

What Drives Human-Centered Leadership? Personal Excellence and Collaborative Excellence with AI Usage

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ABSTRAK

Human-centered leadership has become a term established due to increasing concern on organizations that need to balance technological improvement while maintain the importance of human values. This study investigates whether religiosity may serve as a source that is being mediated through personal excellence and collaborative excellence with AI usage as moderating variable. Data were collected from 400 employees across organizational levels in Indonesia, data were analyzed using PLS-SEM through SmartPLS 4.0. The result of this study shows that Religiosity positively strengthens both Personal Excellence (PE) and Collaborative Excellence (CE), which each contribute significantly to the establishment of Human-Centered Leadership (HCL). PE and CE also becomes mediators in this study, meaning that religiosity operates through how individuals develop and express excellence rather than acting on leadership directly. However, AI usage moderated none of these paths. The relationship between excellence and Human-Centered Leadership remains regardless of AI integration level. It provides important insight that AI influence operational efficiency rather than humanistic leadership qualities. These findings also shows that spiritual values may influence the personal and relational excellence that Human-Centered Leadership demands. AI functions as an operational tool, not a substitute of its human factor.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Organizations are facing a condition where employee's engagement is declining while technology are becoming more advanced. The Gallup State of Global Workplace Report (2025) state that global employee engagement dropped from 23% to 21% in 2024, it is the lowest point since pandemic which costs a lost of productivity equivalent to USD 438 billion. Indonesia shows that only 27% employee are engaged, while 68% remain disengaged (Gallup, 2025). Moreover, the development of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has influenced leadership styles, where AI are becoming a cognitive partner that influences organizational decisions strictly based on presented data (Peifer et al., 2022). The shift on this leadership risks eroding human values such as empathy, moral reasoning, and interpersonal sensitivity that could decrease employee trust and engagement (Madanchian et al., 2024). Existing research in the Indonesian context moreover confirms that leadership styles are neglecting human values generate one-directional communication and low work involvement (Syamsuri & Zakaria, 2025).

Human-Centered Leadership (HCL) is a leadership transformation which prioritizes employee happiness, psychological well-being, and individual empowerment as the basis of

organizational success (Kennedy et al., 2020; Safuan, 2025). Organizations that adopt HCL may improve performance until 2.6 times compared to other leadership styles (AACSB, 2024). However, existing literature are still limited, particularly in integrating internal individual values that forms HCL. This is necessary since religiosity, social harmony, and interpersonal relationships are rooted in workplace culture (Khalida et al., 2023). Religiosity as an internal value has shown to be influencing moral orientation and leadership behavior, however its influence through personal and collaborative capacities are still empirically limited (Arifin et al., 2024).

This study proposes that religiosity forms HCL both directly and indirectly through Personal Excellence (PE) and Collaborative Excellence (CE). PE refers to continuous individual self-development through interpersonal, motivational, and leadership skills (Hammett et al., 2010). CE refers to the capacity that individuals have on effective teamwork, communication, and problem solving as a group (Microsoft, 2025). This study also tests AI Usage as a moderating variable that may strengthen or weakens the relationships between PE, CE, and HCL, and it depends on the degree where human values could still becoming the center of AI-assisted leadership practice (Peifer et al., 2022; Raisch & Krakowski, 2021).

The innovation of this study is the integration of research models that connects spiritual values, individual excellence, collaborative capacity, and AI usage in a single human-centered leadership framework. These have been limitedly examined in prior research, especially in Indonesia, where the nation consists of diverse organizations in various sectors. This study aims to contribute theoretically in leadership and organizational behavior literatures, while also provide practical guidance for future leaders that are becoming more reliance on technology, so that future leaders could manage the degree of AI usage while being thoughtful on human values.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Foundation

This study utilizes the Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) as the grand theory which states that human behavior comes from reciprocal interactions between personal factors, behavioral factors, and environmental factors, a concept known as reciprocal causation (Bandura, 1991; 1986). In organizational contexts, religiosity act as an internal and external cue that motivates moral judgement and workplace behavior (Otake-Ebeda et al., 2019). In addition, PE and CE reflects behavior factors that are developed through self-management and social interaction (Hammett et al., 2010; Pelser, 2023). The external condition described on this theory refers to AI technology that may expand or constrain individual behavioral expression depending on how it is utilized at work (Raisch & Krakowski, 2021).

