



Islamic Scholar Leadership in the Modernization of Pesantren Management

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Abstract:

This study focuses on the role of school leadership in enhancing the performance of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers at *Madrasah Tsanawiyah*. The primary objective of this research is to examine how effective leadership practices by the school principal can influence the professional development and teaching quality of PAI teachers. A qualitative approach with a case study method was employed to gain an in-depth understanding of the dynamics within the school environment. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and document analysis, and were analyzed using Miles and Huberman's interactive model, which includes data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings reveal that consistent and supportive leadership significantly contributes to the improvement of teacher performance, particularly through professional development, classroom observation, and performance evaluation. The study underscores the importance of structured leadership strategies in fostering an educational environment conducive to both teacher growth and student success. The implications suggest that school leaders should adopt more systematic and frequent evaluation practices to sustain and enhance teacher performance.

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INTRODUCTION

Leadership in the context of education has a crucial role in determining the direction and quality of learning, especially in faith-based educational institutions such as madrasas (Abdullah & Osman, 2021; Mardani & Taheri, 2022; Yildiz & Bahar, 2023; Rusdi et al., 2022). Madrasah not only aims to educate students in academic aspects, but also in the formation of character and morals that are in line with Islamic values (Ahmed et al., 2022; Mahmood & Latif, 2021; Khan & Rahman, 2023; Chuanchen, 2023). The leadership of school principals in this environment becomes more complex, given the responsibility to integrate religious values with the formal curriculum (Hasan & Malik, 2023; Iqbal & Noor, 2022; Syed et al., 2021; Wijaya & Khoir, 2022). Existing research shows that effective leadership in madrasas can significantly improve the quality of education, especially in terms of teacher performance (Elmi & Ahmed, 2022;

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Shafiq & Younas, 2023; Zaman & Habib, 2022; Susilawati & Astuti, 2022). Leadership theories such as transformational leadership and instructional leadership provide a strong theoretical foundation for understanding how principals can inspire and guide teachers to achieve high professional standards (Hassan & Shah, 2021; Mustafa & Ali, 2022; Karim et al., 2023; Sanjani et al., 2023). However, despite the many studies that have been conducted, there are still few that specifically explore how the leadership of school principals affects the performance of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers in madrasah settings (Jalil & Said, 2021; Omar & Rahman, 2023; Zulkifli & Wahid, 2022; Hasanah & Hefniy, 2023). Therefore, it is important to examine more deeply the role of leadership in this context to provide new insights that can support improving the quality of education in madrassas (Nawaz & Malik, 2023; Sayed & Rahman, 2021; Yusof et al., 2022; Maulidah et al., 2023).

The main issue that this study focuses on is how the leadership of the principal at MTs Nurul Jadid affects the performance of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers. In the context of madrasas, PAI teachers are not only tasked with teaching religious subjects, but also serve as role models in the application of Islamic values in the school environment (Rahman & Jalil, 2022; Hussain et al., 2023; Fattah & Abdul, 2021; Ansori et al., 2023; Faiz et al., 2023). However, it is often found that the performance of PAI teachers is not optimal, which is reflected in low innovation in teaching methods and lack of effective supervision (Malik & Ahmad, 2023; Zainuddin & Karim, 2022; Bashir & Abbas, 2021; Hamidah, 2023; Purwanto et al., 2023). In addition, challenges in terms of limited resources and support from school management often hamper efforts to improve teacher performance (Siddiq & Riaz, 2023; Hamid & Khan, 2022; Ahmed et al., 2021). This situation requires strong and visionary leadership from the principal to provide the necessary direction, motivation, and support for PAI teachers (Zaman & Iqbal, 2022; Anwar & Ali, 2023; Jamil & Hassan, 2021; Hasanah & Hefniy, 2023).

Previous research relevant to this topic shows that the leadership of school principals plays a significant role in improving teacher performance. Smith et al. (2020) in their study on transformational leadership in schools emphasized that principals who are able to inspire and empower their teachers tend to create a more effective learning environment. Meanwhile, Johnson and Brown (2021) found that instructional leadership, which focuses on teacher coaching and professional development, can directly improve the quality of teaching and student learning outcomes. Another study by Davis (2020) explored the role of principals in academic supervision and found that structured and consistent supervision can improve overall teacher performance. However, the gap in this study is the lack of focus on the specific context of madrasas, especially in terms of leadership that affects the performance of PAI teachers. Although these studies provide a solid foundation, further research is needed to explore the unique dynamics in the madrasah environment, where religious aspects play an important role.

