



Principal's Strategy in Improving Madrasah Teacher Performance

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Abstract :

The performance of teachers in madrasahs plays a crucial role in the overall quality of education. This study explores the principals' strategies in improving teacher performance at madrasahs, with a particular focus on the leadership approach and pedagogical collaboration methods. The research utilizes a qualitative approach, including interviews and observations of the strategies implemented by school principals. The findings reveal that active leadership based on example, regular structured pedagogical collaboration, and an emphasis on professional development are key factors in enhancing teacher performance. Additionally, the study highlights the importance of fostering a collaborative environment where teachers engage in continuous learning and teamwork. The role of principals in setting clear expectations, providing support, and facilitating opportunities for professional growth is found to be essential in creating a motivated and effective teaching staff. The study concludes that effective leadership and strategic collaboration are critical to improving teacher performance in madrasahs, ultimately contributing to the overall quality of education.

INTRODUCTION

The performance of teachers plays a crucial role in the success and development of any educational institution, including madrasahs. As educators, madrasah teachers are entrusted not only with imparting knowledge but also with nurturing the character and spirituality of their students (Alzouebi et al., 2025; Heystek & Emekako, 2020; Mercader et al., 2021; Rais et al., 2022). Therefore, the enhancement of teacher performance is a strategic imperative for improving the quality of education in madrasahs, especially in the face of growing global educational challenges. This performance improvement must be supported by effective leadership strategies that enable teachers to maximize their potential and respond to the evolving needs of students and the broader community (Ballangrud & Aas, 2022; Schlebusch, 2020; Williams et al., 2021).

The role of a principal in improving teacher performance is multifaceted, involving various leadership approaches and strategies. In the context of madrasahs, where education is grounded in both academic and religious values, the principal's leadership strategy must harmonize these dual aspects effectively (Balasi et al., 2023; Mgaiwa & Hamis, 2022; Shava & Heystek, 2021). As educational leaders, principals are responsible for creating an environment that fosters professional development, motivation, and continuous improvement (Alkaabi et al., 2025; Kierstead et al., 2023; Siriparp et al., 2022). This includes providing teachers with the necessary tools, resources, and support for their growth, while also encouraging them to align their work with the institution's values and

objectives.

In recent years, there has been an increased emphasis on collaborative leadership and data-driven decision-making in educational settings, with a particular focus on how these approaches can enhance teacher performance (Abdullah, 2024; Liswati et al., 2023; Sain, 2025). However, despite this growing body of research, there is limited focus on how specific strategies tailored to the unique environment of madrasahs can effectively improve teacher performance. Given the diverse challenges faced by madrasah principals, including limited resources, varying levels of teacher motivation, and the need for alignment with religious principles, there is a pressing need to explore leadership strategies that are specifically designed for this context (Baharun, 2023; Herlina, 2024; Setiawan Putri et al., 2024).

This study aims to address this gap by examining the strategies employed by madrasah principals to enhance teacher performance. Through a qualitative approach, this research will identify and analyze the key leadership practices that contribute to the improvement of teacher effectiveness in madrasahs. By doing so, this study seeks to provide valuable insights into how principals can implement strategies that foster professional growth and performance enhancement in the unique setting of a madrasah. The findings of this study are expected to contribute to the broader discourse on educational leadership, offering practical recommendations for madrasah principals to strengthen the performance of their teaching staff, thus improving the overall quality of education provided in these institutions.

Improving teacher performance is a key element in efforts to improve the quality of madrasah education, where the role of the madrasah principal is a strategic factor that determines the success. In the context of increasingly complex changes in the educational landscape, madrasah principals are required to implement leadership strategies that are not only managerially effective but also relevant to Islamic values and the institutional culture of madrasahs. This study starts from the argument that the right leadership strategy, including a participatory approach, teacher empowerment, and the use of data-based evaluation, can significantly encourage increased teacher professionalism and performance. The main objective of this study is to analyze the madrasah principal's strategy in improving teacher performance, as well as to identify supporting and inhibiting factors in its implementation. The originality of this study lies in its contextual focus on madrasahs as religious-based educational institutions, as well as the presentation of a strategic perspective that integrates the principles of educational leadership with religious values in human resource management. This study is expected to provide conceptual and practical contributions to the development of madrasah principal leadership that is responsive to the challenges of the times and oriented towards improving the quality of learning.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study design. This study aims to deeply understand the principal's strategy in improving teacher performance at MA Nurul Jadid, Paiton Probolinggo. The research location was chosen because of the relevance and strategic contribution of the principal in improving teacher performance, which is considered unique and has the potential to be a learning model for other institutions (Nafindra & Rifqi, 2022).

