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Madrasah Principal Leadership in Improving Teacher Performance in Islamic Educational Institutions

Muhammad Abdussyakir

Master of Islamic Education Management, Postgraduate, Nurul Jadid University, Indonesia

[*abdussyakir07@gmail.com](mailto:abdussyakir07@gmail.com)

Abstrak

Low teacher performance will impact the implementation of tasks, which in turn will affect the achievement of educational goals. In such conditions, the principal plays a crucial role because he can create a climate that allows educators to work enthusiastically. This research uses a qualitative case study method. This study describes the application of several problem-solving procedures examined by presenting data on the principal's leadership in improving teacher performance in Islamic educational institutions. The results of this study explain that the principals of MTs. Nurul Wafa and MTs. Miftahul Ulum consistently apply a democratic leadership style in managing their institutions. Every policy and decision taken always goes through a process of discussion, careful consideration, and involves all school components, both teachers and students, through official forums and informal communication. Open communication and openness to suggestions are key to creating a participatory, collaborative, and adaptive environment. This leadership style not only encourages active participation but also spurs teacher innovation in the development of learning and school programs.

Keywords: Madrasah Principal Leadership, Teacher Performance, Islamic Educational Institutions

1. Introduction

In an educational institution, the principal plays a crucial role in improving the quality and quantity of education. The success of the institution is determined by the quality of the principal's leadership.[1] The principal is required to be able to plan, implement, and evaluate the educational institution to become a superior educational institution. Therefore, the principal must possess adequate skills, attitudes, actions, morals, and educational background. It cannot be denied that the principal also plays a crucial role in ensuring that the performance of educators and teachers is always aligned with the institution's goals.[2]

Low educator performance will affect the implementation of tasks which in turn will also affect the achievement of educational goals. In such conditions, the principal plays an important role, because he can provide a climate that allows educators to work enthusiastically.[3] With his managerial skills, the principal is able to build and maintain positive educator performance. This is also mentioned in the self-fulfilling prophecy mentioned by Eden in Mulyono, that there is a relationship between superiors who in this case are the principals with employee performance expectations. Basically, educator performance is the performance or work achievements carried out by educators in carrying out their duties as educators. Dunda stated that, "Educator performance can be assessed from the aspect of basic abilities that must be possessed by an educator known as "educator competencies". Regarding the competencies that must be possessed by professional educators, UUGD 14/2005 article 8 and Permendiknas No. 13 of 2007 concerning Madrasah Principal Performance Standards state that there are four competencies that must be possessed by educators, namely: pedagogical competency, professional competency, personality competency, and social (community) competency.[4]

As research conducted by Yayah Faoziyah and Muslihun on a proactive and visionary leadership model that emphasizes communication, motivation, and collaboration. The effectiveness of this leadership approach is proven by a significant increase in teacher performance, which contributes to improving the overall quality of madrasa education. This study concluded that visionary, communicative, and supportive leadership is very important in creating an environment that encourages teacher development and institutional progress.[5] In addition, Nurmahani Tanjung and Irwansyah also stated that madrasa principals in academic supervision and management of teacher training programs also contribute to improving the competence and professionalism of educators. Factors that support the effectiveness of madrasa principal leadership include support from the school, teacher

discipline, and active involvement in professional development activities. However, there are several obstacles such as limited facilities and low participation of some teachers in training. Thus, the effectiveness of madrasa principal leadership greatly influences the improvement of teacher performance.[6]

MTs Nurul Wafa and MTs Miftahul Ulum Besuki Situbondo are educational institutions with significant reputations in their respective regions and a high reputation for educational quality. Both institutions have contributed to the advancement of education in Situbondo Regency, despite being private institutions. Another factor that attracted the researcher's interest was the consistent increase in the number of students from year to year. This prompted the researcher to examine the leadership of madrasah principals in improving teacher performance. Based on this discussion, the researcher attempted to discuss in depth the theories, opinions, and phenomena, as well as gain a deeper understanding of the leadership styles and types used by madrasah principals in their leadership process, particularly in improving teacher performance. Therefore, this paper is very interesting to discuss and review formally.