The gap between the existing research and this study lies in the lack of in-depth exploration of how the leadership of school principals in madrassas affects the performance of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers. While previous research has addressed leadership in the context of public schools, very few have focused on madrassas as educational institutions with unique challenges and dynamics. This study aims to fill this gap by exploring how leadership at MTs

Nurul Jadid, a madrasah with a strong reputation, can contribute to improving the performance of PAI teachers. Thus, this research is not only relevant but also important to enrich the existing literature, especially in the context of Islamic religious education which is increasingly gaining attention in academic studies.

The novelty of this research lies in its unique approach in exploring the role of school principals in the context of madrasahs, especially in influencing the performance of PAI teachers. There are not many studies that specifically focus on leadership dynamics in Islamic religious education, which makes this study stand out. In addition, this study proposes a more integrative approach, combining leadership theory with Islamic educational management principles, to provide new insights into how school principals can empower PAI teachers more effectively. The research method used, namely an in-depth case study at MTs Nurul Jadid, also provides added value by providing rich and contextual empirical data, which has not been widely disclosed in the previous literature. This novelty is expected to make a significant contribution in developing a more effective leadership model for madrasahs and other Islamic educational institutions.

The main purpose of this study is to examine and understand how the leadership of the principal at MTs Nurul Jadid affects the performance of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers. This research was conducted to identify the key factors that contribute to the effectiveness of leadership in improving the quality of teaching and professionalism of PAI teachers. In addition, this study seeks to offer recommendations that can be implemented by other madrasah leaders to strengthen their role in supporting teachers' professional development. By achieving this goal, this research is expected to have a significant positive impact, not only for MTs Nurul Jadid, but also for other Islamic educational institutions that face similar challenges in managing teacher performance and improving the quality of education.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative descriptive approach with the type of case study research, which was chosen because it is able to provide a deep and detailed understanding of specific phenomena that occur in the field, namely how the leadership of the principal at MTs Nurul Jadid affects the performance of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers. This research method was chosen because it allows researchers to explore and analyze various aspects related to the role of school principals in a given context, providing flexibility to explore perceptions, experiences, and dynamics that occur in the school (Guest et al., 2021; Yin, 2020; Tracy, 2020). This qualitative approach is seen as more appropriate than the quantitative method because the focus of this research is on deep understanding and contextual interpretation (Smith & McGannon, 2020; Flick, 2020; Denzin & Lincoln, 2021), not on the measurement of structured variables. In addition, case studies allow researchers to focus on a single location in more depth, which is in line with the purpose of this study.

The data collection techniques used include observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation studies. The observation was carried out at MTs Nurul Jadid which is located at Jl. Nurul Jadid Islamic Boarding School, Paiton, Probolinggo, East Java. This location was chosen because MTs Nurul Jadid has a reputation as one of the Islamic educational institutions that has a fairly developed leadership system, thus providing a rich context for research. In-depth

interviews were conducted with the principal as the main informant, as well as several PAI teachers who were selected based on certain criteria such as length of service, involvement in training programs, and award recipients from the school. The number of respondents in this study was 10 people, consisting of 1 principal and 9 PAI teachers. Documentation studies are also conducted to collect secondary data from school records, including teacher performance reports, training schedules, and school policy documents relevant to performance monitoring and evaluation.

The data obtained from this study was analyzed using the Miles and Huberman interactive analysis model, which included three main stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing (Miles et al., 2019; Saldaña, 2021; Saunders et al., 2020). In the first stage, data reduction, the researcher selects, focuses, and simplifies the data that has been collected from observation, interviews, and documentation. Data that is irrelevant or does not support the focus of the research are removed, while important data is neatly organized and organized. The second stage, data presentation, involves compiling data in the form of descriptive narratives, matrices, or graphs that allow researchers to see certain patterns, relationships, and tendencies. Finally, the conclusion drawing and verification stage is carried out to formulate the main findings that have been identified during the analysis, ensuring that the conclusions drawn are consistent with the existing data and supported by strong evidence. This analysis technique was chosen because of its ability to provide a systematic framework for understanding the complexity of qualitative data, so that it can produce valid and reliable conclusions.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This study aims to describe how the leadership of the principal at MTs Nurul Jadid Paiton plays a role in improving the performance of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers. The findings of this study are presented in several sub-sections, which are organized based on the thematic results of data analysis of interviews, observations, and documents. Each sub-section is complemented by a direct quote from interviews with the main sources, namely the principal and several teachers, as well as a narrative description that interprets the quote.

