When Leadership and Climate Matter: Enhancing Teachers' Work Ethic through Participative School Leadership

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Abstract:

Teachers' work ethic is a crucial factor in supporting instructional quality and the achievement of educational goals. Variations in teachers' work ethic across schools indicate that organizational factors play a significant role in shaping teachers' professional attitudes and behavior. This study aims to obtain empirical evidence on the influence of the principal's participative leadership style and school climate on teachers' work ethic. The research employed a quantitative approach with an explanatory survey design. The population consisted of 142 teachers, with 105 teachers selected as respondents. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire developed based on theoretical indicators of participative leadership, school climate, and teachers' work ethic. Multiple linear regression analysis was used to analyze the data with the assistance of SPSS software. The results reveal that the principal's participative leadership style has a positive and significant effect on teachers' work ethic. In addition, school climate also has a positive and significant influence on teachers' work ethic. Simultaneously, participative leadership style and school climate significantly contribute to enhancing teachers' work ethic. These findings indicate that involving teachers in decision making and creating a supportive, harmonious, and conducive school environment can strengthen teachers' motivation, responsibility, and professional dedication. This study provides important implications for school principals and educational policymakers to implement participative leadership practices and foster a positive school climate as effective strategies for improving teachers' work ethic and overall educational quality.

Key Words: *Participative Leadership Style, School Climate, Teachers' Work Ethic, Educational Management*

INTRODUCTION

Education plays a central role in shaping the quality of human resources and determining national development (Fernandes & Singh, 2022; Ogutu et al., 2023; Piwowar-Sulej, 2021). Within the educational system, teachers hold a strategic position as the main actors responsible for implementing educational goals through teaching and learning activities. In addition to professional competence, teachers are expected to demonstrate a strong work ethic that is

reflected in responsibility, discipline, dedication, and commitment to continuous improvement (Antera, 2021; Gimbert et al., 2023; Saada, 2025). Teachers' work ethic influences the quality of instruction, learning outcomes, and the overall effectiveness of educational institutions (Alam & Mohanty, 2023; Alotaibi & Alshehri, 2023; Slimi & Carballido, 2023). However, in practice, differences in teachers' work ethic are still evident in many schools, indicating that professional behavior is not solely determined by individual competence. Organizational factors within schools play an important role in shaping teachers' attitudes and motivation, particularly leadership practices and the school climate.

Leadership style has been widely discussed in educational management literature as a critical factor affecting teachers' performance and work attitudes. Participative leadership emphasizes the involvement of teachers in decision making, openness to feedback, and shared responsibility. Studies have shown that this leadership style can enhance teachers' job satisfaction, motivation, and organizational commitment (Hussain & Khayat, 2021; Sahito & Väisänen, 2020; Tamimi & Sopiah, 2022). In addition, school climate has been identified as an essential element influencing teachers' psychological well-being and professional behavior. A positive school climate is characterized by supportive relationships, effective communication, and a sense of mutual trust among school members (Gonzálvez et al., 2023; Wator et al., 2025; Wilson Heenan et al., 2023). Although many studies have examined leadership style and school climate, most of them focus on their independent effects on teacher outcomes. As a result, limited research has explored how participative leadership and school climate jointly influence teachers' work ethic, especially in the context of madrasah education.

Despite the growing number of studies on educational leadership and school climate, challenges remain in explaining variations in teachers' work ethic across different school settings. In some institutions, teachers demonstrate strong dedication and responsibility, while in others, motivation and commitment appear to be less optimal. Preliminary observations at MAN 2 Tulungagung indicate that some teachers have not fully demonstrated a high level of enthusiasm and responsibility in carrying out their professional duties. This condition suggests that leadership practices and the existing school climate may not yet fully support the development of a strong work ethic. Therefore, the main research problem addressed in this study concerns the extent to which the principal's participative leadership style and school climate influence teachers' work ethic, both individually and simultaneously.

Based on this research problem, the objectives of this study are to obtain empirical evidence regarding the influence of the principal's participative leadership style on teachers' work ethic, to analyze the effect of school climate on teachers' work ethic, and to examine the simultaneous influence of both variables on teachers' work ethic at MAN 2 Tulungagung. This study employs a quantitative explanatory approach to test theoretical assumptions derived from leadership and organizational behavior theories. Through statistical analysis, the research seeks to explain the relationships among variables and provide a clearer

understanding of how leadership and school climate contribute to shaping teachers' professional attitudes and work behavior.

