and institutional spirituality. Theoretically, these findings extend the concept of psychological empowerment within the context of religious bureaucracy, while practically, they provide guidance for madrasah leaders in developing a professional work culture based on values and meaningful engagement.

**Keywords:** *Psychological empowerment, professionalism, phenomenology, madrasa employees, religious bureaucracy*

## INTRODUCTION

Employee professionalism is a key prerequisite for achieving effective and accountable public organization governance, particularly in the education sector, which plays a strategic role in human resource development (Umihastanti & Frianto, 2022). Religious-based educational institutions such as State Islamic Senior High Schools (MAN) face a dual challenge: meeting public bureaucratic standards while integrating institutional spiritual values.

In this context, Psychological Empowerment is recognized as an important strategy for enhancing intrinsic motivation and employee performance (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990; Spreitzer, 1995). This concept emphasizes individuals' feelings of control and competence in

their work roles. However, previous studies have tended to measure psychological empowerment as a managerial or structural construct, ignoring how this phenomenon is truly interpreted and experienced by individuals, especially in spiritually rich environments such as madrasas (Luthans, 2017).

Understanding psychological empowerment in the madrasah context is often limited to universal dimensions (meaning, competence, destiny determination, and impact). Few phenomenological studies have explored in depth how religious, moral, and social values within the madrasah bureaucracy modify the core meaning of psychological empowerment.

This study aims to explore and understand the essential meaning of psychological empowerment experienced by madrasah employees at MAN 1 Ngawi, as well as how this meaning is constituted in the formation of their identity and professional practices.

The findings of this study expand the concept of Psychological Empowerment (PE) in the context of religious bureaucracy. Theoretically, this study demonstrates that PE is not solely driven by organizational trust, but rather represents a fundamental synergy between organizational trust and institutional spirituality. The practical implications provide guidance for madrasah leaders in designing empowerment strategies rooted in religious values to foster meaningful professionalism.

In the context of human resource management, Psychological Empowerment (PE) has long been recognized as a crucial strategy for fostering intrinsic motivation, increasing commitment, and encouraging optimal employee performance (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990; Spreitzer, 1995). This concept emphasizes individuals' feelings of control, competence, and meaning in their work roles. In Indonesia, the urgency of PE is increasing, especially in public bureaucratic institutions such as Madrasah Aliyah Negeri (MAN), which operate at the intersection of the demands of Civil Service (ASN) professionalism and religious spiritual values. However, previous studies measuring PE tend to limit themselves to a universal cognitive framework (meaning, competence, destiny, and impact) or measure it as a structural managerial construct, often ignoring how this phenomenon is actually experienced, interpreted, and internalized by individuals (Luthans & Youssef-Morgan, 2017). Specifically, there have not been many phenomenological studies that have deeply explored how religious, moral, and social values in madrasa bureaucracy, which are rich in Institutional Spirituality, modify and reshape the core meaning of psychological empowerment.

Departing from this literature gap, this qualitative study specifically aims to explore and understand the essential meaning of Psychological Empowerment experienced by madrasah employees at MAN 1 Ngawi. Through an Interpretative Phenomenology (IPA) approach, the main focus of this study is to uncover the deepest layers of the informants' subjective experiences regarding how they construct the meaning of empowerment in a faith-based work environment. The core question is: how does the leadership's recognition of employees' spiritual values influence their feelings of competence, belonging, and commitment? Furthermore, this study aims to investigate how the meaning of empowerment that has been modified by institutional spirituality is constituted in the formation of their professional identity and practice, whether professionalism in madrasah only means technical competence, or includes moral dimensions and transcendent service.

The findings of this study make a significant contribution by theoretically expanding the concept of Psychological Empowerment (PE), particularly in the context of religious bureaucracy. Critically, this study demonstrates that authentic and sustainable PE in madrasahs is not solely driven by Organizational Trust (i.e., managerial support and authority delegation practices), but is the result of a fundamental synergy between Organizational Trust and Institutional Spirituality. This synergy results in added value to the dimensions of PE, such as the shift from Meaning to Moral Ownership and from Competence to Dual Efficacy. By identifying Institutional Spirituality as a contextual prerequisite for meaningful PE, this study confirms that PE is a context-bound construct and must be sensitive to the cultural and spiritual values of the institution.