Complementing SCT, Transformational Leadership Theory (TLS) becomes the middle theory which conceptualized leadership as a moral and motivational evolution where leaders fulfill follower needs and transform these into moral agents (Bass, 1985; Burns, 1978). Human-Centered Leadership is incorporated in this, where religiosity provides the moral quality that inspires trust (Arifin et al., 2024). PE supplies the internal capacities to inspire and empower followers while CE reflects the relational principles related to transformational practice (Aduwo et al., 2025). Hence, SCT explains how internal values are transformed through behavioral capacities into leadership orientation while TLS explains why these dimensions collectively results in HCL.

Human-Centered Leadership (HCL)

Human-Centered Leadership (HCL) is a leadership style that places individuals at the center of organizational change and success, where leaders connect, inspire, and empower people through a culture of care, trust, and excellence (Kennedy et al., 2020). This style is built upon transformational, authentic, and servant leadership theories, and it consists of four dimensions, such as empathy, happiness, employee well-being, and individual empowerment with the principle that individual growth drives organizational transformation (Leclerc et al., 2020; Safuan, 2025). HCL includes a six cyclical stage such inspiration, approach, ideation, action, implementation, and reflection, also the intrapersonal, interpersonal, and strategic communication as the means which human values are part of the leadership (Anders, 2021). Altogether, HCL combines humanity,

continuous learning, and innovation as the energy of organizational sustainability and performance (Kennedy et al., 2020; Safuan, 2025).

Religiosity

Religiosity represents internalized religious conviction which includes cognitive, affective and behavioral components which becomes moral filter that influence personal conduct and organization interactions (Mousa & Chaouali, 2021; Wijayanti & Nurhayati, 2021). Its four dimensions includes religious practices, religious salience, spiritual well-being, and religious coping, which positions religiosity as a value-belief capacity that guides moral perception and workplace behavior (Aggarwal et al., 2023). Prior studies states that religiosity significantly strengthens teamwork, communication, and collective discipline through heightened personal responsibility (Widiyono, 2021). It also emphasizes on conflict resolution and social harmony through values of equality and mutual respect (Dasopang et al., 2023). Moreover, religiosity strengthens self-control, self-esteem, resilience, and empathy, which are all dimensions of personal excellence, through practices such as prayer, spiritual reflection and positive religious coping (Aggarwal et al., 2023; Erken et al., 2021; Palm et al., 2021).

Personal Excellence (PE)

Personal Excellence (PE) is a continuous self-development process that aims to master skills across interpersonal, interpersonal, motivational, and leadership to realize one's fullest potential (Dave, 2017; Hammett et al., 2010). It consists of five dimensions such as intrapersonal skills (self-esteem, self-confidence, stress management), interpersonal communication skills (assertive communication, self-control), motivational skills (goal setting, self-management), and personal skills (empathy, positive influence, decision making), PE becomes the psychological and behavioral basis for effective leadership (Hammett et al., 2010). Research confirms that self-awareness and emotional regulation strengthen leader well-being and happiness (Dubey, 2024; Tran et al., 2022). On the other hand, self-esteem and self-efficacy influence individual empowerment, both being the essence of HCL (Al-Qahtani et al., 2021). Motivational dimensions of PE moreover contributes to empowerment and growth working environments, while religious values works through personal competence rather than directly, this also confirms PE as a mediator between religiosity and leadership outcomes (Aggarwal et al., 2023; Jabar & Suharnomo, 2023; Marta et al., 2020).

