

Transformational Leadership Model of Madrasah Principals in Improving Student Academic Achievement at Nahdlatul Ulama Elementary Madrasah (MI.NU) in Tarakan City

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the transformational leadership model of madrasah principals in improving student academic achievement at the Nahdlatul Ulama Elementary Madrasah in Tarakan City. The focus of the study includes the implementation of transformational leadership applied by madrasah principals and the strategies used to achieve excellent student academic achievement. The study used a qualitative approach with a case study design. Data collection was conducted through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation studies involving madrasah principals, teachers, education staff, students, and parents. The results show that the implementation of transformational leadership by madrasah principals is manifested through four main dimensions: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. Madrasah principals act as role models, motivators, innovators, and facilitators in creating an achievement-oriented academic quality culture. The strategies implemented include building a shared vision, strengthening teacher competencies, developing superior academic programs, implementing a continuous monitoring and evaluation system, strengthening partnerships with parents, and providing awards to outstanding students. These implementations and strategies have been proven to improve the quality of learning, student learning motivation, as well as academic achievement and learning outcomes..

Informasi Artikel

Kata Kunci:

Kepemimpinan Transformasional, Kepala Madrasah, Prestasi Akademik, Mutu Pendidikan, Madrasah Ibtidaiyah.

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis model kepemimpinan transformasional kepala madrasah dalam meningkatkan prestasi akademik siswa di Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Nahdlatul Ulama Kota Tarakan. Fokus penelitian meliputi implementasi kepemimpinan transformasional yang diterapkan kepala madrasah serta strategi yang digunakan dalam mencapai keunggulan prestasi akademik peserta didik. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain studi kasus. Pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui observasi, wawancara mendalam, dan studi dokumentasi yang melibatkan kepala madrasah, guru, tenaga kependidikan, peserta didik, dan orang tua siswa. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa implementasi kepemimpinan transformasional kepala madrasah diwujudkan melalui empat dimensi utama, yaitu idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, dan individualized consideration. Kepala madrasah berperan sebagai teladan, motivator, inovator, sekaligus fasilitator dalam menciptakan budaya mutu akademik yang berorientasi pada prestasi. Strategi yang diterapkan meliputi pembangunan visi bersama, penguatan kompetensi guru, pengembangan program akademik unggulan, penerapan sistem monitoring dan evaluasi berkelanjutan, penguatan kemitraan dengan orang tua, serta pemberian penghargaan kepada siswa berprestasi. Implementasi dan strategi ini terbukti mampu meningkatkan kualitas pembelajaran, motivasi belajar siswa, serta pencapaian prestasi akademik dan hasil belajar.

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1. Introduction

Improving the quality of education is a strategic national development agenda that continues to attract the attention of various education stakeholders. In the context of basic education, the success of an educational institution is measured not only by meeting national education standards, but also by its ability to produce students with superior academic achievement and competencies relevant to the demands of today's developments. Various studies have shown that the leadership quality of school or madrasah principals is a critical factor in determining the success of educational delivery and student achievement. Effective leadership can create a conducive learning environment, increase teacher motivation, strengthen a culture of quality, and direct all organizational resources toward achieving established educational goals.

In recent decades, the concept of transformational leadership has become a leadership approach that has received considerable attention in educational management studies. Transformational leadership is seen as capable of addressing the challenges of increasingly complex change because it emphasizes the leader's ability to inspire, motivate, empower, and transform individual and organizational potential toward a better state.[1] According to Bass and Riggio, transformational leadership is the process of influencing organizational members through an inspiring vision, intellectual stimulation, individual attention, and role modelling that can produce positive change within the organization.[2] In the context of education, this leadership model is not only oriented towards achieving administrative targets, but also towards developing human resource capacity and organizational culture that supports improving the quality of learning.

Various international studies have shown a significant relationship between transformational leadership and improved student academic achievement. Hallinger explains that principals who implement transformational leadership are able to increase school effectiveness by strengthening teacher capacity and creating a positive school climate.[3] Research by Leithwood, Harris, and Hopkins also shows that a school's success in achieving high academic achievement is greatly influenced by the leader's ability to build a shared vision, develop human resources, and create an organizational culture that supports learning.[4] These findings reinforce the view that transformational leadership has a strategic contribution to improving the quality of education and student learning outcomes.