From a practical perspective, the findings of this study have significant and applicable implications for leaders of madrasahs and other religious bureaucratic institutions. Rather than focusing solely on technical training or bureaucratic restructuring, these findings provide strategic guidance for leaders in designing empowerment strategies rooted in religious values to foster meaningful professionalism. This strategy includes leaders' efforts to explicitly recognize, appreciate, and integrate employees' spiritual values (such as the concept of amanah or worship) into daily work procedures and culture. In this way, leaders can facilitate the transformation of work responsibilities into moral commitments, which ultimately result in improved professional performance driven by intrinsic motivation, a strong work ethic, and a dedication to transcendent service (through Service Commitment).

## LITERATURE REVIEW

1. **Draft Empowerment Psychological (Psychological Empowerment)**

Empowerment psychological (PE) is defined as a set cognition about role work characterized by four Dimensions : Meaning , Competence / Self -Efficacy , Self-Determination / Autonomy , and Impact ( Spreitzer, 1995). Thomas and Velthouse (1990) define it as as improvement motivation intrinsic assignments , which focus on experience subjective employee .

   - Meaning : Is value placed someone on purpose or task work , which is assessed worth it with effort and energy expended (Spreitzer, 2015) .
   - Competence : Is belief somebody to his abilities in carry out task Work with adequate skills (self-efficacy) (Conger & Kanungo, 1988) .
   - Self-Determination : Is feeling autonomy or control in choose method and time implementation task Work .
   - Impact : Is level belief that action somebody can make difference significant in results work and operations organization .

2. **Professionalism in Public Administration and Education**

Professionalism often associated with competence technical , ethical high level of work and commitment to service public (Brown et al., 2017). In the context of education , professionalism of teachers and madrasah staff includes dimensions competence pedagogical , personality , social , and professional , as well as commitment affective to institutions ( Fitriyanti et al., 2019). Research show connection positive

between empowerment psychological and commitment professional as well as performance employees , including teachers and staff in institutions education (Izzati & Mulyana, 2020).

3. **Relevance Context Bureaucracy Religious and Approach Phenomenology**

State Islamic Senior High School (MAN) is part from bureaucracy of the Ministry of Religion, however his identity strong influenced by Islamic values . Work in madrasas is often interpreted as *worship* or *call* . Empowerment psychological in context This must seen No only from perspective Western management , but also associated with values *Maqasyid Sharia* or spirituality work , as highlighted in study latest regarding PE in institutions Islamic education (Siregar, 2023). For catch experience deep subjective This is a **Phenomenological Study Qualitative** is the most appropriate method . Phenomenology aim For describe meaning  from experience life experienced by a group individual about something draft or phenomenon (La Kahija, 2017).

**RESEARCH METHOD**

Study This adopt approach qualitative with Phenomenological Study Design Interpretative (Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis/IPA) Approach phenomenology chosen to explore and understand meaning  essential from experience subjective employees of MAN 1 Ngawi related phenomenon empowerment psychological and professionalism (La Kahija, 2017). Science design in general specific aims to interpret how the employees construct meaning  the from corner their internal view , which is very relevant to the context bureaucracy religious where the values spirituality play role key (Smith et al., 2009).

Research location is the State Islamic Senior High School (MAN) 1 Ngawi , which was chosen purposively because its unique context as institution public religion- based , ideal for studying synergy between aspect organizational and spiritual. Informant study consists of from teachers, staff administration and leadership school . Election informant use purposive sampling and snowball sampling techniques , with criteria own rich experience and have interacted for a long time with the phenomenon being studied . The number This sufficient to achieve typical depth of data (thick description). studies phenomenology (Creswell, 2018).

Primary data collection was carried out through triangulation from three method main . Main method is Interview In-depth (In-depth Interview) that uses question open to dig meaning  subjective ( for example , "What does it mean? " Work professional for you?"). This method supported by observation Participatory to verify culture work and interaction directly , as well as documentation to obtain secondary data institutional like structure organization and code ethics .

Data analysis was performed in a way cyclical and interpretive in accordance stages of science. Stages started from Data Reduction ( verbatim transcription and identification of meaning units). Then to be continued to Data Presentation ( grouping meaning units into themes convergent ). Stage peak is Interpretation Meaning Important to focus on development theme convergent become themes essential (superordinate themes), to explain the core findings , such as synergy between trust organization and spirituality institutional .