The subjects of this study include the principal as the main actor of the strategy,

teachers as the object of the strategy, and students and administrative staff as additional informants who can provide views on the impact of the strategies implemented. Data collection was carried out through several techniques, namely in-depth interviews with the principal, teachers, students, and staff to understand the strategies implemented and their impacts; participatory observation of activities such as coordination meetings, class supervision, and teacher training; and documentation that includes the principal's work program, teacher performance reports, supervision notes, and training reports (Sriminosari, 2024). To ensure the validity of the data, triangulation of techniques and sources was carried out by comparing the results of interviews, observations, and documentation.

The main research instrument was the researcher himself, supported by interview guidelines, observation formats, and document checklists. Data analysis was conducted using the Miles and Huberman interactive analysis model, which includes the stages of data collection, data reduction, data presentation in narrative or diagram form, and drawing conclusions verified through triangulation (Fadli, 2021). Data validity was also strengthened by member checking techniques to confirm the results of interviews with informants and the use of field notes and discussions with colleagues to ensure the credibility and dependability of the data. The research procedure involved three stages. First, the preparation stage includes determining the location, managing permits, and preparing research guidelines. Second, the implementation stage, namely data collection through interviews, observations, and documentation, accompanied by initial analysis. Third, the completion stage, in the form of in-depth data analysis and preparation of the research report results. This approach is designed to provide a deep understanding of the principal's strategy in improving teacher performance at MA Nurul Jadid Paiton Probolinggo.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

Active Leadership Based on Example

One of the main strategies of the madrasah principal in improving teacher performance is to implement active leadership based on exemplary behavior. This strategy positions the madrasah principal not only as an administrative manager but also as a central figure who is a role model in work attitudes, discipline, and commitment to the quality of education. Exemplary behavior becomes an effective leadership instrument because, psychologically, it forms a professional culture that is imitated by teachers in carrying out their duties.

In an interview with the Principal of Madrasah NA, he explained, "If we want teachers to be disciplined, we must come earlier. If we want teachers to be enthusiastic about teaching, the madrasah principal must often come to class, not just sit in the principal's room." This statement shows that exemplary behavior is not only symbolic but is manifested in consistent real actions in the field. The madrasah principal actively participates in various learning activities, even periodically conducting informal observations to provide moral support to teachers, not just evaluating their performance. One of the senior teachers at the same madrasah, with the initials LS, also gave his views: "We feel more enthusiastic because the head of the madrasah often comes down

directly. He doesn't just give orders, but also helps when there are difficulties, especially when there was a change in the curriculum yesterday. That motivates us." This testimony strengthens that the exemplary strategy has a positive impact on teacher motivation, creating a more collaborative and supportive work atmosphere.

This exemplary role is not only limited to aspects of work professionalism, but also in terms of spirituality and ethics. The head of the madrasah consistently shows a commitment to Islamic values such as honesty, responsibility, and sincerity in educational services. A young teacher, with the initials RI, said, "I learned a lot from the way he leads. There is integrity in his actions that makes us not want to disappoint him." This statement shows that exemplary leadership has a long-term effect on shaping the character and integrity of teachers.

However, the implementation of this strategy also faces challenges. An exemplary role requires high consistency and extra energy, especially when the head of the madrasah has to divide his time between managerial tasks and direct involvement in the field. However, the principal of the NA madrasah stated that "Leading is not just about managing, but being one with the process. I believe that if we are present and give examples, change will happen more easily." This statement reflects a leadership philosophy that not only relies on formal authority, but more on moral and personal influence. Thus, the Active Leadership Based on Example strategy has proven to be an approach that not only builds teacher discipline and work enthusiasm but also creates a harmonious, ethical, and professional madrasah ecosystem. The role model of the madrasah principal plays an important role in building trust, loyalty, and a sense of collective responsibility in improving the quality of education in the madrasah.

Regular Structured Pedagogical Collaboration

One strategy that has proven effective in improving teacher performance in madrasahs is the implementation of structured and sustainable pedagogical collaboration. This activity is carried out through regular discussion forums between teachers that have been officially scheduled in the academic calendar. In this forum, teachers discuss learning problems, share best practices, and design learning innovations together. This collaboration not only strengthens synergy between teachers but also creates a reflective space that enriches their teaching strategies. Madrasahs build this collaborative work system as part of a professional culture, where teachers support each other and develop together in an open, structured atmosphere that is oriented towards improving the quality of learning.