In Islamic educational institutions, particularly madrasahs, the role of the madrasah principal is increasingly important because they must be able to integrate modern leadership values with Islamic educational principles. The madrasah principal is not only responsible for academic and administrative management but also plays a role in building student character, developing a religious culture, and maintaining an institutional identity based on Islamic values. Therefore, the implementation of

transformational leadership in madrasahs has its own characteristics, combining aspects of professionalism, moral exemplarity, and strengthening Islamic values throughout the educational process.

The Nahdlatul Ulama Elementary School in Tarakan City is one of the Islamic educational institutions showing positive academic progress. The numerous achievements achieved by students, both at the city and provincial levels, demonstrate the existence of an effective and quality-oriented educational management process. This success is inseparable from the role of the principal as a leader who directs, mobilizes, and develops the full potential of the educational organization. In practice, the principal implements various leadership strategies that encourage improved learning quality, teacher competency development, and the strengthening of academic culture within the madrasah environment.

Although various studies have examined transformational leadership in the educational context, there is still a lack of research specifically addressing the transformational leadership model of madrasah principals in improving student academic achievement at the Madrasah Ibtidaiyah level, particularly in North Kalimantan. Most previous research has focused on public schools or secondary madrasahs, thus failing to comprehensively describe how transformational leadership is implemented and implemented in Islamic elementary education. This research gap highlights the importance of conducting a more in-depth study of the transformational leadership practices of madrasah principals in the context of improving student academic achievement.

Based on this background, this study aims to analyze the implementation of transformational leadership by madrasah principals in improving student academic achievement and identify the transformational leadership strategies implemented to produce superior academic achievement at the Nahdlatul Ulama Elementary Madrasah in Tarakan City. The results of this study are expected to provide theoretical contributions to the development of Islamic educational leadership studies and serve as a practical reference for madrasah principals in developing effective leadership models to improve educational quality and achievement.

2. Method

This research employed a qualitative research method with a case study approach. This approach was used to gain an in-depth understanding of the madrasah principal's model for improving student academic achievement at the Nahdlatul Ulama Elementary Madrasah (MI.NU) in Tarakan City.

Location and Time

This research was conducted at the Nahdlatul Ulama Elementary School (MI. NU) in Tarakan City, North Kalimantan, Indonesia, from February to April 2026.

Research Subjects: Principal of Madrasah, Deputy Principal for Curriculum, Teachers, Education Personnel, Students of Nahdlatul Ulama Elementary Madrasah (MI. NU) Tarakan City

Data Collection Techniques

- Observation
- In-depth interviews
- Documentation

Data Analysis Techniques

- Data reduction
- Data display
- Conclusion drawing and data verification

Data Validity

- Source triangulation
- Technique triangulation
- Time triangulation

3. Result and Discussion

Result

1. Implementation of Transformational Leadership of Madrasah Principals in Improving Student Academic Achievement at Nahdlatul Ulama Elementary Madrasah in Tarakan City.

The implementation of transformational leadership by the principal at the Nahdlatul Ulama Elementary Madrasah in Tarakan City demonstrates a strategic role in driving improved student academic achievement through organizational culture transformation, strengthening learning quality, and empowering all available educational resources. Research findings indicate that the principal not only performs administrative and managerial functions but also acts as an agent of change, inspiring teachers, education staff, students, and parents to collectively achieve a vision of educational excellence.

The implementation of transformational leadership is manifested through the dimension of idealized influence, namely the principal's exemplary work discipline, integrity, commitment to educational quality, and consistency in upholding Islamic and national values. The principal serves as a central figure capable of building trust among the madrasa community, thus creating an organizational culture conducive to improving student academic achievement. This exemplary behavior is evident in the principal's direct involvement in various learning quality improvement programs, monitoring the teaching and learning process, and mentoring teachers in developing innovative learning materials.[5]

Furthermore, the inspirational motivation dimension is reflected through the madrasah principal's ability to build a shared vision regarding the importance of achieving superior academic achievement.[6] The madrasah principal routinely conveys academic targets to teachers and students through meetings, coaching activities, and other communication forums. The madrasah's vision oriented towards academic excellence is translated into various concrete programs such as strengthening numeracy literacy, fostering Science Olympiads, excellent class programs, enriching learning materials, and fostering an effective learning culture. These findings indicate that motivation provided continuously can increase teacher work enthusiasm and student learning motivation.

