

Teacher's Perception of the Principal's Leadership

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ABSTRACT

This study answers the question of how teachers perceive the leadership of the madrasa principal. The type of this research is a qualitative approach with descriptive analytical study method, towards Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 1 Tapanuli Tengah. The focus of the research analysis includes aspects of behavior, experience, and leadership strategies of the madrasa principal. The results of this study indicate that (1) the leadership behavior displayed by the madrasa principal is perceived as good by the teachers. This is indicated by the exemplary figure displayed by the head of the madrasa and in line with the needs of the teacher, although there are still weaknesses in the aspect of providing learning facilities in madrasas. (2) the experience provided by the head of the madrasa, namely creating a conducive learning climate, appreciating the performance of educators, and providing creative and innovative space for teachers in educating. (3) the leadership strategy practiced by the head of the madrasa to the teacher provides support (motivation) to the implementation of professional practice in educating, including the provision of guidance, direction, and teaching practice through teacher delegations to participate in education and training (training), Subject Teacher Deliberation activities (MGMP), as well as reminding teachers about optimizing daily and monthly performance in the momentum of monthly apples in madrasas.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Leadership is a term that is constantly being studied, researched, and discussed related to organization and management (Ho, 2012; Wan, et.al., 2018). This is based on the location of the urgency and centrality of the leader's role as the pinnacle of policy makers in an organization. In practice, it can be seen how the attitude of leaders in educational institutions in making decisions and communicating

with teachers (educators), students, education staff, and "school residents" (Mattar, 2012). The implementation of leadership attitudes is certainly a measure of the success of leaders in making decisions, establishing a policy, and being communicative with "school residents".

According to Adeyemi (2010), the important role of madrasah principals is in implementing managerial functions, supporting the power (spirit) and performance of teachers. In line with this, Johnson (2009) states that the head of the madrasah must be able to position himself as the highest decision maker in the institution and be responsible for the process of implementing learning in the madrasa. This is emphasized by Sebastian, et.al., (2017) that leadership in madrasahs is the responsibility of the madrasa head in running the madrasa organization, both from managerial and academic aspects.

The success of a madrasa principal can be identified through improving student learning outcomes and achievements (Gurr, et.al., 2006). In this context, the madrasa principal requires the central role of the teacher as a "leader" in learning activities with students. Furthermore, the qualities of a madrasa principal can be identified through a set of traits, behavior, personality, consistency, honesty, transparency, communication skills, commitment, and a sense of social justice. Because, the practice of leadership always involves between a leader and his followers or subordinates (Epitropaki & Martin, 2013; Le Blanc & González-Romá, 2012).

Supporting the above statement, Paletta & Bezzina (2016) explain that authoritarian and unified leadership in organizations is theoretically inadequate to manage complex and adaptive challenges. This is based on a logical view that the madrasa organization is ecological, and the decisions are in the "hands of the leader", so that there is a linkage and dependence between the madrasa "citizens" (Allen, et.al., 2016; Yair, 1996). In fact, structurally there is no leader without followers, but culturally everyone must have a leadership spirit, especially the head of the madrasa (Olsson, et.al., 2012; Peters, 2017; Bunders, et.al., 2021).

Sourced from research by Bellibaş, et.al. (2021), obtained information that leadership behavior in madrasahs has a direct impact (effect) on teachers and learning activities in the classroom. In line with this, Eckman (2006) argues that the exemplary leadership attitude practiced by the madrasa principal in the form of attitudes, behavior, strategies, and work vision, will affect the performance and dedication of teachers in teaching. In more detail, Blase & Blase (2002) describe that the leadership behavior in question includes (1) giving suggestions, (2) feedback, (3) asking for suggestions or opinions from subordinates in deliberation, and (4) appreciating the performance of subordinates.

According to Sari, et.al. (2020: 200-216), leaders must also inform various teacher professional developments, including moral and material support for teachers, collaboration, developing teacher professional development relationships, staff coaching and development, and providing guidance facilities for teachers in the implementation of classroom action research. This opinion supports the research of Al-Mahdy, et.al. (2016) who concluded that leadership that prospers teachers (generates satisfaction for teachers) has a significant synergistic impact on student achievement. Observing these various opinions, it is understood that there is a synergistic relationship between the leadership of the madrasa principal on teacher performance, and also has an impact on student achievement.