2. Research Methods

This study describes the application of several problem-solving procedures that are studied by presenting data on the relationship between administrators and students in the leadership of madrasah principals in improving teacher performance in Islamic educational institutions. This study uses a qualitative case study method.[4] The case study in this study is an in-depth study of individuals, groups, organizations, activity programs, and so on within a certain period of time. The case study was conducted because it is specific to the in-depth case of madrasah principal leadership in improving teacher performance in Islamic educational institutions, especially MTs Nurul Miftahul Ulum and MTs Nurul Wafa Besuki Situbondo.

The data collection technique in this study was carried out circularly with three approaches, namely: 1) participant observation; 2) in-depth interviews with the caretakers of the Nurul Jadid Islamic boarding school and the head of the education bureau (in-depth interviews); and 3) documentation. Meanwhile, data analysis in this study was carried out through: data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions or verification [7]

Data analysis was obtained from all field notes resulting from observations, interviews, and document reviews [8]. Data obtained through observations, interviews, and document reviews were collected, selected, and grouped, then concluded without eliminating the value of the data itself. Data presentation, namely a collection of structured information that provides the possibility to draw conclusions in taking action. This data presentation process reveals the whole of a group of data obtained so that it is easy to read and understand.[9]

3. Results and Discussion

When leading an institution, a madrasah principal needs to consider what steps or policies to take and how to implement them. This can be observed from the principal's leadership style. In an interview, the principal of MTs Nurul Wafa explained, "I use a democratic style to manage my madrasah. I believe that the most relevant and appropriate leadership style today is democratic leadership. This allows leaders and staff to have their own space to make decisions together. I implement this democratic style by always involving other teachers in problem-solving or decision-making." This statement is reinforced by an interview with Ms. Emalia Moneta about the madrasah principal's leadership style. "So far, all decisions made by the madrasah have been made through a reasoning process involving all elements of the madrasah, whether through consultation or solicitation of opinions, or through meetings"

This observation supports the findings, where researchers found that the madrasah principal uses a democratic leadership style. The implementation of this democratic leadership style is evident in how every decision-making process involves other teachers. Even on minor issues, the principal still involves teachers to solicit their opinions. In addition to involving teachers, the principal also encourages students to share their concerns during learning through direct interaction with students.

Next, the researcher asked how the principal responded to suggestions from teachers and students. Mr. Kurnaidi, the principal of MTs Nurul Wafa, expressed his opinion: "I am very happy with the suggestions. Their suggestions demonstrate a special interest from me personally and the school. I try to encourage them to be bold and willing to share their suggestions. I often use a personal approach, starting with casual conversations. My goal is to get them used to it and not be afraid to talk to me." Regarding the principal's acceptance of suggestions, Mrs. Restu Ayu Fitrah also shared her opinion. "I think the principal is happy to receive input; he even asks for input from the teachers themselves. That's how the principal values all suggestions".

This is supported by observations that show the principal highly values and even welcomes input from teachers and students. This is evident in the way the principal consistently responds to these suggestions, both those that are immediately implemented and those that require prior meetings. Interviews, observations, and documentation indicate that the principal consistently welcomes all suggestions from all school components. Evidence of this can be seen in several meetings held based on teacher suggestions.

Echoing the principal of MTs Nurul Wafa, the principal of MTs Miftahul Ulum has implemented a democratic leadership style since its inception, which is expected to improve teacher performance and dignity. Mr. Abd Jalal, the principal of MTs Miftahul Ulum, stated, "The principal indirectly encourages and motivates teachers to continue using reasoning in problem-solving. Thus, the democratic leadership implemented by the principal works well because of the reciprocal feedback felt by teachers at the madrasah. This is achieved through open communication, meetings, and individual approaches by the principal, both inside and outside the madrasah".

