

Servant Leadership: Maintaining Teacher Commitment and Building Community Trust

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ABSTRACT

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This study aims to analyze servant leadership: maintaining teacher commitment and building community trust in educational institutions. This research was conducted at the RA Masyitoh V institution located in the Probolinggo area. This research is a qualitative descriptive research type of case study, in this study the formulation of problems that guide research to explore or photograph social situations that will be researched thoroughly, broadly and deeply. Data were collected using interviews, observations and documentation studies. The sources of informants for this research are principals, teachers and parents. Based on research conducted by servant leadership, it has succeeded in fostering higher teacher commitment and shaping the pattern of public trust in educational institutions. The results revealed that servant leadership implemented in RA Masyitoh V in maintaining teacher commitment and building community trust was carried out by; Leader appreciation for teachers, building collaborative teams, maintaining servant leadership commitment. The implication obtained from the results of this research is the stronger commitment of teachers in carrying out the mandate which has an impact on the growth of public trust in educational institutions with a collaborative relationship from all institutional stakeholders both from within and from outside.

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INTRODUCTION

In essence, the principal is a school leader who has great responsibility in all aspects of it (Firdaus et al., 2023) In carrying out their duties, each principal has a different style or type of leadership from one another. The leadership style applied is intended to create changes effectively in influencing the behavior of subordinates (teachers, employees and students) by making them aware of doing what the principal wants (Sahabuddin & Syahrani, 2022).

Rationally, the principal's will in question is a will based on the school's vision and mission that has been made before. The role of a leader or principal in the world of education is very important in creating a conducive environment and building teacher commitment and a strong environment (Ulfah et al., 2022). So important is the role of the principal, it is very necessary for the professional character of the principal with all its dimensions, especially regarding how the principal processes the policies applied. One important aspect of the principal is the area of management. To achieve the effectiveness and efficiency of the expected results, the principal is obliged to manage the school as well as possible (Artilah et al., 2022; Rozi et al., 2022).

The importance of leader involvement in stabilizing an organization was expressed by several previous researchers including Fauzi & Muali, (2018) said leaders become spearheads in the success of an organization, the expertise of leaders in directing their members will create leadership effectiveness. Because morale, comfort, safety, quality of work and the level of achievement of an organization are influenced by a leader, the role of the leader is needed in achieving the goals of an optimal organization (Baharun et al., 2021). Furthermore Anastasiou S, Oikonomou, (2020) said, successful school leaders rely on a wide range of skills, personality traits, and experience to do their jobs, inspire, lead, and competently meet the demands of a rapidly growing society and school, they also communicate with teachers, students, parents, and stakeholders while managing conflicts in their school units. Leaders must have skills and advantages, especially skills / advantages in one area so that they are able to influence others to jointly carry out certain activities for the achievement of one or several goals (Fitriani, 2015; Zamroni et al., 2021).

The commitment of teachers and community trust will grow with visionary leaders who are able to stick to the establishment and are able to serve all cuttingholders of educational institutions, of course, in the context of developing education in a better direction (Husnah et al., 2021 (Husnah et al., 2021)(Nurhaco et al., 2021) However, there are several cases that occur in the field, namely principals who are less able to manage schools properly characterized by lack of innovation in managing school programs, unsatisfactory services to all components of the institution, less ability of principals to carry out responsibilities and inability of principals to face existing challenges. Some of these gaps can have a negative impact on the effectiveness and quality of education in schools. The problem is caused by various factors including the lack of competence possessed by the principal or even in some cases the principal is just a black on white name but cannot act as a principal professionally.

With several cases exposed, teacher commitment and community trust can falter or collapse at any time, even though teacher commitment and community trust in work and school are key factors in achieving educational success. Teacher commitment can be affected by a variety of factors, including weak or less inspiring leadership from the principal. Lack of adequate support, recognition, and development opportunities can also affect teacher commitment (Lee & Mohd Hamzah, 2023). In addition, unfair policies or lack of effective communication between principals and teachers can also lead to shaky commitments. The inability to manage leaders not only has an impact on teacher commitment, but also flows from the depletion of public trust in the educational institution (Billy & Taat, 2020).