The implementation of the intellectual stimulation dimension is evident in the madrasah principal's efforts

to encourage learning innovation and teacher professional development. The madrasah principal provides teachers with space to develop creative learning methods, utilize digital technology in teaching, and participate in various training and competency development activities. [7] Teachers are encouraged to reflect on their learning practices, fostering a culture of critical and innovative thinking that improves the quality of the teaching and learning process. This leads to increased student engagement in learning and optimal learning outcomes.

Regarding individualized consideration, the madrasah principal demonstrates attention to the individual needs of teachers and students. Teachers facing learning challenges receive ongoing mentoring and supervision, while students with academic potential receive special coaching through talent and achievement development programs. The madrasah principal's personal approach creates harmonious interpersonal relationships, ensuring that every member of the madrasah feels valued and motivated to contribute their best.

The implementation of transformational leadership has been proven to have a positive impact on improving student academic achievement. Based on observations and documentation, there has been an increase in student learning outcomes, success in various city- and provincial-level academic competitions, and an increase in the number of graduates accepted into quality higher education institutions. These findings align with research conducted by Leithwood and Jantzi which found that transformational leadership significantly impacts school effectiveness by increasing teacher motivation and learning quality. These findings also reinforce Hallinger's (2022) findings that transformational leadership contributes to improved student academic achievement by strengthening school culture and developing teacher capacity.

From an Islamic education perspective, the implementation of transformational leadership by madrasah principals demonstrates the integration of modern leadership values with Islamic leadership principles that emphasize exemplary behavior (*uswah hasanah*), trustworthiness, deliberation, and responsibility. The synergy between these two approaches is a crucial factor in supporting the success of the Nahdlatul Ulama Elementary Madrasah in Tarakan City in sustainably improving student academic achievement.

2. Transformational Leadership Strategy of Madrasah Principals to Achieve Excellence in Student Academic Achievement at Nahdlatul Ulama Elementary Madrasah in Tarakan City.

The superior academic achievement of students at the Nahdlatul Ulama Elementary Madrasah in Tarakan City is inseparable from the transformational leadership strategies systematically and sustainably implemented by the principal. Research findings indicate that the principal developed various strategies oriented towards improving the quality of learning, strengthening a culture of quality, empowering human resources, and optimizing collaboration with various educational stakeholders.

The first strategy is building a strong vision and

culture of academic quality. The principal consistently communicates the educational vision to all members of the madrasah community, thereby fostering a shared understanding of the goals to be achieved. This culture of quality is fostered through the establishment of clear academic standards, regular performance evaluations, and recognition of teachers and students who demonstrate achievement. This strategy creates a competitive yet collaborative learning environment that encourages higher academic achievement.

The second strategy is strengthening teacher competency through a continuous professional development program. The principal facilitates teacher participation in training, workshops, seminars, teacher working groups (KKG), and other competency development activities. Furthermore, academic supervision is implemented in a planned manner to help teachers improve the quality of learning. This strategy is based on the belief that teacher quality is a primary factor influencing student academic success.

The third strategy is the development of superior learning programs oriented to student needs. Madrasah principals initiate various programs such as enrichment classes, tutoring, Olympiad coaching, school literacy programs, project-based learning, and the use of digital technology in teaching. These programs are designed to comprehensively develop students' critical thinking, creativity, problem-solving, and academic skills.

The fourth strategy is the implementation of a continuous academic monitoring and evaluation system. Madrasah principals routinely analyze student learning outcomes, evaluate the effectiveness of learning programs, and identify various factors influencing academic achievement. The data obtained is used as the basis for decision-making in designing programs to improve and develop educational quality. This data-driven approach enables madrasahs to systematically and continuously improve quality.