Furthermore, based on interviews conducted by the author with ninth-grade homeroom teachers, the principal routinely conducts class surveys to ensure the smooth running of the teaching and learning process. Examples include ensuring teacher attendance and student learning according to schedule, monitoring teacher-student learning activities to identify problems such as a lack of learning media, inappropriate teaching methods, and so on. These activities are carried out directly and indirectly through the relevant teachers and homeroom teachers.

In this regard, Mrs. Zubaidah said, "Usually, if a teacher experiences learning-related obstacles, such as those related to information technology, they will ask for help from fellow subject teachers or senior teachers. If the problem is not resolved, the system will help higher up until it reaches the madrasah principal, who is often discussed together." Based on the interview, it can be seen that there are a series of activities as an effort by the madrasah principal to be responsible for ensuring that teachers carry out their assigned tasks well and resolve various problems faced, this is with the help of homeroom teachers, senior teachers, and other educational staff. It can be concluded that the principal of MTs Miftahul Ulum communicates openly and gives trust to all teachers to help each other as an effort to encourage his subordinates in dealing with problems faced while on duty.

The principal of MTs Miftahul Ulum also provides intensive training to teachers, including subject training in their respective fields. One teacher, thanks to the principal's encouragement to improve her creativity, successfully won the Kuansing Batik Clothing Photography Competition. In this case, not only the organizers gave awards, but the principal also gave awards to teachers within the school environment for improving creativity. In teacher training held outside of school or through teacher training invitations, the principal consistently supports discipline related to teacher professional development. This is an effort to increase work productivity so that teacher performance is optimal and aligned with the lesson plan and school goals. As a principal, it is obligatory to provide a good example for improving performance in the school, exemplified by participating in various training and coaching. Therefore, not only teachers are required to participate in a series of trainings, but the principal is also obliged to participate.

Based on the research results above, in leading the institution, the principal of MTs. Nurul Wafa Madrasah showed that every step and policy taken was always through careful consideration and involved various parties within the Madrasah environment. This reflects the use of a democratic leadership style, in which the Madrasah principal emphasized the importance of involving all components of the Madrasah in the decision-making process. In practice, the Madrasah principal always involved teachers in various matters, both in solving large and small problems. This approach was carried out through informal consultations and formal forums such as meetings.[10]

This statement is supported by a teacher's statement that the decisions taken by the Madrasah are the result of a collective discussion and reasoning process, involving all elements of the Madrasah through meetings or direct requests for opinions. Field observations also show that the Madrasah principal actively invites teachers to discuss and consider their opinions in every policy to be implemented. Even on minor issues, the Madrasah principal still shows attention to teacher input. In addition to teachers, the Madrasah principal also applies a democratic approach to students. The Madrasah principal opens up communication spaces with students through direct interactions, both in class and in the Madrasah environment, to explore their aspirations and complaints during the learning process. The results of observations show that the Madrasah principal creates an atmosphere of openness so that students do not feel reluctant to express their opinions. This effort is also supported by personal methods so that students feel closer and more comfortable in interacting.[11]

The entire decision-making process is always linked to the vision, mission, and objectives of the Madrasah, which have been established by the foundation as the parent institution. Every decision must be in accordance with the direction and basic principles that serve as the institution's guidelines. This shows that the Madrasah principal not only prioritizes internal participation, but also ensures that policies remain within the foundation's vision and mission. Openness to suggestions is also an important characteristic of the leadership style implemented. The

Madrasah principal stated that accepting suggestions is a form of concern from the Madrasah community, and is highly valued. Therefore, the Madrasah principal strives to create a comfortable atmosphere so that teachers and students feel free to express their opinions.[12] This is evident in various informal interactions carried out to build close and open relationships.