Collaborative Excellence (CE)

Collaborative Excellence (CE) refers to the degree of collaborative superiority achieved through effective and sustained cooperation that enhances organizational resilience and innovation capability under uncertainty (Pelser, 2023; Reid, 2021). It is operationalized through five dimensions such as teamwork, communication, conflict resolution, reward systems, and leadership support that are assessed through process indicators and outcome indicators (Aduwo et al., 2025). Existing research shows that effective teamwork results in trust environments that increases empowerment and well-being as the essence of HCL characteristics (Gupta et al., 2023; Mukhtar et al., 2022). On the other hand, constructive conflict resolution and intrinsic reward systems strengthen psychological safety, happiness, and employee engagement (Ahmada et al., 2024; Shah et al., 2025). In addition, collaborative environments mediate the transformation of individual values into humanistic leadership behavior, where collaboration bridge leadership values and productive outcomes (Lin, 2022; Wiroonrath et al., 2024).

AI Usage

AI Usage is defined as the extent where employees utilize AI in the work processes, it is measured through comfort level, frequency, comprehension support, perceived effectiveness, and resource selection accuracy (Fauzi et al., 2025). AI systems augment compared to replace human cognitive capacity which expands individual decision making and goal orientation capabilities (Jarrahi et al., 2022; Samara et al., 2024). The integration of AI with emotional intelligence significantly contributes to leadership effectiveness and team performance (Vivek & Krupskyi, 2024). AI also increases the tendency of professional development through strengthening individual potential within work

systems (Zahoor et al., 2024). In relation to collaboration, AI adoption influence collaborative environments, where leaders that are proficient in AI usage shows higher capacity in establishing ethical and productive collaboration (Hossain et al., 2025; Jain et al., 2022).

This study identifies the variables that may influence Human-Centered Leadership. These are Religiosity, Personal Excellence, Collaborative Excellence, and AI Usage. Thus, according to the literature review, the following hypotheses are proposed (Figure 1)

- H1: Religiosity has a significant effect on Personal Excellence.
 H2: Religiosity has a significant effect on Collaborative Excellence.
 H3: Personal Excellence has a significant effect on Human-Centered Leadership.
 H4: Personal Excellence mediates the relationship between Religiosity and Human-Centered Leadership.
 H5: Collaborative Excellence has a significant effect on Human-Centered Leadership.
 H6: Collaborative Excellence mediates the relationship between Religiosity and Human-Centered Leadership.
 H7: AI Usage moderates the effect of Personal Excellence on Human-Centered Leadership, such that the relationship is stronger at higher levels of AI usage.
 H8: AI Usage moderates the effect of Collaborative Excellence on Human-Centered Leadership, such that the relationship is stronger at higher levels of AI usage.

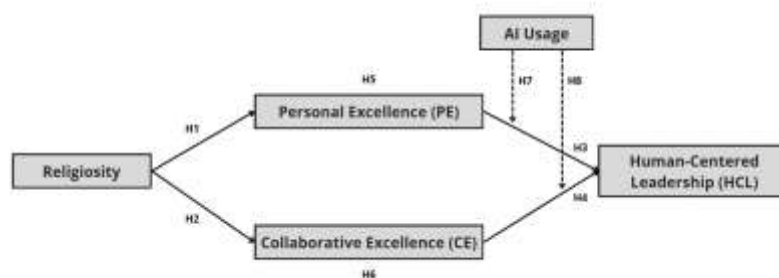


Figure 1. Research Framework

3. RESEARCH METHOD

All research measurement variables are measured on a 5-point Likert scale (1 as strongly disagree and 5 as strongly agree). Each constructs are measured as follows: Religiosity (RG) measured through 8 items adapted from Aggarwal et al. (2023); Personal Excellence measured through 5 items adapted from Hammet et al. (2010); Collaborative Excellence measured through 5 items adapted from Aduwo et al. (2025); Human-Centered Leadership measured through 5 items adapted from Safuan et al. (2025); and AI Usage measured through 4 items adapted from Fauzie et al., 2025). A self-reported questionnaire were distributed to collect primary data. A non-probability sampling technique were employed to (N = 300) with a calculation of (N = 270) as the minimum sample. All response were kept as confidential.