Teacher commitment and community trust are important components that must be owned by educational institutions, as expressed by research prenamia by Husnah et al., (2021) Teachers who have a high commitment are not only professional in teaching in the classroom but also uphold their competencies which lead to the progress of the institution. Then Muis et al., (2018) Commitment is seen as a value orientation towards organizations that shows individuals are very concerned about and prioritize their work and organization. Affirmed by Ahyanuardi et al., (2018) Low commitment to the work or profession he is engaged in causes attitudes or behaviors that are not positive towards work or profession. Furthermore, about community trust in educational institutions presented by Hakim, (2019) community trust in schools has a great impact on school progress because they are an inseparable unity because they both give and take. Also revealed by Karsono et al., (2021)

In solving this case, a leadership approach is needed, an approach that has proven effective is servant leadership. Servant leadership views leaders as servants who focus on the needs and welfare of all school components, be it teachers, students or parents (Mufassir et al., 2019) By becoming a leader with a pattern of service, the headmaster can help build strong bonds with all components of the school, listen to and respect their views, and provide the necessary support. This will help maintain the commitment of teachers in serving and build or strengthen community trust in the education system that runs (Fadhli, 2017)

Several studies have revealed servant leadership that is able to maintain the commitment of subordinates including; Wuwung et al., (2020) said that leaders who serve are leaders who influence and serve as well as prioritize, empower, and assist followers in the full development of their personal capacities so that their subordinates are closer and prioritize the interests of their organization.

Then Mufassir et al., (2019) said servant leadership Emphasizing the importance of aspirations for the organization rather than ambitions for specific people, humility, collaboration, and work lead to positive results. It was also emphasized by Solikin et al., (2017) that leadership that serves with sincerity gives encouragement to subordinates to behave more towards leaders. In addition, Andriani & Wibawanta, (2020) revealed that servant leadership also plays an important role in building public trust in educational institutions. Through a genuine service approach and dedication, the headmaster can create a positive climate in the school and surrounding community. In an environment led by a servant leader, the community will feel confident and believe that the educational institution really cares about the interests of students and provides quality education for the community (Hermawan et al., 2022).

RA Masyitoh V is a school that applies the concept of servant leadership to all components of the institution with the aim of strengthening teacher commitment and building community trust in the institution. RA Masyitoh V has visionary leaders who can carry out responsibilities well and are able to manage institutions in improving their quality and quality. Departing from this, researchers have an interest in analyzing and understanding the implementation of servant leadership in maintaining teacher commitment and community trust in educational institutions. The focus of this study aims to analyze how the leadership of the principal of RA Masyitoh V in serving all components of the institution in maintaining teacher commitment and community trust for the realization of education dreamed of by all components of educational institutions.

METHOD

This study used qualitative descriptive method. Qualitative research that can be described in words, and language in a natural context and by utilizing natural methods. Qualitative research aims to gain insight related to the construction of reality that occurs to be interpreted (Sholikhah, 2016) The method is used to describe and analyze servant leadership: maintaining teacher commitment and building community trust. The place chosen to conduct research is in early childhood education in Probolinggo, namely RA Masyitoh V. The informants of this study are the components of the school which can be seen in the following table: principal, teachers, staff, and parents.

Table 1. Research Informant Sources

NO	INFORMANT	AMOUNT	INITIALS
1	Head	1	WT
2	Teacher	2	NC, DA
3	Staff	1	AP

In the table it appears that the source of information obtained from several informants including; Principal, two teachers, one staff and one parent. To select and determine informants in this study, researchers used purposive sampling techniques. Data collection techniques in this study are using content / document analysis techniques, in-depth interviews (in depth interviews), and events / observations. The method used to check the validity of data is by triangulation method, namely by utilizing various methods as consideration. This triangulation is carried out by comparing and checking information or data obtained from documentation with the results of observations and interviews (Uci Pranita, Nina Kurniah, 2018).