Structurally, the assessment of the leadership of the madrasah head is carried out by the madrasa supervisor as the supervisor of the Islamic educational institution unit under the auspices of the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia. However, the teacher's considerations and views need to be considered, because it is the teachers who directly feel the impact of the policies and treatment of the leadership in running the madrasa program (Najmulmunir, et.al., 2009: 23-34). In fact, the teacher's performance during teaching is also greatly influenced by the leadership factor of the madrasa principal.

Madrasah Aliyah Negeri (MAN) 1 Tapanuli Tengah as one of the Islamic educational institutions in Central Tapanuli Regency (Tapteng), seeks to become an educational institution that excels in achievement, is institutionally independent, and creates students who have good morals. The mission carried out by this madrasa is to achieve this vision, namely (1) increasing the potential and intellectual abilities of students according to their potential (meaning, madrasahs understand the existence of

multiple intelligences in students); (2) develop discipline, exemplary according to madrasa culture and religious norms (meaning, madrasas seek to create a conducive learning climate); (3) forming students who are moral and virtuous (that is, madrasas prioritize students' morals/characters); (4) increasing environmental insight, having historical insight as an Islamic spiritual tourism area in Tapteng Regency (meaning, madrasas seek to raise students' awareness of local wisdom); and (5) develop a competitive attitude that is sporty and a spirit of excellence in various fields and opportunities.

The embodiment of the values, attitudes, vision, and mission of the institution, of course requires the collaboration of various parties, ranging from leaders, teachers, education staff, students and the community. In an effort to develop this institutional culture, the head of the madrasa has a program that is carried out with "madrasah residents". In this context, the teacher certainly has a special view (perception) regarding the leadership and managerial aspects of the madrasa principal (Wirawan, 2022). Positive assessments from educators of madrasah principals certainly produce optimal and dedicated performance, and support students' creativity to excel.

Indeed, academic studies on the leadership of madrasah principals have been studied from various aspects. Among them are related to teacher motivation and competence (Putra & Wulandari, 2020: 110-127; Kaspullah, et.al., 2020; Sihombing, 2013), managerial skills of madrasa principals (Sugandi & Sutrisno, 2013), organizational culture (Fardah, 2012), leadership effectiveness of madrasah principals (Harahap, 2010; Putra, 2018: 167-178), madrasah management and supervision (Indriasari, 2010; Kiki, 2020), madrasah principals' policies (Ningrum, 2018), and madrasah principals' leadership style (Megiati, et.al., 2021).

Observing the description above, it can be understood that relevant academic studies on the leadership of madrasah principals are researched around the themes of decision making (style, policy, and effectiveness of leadership) and managerial aspects of madrasah principals. In fact, in addition to decision making, the context of leadership is also closely related to aspects of communication with subordinates. To see this, the researchers tried to analyze the perceptions of teachers at MAN 1 Tapanuli Tengah regarding the behavior, experiences, and strategies applied by the head of the madrasa, summarized in the title of the study, "Teacher's Perception of the Leadership of the Head of Madrasah".

2. METHODS

Research with the theme "teacher's perception of the leadership of the madrasah principal" analyzes aspects of perceptions and/or attitudes experienced personally, as well as interactive contexts that have been carried out by teachers with madrasah principals as leaders. This type of research uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive analytical study method. In practice, the researchers prioritized interviewing 12 (twelve) MAN 1 Tapanuli Tengah teachers who provided information regarding their perceptions of the leadership of the madrasah principal (until the researchers obtained "saturated data"). It is intended to identify, understand, and correlate the perspectives of teachers to the head of the madrasa. In addition, researchers also use the method of observation and documentation as a reinforcement of the validity of the research data. To maintain ethics in data construction, the researchers conducted a member check and wrote the initials of the informants' names. Determination of the research sample using purposive sampling, this is based on the need for research on informants who can provide information according to the research theme, as well as the classification of informants from teacher subjects that are homogeneous. Thus, the teachers who were sampled included individuals who provided detailed information regarding the leadership of the madrasah principal.