The significance of this research lies in its theoretical and practical contributions to the field of educational management. Theoretically, this study contributes to the development of leadership and school climate theories by providing empirical evidence on their combined influence on teachers' work ethic. Practically, the findings offer insights for school principals and educational policymakers in developing participative leadership practices and fostering a positive school climate that supports teachers' motivation and professional commitment. This research is limited to teachers at MAN 2 Tulungagung and focuses on organizational factors within the school context. Future studies may expand the scope by including additional variables and different educational settings to further enrich understanding of teachers' work ethic.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research was conducted at MAN 2 Tulungagung, an Islamic senior secondary school (madrasah), where teachers' work ethic plays a vital role in achieving educational quality and institutional effectiveness. The research context was selected based on initial observations indicating variations in teachers' motivation and professional commitment, which were assumed to be influenced by leadership practices and the school climate. The population of this study comprised 142 teachers, from which 105 teachers were selected as respondents to represent the population. This study employed a quantitative explanatory research design using a survey method within a deductive approach (Asad et al., 2022; McGowan et al., 2020; Turnbull et al., 2021). The explanatory design was chosen to test theoretical assumptions derived from educational management and leadership theories (Alhazmi & Kaufmann, 2022; Bentouhami et al., 2021; Bernacki et al., 2021). Based on this framework, the study formulated three hypotheses: (H1) the principal's participative leadership style has a significant effect on teachers' work ethic; (H2) school climate has a significant effect on teachers' work ethic; and (H3) the principal's participative leadership style and school climate simultaneously have a significant effect on teachers' work ethic. These hypotheses guided the entire research process from data collection to statistical testing. Where the flow of this research hypothesis is as shown in the following image:
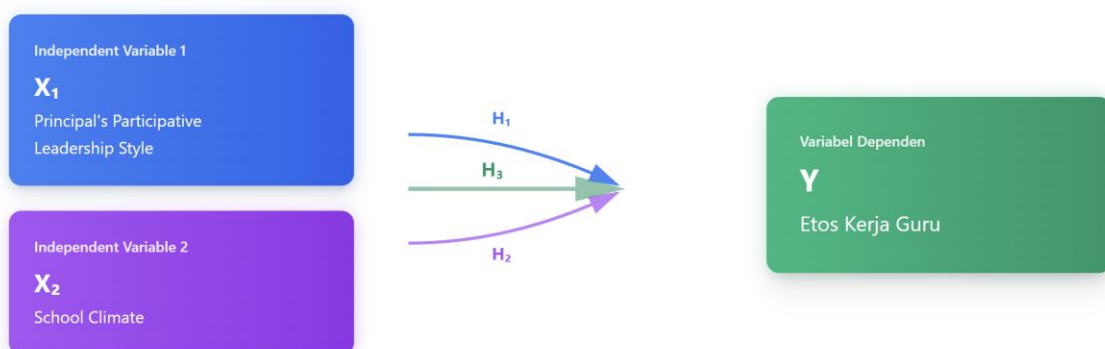
Figure 1. Research Hypothesis

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire developed to measure the variables of the principal's participative leadership style, school climate, and teachers' work ethic. The instrument was constructed based on theoretical indicators and previous empirical studies to ensure validity and relevance to the research hypotheses. A Likert-scale format was used to quantify respondents' perceptions, enabling numerical representation of attitudes and behaviors related to leadership and school environment (Azyabi et al., 2021; Castro et al., 2023; Kenny et al., 2025). This method was selected because it allows efficient data collection from a relatively large sample while maintaining consistency across responses. The questionnaire data were complemented by documentation to provide contextual support for the research setting. Through this data collection process, the study generated quantitative data suitable for hypothesis testing, enabling the examination of direct and combined effects of the independent variables on teachers' work ethic as formulated in the research hypotheses.