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Data Analysis Technique

Through SmartPLS (Partial Least Square) 4.0 software to test the model's hypothesis. The PLS-SEM involves two procedure such as the evaluation of measurements and evaluation of structural model (Hair et al., 2021). The evaluation of measurement starts with reliability of internal consistency through factor loadings, convergent validity, and discriminant validity (Hair et al., 2021).

Internal consistency are measured through composite reliability score. The findings reveals that all measurement exceeds the threshold of 0.708 which means that all constructs have a high level of internal consistency (Hair et al., 2021). Once this is confirmed, next is to assess the factor loadings and Average Variance Extracted (AVE). The factor loadings must be at least 0.708, however 0.40 to 0.708 may still be accepted as long as the construct explains at least 50% of the variance (AVE > 0.50) (Hair et al., 2021).

Table 1. Measurement Model Quality

Variable	Factor Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	CR	AVE
Religiosity				
RG1	0.799	0.914	0.931	0.629
RG2	0.788			
RG3	0.613			
RG4	0.767			
RG5	0.834			
RG6	0.843			
RG7	0.871			
RG8	0.801			
Personal Excellence				
PE1	0.715	0.806	0.866	0.565
PE2	0.812			
PE3	0.807			
PE4	0.744			
PE5	0.671			
Collaborative Excellence				
CE1	0.792	0.829	0.880	0.594
CE2	0.771			
CE3	0.789			
CE4	0.763			
CE5	0.736			
Human-Centered Leadership				
HCL1	0.780	0.844	0.889	0.617
HCL2	0.790			
HCL3	0.807			
HCL4	0.803			
HCL5	0.745			
AI Usage				
AI1	0.839	0.718	0.832	0.564
AI2	0.808			
AI3	0.828			
AI4	0.461			

All AVE scores exceeded the threshold of 0.50 which means that there is a good convergent validity score. The factor loadings, composite reliability, and average variance extracted are shown in Table 1. Another criterion is to measure the discriminant validity which refers to how distinct a construct among others (Hair et al., 2021). The discriminant validity in this study is measured through HTMT as recommended by Hair et al. (2021) where the square root of AVE of each construct must be greater than the correlation of other construct. The correlations are shown in Table 2, where discriminant validity criterion are fulfilled.

Table 2. HTMT Discriminant Validity

	AI	CE	HCL	PE	RG
AI	0.751				
CE	0.672	0.771			
HCL	0.670	0.758	0.785		
PE	0.576	0.694	0.712	0.752	
RG	0.529	0.659	0.646	0.573	0.793

Evaluation of The Structural Model's Relevance

Once confirming the validity and reliability of the measurement model, a bootstrapping technique are then utilized with 5.000 repetition (Hair et al., 2021). The path coefficient will reveal the strength which the dependent variables change as a cause of each independent variable (Hair et al., 2021). The findings of hypothesis testing are shown in Table 3. H1 and H2 are accepted where Religiosity (RG) are proven to be influencing Personal Excellence (PE) and Collaborative Excellence (CE). H3 and H4 are also supported, where Personal Excellence (PE) and Collaborative Excellence (CE) are s

Table 3. Results of Hypothesis Testing via Bootstrapping

Hypothesis	Path	Path Coefficient	t-Statistics	p-values
H1	RG → PE	0.573	10.118	0.000
H2	RG → CE	0.659	12.782	0.000
H3	PE → HCL	0.316	4.966	0.000
H4	CE → HCL	0.384	4.600	0.000

Mediation Analysis

Bootstrapping method was also utilized to measure the indirect impact (Hair et al., 2021). PLS-SEM method is then employed as shown in Table 4 below.

Table 4. Mediation Analysis

Hypothesis	Path	Path Coefficient	t-Statistics	p-values
H5	RG → PE → HCL	0.181	4.493	0.000
H6	RG → CE → HCL	0.253	4.166	0.000

According to the findings in Table 4, Personal Excellence (PE) mediates the relationship between Religiosity (RG) and Human-Centered Leadership (HCL). Similarly, Collaborative Excellence (CE) mediates the relationship between Religiosity (RG) and Human-Centered Leadership (HCL). Hence, all hypotheses are accepted.