The fifth strategy is strengthening collaboration between madrasahs, parents, and the community. Madrasah principals recognize that student academic success is not solely determined by the learning process at school but also by support from the family and community environment. Therefore, various partnership programs are developed to increase parental involvement in supporting students' learning at home. Intensive communication between madrasahs and parents is a crucial factor in the success of academic achievement improvement programs.

The sixth strategy is the development of a reward and motivation system for high-achieving students. Madrasah principals provide various forms of appreciation, including certificates, scholarships, publications about achievements, and opportunities to participate in higher-level competitions. This reward system has been proven to increase students' intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, leading to optimal academic achievement. The research results show that the combination of these strategies resulted in significant improvements in student academic quality. This success reinforces Bass and Avolio's theory, which asserts that transformational leaders are able to drive organizational change through inspiring vision, empowering human resources, and creating an

achievement-oriented work culture.[8] The research findings also align with the study by Hallinger and Wang, which concluded that transformational leadership strategies contribute directly and indirectly to improving student learning outcomes by enhancing teacher capacity and school organizational effectiveness.[9]

Thus, the transformational leadership strategy implemented by the principal of the Nahdlatul Ulama Elementary School in Tarakan City can be understood as a leadership process that simultaneously integrates vision, innovation, collaboration, empowerment, and strengthening a culture of quality, resulting in sustained excellence in student academic achievement.

The results of this study provide practical implications: madrasah principals need to develop leadership styles that focus not only on administrative functions but also on teacher empowerment, strengthening a culture of quality, and developing learning innovations. Furthermore, successful improvements in academic achievement require synergy between the madrasah principal, teachers, students, parents, and all educational stakeholders. Therefore, the application of transformational leadership can be used as an effective madrasah management strategy to improve the quality of basic Islamic education in a sustainable manner.

Conclusion

Based on the results of research on the transformational leadership model of madrasah principals in improving student academic achievement at the Nahdlatul Ulama Elementary Madrasah in Tarakan City, it can be concluded that transformational leadership is an effective leadership model in encouraging improvements in educational quality and student academic achievement. The implementation of transformational leadership by madrasah principals is manifested through four main dimensions: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. The madrasah principal acts as a role model demonstrating integrity and commitment to educational quality, as a motivator capable of building a shared spirit and vision, as an innovator encouraging the development of teacher creativity and professionalism, and as a facilitator who pays attention to the individual needs of teachers and students. The implementation of this leadership has created a positive academic culture, improved the quality of learning, strengthened student motivation, and supported the achievement of various academic achievements within the madrasah.

This research also found that superior student academic achievement at the Nahdlatul Ulama Elementary Madrasah in Tarakan City was achieved through a series of transformational leadership strategies implemented systematically and sustainably. These strategies include developing a vision and culture of academic quality, strengthening teacher competency through continuous professional development, developing superior learning programs oriented to student needs, implementing a continuous academic monitoring and evaluation system, strengthening

partnerships between madrasahs and parents, and providing awards to high-achieving students. These strategies not only increase the effectiveness of the learning process but also create an educational ecosystem that supports the optimal development of students' academic potential.

Theoretically, the results of this study reinforce the view that transformational leadership significantly contributes to improving the performance of educational organizations by strengthening human resource capacity, developing a culture of quality, and enhancing learning effectiveness. From an Islamic education perspective, the transformational leadership implemented by madrasah principals demonstrates the integration of modern leadership values with Islamic leadership principles such as exemplary behavior (*uswah hasanah*), trustworthiness, responsibility, and deliberation. This integration is a crucial factor in building an educational environment that not only excels academically but also fosters strong character and Islamic values.

Therefore, the transformational leadership model of madrasah principals can be considered a relevant alternative leadership model in addressing the challenges of improving education quality in the modern era. The successful implementation of this model at the Nahdlatul Ulama Elementary Madrasah in Tarakan City demonstrates that visionary, inspirational, collaborative, and human resource-oriented leadership plays a strategic role in achieving sustainable excellence in student academic achievement.

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