The data analysis employed multiple linear regression techniques to test the proposed hypotheses and determine the magnitude of the influence of the independent variables on the dependent variable. Descriptive statistics were first used to summarize respondent characteristics and describe the distribution of each variable (Hariyani et al., 2023; Kotronoulas et al., 2023; South et al., 2022). Subsequently, inferential statistical analysis was conducted using t-tests to examine the partial effects of participative leadership style (H1) and school climate (H2) on teachers' work ethic, while an F-test was used to assess their simultaneous effect (H3). The coefficient of determination (R^2) was analyzed to identify the proportion of variance in teachers' work ethic explained by the independent variables. All statistical analyses were performed using SPSS version 26.0 for Windows to ensure accuracy and reliability. This analytical procedure provides a clear and systematic pathway from hypothesis formulation to empirical testing, allowing the study to draw valid conclusions regarding the relationships among the variables.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Results

Multiple linear regression is used to determine the magnitude of the influence of one variable's variation on another variable. The results of the multiple linear regression test can be seen in the coefficients Table 1.

Table 1. Results of Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

Coefficients[a]

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	9.724	2.352		4.135	.000
Principal's Participative Leadership Style	.427	.056	.402	7.582	.000
School Climate	.785	.069	.600	11.323	.000
a. Dependent Variable: Teachers' Work Ethic					
Source: Research Data Processing Results (2025)					

Based on the results of the regression analysis presented in Table 1, the regression equation can be formulated as follows:

$$Y = \alpha + b_1X_1 + b_2X_2 + e$$
$$Y = 9.724 + 0.427X_1 + 0.785X_2 + e$$

Based on the results of the regression analysis, the constant value of 9.724 indicates that if the variables of participative leadership style and school climate remain unchanged, the teachers' work ethic will stay at a value of 9.724. The regression coefficient for the participative leadership style variable is 0.427, indicating that each increase in the implementation of participative leadership style is followed by an increase in teachers' work ethic by 0.427, assuming the school climate remains constant. Meanwhile, the regression coefficient for the school climate variable is 0.785, showing that each improvement in the school climate condition leads to an increase in teachers' work ethic by 0.785, assuming the participative leadership style remains constant. This finding demonstrates that both variables contribute positively to the enhancement of teachers' work ethic.

Multiple regression analysis was used to determine the influence of the independent variables, participative leadership style and school climate—on the dependent variable, namely teachers' work ethic. Based on the calculations using SPSS version 26.0 for Windows, the multiple regression coefficients were obtained and are presented in the following table.

Tabel 2. Model Summary[b]

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.914[a]	.835	.832	2.07296
a. Predictors: (Constant), School Climate, Principal's Participative Leadership Style				
b. Dependent Variable: Teachers' Work Ethic				
Source: Research Data Processing Results (2025)				

Based on Table 2, the R value of 0.914 indicates a strong correlation between the independent variables—competence, work discipline, and motivation. The R Square value of 0.835 means that the influence of the independent variables, namely school climate and participative leadership, on the dependent variable, teachers' work ethic, is 83.5%, while the remaining percentage is influenced by other factors. The t-test statistic essentially indicates the extent to which an explanatory or independent variable

individually influences the variation in the dependent variable. Based on the analysis, the results are as follows:

Table 3. Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	9.724	2.352		4.135	.000
	principal's participative leadership style	.427	.056	.402	7.582	.000
	School Climate	.785	.069	.600	11.323	.000
a. Dependent Variable: Etos Kerja Guru						
Source: Research Data Processing Results (2025)						

From the data above, the analysis results are as follows: based on the findings, the t-value is greater than the t-table value (7.582 > 1.65978) and the significance value is 0.000 < 0.05. Therefore, it can be concluded that H0 is rejected and Ha is accepted, indicating that the participative leadership style has a significant effect on teachers' work ethic. Furthermore, the analysis also shows that the t-value is greater than the t-table value (11.323 > 1.65978) and the significance value is 0.000 < 0.05. Thus, it can be concluded that H0 is rejected and Ha is accepted, meaning that the school climate has a significant effect on teachers' work ethic.

This study examined the joint influence of participative leadership style and school climate on teachers' work ethic at MAN 2 Tulungagung. The testing was conducted using the F-test, which aimed to determine the extent to which the two independent variables—participative leadership style (X1) and school climate (X2)—simultaneously affect the dependent variable, namely teachers' work ethic (Y). Based on the comparison between the calculated F-value (Fhitung) and the critical F-value (Ftabel) at a 5% significance level with a total of 105 respondents, the results show that the calculated F-value is greater than the critical F-value. Therefore, it can be concluded that the hypothesis is accepted, meaning that the principal's participative leadership style and the school climate jointly have a significant effect on improving teachers' work ethic at MAN 2 Tulungagung.