At the initial stage of data collection, then reduce the data sorted in the form of records, then display data understands the data which is then drawn conclusions from the data studied.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Servant leadership is a leadership approach that focuses on service to all components of the institution. In the context of early childhood education, servant leadership is related to how a leader or teacher prioritizes the needs and welfare of teachers, students and builds strong relationships with the school community. RA Masyitoh V applies the servant leadership method in protecting all aspects of the school component layer so that. Here is some possible research results obtained in the context of servant leadership in early childhood education:



Figure 1. Servant Leadership in Early Childhood Education

Leader Appreciation for Teachers

Teachers are the spearhead in the success of learning activities in a school. Giving appreciation to all teachers in the form of support from a leader so that the fighting spirit of the teachers will increase and the more committed to the progress of the institution in the future. The appreciation given to teachers is in the form of providing training, teaching materials, technology, rewards and a conducive work environment (Pratama et al., 2022).

By giving full appreciation to teachers, a servant leader shows his commitment to the growth and development of school human resources so that teachers are higher in maintaining their commitment (Ningsih et al., 2022). Principals who give appreciation to teachers can play a very important role in building commitment among teaching staff. When principals appreciate and acknowledge the efforts and contributions of teachers, they provide strong motivation and encouragement to continue to do well (Huriaty et al., 2022) Based on the expression of the WT informant explained, full appreciation is always favored at this institution in order to provide services and support the effectiveness of school development.

Some appreciation is done for teachers such as providing training according to their needs. The training provided is not only within the school environment but also the termination of training outside the school. The trainings carried out have been verified and ensured to be in accordance with the needs of the school. Not only training but we also try to provide the facilities and infrastructure needed to support school activities. Of all the efforts made by teachers towards the institution, we also appreciate in the form of rewards because they have shown high commitment in building and developing the institution in a more positive direction.

Interviews from several informants, namely NC, DA and FH, found that RA Masyitoh V did several ways to show appreciation for teachers to build and strengthen commitment, namely:

First, Public recognition: The principal publicly recognizes the achievements and contributions of teachers. This is done through staff meetings, school events, or letters of appreciation distributed to outstanding teachers. This public recognition makes teachers feel valued and motivated to continuously improve their performance. Second, Professional support: The headmaster provides strong support for the professional development of teachers, does so by providing opportunities for training or seminars, providing necessary resources and facilitating collaboration between teachers. By providing this support, the headmaster shows concern for the growth and career development of teachers.

Open and transparent communication: The principal of RA Masyitoh V strives to create an open and transparent communication culture by listening to the opinions and input of teachers, as well as providing clear and constructive feedback. By communicating openly, principals are able to build strong relationships with teachers and create a mutually supportive work environment.

Fourth, Collaboration in decision making: In making decisions the principal involves teachers related to school policies or other important changes. By involving teachers in this process, principals demonstrate that their opinions and contributions are valued.

It can also increase teachers' sense of belonging and commitment to decisions. Fifth, Awards and prizes: The principal also gives awards and prizes to teachers as a form of appreciation for their performance. These awards can be certificates of appreciation, bonuses, or other incentives. These awards and prizes not only motivate the teachers who receive them, but can also serve as an example for others to improve their performance. In building commitment, principals need to realize the importance of teacher appreciation. By providing recognition, support, open communication, collaboration, and appreciation, principals can create a positive work environment and build strong commitment among teachers (Santika, 2017) A servant leader must regularly appreciate or recognize and reward the achievements of all components of the institution. This can be done through verbal appreciation, appreciation, or public recognition. By appreciating the achievements of the institution's components, a servant leader builds confidence and motivation, and maintains the commitment of all the institution's human resources.

Build Collaboration Teams

A servant leader promotes a collaborative work culture among teachers. School principals must be able to encourage cooperation in all components of the school, share knowledge, and work together to achieve common goals. By building a solid team, a servant leader can strengthen a teacher's commitment to the school and facilitate collective growth and success (Sofiyana & Trihantoyo, 2012; Zaini, 2020, 2023; Zaini & Hamidah, 2023)

The collaborative culture carried out at RA Masyitoh V is to build a collaborative team between the head, teachers and parents. Collaboration is carried out. The ability to build a collaborative team in servant leadership is the ability of the principal to build a close relationship like a family among school residents (Nurhayati et al., 2022; Nurhayati et al., 2022;) Building a solid relationship requires openness and mutual respect among others, the principal's attitude is the most supportive in establishing good relations with the school community, therefore the principal must have a wise and wise attitude. Wise and wise in leading means clever, clever, knowledgeable, in leading and always using reason every time you make decisions. Does not prioritize "ego", and does not "high-profile" himself as a principal.