Based on observations, every suggestion submitted, both by teachers and students, is not only listened to but also taken seriously. Some suggestions even become the basis for meetings or used as a reference in the preparation of new programs. This proves that the leadership style applied is not merely symbolic, but truly opens up real participation in the management of the Madrasah. In terms of development, the Madrasah principal utilizes a democratic style to encourage innovation among teachers. Teachers are encouraged to create new ideas in the implementation of learning. Program evaluations are carried out periodically through joint forums, where teachers can provide input and suggestions for development.[13] From the results of observations, it is clear that many creative programs are born from this spirit of togetherness, one of which is a program for sharing learning through social media, which was initiated by teachers as a forum for exchanging experiences.

Newly developed programs not only follow trends but also remain in line with the direction of Madrasah development. This shows that the Madrasah principal is able to utilize a democratic style as a tool to build innovation and maintain the relevance of the education provided. Open communication is also an important part of forming an effective leadership style. The Madrasah principal consciously opens up a space for discussion with all parties and strives to eliminate communication barriers through a personal approach. One form of the success of this approach is seen in how students who initially felt afraid or reluctant to communicate with the Madrasah principal gradually became more open due to the consistent approach.[14] Field observations also prove that this open communication is an effective path to resolving various problems quickly and appropriately, because all parties feel involved.

When asked why he chose a democratic leadership style over an autocratic or laissez-faire style, the principal explained that this style better suited the characteristics of the institution. MTs. Nurul Wafa is under the auspices of a foundation that has many parties with various backgrounds and interests. Within this structure, many issues need to be discussed together, and the foundation's culture encourages openness and collaboration. Therefore, democratic leadership is a logical and relevant choice in running the organization. Overall, the implementation of a democratic leadership style at MTs. Nurul Wafa is evident in the principal's behavior, who consistently involves all components of the Madrasah in decision-making.[15] These processes are carried out through meetings, consultations, open communication, and strengthening the Madrasah's vision and mission. All forms of proposals are well received and become an important part of policy development. In addition, the principal also encourages innovation and the development of new programs that remain within the framework of the institution's values and direction. This leadership style has been proven to be able to create an environment that is participatory, collaborative, and adaptive to change.

Similarly, at MTs. Miftahul Ulum, the principal applies a democratic leadership style aimed at improving performance and maintaining the dignity of teachers in carrying out their duties. This leadership style is manifested in various forms of open communication, personal approaches, and giving teachers the trust to solve problems faced collectively. The principal believes that being a democratic leader means having sensitivity and understanding of the various problems faced by teachers. Teachers' problems are believed to affect the quality and performance of their teaching. Therefore, maintaining a good relationship between leaders and teachers is important to create effective cooperation to achieve the expected quality of education. The principal builds open communication both through official forums such as meetings, as well as personal approaches carried out within the Madrasah environment and outside the Madrasah. This communication provides space for reciprocity between the Madrasah principal and teachers, thus creating a conducive and mutually supportive atmosphere.[16]

In carrying out their duties, the Madrasah principal also routinely monitors the learning process in each class. This includes checking teacher and student attendance, as well as the quality of the learning process. This monitoring is carried out both directly and through reports from teachers and homeroom teachers. If problems are found, such as limited learning media or the use of inappropriate methods, teachers usually help each other. If the problem remains unresolved, it will be discussed collectively, even to the Madrasah principal for joint deliberation. This approach demonstrates a leadership pattern that supports active involvement and mutual support among teachers in problem solving. The Madrasah principal also strives to improve teacher quality and productivity through intensive training tailored to their respective areas of expertise. These training programs are implemented both internally at the Madrasah and through collaboration with external parties. In supporting teacher professional development, the Madrasah principal not only encourages teacher participation but also provides direct examples

by actively participating in training and coaching.[17] After participating in training, the Madrasah principal then provides direction to all teachers regarding specific development programs.

One form of appreciation implemented by madrasah principals for teacher performance is through awards. This practice is part of a motivational strategy to increase teacher productivity. Awards are usually given after formal activities such as ceremonies, as a shared motivation for the entire madrasah community. Awards are given regardless of position and are based on the principle of persuasive communication. The culture of cooperation fostered also reflects an egalitarian approach, where every teacher is treated equally and valued based on their contribution, not solely on position or seniority.