Table 4. Results of Simultaneous Testing (F Test)

ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	2217.535	2	1108.768	258.022	.000[b]
	Residual	438.312	102	4.297		
	Total	2655.848	104			

a. Dependent Variable: Etos Kerja Guru

b. Predictors: (Constant), School Climate, principal's participative leadership style

Source: Research Data Processing Results (2025)

Table 3 shows that, based on the output, the calculated F-value (258.022) is greater than the critical F-value (3.08), indicating that H0 is rejected and H3 is accepted. This means that the variables of participative leadership style and school climate jointly have a significant effect on teachers' work ethic at MAN 2 Tulungagung. This is supported by the significance value, which is less than 0.05, demonstrating that both independent variables make a meaningful contribution to influencing teachers' work ethic. Thus, the better the implementation of the principal's participative leadership style that involves teachers in the decision-making process, and the more positive the school climate created through an open, harmonious, and supportive work atmosphere, the higher the teachers' work ethic will be. These results confirm that the success of improving teachers' work ethic depends not only on individual factors but also on effective leadership and a well-managed work environment.

Discussion
The Influence of the Principal's Participative Leadership Style on Teachers' Work Ethic

The results of the study indicate that the principal's participative leadership style has a significant effect on teachers' work ethic at MAN 2 Tulungagung. This finding demonstrates that the higher the implementation of participative leadershi, characterized by involving teachers in the decision-making process, providing opportunities for expressing opinions, and encouraging active participation—the higher the level of work ethic exhibited by the teachers.

The findings of this study are consistent with Wang et al. (2022) who state that participative leadership is a leadership style in which a leader involves subordinates in the consultation process regarding actions and decisions to be taken, while also encouraging their active participation. According to Dhamija et al. (2023) participative leadership is viewed as a distinct form of behavior, differing from task-oriented and relationship-oriented leadership styles. This approach emphasizes the leader's or manager's efforts to encourage and facilitate members' involvement in making important decisions. In a democratic society, such participation reflects respect for individuals' rights to meaningfully influence decisions that affect them.

Participative leadership in the field of education emphasizes the role of a leader, particularly the school principal, in engaging organizational members to actively participate in various ongoing processes, including decision-making (Trunk et al., 2020). Participative leadership can be defined as a leadership style in which the leader involves members in different organizational processes,

including the process of making decisions. The indicators of participative leadership include: (1) providing opportunities for subordinates to participate, (2) willingness to accept input and suggestions from subordinates, (3) active involvement in working together with subordinates, and (4) involving teachers in the decision-making process (Asad et al., 2022).

The results of this study are supported by Coelho et al. (2023) whose research found a positive and significant direct influence between the principal's participative leadership style and teachers' work ethic. A high work ethic will not emerge from individuals who work out of compulsion. Therefore, teachers with a strong work ethic will consciously direct their work behavior toward achieving optimal work quality and strive to realize high-quality education.

The Influence of School Climate on Teachers' Work Ethic

The research findings indicate that the school climate has a significant influence on teachers' work ethic at MAN 2 Tulungagung. This suggests that the better and more conducive the school climate, characterized by harmonious working relationships, open communication, and an environment that supports teaching and learning activities, the higher the teachers' work ethic in carrying out their duties and responsibilities. According to Sahito & Vaisanen (2020) the school climate is understood differently by experts as the result of subjective perceptions of the formal system, the principal's leadership style, and various environmental factors that influence the attitudes, beliefs, values, and motivations of individuals within it. In general, the school climate reflects the quality and character of school life, as manifested through norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, learning practices, and organizational structure (Bardach et al., 2022; Fuad et al., 2022; Xie & Derakhshan, 2021).

The findings of this study are consistent with the research conducted by Wilson Heenan et al. (2023) which revealed that the school climate has a positive and significant influence on teachers' work ethic. A healthy school climate has been shown to create a conducive atmosphere for the development of teachers' competence and self-efficacy, particularly in believing that they can make a positive impact on students' learning processes and outcomes (Liao, 2022). Moreover, a healthy school climate is closely associated with organizational commitment, increasing the likelihood of having more committed teachers who are open-minded and uphold high academic standards (Burhanuddin, 2021). In such schools, improving the quality of teaching and ensuring continuous professional development for teachers becomes an achievable goal.