The pedagogical collaboration process that is carried out has various forms, such as lesson study, peer teaching, and weekly learning reflections. These activities are carried out systematically with a focus on evaluating and improving the effectiveness of teaching in the classroom. Teachers are actively involved in providing feedback to each other, conducting classroom observations, and preparing follow-up plans for the results of reflections. This collaboration has a significant impact on teachers' ability to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the learning methods used. In addition, this forum also encourages the creation of innovations based on field experience, making teachers more adaptive in dealing with changes in the curriculum and the diverse needs of students. This is a descriptive analysis related to the professional competence of teachers, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Structured Pedagogical Collaborative Practices in Madrasahs

Collaboration Form		Frequency		Objective	Teacher Testimonials	
Weekly Forum	Discussion	Weekly Forum	Discussion	Weekly Discussion Forum	Weekly Forum	Discussion
Collaborative Study	Lesson	Collaborative Study	Lesson	Collaborative Lesson Study	Collaborative Study	Lesson
Peer Teaching		Peer Teaching		Peer Teaching	Peer Teaching	

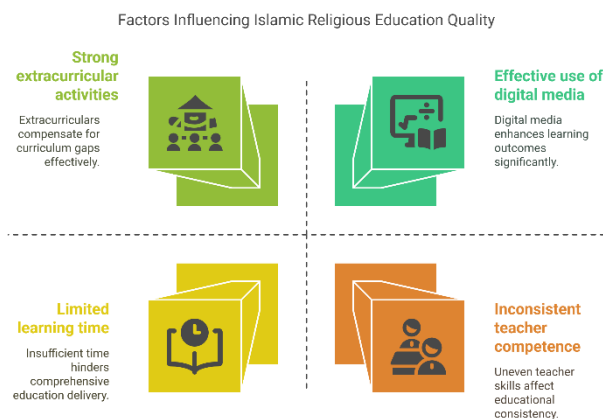
The table emphasizes that pedagogical collaboration carried out regularly not only strengthens relationships between teachers but also becomes a concrete professional learning space. Through this activity, teachers not only become teachers but also active and reflective learners. This has a direct impact on improving the quality of teaching and teacher job satisfaction. However, challenges remain. Several teachers admitted that busy schedules and administrative burdens often interfere with consistent attendance at forums. The head of the MS madrasah realized this and stated, "We try to balance, for example, by simplifying administration so that teachers can focus on collaboration activities." This statement shows institutional awareness of the importance of redesigning the workload to support teacher Professional activities.

Thus, the Regular Structured Pedagogical Collaboration strategy proves itself as a strategic approach that builds a dynamic professional atmosphere, supports learning innovation, and strengthens teacher solidarity in facing the challenges of the ever-changing world of education. This collaboration is the driving force for the transformation of teacher quality in a sustainable manner in the Madrasah ecosystem.

Descriptive Analysis of PAI Learning Quality

The quality of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning in madrasahs is a strategic focus in improving the quality of students spiritually, intellectually, and socially. Field findings show that the PAI learning process tends to be characterized by an integration between textual and contextual approaches. PAI teachers in the madrasahs studied use various active methods, such as group discussions, religious case studies, and social projects based on Islamic values, to bridge teaching materials with the realities of students' lives. The quality of learning increases when teachers can link themes such as morals, worship, and muamalah with the context of students' daily lives. This approach makes PAI lessons more meaningful, applicable, and not limited to memorizing book material alone.

Strengthening the quality of PAI learning is also supported by the use of varied and interactive learning media. Several teachers utilize digital media such as Islamic videos, worship simulations, and online quiz applications that are adjusted to the age and level of students. In addition, classroom learning is reinforced with out-of-class activities such as post-dzuhur study, social service projects based on religious values, and moral mentoring integrated with student programs. These activities enrich students' religious experiences and strengthen the internalization of Islamic values in them. This is an indicator that the quality of Islamic Religious Education learning is not only determined by cognitive achievement, but also by the formation of students' character and spiritual behavior.



Picture 1. Descriptive Analysis of PAI Learning Quality

Findings on the quality of Islamic Religious Education learning in madrasas indicate a complex dynamic between pedagogical innovation efforts and the structural challenges faced. On the one hand, the integration of Islamic values in the context of real life and the use of digital media indicate progress in a learning approach that is more relevant and interesting for students. Extracurricular activities with religious nuances also enrich the process of internalizing spiritual values in a more applicable way. However, on the other hand, the inequality of teacher competencies and limited learning time are serious obstacles that hinder the optimization of the Islamic Religious Education process. This indicates that improving the quality of Islamic Religious Education learning requires not only creative pedagogical strategies, but also policy support that ensures equal distribution of teacher competencies and strengthening proportional time allocation in the madrasah curriculum.