After the research data were collected, the data were analyzed using thematic content (Creswell, 2009). The thematic approach aims to understand "what is told" not the structure of the story and to identify problems and experiences based on predetermined themes (Ferdiansyah, et.al., 2020: 58-74). The research data collected were coded and classified. Transcripts were analyzed by combining structural and descriptive coding processes (Leavy, 2017: 139). Followed by data interpretation by using depth critically to interpret according to the words spoken by participants. During the analysis, the code is adapted, and additional code is added to the coding list if needed. Patterns of meaning were

identified across the data set, leading to the formulation of high-level interpretive themes. Throughout the analysis process, the research team repeatedly analyzed and looked at different steps or things for comparison. In which, relevant citations are selected to describe the identified themes.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Teacher's Perception in Madrasah Principal Leadership

Teachers' perceptions or views on the leadership of the madrasah principal are obtained from the interaction of madrasah leaders with teachers regarding programs, policies, and learning in madrasahs. It contains aspects of investigation, reflection, exploration, and experimentation in learning activities (Bari, 2014). Specific views from the teacher to the madrasah leadership were also obtained from the directions given by the madrasah head regarding the flexibility of activities in the madrasah environment, the steps, and learning methods that the teacher had to implement. For this reason, the head of the madrasah has the role of providing direction, organizing, coaching (guiding), on the process and performance carried out by the teacher (Soleman, 2018). On this basis, teachers have different views on everything the principal does and the teacher feels its usefulness in teaching practice.

Based on the observations of the researchers in early February (05 February 2022), data were obtained that the teacher showed several changes in behavior, attitudes and goals exemplified by the madrasah head during his leadership. The following are excerpts from interviews with several teachers at madrasahs:

"My opinion about the leadership of the madrasah principal is very good, because the madrasah principal often consults about the problems faced in the madrasah, and also often motivates both students and teachers/educators". (Results of direct interview with Zakiyah Hibdar Pasaribu, S.Ag., March 31, 2022)."

In line with the interview excerpt above, Rodiyah Hastuti Tanjung, S.Pd.I. said:

"...My opinion about the leadership of madrasah principals is good, because madrasah principals often ask about the condition of teachers who are present and not and often motivate teachers in carrying out their duties (Results of direct interview with Deputy Head of Madrasah Curriculum Sector MAN 1 Tapanuli Tengah, 31 March 2022)".

In line with the interview excerpt above, Rahmiyani Sinaga, S.Pd. said:

"...The head of the madrasah can foster communication with all teaching and educational personnel within the MAN environment. He also creates comfortable madrasahs, always guides and provides input and advice to teachers. (Results of direct interview with Chemistry teacher at MAN 1 Tapanuli Tengah, 31 March 2022).

Excerpts from several interviews above, information is obtained that various perceptions arise regarding the head of the madrasah, including frequently asking the teacher's condition, motivating and giving advice. In line with the results of the interview, Megiati & Pratiwi (2021) explained that the efforts of the madrasah head in interacting with teachers communicatively affect teacher performance. Furthermore, Sumarsono (2018: 156-170) explains that various madrasah programs are perceived by teachers to be implemented if the leadership of the madrasah principal is effective and conducive.

Teachers have almost the same view in implementing the leadership of the madrasah principal as in terms of guiding, directing, providing encouragement and communicating well with all personnel in the madrasah environment. This finding is similar to what was reported by Sahlin (2022), madrasah principals showed empathy, communicated effectively and motivated in teacher training.

The emphasis on madrasah leadership has a major influence on improving quality in madrasahs (Yirci, et.al., 2014). As primary leaders, principals can set direction and goals, understand and develop teachers, design and manage communities, and manage the learning environment (Leithwood & Day, 2008). Based on this description, it can be concluded that the head of MAN 1 Tapanuli Tengah (Irfan

Pasaribu, S.Pd.I.) is perceived positively (good) by the teachers, this is indicated by the interview answers stating his habit of asking the teacher's condition, motivation, and provide input (advice) to teachers, in order to improve the quality of performance and human resources in madrasahs.