Finally , the validity of the data (trustworthiness) is ensured. through two techniques Main . First , Triangulation Source done with compare information obtained from various informants and methods data collection . Second , Member Check is carried out with confirm return results transcript and interpretation findings to informant key , to ensure that interpretation researchers in harmony with experience subjective that they feel .

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 1. Meaning Essential Empowerment Psychological Employees of MAN 1 Ngawi

The results of this phenomenological study reveal that the meaning of Psychological Empowerment (PE) internalized by the employees of Madrasah Aliyah Negeri (MAN) 1 Ngawi goes beyond the standard theoretical cognitive framework developed by Spreitzer (1995), because its meaning is deeply infused with **moral-spiritual dimensions** . Empowerment is not only seen as a transfer of managerial authority or trust, but is essentially felt as **the Recognition of Spiritual, Moral, and Social Values** inherent in their professional identity by the leadership. This essential meaning is manifested into three cores that collectively form a unique professionalism in the madrasah.

### A. Sense of Ownership and Moral Responsibility ( *Moral Ownership* ):

First, **a Sense of Ownership and Moral Responsibility ( *Moral Ownership* )** where employees perceive the madrasah not just as a workplace, but as a "home" or entity to be maintained, thus fostering ownership that goes beyond formal administrative duties. This responsibility is interpreted as **a mandate** from God and the leadership, which intrinsically encourages initiative, innovation, and accountability without the need for strict supervision, significantly expanding the *Meaning dimension* in the PE model with a moral-spiritual filter.

The first core meaning revealed from the experiences of MAN 1 Ngawi employees is a cognitive shift from job ownership to a sense of ownership and moral responsibility towards the madrasah institution. This phenomenon arises when employees perceive the madrasah not only as a workplace where they earn a living and carry out formal duties, but as a "home" or entity that holds high spiritual and social values. This perception gives rise to a deep form of organizational commitment, which goes beyond ordinary affective commitment and places moral responsibility as the foundation of professionalism. This sense of ownership creates a protective loyalty, where employees feel obligated to maintain the good name, quality of service, and integrity of the institution, going beyond the description of administrative duties stated in the employment contract.

This expansion of meaning significantly enriches the Meaning dimension in Spreitzer's (1995) Psychological Empowerment (PE) model. While classical PE focuses on the alignment of work roles with personal values, in the madrasah context, this Meaning is filtered through a moral-spiritual lens. For employees, this responsibility is interpreted as a mandate from God and leadership. This concept of mandate shifts work motivation from extrinsic (salary or promotion) to intrinsic and transcendent. This

moral quality serves as an internal catalyst, intrinsically driving initiative, creativity, and accountability without having to be triggered or closely monitored by structural bureaucratic mechanisms. Employee initiative becomes a moral act, not simply a response to managerial incentives.

Moral ownership manifests itself in proactive, problem-solving work practices. Employees who feel a sense of moral responsibility will voluntarily go beyond their formal roles when faced with challenges or opportunities for improvement. For example, teachers who attend to students' administrative needs outside of work hours or staff who take the initiative to clean common areas without being asked. These actions are a direct reflection of the belief that the school's failure is a personal failure, and its success is the fulfillment of the trust given to it. Therefore, moral ownership acts as an internal quality assurance system based on conscience and integrity, not the threat of bureaucratic sanctions.

Thus, the shift from structural ownership to Moral Ownership is concrete evidence that Psychological Empowerment in a religious bureaucracy environment does not only depend on the trust given by the organization, but on the recognition and affirmation of moral values inherent in the employee's identity. By making work a mandate, Meaning in PE is elevated to a spiritual level, which ultimately results in a more stable, ethical, and sustainable professionalism, because it is driven by internal moral commitment rather than external compliance.

B. **Self-Efficacy in Carrying Out Religious and Administrative Roles (*Dual Efficacy*)**

Second, **Self-Efficacy in Carrying Out Religious and Administrative Roles (*Dual Efficacy*)** which shows that employee self-confidence (*Competence* or Self-Efficacy) is not limited to technical abilities (administrative or pedagogical), but also includes the role as a religious role model (*murabbi*). This dual competency construction (worldly and *hereafter*) emphasizes that professional success is measured by effectiveness in carrying out functional functions as well as moral and spiritual roles, providing *added value* to the standard PE *Competence dimension*.