However, behind these good practices, several challenges have also been identified. One of the main obstacles is the inequality of competence between teachers in managing creative and contextual pedagogical approaches. There are still teachers who rely on conventional lecture methods without involving active student participation. In addition, time constraints due to the relatively small allocation of Islamic Religious Education hours are an obstacle to optimally deepening the material and spiritual practices. To answer this challenge, madrasas need to reorganize their Islamic Religious Education teacher training strategies to be more responsive to the needs of the times. Institutional support in the form of academic supervision, provision of contextual learning resources, and strengthening collaboration between teachers are important keys in encouraging continuous improvement in the quality of Islamic Religious Education learning in madrasas.

Discussion

The findings of this study confirm that the strategy of active leadership based on example has a significant influence on strengthening the image of the madrasah as a professional and Islamic institution. The principal of the madrasah who actively provides an example in behavior, work ethic, and digital engagement shows that transformative leadership plays a central role in building the institutional brand image. This is in line with the Transformational Leadership theory by Kenigs et al. (2022), which emphasizes that effective leaders are those who inspire through example. This approach forms the public perception that the madrasah is an organized, adaptive institution with a strong value orientation. This study strengthens the idea that leadership based on example not only has an impact on internal governance but also becomes the foundation of the narrative of institutional identity in the digital public space (Greyling & Tokosi, 2020; Putri, 2024; Sariakin et al., 2025).

Furthermore, regular structured pedagogical collaboration contributes to improving the quality of the learning process while strengthening communication between educators as part of a collaborative institutional image. This finding is in line with the concept of Collaborative Professionalism by Elfira et al. (2024), which states that developing the quality of education cannot be done individually, but through organized and consistent professional cooperation. In the context of madrasahs, this collaboration not only enriches learning strategies but also projects madrasahs as institutions that are open to innovation and continuous improvement (Hu, 2022; Peddell et al., 2020; Widodo et al., 2024). This study contributes by showing that regularity and structure in teacher collaboration also influence external perceptions of the quality of institutions, especially in the eyes of the community and prospective students.

Furthermore, the quality of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning in both madrasahs shows that the integration of Islamic values in a thematic-contextual approach and the use of digital media are important aspects in strengthening a religious brand image that is adaptive to the development of the times. This finding confirms the theory of Contextual Religious Pedagogy by Tunsisa et al. (2025), which states that contextual and participatory religious education can increase the effectiveness of learning and form a strong religious identity. However, challenges such as limited learning time and inequality in teacher competencies indicate that strengthening the quality of learning cannot be separated from supportive institutional policies (Bartanen et al., 2024; Hindaryatiningsih et al., 2025; Mukhtarbekkyzy, 2021). This study shows that public perception of the image of madrasahs is not only formed from digital imaging, but also from the quality of religious education felt directly by students and parents.

From the three findings, it appears that the strategy for building a madrasah brand image is not linear, but multidimensional and integrative. Exemplary leadership, structured pedagogical collaboration, and contextual learning quality form a synergy that simultaneously supports the madrasah institutional narrative. This is in line with the theory of Strategic Institutional Branding (Liu et al., 2024; Mugwaze & Smith, 2024; Rohmad et al., 2024), which states that the image of an institution is formed by a combination of authentic internal actions and consistent external representations. This study expands the approach to branding Islamic education by emphasizing that a strong institutional image is built from within, through practices that holistically reflect the values, qualities, and character of the institution.

Theoretically, the contribution of this study lies in the integration of leadership theory, professional collaboration, and religious pedagogy within a digital-based institutional branding framework. The practical implications are the need for madrasahs to strengthen the quality of leadership, build a sustainable teacher collaboration system, and evaluate the Islamic Religious Education curriculum to be more adaptive and contextual. This approach will help madrasahs shape their image as superior, credible, and relevant Islamic educational institutions in the digital era. Thus, madrasahs are not only centers of religious learning but also agents of social transformation that can adapt and compete in the modern education ecosystem.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of this study, it can be concluded that the leadership strategy of the madrasah principal that focuses on exemplary behavior and collaboration has a major influence on improving the performance of madrasah teachers. Example-based leadership carried out by the madrasah principal provides inspiration and motivation for teachers to adopt positive behavior and improve their performance, both in terms of learning quality and professional development. In addition, regular structured

pedagogical collaboration has been shown to strengthen the quality of learning and build a mutually supportive working atmosphere between teachers. However, the main challenges faced are limited time and varying competencies among teachers. Solutions that can be implemented include increasing teacher training and professional development, as well as more systematic planning in teaching team collaboration. Overall, the implementation of effective and collaborative leadership strategies can create an environment that supports the continuous improvement of madrasah teacher performance. Thus, this strategy plays an important role in creating a more professional, adaptive, and quality madrasah in managing Islamic education.

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