AP revealed that the application of servant leadership in RA Masyitoh V in the context of collaboration is by emphasizing open or transparent communication both to teachers and the community such as sharing relevant information, maintaining two-way communication, and explaining decisions and policies clearly.

By communicating openly, principals build trust between teachers and the community, and help maintain commitment to all components involved. FH conveyed that the collaboration team that had been formed included; Curriculum Development Team, Supervision Team, New Student Admission Team, Community Team and Partnership Socialization Team. Several teams were formed involving the community and the principal was actively involved in supervising and controlling the team's performance. By forming positive and mutually beneficial relationships between institutions, teachers and communities, servant leadership has built trust and support that is important in maintaining teacher commitment and strengthening school-community relationships.

To clarify the findings related to the implementation of collaboration in servant leadership at RA Masyitoh V, the following is a summary of the aspects of collaboration that have been implemented by school principals, teachers, and the school community.

Table 2. Aspects of Collaboration in the Implementation of Servant Leadership in RA Masyitoh V

No	Collaboration Aspect	Description
1	Collaborative Culture	School principals promote collaboration by encouraging cooperation, sharing knowledge, and working towards common goals.
2	Close Relationship Building	The principal builds close relationships within the school community through openness, mutual respect, and a wise attitude.
3	Open Communication	Emphasizes transparency by sharing relevant information, maintaining two-way communication, and clearly explaining decisions.
4	Team Formation	Curriculum Development Team, Supervision Team, New Student Admission Team, Community Team, and Partnership Socialization Team were formed.
5	School-Community Collaboration	Collaborates with parents and communities to understand children's development and contribute to optimizing school programs.
6	Deliberation and Consensus	Involves all components in decision-making through open communication and deliberation to avoid misunderstandings.
7	Impact on Commitment and Trust	Servant leadership builds trust and strengthens teacher commitment by fostering positive, mutually beneficial relationships.

The involvement of all components of the institution is very important in creating a positive work climate and improving the overall performance of the educational institution.

When all members of the institution are actively involved and feel a sense of belonging, they are more likely to contribute optimally and work together to achieve common goals (Purbaningrum, 2022; Diana, 2023; Susilawati & Astuti, 2022). LS conveyed that the collaboration carried out by the school with parents, such as the existence of the community team, provides opportunities for us to better understand children's growth and development and understand school programs so that we synergize and contribute to helping School in optimizing existing programs. The head of WT school said, we try our best in maintaining attitudes, behaviors and speech in avoiding jealousy or misunderstanding from all school residents. We also establish open communication and always involve all school components in deciding on a press and by means of deliberation in order to maintain good relations with all school.

The collaboration team with the servant leadership system is able to provide feedback to educational institutions because all components in the team synergize to build the progress of educational institutions so that this situation has an impact on teacher commitment and higher community trust.

Maintaining Servant Leadership Commitment

Leadership is the ability to influence and direct others so that organizational targets are realized. Whether or not the target is achieved depends on the leadership of the organization (Waruwu et al., 2021; Arifin & Sanjani, 2024; Chuanchen, 2023; Hasanah & Hefniy, 2023) But the other most important thing is that the leadership is able to commit to continue to carry out the steps according to the agreement that has been set. In maintaining the commitment of the school component, the first to commit to education is the principal. The commitment or consistency of the principal to the agreed rules must really be carried out in order to be able to set an example for all components of the institution (Anwar, 2019; Khotimah et al., 2024; Sanjani, 2023; Zaini, 2024).