Encouragement by Madrasah Principals for Teachers in Professional Practice

Leadership, innovation, and creativity inherent in the personality of the madrasah principal, have a major impact on teacher creativity in the learning process and encourage teachers to share knowledge (scientific insights) to students. Slegers, et.al. (2014) argues that the leadership of the madrasah principal in the form of motivation and support for teachers will lead to collective trust and a dedicated attitude from teachers. In fact, the encouragement or motivation (guidance) provided by the madrasah principal helps teachers in professional teaching practices.

Based on the observations of the researchers, it was obtained information that the teacher was inspired by what was done by the head of the madrasah. This is because the head of the madrasah often instructs the tasks that he himself has practiced in the madrasah. The encouragement (motivation) of a madrasah principal is a necessity for teachers, because of his central role as a role model (figure) for all subordinates. In this context, professionalism and dedication are the 2 (two) key words that the madrasah principal must give to his subordinates through his leadership attitude. As stated by the informants in the interviews that the researchers conducted, including the following:

"During his leadership (Mr. Irfan Pasaribu, S.Pd.I.), he always encouraged us teachers to practice professionally through the example started by him. It means, the examples are direct from Pak Irfan, not just orders". (Interview with Mulia Darni, S.Pd.I., Guru Akidah Akhlak MAN 1 Tapanuli Tengah, 29 March 2022).

Supporting the above interview, Hadisyah Putri, S.Pd. said:

"We teachers at MAN 1 Tapanuli Tengah always receive guidance and motivation from the madrasah principal to carry out professional practice in teaching. As for the efforts of the head of the madrasah, namely by providing direction to converts/ahs (teachers) about the implementation of learning well during the monthly apples (17th of every month)" (Results of interview with Khairanni Tanjung, S.Ag. Islamic Cultural History Teacher, 29 March 2022).

The interview data above shows that the madrasah principal provides support to teachers regarding professional practice by providing guidance. Guidance and direction given in the implementation of learning is carried out once a month. This guidance and direction is given during the monthly meeting, in the form of advice regarding the teaching and learning process. This gives teachers a new understanding in the implementation of teacher-student teaching towards better education.

Teacher professional learning has gained considerable recognition in school improvement research because high quality teaching is now considered a prerequisite for student learning. In line with the experience of the participants above, the research of Karacabey, et.al. (2020) informed that principal leadership is significantly related to teacher professional learning. This is where the importance of the principal's role in fostering, directing and motivating teachers to carry out teaching professionally, so as to obtain quality teaching. At the time of conducting the guidance and direction of teaching professional teachers there are obstacles that are felt by the teacher. As expressed by the following participants:

"The Head of Madrasah often encourages teachers to practice professionally, although there are often problems with the facilities available at Madrasahs. He always leaves a message that students are children whose potential must be developed, so the problem of lack of facilities must be covered with the creations of each teacher". (Interview with Mulia Darni, S.Pd.I., Guru Akidah Akhlak MAN 1 Tapanuli Tengah, 29 March 2022).

Supporting the above interview, Khairanni Tanjung, S.Ag. said:

"The madrasah principal encouraged us to teach professionally. However, obstacles are often found in the availability of facilities needed by teachers. The head of the madrasah always reminds us that it is admitted that the facilities are lacking, but please be optimal in teaching by utilizing existing facilities plus the creativity and innovation of the teachers". (Results of interview with Khairanni Tanjung, S.Ag. Islamic Cultural History Teacher, 29 March 2022).

The excerpt from the interview above shows that in order to achieve the optimal level of teacher professionalism, madrasah principals provide motivation and direction regarding the importance of educating students wholeheartedly, despite inadequate facilities. On another occasion, Irfan Pasaribu, S.Pd.I. (Head of MAN 1 Tapanuli Tengah) stated that, "the constraints in question include incomplete learning tools (media) for student practice and experimentation, limited textbooks, and limited laboratory facilities". Explicitly, Er (2021) in his research states that student learning outcomes are highly dependent on the quality of learning practices in the classroom and outside the classroom. Supporting this, Luyten & Bazo (2019) reiterates how the central role of madrasah leadership is needed in optimizing teacher performance. At least, even though the facilities are not adequate conceptually and theoretically, the principal always wholeheartedly supports teacher performance, appreciates teacher performance, and gives teachers the flexibility to be creative and innovate to develop the potential of students (Supovitz, et.al., 2010). Likewise, research by Astuti & Danial (2019: 31-45) suggests that inadequate facilities in madrasahs remain the responsibility of the madrasah head. This is because the top decision-making and responsibility for the needs of the madrasah lies with the head of the madrasah.