Moderation Analysis

In relation to the moderation testing, AI Usage is incorporated to examine whether it strengthen or weakens the relationship between Personal Excellence (PE) and Collaborative Excellence (CE). The moderation analysis is shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Moderation Analysis

Hypothesis	Path	Path Coefficient	t-Statistics	p-values
H7	AI X PE → HCL	0.014	0.208	0.835
H8	AI X CE → HCL	-0.013	0.169	0.866

Based on Table 5, AI usage does not moderate the relationship between Personal Excellence (PE) and Collaborative Excellence (CE) towards Human-Centered Leadership (HCL). This means that both H7 and H8 are rejected.

Discussion

H1 shows that religiosity influences Personal Excellence, which shows how religious conviction may form the psychological architecture of an individual. Religious practices such as prayer and spiritual reflection may present opportunities for self-examination and emotional discipline, and it gradually builds the kind of self-control, self-esteem, and moral resilience that define personal excellence (Palm et al., 2021; Aggarwal et al., 2023). Religiosity adds a moral filter on top of existing personal qualities where all are activated from within, and the finding of empathy as the interpersonal dimension of PE also positively formed through religious depth. This result shows that religiosity humanizes the individual before humanizes one's leadership (Erken et al., 2021). Alongside of individual development, religiosity was also found to influence how individuals engage with other collectively. Religious values brings a sense of shared responsibility and accountability that results into stronger teamwork (Widiyono, 2021). It will also open up to a more honest communication and constructive feedback during disposition compared to adversarial conflict resolution (Dasopang et al., 2023). The stronger strength of PE compared to CE as presented in the path coefficient (Table 3) means that religious activities are often community oriented, so it's influence collective behaviour more than individual personal development. In Indonesia, the findings mean that religiosity is more connected to social and cultural values and the attention in applying religiosity to build collaborative culture might still be limited in leadership programs.

H3 shows that the quality of leader's personal life is not separable from the quality of the leadership, leaders who possess strong self-awareness and emotional regulation are better in managing and recognizing the needs of followers, especially in terms of empower others to grow (Al-Qahtani et al., 2021; Dubey, 2024; Tran et al., 2022). This is not just about leaders being "good people" but it answers the argument that Human-Centered Leadership (HCL) cannot be established without it being developed from within individuals. The motivational aspect of PE emphasize this as leaders that are more focus to growth and self-mastery may consciously create working environments that reflect these values for the teams (Marta et al., 2020). H4 shows that Collaborative Excellence (CE) and has a stronger effect compared to Personal Excellence (PE), and this has something unique with the essence of Human-Centered Leadership (HCL). Since, HCL is express through relationships especially on how leaders listen, resolve, and create space for contribution, the collective results of an organization may generate more humanistic leadership than individual internal qualities alone (Aduwo et al., 2025). Effective teamwork builds trust and psychological safety that led empowerment and well-being (Gupta et al., 2023; Mukhtar et al., 2022). Moreover, fair recognition systems and constructive conflict emphasize the sense that all people are valued (Ahmada et al., 2024; Shah et al., 2025). Hence, organizations that wants to establish HCL should build collaborative workplace that could allow humanistic leadership to be visible.

In relation to mediation results, H5 shows that religious value do not directly led to humanistic leadership behavior but it requires individual's psychological development. This shows that personal excellence is a transformational bridge between what leaders believe and how leaders lead, since religiosity strengthens the intrapersonal foundations that allow leaders to implement empowerment and well-being in daily interaction (Aggarwal et al., 2023; Jabar & Suharnomo, 2023). In addition, H6 adds a collective dimension in the result, PE shows how religiosity build individual leader while CE shows how it forms organizational environment. Religious value create shared moral as a sense of collective purpose and ethical accountability that strengthen team collaboration (Lin, 2022; Wiroonrath et al., 2024). The collaborative quality then becomes a work environment where HCL can be expressed.

