



## THE STRATEGY OF MADRASAH PRINCIPALS IN BUILDING EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP TO IMPROVE TEACHER PERFORMANCE AT STATE ISLAMIC JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOLS IN PADANGSIDIMPUAN CITY

### STRATEGI KEPALA MADRASAH MEMBANGUN KEPEMIMPINAN EFEKTIF DALAM MENINGKATKAN KINERJA GURU DI MADRASAH TSANAWIYAH NEGERI KOTA PADANGSIDIMPUAN

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#### Abstract

This background is based on the importance of the effective leadership role of madrasah principals in improving teacher performance, particularly at Padangsidimpuan State Islamic Junior High School. Challenges such as lack of teacher motivation, minimal professional training, and suboptimal communication between leaders and staff are factors that hinder performance improvement. Therefore, adaptive and innovative leadership strategies are needed to create a conducive work environment and encourage improvements in the quality of education. Methodology: This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach with data collection methods through participant observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation studies at MTsN 1, MTsN 2, and MTsN Preparatory State Islamic Junior High School 3. Padangsidimpuan. Data were analyzed using the Miles and Huberman model through data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The results of this study showed that the madrasah principal implemented eight main strategies in building effective leadership to improve teacher performance; (1). Coaching strategy, through training, individual mentoring, and Professional Learning Community (PLC). (2). Supervision strategy, based on participatory academic supervision and constructive feedback. (3). Motivation strategy, through verbal appreciation, emotional support, and professional development. (4). Reward strategy in the form of certificates, incentives, and additional task trust. (5). Discipline strengthening strategy with a systemic, restorative approach, and based on a collective work culture. (6). Family gathering strategy to build emotional bonds and social capital in the madrasah environment. (7). Structured academic supervision strategy through a cycle Collaborative planning, observation, and reflection. (8) Lesson Study strategy as a vehicle for developing distributive leadership and improving the quality of learning. Effective leadership of madrasah principals is built through a holistic approach that integrates administrative, pedagogical, and relational aspects. The implemented strategy has proven significant in improving teacher performance through increased competence, motivation, collaboration, and a positive work



culture. This study recommends the need to strengthen teacher development programs and leadership training based on Islamic values for the sustainable improvement of educational quality in madrasahs.

**Keywords :** Strategy, Madrasah Principal, Effective Leadership, Teacher Performance, State Junior High Madrasah.

### Abstrak

Latar belakang ini didasari oleh pentingnya peran kepemimpinan efektif kepala madrasah dalam meningkatkan kinerja guru, terutama di Madrasah Tsanawiyah Negeri Kota Padangsidimpuan. Tantangan seperti kurangnya motivasi guru, minimnya pelatihan profesional, dan komunikasi yang kurang optimal antara pimpinan dan staf menjadi faktor penghambat peningkatan kinerja. Oleh karena itu, strategi kepemimpinan yang adaptif dan inovatif diperlukan untuk menciptakan lingkungan kerja yang kondusif serta mendorong peningkatan kualitas pendidikan. Metodologi Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif dengan metode pengumpulan data melalui observasi partisipan, wawancara mendalam, dan studi dokumentasi di MTsN 1, MTsN 2, dan MTsN Persiapan Negeri 3 Padangsidimpuan. Data dianalisis menggunakan model Miles dan Huberman melalui reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Hasil Penelitian ini Kepala madrasah menerapkan delapan strategi utama dalam membangun kepemimpinan efektif untuk meningkatkan kinerja guru; (1). Strategi Pembinaan, melalui pelatihan, pendampingan individu, dan Professional Learning Community (PLC). (2). Strategi Pengawasan, berbasis supervisi akademik partisipatif dan umpan balik konstruktif. (3). Strategi Pemberian Motivasi, melalui apresiasi verbal, dukungan emosional, dan pengembangan profesional. (4). Strategi Pemberian Penghargaan dalam bentuk piagam, insentif, dan kepercayaan tugas tambahan. (5). Strategi Penguatan Disiplin dengan pendekatan sistemik, restoratif, dan berbasis budaya kerja kolektif. (6). Strategi Family Gathering untuk membangun ikatan emosional dan modal sosial di lingkungan madrasah. (7). Strategi Supervisi Akademik Terstruktur melalui siklus perencanaan, observasi, dan refleksi kolaboratif. (8) Strategi Lesson Study sebagai wahana pengembangan kepemimpinan distributif dan peningkatan kualitas pembelajaran. Kepemimpinan efektif kepala madrasah dibangun melalui pendekatan holistik yang mengintegrasikan aspek administratif, pedagogis, dan relasional. Strategi yang diterapkan terbukti signifikan dalam meningkatkan kinerja guru melalui peningkatan kompetensi, motivasi, kolaborasi, dan budaya kerja positif. Penelitian ini merekomendasikan perlunya penguatan program pengembangan guru dan pelatihan kepemimpinan berbasis nilai keislaman untuk keberlanjutan peningkatan mutu pendidikan di madrasah.