The second core meaning identified in professionalism employees of MAN 1 Ngawi is **Dual Self - Efficacy ,** which is construction contextual from dimensions **Competence** in Empowerment Psychological (PE). In standard PE theory , Competence refers to belief somebody to his abilities For succeed carry out task work (*self-efficacy*) (Bandura, 1997). However , in the madrasa environment , self- efficacy beliefs self This No only limited by capabilities technical or functional solely like ability administration , pedagogy , or mastery teaching materials but expanded until covers role they as **example religious ( *murabbi* )** for students and society .

Construction *Dual Efficacy* This show existence emphasis double to success professionalism . Success professionals at MAN 1 Ngawi measured from effectiveness employee in two domains: **worldly domain** ( abilities carry out task functional bureaucracy ) and the **afterlife domain** ( capabilities For integrate moral and spiritual values in every actions and interactions ). Employee feel truly empowered in a way psychological when they Certain capable manage class or administration in a way

effective at a time capable become role model ethical and religious . With thus , if competence technical they shaped by training and experience work , then their moral competence strengthened by awareness will role madrasah institutions as center education character religion- based .

Implications from This Dual Self -Efficacy to Empowerment Psychologically very significant , because give **mark added value** to dimensions Competence PE standards . When a employee feel competent spiritually and functionally , this increase motivation intrinsic they For take calculated risks , innovating , and taking aligned initiatives with mission institutional . Belief double This functioning as filter that ensures that every improvement acquired abilities ( eg . through training ) will integrated with code Islamic ethics and values , resulting in performance that is not only efficient but also ethical and responsible answer morally .

Therefore that , for madrasah leaders , development professionalism through empowerment must nature holistic . Giving authority or autonomy ( *self-determination* ) must be accompanied by with effort strengthening belief self in both realm : through training qualified technical personnel and through strengthening programs character or personality . When the leader in a way explicit acknowledge and support role double This that employee is a civil servant at the same time *murabbi* so that's it moment Dual Self -Efficacy transforms become strength driver the main thing behind performance meaningful and sustainable professional development in the midst of demands bureaucracy and values religious .

## C. Commitment to Service Based on Religious Values ( *Service Commitment* )

Third, **Commitment to Service Based on Religious Values ( *Service Commitment* ),** where professionalism is interpreted as a form **of service** to the community and religious institutions, positioning it above mere fulfillment of bureaucratic obligations. The feeling that work contributions impact this higher institutional mission directly strengthens the *Impact* and *Self-Determination dimensions* of PE, because employees feel their actions have a strong transcendent relevance, not only to the organization, but also to religious values.

The third core meaning expressed by MAN 1 Ngawi employees is **Commitment to Service Based on Religious Values** ( *Service Commitment* ) **.** Commitment This represent peak from professionalism in madrasas, where work interpreted as form **service to religious communities and institutions** , which position them above just fulfillment obligation bureaucracy solely . In the context of this , professionalism No Again driven by contract formal work or evaluation routine performance , but rather by motivation intrinsic For contribute to a greater mission great and noble . Service here interpreted as *worship* or *charity pious* , who gives *ultimate meaning* in every tasks performed , starting from teach until look after correspondence , because all considered as part from effort advance Islamic education .

Conception *Service Commitment* This in a way direct and significant strengthening two dimensions key Empowerment Psychological (PE), namely **Impact** and **Self - Determination .** Employees feel contribution Work they own **relevance**

powerful **transcendental** *impact* No Again measured only from organizational output ( for example , improving school rankings ), but from moral and spiritual impact on students and society . Feelings that action they influence success Islamic preaching and education provide weight Far- reaching *impact* more big and valuable eternal , than just impact financial or administrative .

On the other hand , the increase dimensions *Self-Determination* happen Because employee feel own autonomy and control For realize religious values in method Work they . When the goal service based on religion, recognized by leaders and employees tend make choice and initiative Alone about How carry out work with the most effective and ethical way . They feel empowered For adapt method Work them to be in harmony with moral demands , not only demands procedural . This is push **autonomy based values** , where freedom act used For strengthen commitment ethical , not For avoid not quite enough answer .