In the implementation of various Madrasah programs, such as new student admissions, final year farewells, competitions, seminars, festivals, and other activities, the Madrasah principal gives full responsibility to teachers appointed as coordinators. However, the Madrasah principal still provides monitoring and direction through each person responsible for the activity. This strategy shows that the Madrasah principal is able to delegate tasks while controlling their implementation responsibly. The relationship between the Madrasah principal and teachers is well-established because it is based on a communicative and open leadership attitude. In various situations, the Madrasah principal directly helps resolve obstacles faced by teachers, provides direction, and carries out monitoring through the homeroom teacher. This approach creates a comfortable working atmosphere and is full of mutual respect.[18] Daily life at the Madrasah shows that the relationship between teachers is also harmonious, without any differences in treatment, and with a strong family atmosphere.

One of the principal's strategies for obtaining pure information is to go directly into the classroom or engage in dialogue with students. This is done so that the information received is not through intermediaries and is more objective. In addition, the principal requests a report after each activity is completed to ensure that all activities run smoothly and according to plan.[19] The approach implemented not only creates a healthy work environment but also improves the quality of educator performance at the Madrasah. In implementing a democratic leadership style, the Madrasah principal also prioritizes the value of inclusivity. All teachers are treated equally, regardless of religious, racial, ethnic, or cultural background. The Madrasah principal's view is that the institution's success is not solely determined by him/herself, but rather the result of the collaborative work of all educators and education staff. This is reflected in meeting forums, where differences of opinion are accepted as long as they are positive and constructive. The Madrasah principal strives to listen to all suggestions and criticisms, although in practice there are circumstances where differing opinions are not always accepted, especially if they align with the Madrasah principal's personal views.

There are also dynamics in the implementation of this democratic style. Some teachers felt that on some occasions, the principal listened more to the opinions of senior teachers or vice principals. This was because the principal was an alumnus of the institution and felt more comfortable discussing with senior teachers first. However, suggestions from other teachers were still considered through informal channels, outside of formal forums. The principal often sought information from other teachers privately, and the results of these communications were used in collective policy-making. This practice demonstrates that even though not all teachers are directly involved in the formal decision-making process, their views are still accommodated in other ways.[20]

In every task or activity, the Madrasah principal prioritizes fair distribution of responsibilities and involves many parties. This is done to create a shared commitment and a sense of ownership of the program being implemented. The Madrasah principal acts as a supervisor and maintains harmony among fellow teachers, as well as encouraging a spirit of cooperation to ensure the success of the Madrasah program. From the overall observation and interview process conducted, it can be concluded that the democratic leadership style implemented at MTs. Miftahul Ulum has been running well and has had a positive impact on improving the quality of teacher work and a comfortable and participatory work atmosphere. Despite facing challenges such as differences in character and the dynamics of decision-making forums, the Madrasah principal continues to prioritize democratic principles in carrying out his duties. Awareness to respect differences, open communication spaces, and encourage the active participation of all Madrasah components are key strengths in building a strong and dignified educational institution.

4. Conclusion

Understanding the explanation above, it can be concluded that the Principals of MTs. Nurul Wafa and MTs. Miftahul Ulum consistently apply a democratic leadership style in managing their institutions. Every policy and decision taken is always through a process of deliberation, careful consideration, and involves all components of the school, both teachers and students, through official forums and informal communication. Open communication and openness to suggestions are key to creating a participatory, collaborative, and adaptive environment. This leadership style not only encourages active participation but also spurs teacher innovation in the development of

learning and school programs. Furthermore, all policies remain directed in accordance with the vision and mission of the foundation, so that the involvement of all parties does not ignore the basic principles of the institution. Thus, the implementation of democratic leadership at MTs. Nurul Wafa has proven to be able to build a harmonious work atmosphere, improve teacher performance, and create an open and innovative educational environment.

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