Another study conducted by Park & Byun (2021), explains that the academic success of students is very much the contribution of the teachers. Teachers ideally support students to continue to excel, so that the enthusiasm for learning and students' expectations about future needs can be carried out optimally. Thus, the encouragement (motivation) from the head of the madrasah to the teacher has a big role for achievement motivation which is transmitted by the teacher to the students, so that a conducive learning climate will be created at MAN 1 Tapanuli Tengah.

The Strategy of the Head of Madrasah in Guiding and Directing the Professional Practice of Learning

Teacher professional learning has gained considerable recognition in madrasah improvement research because high quality teaching is now considered a prerequisite for student learning. The achievement of teaching quality is supported by madrasah leaders. Without the support of a quality learning madrasah principal, the data will not be achieved as expected (Purwanti, 2016). For this reason, the support for the guidance and direction of the madrasah principal in achieving the quality of teaching is very much needed by the teacher.

The principal's strategy and teacher trust are important means of influencing teacher professional learning. Madrasah principals occupy important positions that can have a major influence on teacher and student learning (Leithwood, et.al., 2020). Teachers' expectations in meeting the needs of teachers in supporting professional teaching practices with various strategies carried out by leaders, as expressed by this participant:

"The current strategy of the head of madrasah in guiding the professional practice of learning is to include teachers in subject training in accordance with their respective fields and also to form MGMP (Results of excerpts from an interview with Khairanni Tanjung, S.Ag., 27 March 2022) "

Supporting the above interview, Khairanni Tanjung, S.Ag. said:

"The principal's strategy in guiding and directing professional practice is by reminding teachers to be on time in carrying out the teaching and learning process, reminding in making reports, both daily reports and monthly reports, as well as motivating in making lesson plans". (The results of the interview with Mulia Darni, S.Pd, I. Teacher of Islamic Cultural History, March 29, 2022).

The interview data above, from the teacher's perception, shows that the madrasah principal has a strategy to guide and direct teachers in teaching professional practice. The principal of the madrasah sends and engages teachers in educational activities and subject training according to the MGMP. Then remind the teacher in teaching such as making daily and monthly reports. This strategy seems to give teachers hope and opportunities to improve their teaching experience and understanding more professionally.

Sølvik & Roland (2022) assert that the strategies of madrasah principals and the diverse experiences of teachers contribute to the expansion of leading professional learning among teachers. Based on this affirmation, it appears that the leadership of the madrasah principal at MAN 1 Tapanuli Tengah is responsible for developing the practice of the teaching profession. School leaders provide a broader understanding, which is needed by teachers in the learning process and an understanding of the potential of professional learning in madrasahs and their implementation (Yang, et.al., 2004; Zhang, et.al., 2021). Thus, it is interpreted that the madrasah principal's efforts to facilitate and provide support for continuous learning opportunities for all teachers, innovation and inculcating knowledge sharing and learning are strategies for madrasah principals in realizing professional teaching practices at MAN 1 Tapanuli Tengah.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings and discussion above, it can be concluded that (1) the leadership behavior displayed by the madrasah principal is perceived as good by the teachers. This is indicated by the exemplary figure displayed by the head of the madrasah and in line with the needs of the teacher, although there are still weaknesses in the aspect of providing learning facilities in madrasahs. (2) the experience provided by the head of the madrasah, namely creating a conducive learning climate, appreciating the performance of educators, and providing creative and innovative space for teachers in educating. (3) the leadership strategy practiced by the head of the madrasah to the teacher provides support (motivation) to the implementation of professional practice in educating, including the provision of guidance, direction, and teaching practice through teacher delegations to participate in education and training (training), Subject Teacher Deliberation activities (MGMP), as well as reminding teachers about optimizing daily and monthly performance in the momentum of monthly appraisals in madrasahs.

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