**Kata Kunci :** Strategi, Kepala Madrasah, Kepemimpinan Efektif, Kinerja Guru, Madrasah Tsanawiyah Negeri.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Education is a fundamental pillar in developing the quality of human resources and plays a crucial role in shaping the progress of a nation. In the context of Islamic education, madrasahs serve not only as institutions for knowledge transmission but also as centers for instilling moral, spiritual, and social values. Therefore, madrasahs are expected to produce graduates who are intellectually capable, morally grounded, and socially responsible (Mulyasa, 2009).

In the era of globalization and the Industrial Revolution 4.0, the demands placed on educational institutions are becoming increasingly complex. Madrasahs are required to adapt to rapid changes, integrate technology into learning, and enhance the quality of both academic and non-academic outcomes. This situation requires strong, adaptive, and visionary leadership capable of responding to internal and external challenges (Syafaruddin, 2020). Without effective leadership, educational institutions may struggle to remain relevant and competitive.

Leadership in educational institutions, particularly in madrasahs, is a determining factor in achieving institutional effectiveness. The madrasah principal plays a strategic role as a policymaker,



manager, supervisor, and leader who directs all school components toward achieving educational goals. Effective leadership is characterized by the ability to influence, motivate, and mobilize teachers and staff to work collaboratively and productively (Sagala, 2003). Thus, leadership is not merely administrative but also transformational in nature.

Moreover, effective leadership is closely related to the creation of a positive organizational climate. A conducive work environment encourages teachers to perform optimally, develop professionally, and actively participate in school improvement efforts. Conversely, weak leadership often results in low teacher morale, lack of innovation, and poor communication within the institution. These conditions ultimately affect teacher performance and the quality of student learning outcomes (Nasution, 2015).

Teacher performance is one of the most critical determinants of educational quality. Teachers are at the forefront of the learning process, directly interacting with students and implementing the curriculum. High-performing teachers are able to design effective learning strategies, manage classrooms efficiently, and evaluate student progress accurately. However, teacher performance is influenced by multiple factors, including motivation, competence, leadership support, and opportunities for professional development (Lailatussaadah, 2015).

In reality, several challenges are still faced by madrasahs in improving teacher performance. These include limited access to training programs, inadequate supervision, and ineffective communication between principals and teachers. In addition, some teachers demonstrate low commitment and lack of innovation in instructional practices. These issues indicate the need for comprehensive and strategic leadership approaches that can address both individual and organizational aspects.

From a theoretical perspective, leadership strategies in education involve systematic and planned efforts to achieve institutional goals. According to Sanjaya (2007), strategy refers to a structured plan designed to achieve specific objectives effectively and efficiently. In the context of madrasah leadership, strategies must encompass teacher development, supervision, motivation, and the creation of a collaborative work culture. Therefore, leadership strategies should not be partial but holistic, integrating administrative, pedagogical, and relational dimensions.

Preliminary observations conducted in State Islamic Junior High Schools in Padangsidempuan reveal that madrasah principals have implemented several strategies aimed at improving teacher performance, such as providing motivation, conducting supervision, offering incentives, and facilitating professional development opportunities. However, these efforts have not yet produced optimal results due to limitations in implementation consistency and coordination.

Furthermore, the complexity of educational challenges requires principals to adopt innovative approaches, such as collaborative learning models, professional learning communities, and lesson study practices. These approaches not only enhance teacher competence but also promote a culture of continuous improvement and shared responsibility among educators. In this regard, leadership is expected to shift from a traditional hierarchical model to a more participatory and distributive model.

Based on the above considerations, it is evident that the leadership of madrasah principals plays a crucial role in determining teacher performance and overall educational quality. Therefore, this study aims to explore and analyze the strategies employed by madrasah principals in building effective leadership to improve teacher performance in State Islamic Junior High Schools in Padangsidempuan City. The findings are expected to provide theoretical contributions to educational leadership studies and practical implications for improving leadership practices in madrasah.