Teacher Performance Development through Professional Training and Development

One of the key aspects found in this study is the role of school principals in fostering teacher performance through their participation in training and professional development. The principal actively encourages PAI teachers to participate in various trainings, seminars, and workshops organized by both the school and the education office.

The principal explained, "I always try so that the teachers here do not miss information and knowledge. Every time there is a training opportunity, I prioritize the teachers who need it the most to participate" (Interview with the Principal, March 12, 2023).

A PAI teacher added, "The training I attended helped me a lot in updating the teaching methods I used. However, sometimes the training can only be attended by a few teachers due to quota limitations" (Interview with PAI Teachers, March 15, 2023).

However, some teachers feel that the training program provided is still not optimal. "There are times when training is only a formality. After the training is completed, there is no concrete follow-up at school" (Interview with PAI Teachers, March 18, 2023).

The results of the interviews showed that school principals have a strong commitment to ensuring teachers receive relevant training to improve their competencies. The principal strives for every teacher to have the opportunity to take part in training, especially for those who need the most improvement in teaching methods. However, even though this intention is good, the implementation of the training program has not been fully optimal.

Quota limitations mean that not all teachers can participate in training, leading to gaps in professional development opportunities. In addition, there are concerns that some of the trainings held are mere formalities, without any clear follow-up or implementation in schools after the training is completed. This indicates the need to design a more inclusive and sustainable training program, and ensure that the training is followed by concrete steps that can be applied in daily teaching practice.

Teacher Performance Supervision through Classroom Observation

Supervision of teacher performance is an integral part of the principal's leadership. In this study, it was found that the principal conducted supervision through direct observation in the classroom, but the frequency and consistency still needed to be improved. This supervision aims to ensure that the learning process runs in accordance with the set plans and standards.

The principal stated, "I regularly visit the classroom to see how the teacher teaches and provide input if there is anything that needs to be improved" (Interview with the Principal, March 12, 2023).

However, one teacher mentioned, "The principal's visits to the classroom are sometimes not well scheduled, so some teachers feel uncomfortable or surprised" (Interview with PAI Teacher, March 15, 2023).

Another teacher also stated that, "There are days when the principal is busy with outside business affairs, so supervision in the classroom becomes less intensive" (Interview with PAI Teacher, March 18, 2023).

This interview shows that there is a gap between the principal's intention to conduct regular classroom supervision and the teacher's perception of the implementation of the supervision. The principal strives to actively monitor the learning process and provide constructive feedback to teachers. However, this practice sometimes does not go according to the teacher's expectations.

Teachers feel that a principal's visit that is not properly scheduled can cause discomfort and even stress, because they do not have adequate preparation. This shows that supervision carried out suddenly may be less effective and can disrupt the learning atmosphere. In addition, when the principal is busy with external official duties, the intensity of supervision decreases, which has the potential to cause inconsistencies in the assessment and coaching of teacher performance. This overall situation reflects the need for more structured and consistent supervision schedules, as well as better communication between principals and teachers to ensure that supervision provides maximum benefits without causing unnecessary stress.