Based on the results of the research, the steps taken by the principal in maintaining the commitment of leadership to serve include; Consistency, consistent in applying the principles of servant leadership in daily actions. Team collaboration empowerment, involves empowering team members so that team members feel they have responsibility and autonomy in work. Provide trust and support to take initiative and make good decisions. The principal always empathizes, listens attentively, opens two-way communication, and provides constructive feedback. Professional training, mentorship, and opportunities to learn and grow. Compassion and transparency: maintain humility and remain transparent in communication and decision making.

DA emphasized that several attitudes of commitment applied by the principal further strengthened the commitment of teachers to further improve their performance, not only that community trust is also increasing with the services carried out by the principal and teachers, this is evidenced by the increasing number of RA Masyitoh V students from year to year. The DA's presentation was also strengthened by LS that, public trust has increased since the services provided by the school to students and parents, we as parents are satisfied and proud of the performance and commitment of all RA Masyitoh V school stakeholders.

By maintaining a commitment to the servant leadership portion and creating a positive work environment, it has an impact on building strong relationships with all components of the school both from the teacher, student and guardian side. Properly managed servant leadership is indicated to have an impact on the defense of teacher commitment that is increasing and able to build higher community trust. This is evidenced by RA Masyitoh V where this institution applies servant leadership in achieving the goals of educational institutions so that the results obtained are beneficial to educational institutions, namely further improving the quality and quality of education both internally (teachers / employees) and externally (guardians / communities).

The results of this study show that the implementation of servant leadership in RA Masyitoh V is successful in increasing teacher commitment and building public trust through effective collaboration between school principals, teachers, and the community. These findings are in line with research conducted by Maulidah et al., (2023), which found that servant leadership is able to create a work environment that supports and increases employee engagement and commitment in the context of education.

In addition, a study by Rusdi et al., (2022), also supports that service-focused leadership strengthens the relationship between leaders and subordinates, which in turn increases trust from external stakeholders, such as the school community. However, this study also adds a different perspective from previous studies by Ansori et al., (2023), which emphasized that the main challenge in implementing servant leadership is consistency in maintaining open communication and collective participation. In the context of RA Masyitoh V, this consistency has been well addressed through public recognition and transparent collaboration, which strengthens teachers' commitment and increases public trust. Thus, this study not only strengthens previous studies, but also highlights the importance of systematic and sustainable implementation in maintaining commitment and trust through servant leadership.

This research makes a theoretical contribution by strengthening the concept of servant leadership in the context of education, especially in increasing teacher commitment and building public trust. Theoretically, this study enriches the existing literature by emphasizing that a service-based leadership approach can create a more collaborative and participatory educational environment, where respect for teachers and open communication are key to its success. In addition, this research also makes a practical contribution by offering servant leadership implementation strategies that can be applied by school principals in various educational institutions.

Practices such as public appreciation, teacher training, community engagement, and team collaboration have proven effective in maintaining teacher engagement and strengthening relationships with the community, so that they can serve as a model for other education leaders in building institutions that are more trusted and responsive to the needs of all stakeholders.

CONCLUSION

This study found that the implementation of servant leadership in RA Masyitoh V was able to effectively increase teacher commitment and build public trust in educational institutions. These findings confirm that a leadership approach that focuses on service, collaboration, and reward for educators not only strengthens internal relationships between stakeholders but also increases participation and support from the external community. The application of servant leadership, which is characterized by open communication, public appreciation, and collective involvement in decision-making, creates an environment conducive to the development of the quality of education. This provides new insights into how a more humane leadership approach can overcome challenges in maintaining teacher commitment and building public trust, especially in early childhood education institutions.

The strength of this research lies in the understanding of servant leadership in the education sector. This research not only updates existing perspectives on the importance of collaborative leadership but also adds new insights into the importance of appreciation and communication as key elements in building commitment and trust. However, this research has limitations, especially because its scope is limited to one institution in the Probolinggo area. Additionally, the qualitative approach used may not reflect the variation in context in other institutions. Therefore, further research involving more locations, institutional variation, or quantitative approaches is needed to validate these results in a broader context. Further research can also explore demographic differences such as gender and age, and apply more comprehensive survey methods to strengthen the basis for more effective education policies.

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