*Service Commitment* become proof strong that Empowerment Psychology in institutions religious functioning as mechanisms that integrate motivation Work secular with spiritual goals . With interpret professionalism as religious services , madrasah employees are able overcome potential conflict between demands modern bureaucracy and their spiritual identity . This results in commitment Resilient and deep work , because rooted in belief strong personality , guarantee that standard high professionalism will still maintained , even in times of source Power or supervision external limited .

## 2. Synergy Trust Organization and Spirituality Institutional

Findings qualitative This in a way significant enrich and expand understanding theoretical about **Empowerment Psychological (PE)** . In general Traditionally , PE is defined by Spreitzer (1995) as orientation cognitive individual to role work driven by four Universal dimensions : *meaning* , *competence* , *self-determination* , and *impact* . Research previously tend focus on how practice managerial ( such as empowering leadership or support organization ) in a structural influence cognition this , which can equalized with **Trust Organization** (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990).

However , the findings at MAN 1 Ngawi show that PE does not stand Alone as results from practice managerial only , but is product from **fundamental synergy between Trust Organization and Spirituality Institutional** . Meaning Empowerment Psychological experiences employee ( recognition spiritual, moral, and social values ) function as bridge that integrates second element the .

Findings about **Sense of Ownership and Moral Responsibility** in a way explicit modify dimensions *Meaning* ( Meaning ) in PE theory . Meaning in classic PE defined as suitability between demands role Work with system values and beliefs someone . In madrasas, the system values and beliefs the rooted in religion. Work No only relevant in a way professional , but also have position sacred ( *worship)* or *trust* ). This is in harmony with literature that emphasizes importance spirituality Work in form commitment and ethics in the institution religious (Siregar, 2023). Responsibility this moral responsibility push **Commitment Service Religion Based** , which goes beyond *Impact* ( impact ) bureaucratic (

merely achieve performance targets ) towards impact oriented towards the welfare people ( *service commitment* ).

Dimensions *Competence* ( Self -Efficacy ) also experienced contextualization . MAN 1 Ngawi employees No only Certain will ability technically , but also the ability they as moral role model ( *murabbi* ). The emergence of draft **Dual Self -Efficacy** This show that PE in bureaucracy religious must viewed in framework double : **efficacy functional** ( competent) as ASN) and **efficacy normative** ( competent) as religious servants ). This support findings research that links leadership ethical and empowering , where ethics leaders (who are integrated in the madrasah with spirituality ) greatly influences level engagement and performance employees (Engelbrecht et al., 2017).

In a way theoretical , study This put PE in context Public Administration , in particular bureaucracy religious , with show that high professionalism ( *service commitment* and *moral ownership* ) is manifestation from experience psychologically colored by values institutional findings This confirm that the PE model does not nature *value-neutral* and must sensitive to context socio-cultural and spiritual where it is implemented . At MAN 1 Ngawi , the leadership empowers viewed No only as manager , but as a figure who admits employee spiritual values , and recognition this is what it is catalyst main for motivation intrinsic and formation authentic professionalism .

## CONCLUSION

Study phenomenological This conclude that meaning  empowerment psychological problems experienced by MAN 1 Ngawi employees is fundamental synergy between trust organization and spirituality institutional . Synergy This trigger manifested professionalism through three core meaning : (1) sense of ownership and responsibility moral responsibility , (2) efficacy self dual ( religious and administrative ), and (3) commitment service based religious values .

Madrasah leaders are advised to internalize empowerment as a moral and spiritual process, not only managerial development program professionalism must enter element increasing moral self-efficacy and instilling a sense of ownership (moral ownership) towards the madrasah as institution preaching and education . Research This limited to studies case single (MAN 1 Ngawi ) with use approach phenomenology . Therefore that , generalization findings Possible limited to context bureaucracy similar religions .

Study furthermore it is recommended to test in a way quantitative synergy model between Organizational Trust and Institutional Spirituality as predictor Empowerment Psychology and professionalism . A comparative study between state madrasas and private madrasas is also important to validate role context bureaucracy religious in mediate meaning empowerment .

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