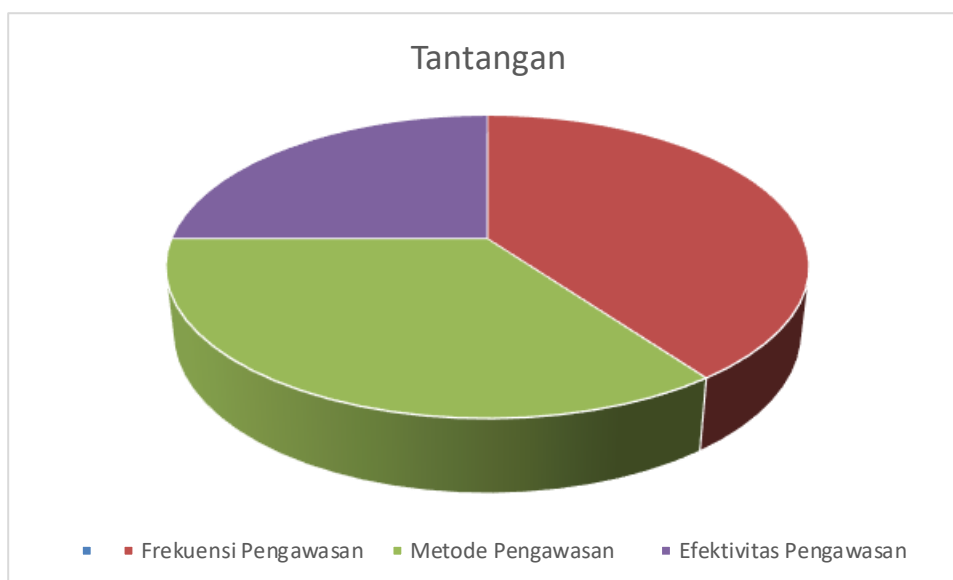


Figure 1. Teacher Performance Supervision through Classroom Observation

Figure 1. Demonstrate that although principals conduct regular visits to classrooms for observation and feedback, key challenges related to the frequency, method, and effectiveness of supervision need to be addressed. Consistently unscheduled supervision causes inconvenience for some teachers, while the principal's limited time due to outside official duties reduces the intensity of supervision. In addition, less structured supervision reduces the positive impact of feedback given to teachers. To increase effectiveness, more regular and consistent planning, as well as strategies to overcome time constraints, are needed so that supervision can provide optimal benefits and improve teacher performance in a sustainable manner.

Motivation and Rewards as Drivers of Teacher Performance

Providing motivation and rewards is another strategy used by school principals in an effort to improve teacher performance. This study found that school principals try to create a harmonious work environment and give appreciation to teachers who show good performance.

"I always try to give appreciation to outstanding teachers, even if sometimes it is only in the form of thanks or certificates. This is important so that they feel valued" (Interview with the Principal, March 12, 2023).

However, some teachers feel that the awards given are still limited. "The awards given are sometimes not worth the efforts we have made. It would be better if the award could be in a more concrete form" (Interview with PAI Teachers, March 15, 2023).

A teacher also opined, "The motivation given by the principal is good, but if there can be additional incentives that can improve the welfare of teachers" (Interview with PAI Teachers, March 18, 2023).

Through the results of this interview, it shows that the principal's efforts to give appreciation to the teacher's performance have been carried out, but it is not fully adequate in the view of some teachers. Principals understand the importance of giving awards to motivate teachers, but the awards given, such as

thank-you notes or certificates, are considered less substantial by some teachers.

Teachers expect more concrete and valuable rewards, which are more commensurate with the effort and contribution they give. In addition, there is a desire among teachers to get additional incentives that can improve their well-being, such as bonuses or other forms of material support. This reflects the gap between the principal's good intentions in motivating and the teachers' real need for more meaningful rewards that have a positive impact on their well-being. This indicates the need for a more comprehensive reward strategy, which is not only symbolic but also has a real impact on teacher motivation and well-being.

Teacher Performance Evaluation as a Continuous Learning Process

Teacher performance evaluation at MTs Nurul Jadid Paiton is carried out routinely at the end of every school year. This evaluation is used as a tool to assess the extent to which teachers have achieved their learning goals and how they can improve themselves in the future.

The principal explained, "The evaluation we conduct is not only to assess, but also to assist teachers in improving their weaknesses" (Interview with the Principal, March 12, 2023).

However, one teacher felt that this evaluation was less intensive. "Sometimes evaluations are only carried out once a year, so improvements that should be made faster are delayed" (Interview with PAI Teachers, March 15, 2023).

Another teacher added, "It would be better if there was a periodic evaluation that was carried out every month or at the end of each semester, so that we could find out the progress and what needs to be improved" (Interview with PAI Teachers, March 18, 2023).

The results of this interview show that there are differences of opinion between the principal and the teacher regarding the effectiveness and frequency of performance evaluations carried out. Principals have a noble goal in evaluation, which is not only to assess but also to help teachers improve their weaknesses. However, the implementation of this evaluation is seen as inadequate by teachers.

Teachers feel that the evaluations that are only conducted once a year are not intensive enough to provide timely feedback and allow for immediate improvement. Evaluations that are rarely carried out tend to cause delays in corrective actions that should be implemented more quickly. Teachers propose that evaluations be carried out more periodically, for example every month or at the end of each semester, so as to allow for more continuous monitoring of progress and identification of areas that need to be improved earlier.