## 2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research approach to explore and analyze the strategies of madrasah principals in building effective leadership to improve teacher performance. A qualitative approach was selected because it enables researchers to understand complex social phenomena holistically within their natural context, particularly leadership dynamics, interactions, and



behaviors that cannot be measured quantitatively (Creswell, 2014). This approach also allows for flexibility in capturing the perspectives, experiences, and meanings constructed by participants regarding leadership practices in madrasahs.

The research was conducted in three State Islamic Junior High Schools in Padangsidempuan City, namely MTsN 1, MTsN 2, and MTsN Preparatory State 3. These sites were selected purposively based on their representativeness and relevance to the research focus, particularly in terms of leadership implementation and efforts to improve teacher performance. The selection of multiple sites aimed to provide a broader and more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under study, as well as to allow for cross-case comparison in identifying patterns and variations in leadership strategies.

The subjects of this study consisted of madrasah principals, teachers, and other stakeholders who were directly involved in the educational process. Informants were selected using purposive sampling, with consideration given to their roles, experiences, and level of involvement in leadership practices within the madrasah (Sugiyono, 2017). This technique ensured that the data obtained were rich, relevant, and aligned with the objectives of the study. In addition, the selection of participants was carried out gradually using a snowball technique to identify key informants who possessed deeper insights into the research problem.

Data collection was conducted through participant observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation studies. Participant observation allowed the researcher to directly observe leadership practices, teacher interactions, and school culture in their natural setting, thereby providing contextual and behavioral data. In-depth interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner to allow flexibility in exploring participants' views while maintaining focus on the research objectives. This method enabled the researcher to uncover implicit meanings, perceptions, and experiences related to leadership strategies and teacher performance. Meanwhile, documentation studies were used to examine official records, such as supervision reports, school programs, policy documents, and other relevant archives, which served as supporting evidence for triangulating the findings.

The data analysis process followed the interactive model proposed by Miles and Huberman (2014), which consists of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. Data reduction involved the process of selecting, simplifying, and categorizing raw data obtained from observations, interviews, and documents. Data display was conducted by organizing information into narrative descriptions and thematic categories to facilitate interpretation and pattern identification. The final stage involved drawing conclusions and verifying them continuously throughout the research process to ensure consistency and validity. This iterative process allowed the researcher to refine interpretations and strengthen the credibility of the findings.

Furthermore, the analysis in this study also emphasized thematic analysis, where data were coded and categorized into meaningful themes related to leadership strategies and teacher performance. This process enabled the identification of recurring patterns, relationships, and key findings that reflect the reality of leadership practices in madrasahs. The use of thematic analysis enhances the depth of interpretation and supports the development of comprehensive conclusions.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the data, this study applied several validation techniques, including triangulation of sources, methods, and time. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing data obtained from different informants, such as principals and teachers, while method triangulation involved the use of observation, interviews, and documentation. Member checking was also conducted to confirm the accuracy of the data and interpretations with the participants. In addition, prolonged engagement in the field allowed the researcher to build trust with participants and gain a deeper understanding of the research context. These strategies were implemented to minimize bias, enhance credibility, and ensure that the findings accurately represent the real conditions of leadership practices and teacher performance in the madrasahs studied.



### 3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal that madrasah principals play a significant role in improving teacher performance through the implementation of comprehensive and integrated leadership strategies. Based on the data collected from observations, interviews, and documentation, it was found that principals in State Islamic Junior High Schools in Padangsidempuan implement eight major strategies in building effective leadership. These strategies include coaching, supervision, motivation, rewards, discipline strengthening, family gathering, structured academic supervision, and lesson study.

The coaching strategy is implemented through various professional development activities, such as training programs, individual mentoring, and the establishment of Professional Learning Communities (PLC). This strategy aims to enhance teachers' pedagogical and professional competencies. The findings indicate that continuous coaching contributes to improving teachers' ability to design and implement effective learning processes. This is in line with the view that teacher development is a key component in improving educational quality (Mulyasa, 2009).

In addition, supervision strategies are carried out through participatory academic supervision accompanied by constructive feedback. Principals actively engage in classroom observations and provide guidance to teachers in improving their teaching practices. This participatory approach fosters a supportive environment and encourages teachers to reflect on their performance. Effective supervision not only functions as a control mechanism but also as a professional development tool (Sanjaya, 2007).

Motivation strategies are also a crucial aspect of leadership practices. Principals provide both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation through verbal appreciation, emotional support, and opportunities for professional growth. These efforts help increase teachers' work enthusiasm and commitment. The findings show that motivated teachers tend to demonstrate higher levels of performance and responsibility in carrying out their duties (Lailatussaadah, 2015).

