

Principal Leadership In Improving Teacher Performance at SMPN 1 Pasangkayu

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ABSTRACT

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This study aims to examine how the leadership of the principal of SMPN 1 Pasangkayu can improve teacher performance. The approach used is descriptive qualitative, with data collection through interviews with the principal and teachers. The stages of data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions (verification) are the stages of the data analysis process used in this study. Based on the research findings, the principal actively assists teachers in creating learning objectives, providing them with work instructions, inspiring them, and supporting their professional growth. In addition, student management and infrastructure also influence teacher performance. This study emphasizes the importance of consistent and collaborative transformative leadership in encouraging improvements in the quality of education. Based on the results of this study, it is hoped that SMPN 1 Pasangkayu will continue to strengthen participatory leadership and support teacher professional development. The principal is advised to maintain an open leadership style and respect teacher potential, while teachers are expected to be more proactive in training and professional collaboration.

1. Introduction

Education is the primary foundation for a nation's development. Through education, human resources can be optimally developed to address various global challenges and advances. The effectiveness of the education system is very important for the quality of the learning process, which is directly influenced by the teacher's work style and the start of school. The results of teachers' strategic efforts in developing the personality, abilities and knowledge of students, their work achievements become a benchmark for the quality of national education (Hsieh et al., 2024).

Based on information provided by the Ministry of Culture, Education, Research and Technology on the date May 3, 2025, the number of active educators and education personnel in Indonesia reached more than 5.7 million people spread across various levels of education. Table 1.1 below shows that elementary and junior high schools have a very large number of educators, amounting to 2,534,713 and 998,263 teachers, respectively, indicating that these two levels have a vital role in the basic education system (Kemendikbudristek; 2025).

Principals who implement a transformational leadership style can create a work environment that supports teacher performance (Sliwka et al., 2024). Furthermore, teacher motivation is also influenced by recognition, support, and opportunities for development (Hsieh et al., 2024). Principals' responsiveness to changes, such as the post-COVID-19 pandemic, also has a big impact in keeping teachers motivated and performing well. motivated and performing well (Fernandes et

al., 2023). Furthermore, Regulations such as the Regulation of the Minister of National Education No. 13 of 2007 provide instructions to school principals on how to become competent enough. Number 13 of 2007 provides instructions to school principals on how to become competent enough (Faridah & Nugroho, 2023).

The findings of this study are expected to have a positive impact by offering suggestions and recommendations to principals, teachers, and administrators on how to improve education by identifying more effective strategies to increase teacher productivity and overall school quality.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Principal Leadership

Every human being possesses the soul of a leader, and institutions must also have a leader who regulates how the institution they lead becomes a prosperous and quality institution. According to the English dictionary, leadership comes from the word lead, which means to lead. While the leader is a leader and leadership means leadership. According to Novianty Djari (2017), leadership comes from the English word *leader*, which means leader, while leadership means leadership. A leader is someone who occupies a position as a leader, while leadership is the activity or task carried out by that individual in carrying out his role. At the operational level, the principal is the responsible individual who coordinates the school network expansion efforts (Windiawan et al., 2024).

2.2 Teacher Performance

According to Susanto (2016), the term performance is a translation of the English *work performance* or *job performance*, and is often shortened to just performance. In Indonesian, performance is also called work achievement. Known as work achievement, it is defined as the ability to work based on knowledge, skills, drive, and motivation to achieve a goal. One of the human components specifically involved in children's education is the teacher. He supports and encourages students in the learning and teaching process, both inside and outside the classroom. Based on the research mentioned previously, a teacher's work style is defined as their ability to produce work that is delivered clearly and concisely, as well as their results in carrying out their duties and fulfilling their obligations in accordance with predetermined goals and expectations.

2.3 Factors Affecting Teacher Performance

Teacher performance is a crucial component in achieving educational goals because teachers are present throughout the learning process. Teachers' work is influenced by various factors, both internal and external. Internal factors include intelligence, skills, talents, interests, motivation, health, personality, and work goals and aspirations. Intelligence helps teachers complete complex tasks, while skills and abilities acquired through training and experience significantly determine professionalism. Talents that align with the profession, along with abilities supported by interests, will encourage teachers to work diligently and enthusiastically. Motivation is also a key driver in achieving optimal work results. Furthermore, good health and a strong personality enable teachers to adapt to the work environment and build positive relationships with colleagues. Ideals that align with the work will foster commitment and sincerity in carrying out their duties.

Meanwhile, external factors also play a significant role in influencing teacher performance. According to Kartono (1985), two primary factors are the family environment and the workplace environment. Family circumstances, such as economic pressure or marital tension, can disrupt

teachers' focus and performance in teaching. In some cases, teachers are forced to seek additional employment to meet economic needs, resulting in reduced attention to their primary duties at school. Furthermore, a supportive work environment, such as good relationships between colleagues, positive leadership, a sense of security, and adequate welfare, will create a conducive work atmosphere and increase teacher motivation. Thus, the combination of internal and external factors greatly influences the inter-work of a teacher in carrying out his professional duties.