This indicates the need for revision in the evaluation approach in the school, by adding more frequent and systematic periodic evaluations. This will help ensure that the process of improving teacher performance can run more effectively and efficiently, as well as have a faster positive impact on the quality of learning.

Table 1. Teacher Performance Evaluation as a Continuous Learning Process

Aspects	Description	Challenge
Evaluation Objectives	Evaluations are conducted to assess and help teachers improve their weaknesses.	Evaluations are rarely conducted (once a year), leading to delays in performance improvements.
Evaluation Frequency	It is done once a year at the end of the school year.	Teachers want periodic evaluations every month or end of the semester for continuous improvement.
Teacher Recommendations	Periodic evaluations are more often required to ensure continuous development.	Revisions in the evaluation system are needed to allow for more effective improvements.

Table 1 illustrates teacher performance evaluation as part of the continuous learning process, focusing on the goals, frequency, and recommendations of teachers. This evaluation aims to assess and help teachers improve their weaknesses, but it is rarely carried out, i.e. only once a year, which leads to delays in performance improvement. This low frequency of evaluations is also a complaint of teachers, who want periodic evaluations every month or at the end of the semester so that performance improvements can be made more sustainably. Recommendations from teachers indicate the need to revise the existing evaluation system, with an emphasis on increasing the frequency of evaluation to ensure continuous and more effective development.

The discussion of the results of this study revealed that the evaluation of teacher performance at MTs Nurul Jadid Paiton, although it has a noble goal to help teachers improve their weaknesses, still has some significant weaknesses, especially related to the frequency of evaluations that are only carried out once a year. This is in line with the findings of previous studies which show that evaluations that are not carried out regularly can hinder the necessary performance improvements. A study by Smith et al. (2020) showed that more frequent periodic evaluations, such as monthly or semester, can provide more timely feedback, allowing teachers to make immediate improvements and improve the quality of teaching. In addition, research by Johnson and Brown (2021) emphasizes the importance of a continuous and systematic evaluation system to ensure continuous teacher competency development. Furthermore, research by Davis (2020) revealed that less intensive and unstructured performance evaluations can lead to a decrease in teacher motivation, which in turn negatively impacts student learning outcomes. Thus, the findings of this study confirm the need for revision in the performance evaluation system at MTs Nurul Jadid, taking into account higher frequencies and a more systematic approach, in order to produce a more significant positive impact on the quality of learning and overall teacher performance.

The contribution of this research lies in the in-depth disclosure of how the leadership of school principals at MTs Nurul Jadid plays a role in improving the performance of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers through various strategies such as coaching, supervision, motivation, and performance evaluation. This research provides new insights into the challenges faced in the implementation of school policies, especially related to the frequency and effectiveness of supervision and evaluation of teacher performance. By offering critical analysis and suggestions for improvement, this research contributes to the development of a more effective school leadership model, which can be applied not only in MTs Nurul Jadid but also in other similar schools. In addition, this study provides a strong empirical basis for improving teacher supervision and

evaluation practices that are more periodic and structured, so as to improve the overall quality of education.

CONCLUSION

This study reveals the important role of the leadership of school principals at MTs Nurul Jadid in improving the performance of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers through a series of strategies such as professional coaching, classroom supervision, motivation, and performance evaluation. Key findings show that despite significant efforts on the part of school principals to encourage teacher competency improvement through training and supervision, challenges remain in terms of frequency and consistency of their implementation. This research provides new insights into the importance of a more structured and systematic approach to teacher performance monitoring and evaluation, which not only strengthens the existing understanding of the role of school leadership in the context of education, but also offers practical guidance for education managers to improve teacher performance on an ongoing basis. The key lesson that can be drawn from this study is the need for revision in supervision and evaluation methods to be more adaptive and responsive to the needs of teachers' professional development.

The main strength of this research lies in its contribution to enriching the literature on educational leadership, especially in the context of madrasas. The study updates existing perspectives by emphasizing the importance of higher frequency of supervision and evaluation, as well as the need for more substantial rewards to motivate teachers. In addition, the study succeeded in introducing important variables, such as consistency in supervision and evaluation, which were previously underpaid in the literature. However, this study also has limitations, especially because its scope is limited to one location, namely MTs Nurul Jadid, as well as the use of qualitative methods that may not cover all relevant variables. Therefore, further research is needed to test these findings in a broader context, involving a wide range of madrasas and using more diverse methods, such as quantitative surveys, to provide a more comprehensive picture and strengthen the basis for more effective education policies.

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