Furthermore, reward strategies are implemented by providing certificates, incentives, and additional responsibilities as a form of trust. These rewards serve as recognition of teachers' achievements and encourage them to maintain or improve their performance. This finding supports the theory that appreciation and recognition are important factors in enhancing employee motivation and productivity (Sagala, 2003).

Discipline strengthening strategies are applied using a systemic and restorative approach, emphasizing collective work culture and shared responsibility. Principals promote discipline not through punishment alone, but through awareness-building and mutual commitment among teachers. This approach creates a more positive and sustainable work environment, which ultimately supports improved teacher performance.

Another important strategy identified in this study is the implementation of family gathering activities aimed at strengthening emotional bonds and social capital within the madrasah community. These activities foster a sense of belonging, improve interpersonal relationships, and enhance teamwork among teachers and staff. A strong organizational culture is essential for achieving institutional goals effectively (Nasution, 2015).

Structured academic supervision is also carried out systematically through cycles of planning, observation, and collaborative reflection. This approach allows teachers to continuously improve their teaching practices based on feedback and shared learning experiences. The findings suggest that structured supervision enhances both individual and collective teacher performance.

Moreover, the lesson study strategy is implemented as a collaborative professional development model that involves teachers working together to plan, observe, and reflect on lessons. This strategy promotes distributed leadership and encourages active participation from all teachers in improving the quality of learning. Lesson study has proven effective in fostering a culture of collaboration and continuous improvement within educational institutions.

From the discussion above, it can be concluded that the leadership strategies implemented by madrasah principals reflect a holistic approach that integrates administrative, pedagogical, and relational dimensions. This finding is consistent with contemporary leadership theories, which



emphasize the importance of transformational and participatory leadership in educational settings. Effective leadership is not only about managing tasks but also about empowering individuals and building a collaborative culture within the organization.

The results of this study also indicate that the successful implementation of leadership strategies significantly contributes to improving teacher performance. Improvements are reflected in increased teacher competence, higher motivation, better collaboration, and the development of a positive work culture. These findings reinforce the idea that leadership plays a central role in determining the success of educational institutions.

However, despite these positive findings, some challenges remain, such as limited resources, varying levels of teacher readiness, and the need for more consistent implementation of strategies. Therefore, continuous efforts are required to strengthen leadership capacity and ensure the sustainability of these strategies in improving teacher performance.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the strategies implemented by madrasah principals in State Islamic Junior High Schools in Padangsidempuan play a decisive role in improving teacher performance through the development of effective leadership. The findings demonstrate that leadership effectiveness is not constructed through a single approach, but through the integration of multiple strategic actions, including coaching, supervision, motivation, rewards, discipline strengthening, family gathering, structured academic supervision, and lesson study. These strategies collectively form a comprehensive leadership framework that addresses not only technical and administrative aspects but also pedagogical and relational dimensions of educational leadership.

The study further reveals that effective leadership significantly contributes to improving teacher performance, as reflected in increased professional competence, stronger work motivation, enhanced collaboration, and the establishment of a positive organizational culture. This indicates that leadership in madrasahs must move beyond traditional administrative functions toward a more transformative and participatory model that empowers teachers as active agents of educational improvement.

From a theoretical perspective, this study offers a contribution by proposing a holistic leadership strategy model that integrates formal managerial practices with socio-emotional and collaborative approaches. Unlike previous studies that tend to examine leadership strategies in isolation, this research highlights the importance of combining multiple strategies simultaneously to achieve sustainable improvements in teacher performance. This integrative model represents the novelty of the study, particularly in the context of Islamic educational institutions.

Practically, the findings imply that madrasah principals should adopt adaptive and context-based leadership strategies that are responsive to the needs of teachers and institutional conditions. Continuous professional development programs, participatory supervision, and collaborative learning practices such as lesson study should be strengthened to ensure long-term impact. In addition, fostering a supportive organizational culture through relational approaches, such as family-oriented activities, is essential for building trust and enhancing teacher engagement.

However, this study also acknowledges several limitations, including variations in teacher readiness, resource constraints, and the need for more consistent implementation of leadership strategies. Therefore, future research is recommended to explore the effectiveness of these strategies in different educational contexts and to develop more measurable indicators of leadership impact on teacher performance.

In conclusion, effective leadership in madrasahs is a multidimensional process that requires strategic integration, continuous adaptation, and strong commitment from school leaders. Strengthening leadership capacity and promoting collaborative culture are key factors in achieving sustainable improvements in teacher performance and educational quality.



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