The insignificant result of AI Usage moderation is the most practically significant finding of this study. The result shows that no matter how extensively leaders use AI tools, the connection between personal and collaborative capacities and HCL orientation remains unchanged. Compared to diminishing the relevance of AI, this study sees AI as an operational facilitator rather becoming a transformative force of humanistic leadership. The relational condition of HCL shows that it cannot just be improved through simply adding technology (Safuan, 2025). The dominance of functional AI usage such as virtual assistants that respondents report in the survey also shows

that AI adoption in Indonesian organizational context has not yet reach the depth of integration necessary to reform leadership conditions. This finding clarifies organizational thinking that assume digital transformation alone will increase leadership quality, because humanistic foundation should come first.

Altogether, these findings could be explained through the Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) and Transformational Leadership Theory (TLS). SCT framework of reciprocal causation shows that religiosity as personal factor could influence behavioral in both personal and collaborative domains which in turn results in humanistic leadership as an outcome (Bandura, 1991). The non-significant moderation of AI Usage also in line with SCT that states environmental factors only become behaviorally meaningful when individuals possess the self-efficacy to include it to existing value systems. Moreover, according to Transformational Leadership Theory perspective (Bass, 1985), the entire model reflects the theory's main argument that effective leadership is all about moral, relationship, and driven internally compared to engineered externally. The stronger influence of collaborative over personal excellence on HCL further confirms that transformational leadership lives between people and not just within people.

Model Explanatory Power

The R^2 values can be seen in Table 6. It can be concluded that Religiosity explains for 32.9% of variance in Personal Excellence and 43.4% in Collaborative Excellence. Overall, the model explains 66.9% of variance in Human-Centered Leadership, which is considered substantial (Hair et al., 2021). It also confirms that the combination of personal and collaborative excellence may explains how HCL develops in practice.

Table 6. R^2 values

	R^2	R^2 Adjusted
Personal Excellence	0.329	0.326
Collaborative Excellence	0.434	0.432
Human-Centered Leadership	0.669	0.664

5. KESIMPULAN

This study shows that religiosity is a foundation that influence the formation of human-centered leadership and it requires the development of personal and collaborative excellence as mediating factors. Leaders with stronger religious conviction shows greater intrapersonal quality and collective orientation which both results into a more empathic and empowering leadership quality. The stronger mediating role of collaborative excellence over personal excellence further confirms that Human-Centered Leadership is shown through relationships and organizational culture aside from simply individual development. Notably, AI Usage does not moderate both relationship which it highlights that humanistic leadership is a result of value and human capacity, while technology is only an operational facilitator and not a substitute for human foundation that highlights it. These findings contribute empirically through validating HCL as a higher construct, and it positions personal and collaborative excellence as higher-order mediators. It also provides non-Western cultural view which is traditionally part of Indonesia's religious and collective organizational context, which is a contribution that adds to leadership theory beyond Western origins.

In practice, organizations should provide spiritual and personal development into leadership programs alongside with technical competencies. Values must be implemented before it is manifested as leadership behavior. Building collaborative infrastructure through open feedback system and team-based recognition might also be implemented as the quality of organizational collaboration directly shapes environment where human-centered leadership exist. In relation to AI usage, leaders must have the knowledge that digital tools might increase efficiency but it cannot replace human judgment, since it has no empathy or moral reasoning.

This study has several limitations that might become reference for future studies. First, the cross-sectional design only focuses on a single point in time, and it limits the ability to track how spiritual values and leadership qualities develop from time to time or longitudinally. Future research

could use a longitudinal design for much comprehensive insight. Second, regardless of Indonesia as a meaningful cultural contribution, the setting of the study also restricts the generalizability where replication in more secular or individualistic cultural settings could help determine whether these patterns remain similar beyond collectivist societies. Lastly, religiosity in this study is a single source, while leaders could obtain meaning from diverse sources such as professional ethics or personal philosophy. Future models could add alternative value systems that might really discuss what truly establish humanistic leadership in digital era.

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