The Influence of Principals' Participative Leadership Style and School Climate on Teachers' Work Ethic

The results of the study show that the principal's participative leadership style and the school climate jointly have a significant effect on teachers' work ethic at MAN 2 Tulungagung. This finding indicates that both factors mutually

support each other in enhancing teachers' enthusiasm, responsibility, and dedication in carrying out their duties. In other words, when the principal implements a participative leadership style that encourages teacher involvement and fosters a positive, open, and harmonious school climate, teachers' work ethic tends to improve. This emphasizes that effective leadership and a supportive work environment are key elements in shaping teachers' performance and professionalism.

Hasil penelitian ini sejalan dengan temuan Damanik et al., (2021) yang menyatakan bahwa kepemimpinan partisipatif berkaitan dengan penerapan berbagai prosedur pengambilan keputusan yang memberikan kesempatan bagi anggota organisasi untuk berpartisipasi, memengaruhi, bahkan mengubah keputusan yang akan diambil oleh pemimpin. Kepemimpinan partisipatif mencakup kegiatan konsultasi, pengambilan keputusan bersama, pembagian kewenangan dan tanggung jawab, desentralisasi, serta penerapan manajemen yang bersifat demokratis (Kenny et al., 2025). Thus, participative leadership can be understood as a leadership style that provides space for members to actively participate in the decision-making process (Hariyani et al., 2023).

The results of this study are consistent with the findings of Damanik et al., (2021), which state that participative leadership is related to the implementation of various decision-making procedures that allow organizational members to participate, influence, and even modify decisions made by the leader. Participative leadership includes activities such as consultation, joint decision-making, the distribution of authority and responsibility, decentralization, and the application of democratic management practices (Bernacki et al., 2021). Thus, participative leadership can be understood as a leadership style that provides opportunities for members to actively engage in the decision-making process.

According to Burhannudin (2021), a positive school climate can be established when a leader is able to provide encouragement and constructive motivation, involve members in formulating shared goals, and foster a sense of responsibility. The principal is required to possess the ability, skills, and intelligence to create a healthy and open school environment, thereby fostering a dynamic and conducive work (Damanik et al., 2021). When the school climate is able to stimulate a strong work culture, it will make a significant contribution to improving teachers' work ethic. The results of this study are also consistent with the research conducted by Slimi (2023) which found that participative leadership style and school climate have a positive and significant influence on teachers' work ethic.

This study contributes to the field of educational management by providing empirical evidence on the simultaneous effects of the principal's participative leadership style and school climate on teachers' work ethic within a madrasah context. In contrast to previous studies that tend to examine these variables independently, the findings demonstrate that participative leadership and a positive school climate operate as complementary organizational factors in

enhancing teachers' motivation, sense of responsibility, and professional dedication. Through quantitative analysis, this research strengthens theoretical perspectives on leadership and school climate while offering practical implications for school leaders and policymakers in developing inclusive leadership practices and supportive school environments to improve teachers' work ethic and overall educational quality.

CONCLUSION

Teachers' work ethic is a crucial factor in achieving quality education, especially in school environments where motivation, responsibility, and professional commitment need continuous strengthening. This study examined the role of organizational factors within schools, particularly the principal's participative leadership style and the school climate, in shaping teachers' work ethic. The findings reveal that both participative leadership and a positive school climate have a significant influence on teachers' work ethic, both individually and simultaneously. Leadership practices that involve teachers in decision-making and acknowledge their contributions encourage a stronger sense of responsibility and dedication, while a supportive and harmonious school climate enhances teachers' motivation and enthusiasm in carrying out their professional duties.

The combined effect of participative leadership and a conducive school climate underscores the importance of effective leadership and a well-managed work environment in fostering teachers' professionalism. These results suggest that school principals should prioritize inclusive leadership practices and open communication, alongside efforts to create a positive and collaborative school atmosphere. Such strategies can strengthen teachers' commitment, improve their work ethic, and ultimately contribute to the overall quality of educational outcomes. Further studies may consider examining additional organizational and individual factors that interact with leadership and school climate to support sustainable improvements in teacher performance.

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