3. Methodology

This research uses a qualitative approach, namely field studies, in which data is collected is carried out in the field to observe a phenomenon in a natural setting. The research is conducted in a specific setting in real life (natural) with the aim of investigating and understanding the phenomenon: what happened, why it happened, and how it happened. This type of research is descriptive qualitative, where researchers collect information in the form of words that describe the conditions and facts in the field at SMPN 1 Pasangkayu (Haryani et al., 2022).

3.1 Data Collection

Observation

Observation as a data collection method is unique compared to other methods because it doesn't provide information limited to individuals. Its purpose is to provide an overview of the subject matter and serve as a guide, direction, and guidance during research.

Interview

Interviews are used as a data collection technique when researchers want to conduct long-term research to identify problems that need to be investigated. An interview is a type of negotiation conducted by two parties with the same goal : the presence of an interviewer (who asks questions) and an interviewee (who provides advice regarding the questions).

Documentation

Documentation is a technique for collecting data on a concept or variable, such as notes, transcripts, books, letters, newspapers, magazines, inscriptions, meeting minutes, agendas, and so on. Its advantages include efficiency in terms of time and energy.

3.2 Analysis Techniques

First, Collect various data for selection and analysis, Then Select data related to the research Finally Analyze (discuss) and draw conclusions.

3.3 Validation

Credibility

Credibility relates to the level of trust in research results. Steps to increase credibility include triangulation, member checking, extended participation, and increased diligence.

Transferability

Transferability indicates the extent to which research results can be applied in other similar contexts.

Dependability

Dependability emphasizes data consistency. Researchers must ensure that the research process is conducted systematically and traceably.

Confirmability

Confirmability confirms that the research results are based on data and not due to bias or personal interests of the researcher. Explain the analytical methods, models, or tools used to process the data.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Key Findings

The findings show that principal's leadership style at SMPN 1 Pasangkayu has a significant impact on improving teacher performance. Key findings include five key aspects: enhancing teacher professionalism, positive interpersonal relationships, structured work direction, effective motivation, and organizing students in the learning process that supports a conducive learning climate.

4.2 Interpretation of Results

Based on interviews and observations, the principal at SMPN 1 Pasangkayu implements an adaptive, communicative, and participatory leadership style. The principal plays an active role in supporting teacher professional development through training, seminars, academic supervision, and regular evaluations. Open communication between the principal and teachers creates a harmonious working atmosphere, strengthening collaboration and loyalty. Furthermore, guidance is provided not only in formal forums but also personally and discursively. The principal also provides motivation through rewards, recognition, and the assignment of responsibilities, which encourage teachers to continue to innovate. In terms of student learning, the principal ensures active student involvement, discipline, and interactive and humanistic learning.

This finding aligns with research by Juwita and Rohayani (2022), which states that a democratic and open leadership style of school principals contributes to improving educational quality. Principals act not only as managers but also as leaders capable of motivating, directing, and fostering healthy relationships with teachers. This demonstrates that the leadership style implemented can facilitate continuous change and improvement within the school environment.

5. Discussion

5.1 Comparison with Prior Research

The findings of this study support previous research by Juwita & Rohayani (2022), which showed that democratic and inspirational principal leadership can improve teacher motivation and professionalism. Both studies emphasize the importance of open communication, providing direction, and supporting teacher development as essential aspects of educational leadership.

5.2 Limitations

This study was limited in scope, being conducted in only one school. Furthermore, the interview- and observation-based research instruments did not include quantitative data that could provide numerical weighting of influence. The limited research time also affected the depth of analysis of the dynamics of ongoing leadership behavior.

5.3 Future Research

For further research, it is recommended that quantitative or mixed-methods studies be conducted in several schools with varying characteristics, while also considering other leadership styles, such as authoritarian or laissez-faire. This research can also be used to analyze the influence of leadership on the work ethic or intrinsic motivation of teachers more comprehensively.

6. Conclusion

This study concludes that the principal's adaptive, participatory, and communicative leadership style significantly contributes to improving teacher performance and creating a positive learning climate at SMPN 1 Pasangkayu. The qualitative methodology, conducted through in-depth interviews and observations, demonstrates that the principal not only manages but also inspires and motivates teachers. This research provides an important contribution to strengthening understanding of the importance of educational leadership in the context of school management and learning quality.

7. Recommendation

Based on the results and analysis of this study, several recommendations can be made. First, principals need to continue developing a leadership style that is inclusive, participatory, and responsive to teacher needs, while also being able to adapt to changing times. This is crucial for creating a work environment that supports improved teacher performance and professionalism. Second, teachers are advised to be more proactive in establishing collaboration, both among teachers and with the principal, and to utilize available support to improve the quality of learning. Third, education policymakers need to provide regular and ongoing managerial training to principals, enabling them to become transformational leaders who not only manage but also inspire and guide the holistic development of teachers and students. Finally, similar research should be conducted at different educational levels or in other regions to broaden the scope of findings and enrich understanding of effective principal leadership practices in various educational contexts.

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