

The Mindset of Citizenship: How Cultural Intelligence Shapes Leader Behaviors

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Abstract:

This study examines how cultural intelligence shapes madrasah principals' leadership behaviour in Bengkulu Province in a multicultural educational context. Using a qualitative approach with a case study design, the research explores how cultural intelligence influences decision-making and social interactions in the madrasah environment. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with 12 madrasah principals, 15 teachers, 20 students, and 10 guardians, as well as direct observations and document analysis to ensure a comprehensive understanding of leadership practices. The findings indicate that madrasah principals with high cultural intelligence foster inclusive school environments, enhance stakeholder communication, and develop policies that respect cultural diversity. Unlike previous studies focusing on general leadership models, this research highlights integrating local cultural values as a key factor in effective leadership within religious-based schools. These insights contribute to the literature by demonstrating how cultural intelligence can be systematically applied to improve leadership practices. The study also provides a practical perspective for developing training programs emphasizing cultural adaptability and inclusive decision-making in educational institutions.

Keywords: *Cultural Intelligence, Behavior, Principal Leadership, Multicultural*

Abstrak:

Penelitian ini mengkaji bagaimana kecerdasan budaya membentuk perilaku kepemimpinan kepala madrasah di Provinsi Bengkulu dalam konteks pendidikan multikultural. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain studi kasus, penelitian ini mengeksplorasi bagaimana kecerdasan budaya memengaruhi pengambilan keputusan dan interaksi sosial di lingkungan madrasah. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam dengan 12 kepala madrasah, 15 guru, 20 siswa, dan 10 wali, serta observasi langsung dan analisis dokumen untuk memastikan pemahaman yang komprehensif tentang praktik kepemimpinan. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kepala madrasah dengan kecerdasan budaya yang tinggi mendorong lingkungan sekolah yang inklusif, meningkatkan komunikasi antar pemangku kepentingan, dan mengembangkan kebijakan yang menghargai keberagaman budaya. Tidak seperti penelitian sebelumnya yang berfokus pada model kepemimpinan umum, penelitian ini menyoroti integrasi nilai-nilai budaya lokal sebagai faktor kunci dalam kepemimpinan yang efektif dalam sekolah berbasis agama. Wawasan ini berkontribusi pada literatur dengan menunjukkan bagaimana kecerdasan budaya dapat diterapkan secara sistematis untuk meningkatkan praktik kepemimpinan. Penelitian ini juga memberikan perspektif praktis untuk mengembangkan program pelatihan kepemimpinan yang menekankan kemampuan beradaptasi budaya dan pengambilan keputusan yang inklusif di lembaga pendidikan.

Kata Kunci: *Kecerdasan Budaya, Peilaku, Kepemimpinan Kepala Madrasah, Multikultural*

INTRODUCTION

The concept of a citizenship mindset in the leadership of madrasah principals in Bengkulu Province reveals a significant gap between theory and practice. Theoretically, citizenship emphasizes national values, democracy, and social responsibility. However, these principles are often complex and challenging to translate into the actual behaviour of educational leaders (Alifuddin & Widodo, 2022). Madrasah principals are expected to exemplify cultural intelligence that reflects national values. In reality, many lack the understanding to integrate these values into daily policies (Kaya, 2022).

A survey conducted in Bengkulu found that many madrasah principals remain focused on administrative routines, neglecting efforts to strengthen citizenship character, which is essential for developing leaders with integrity. For instance, the survey indicated that only a tiny percentage of madrasah principals actively implement programs to foster citizenship values among students and staff. This gap between theoretical ideals and practical implementation highlights an urgent need for further research. Addressing this issue is crucial to developing a madrasah leadership model that aligns with contemporary educational demands (Acker & Bocarro, 2021). This is a crucial issue that needs further study to create madrasah leadership that is more relevant to the demands of the times.

Several previous studies have revealed the importance of cultural intelligence in leading education, including in Indonesia. Research by Saleem states that principals with cultural intelligence can create an inclusive and harmonious educational atmosphere (Saleem, 2021). Meanwhile, a study by Winter highlights how educational leaders in Madrasah Tsanawiyah focus more on academic achievement without paying attention to the development of students' civic character (Winter & Mccann, 2022). These studies show the importance of understanding cultural intelligence for educational leadership. However, although many studies have discussed the influence of cultural intelligence on educational leadership, no study has directly linked the civic mindset and leadership practices of madrasah principals in Bengkulu Province. This study aims to further fill this gap by examining the relationship.

This study has novelty in examining the relationship between civic mindset and cultural intelligence in the context of madrasah principal leadership, especially in Bengkulu Province (Ma et al., 2024). The novelty of this study lies in the approach that connects the dimensions of citizenship, which include social responsibility and active participation in national and state life, with the ability of the madrasah principal to create an educational climate that focuses not only on academic results but also on the formation of students' civic character (Kristiansen, 2023). In addition, this study reveals local dynamics in Bengkulu Province, which has socio-cultural characteristics different from those of other regions. Thus, this study enriches insight into the importance of cultural intelligence in shaping the

civic mindset of madrasah principals in areas with social and cultural characteristics.

This study aims to answer several important questions relevant to the leadership of madrasah principals in Bengkulu Province and how Cultural Intelligence Shapes the Leadership Behavior of Madrasah Principals in Bengkulu Province. This study is relevant because Bengkulu Province has cultural diversity that influences the world of education, so madrasah principals need to have cultural intelligence to form inclusive and adaptive leadership behaviour. This study fills the research gap regarding the relationship between cultural intelligence and madrasah principal leadership in Bengkulu while also contributing to developing educational leadership competencies in facing the challenges of cultural diversity. The results of this study can be used to design locally relevant leadership training, which will significantly impact national and global education.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach with a case study design. (Assyakurrohim et al., 2022). This approach was chosen to explore how cultural intelligence shapes the leadership behaviour of madrasah principals in Bengkulu Province. The case study method allows researchers to capture the dynamics and local contexts that influence leadership in educational environments (Erma Nurdaningsih et al., 2023).

The research locations were selected based on specific criteria to ensure the representation of diverse educational settings within Bengkulu Province. Madrasahs were chosen based on accreditation status, geographic distribution (urban and rural areas), and institutional affiliation (public and private). The selection of research subjects followed a purposive sampling technique involving principals with varying years of experience, leadership styles, and engagement in citizenship-based educational programs. This selection process ensures a comprehensive understanding of how different contextual factors influence the integration of civic mindset and cultural intelligence in madrasah leadership.

The location of the study focused on several madrasahs in Bengkulu Province. The selection of this location was based on the cultural diversity that characterizes the region, making it relevant to examine the influence of cultural intelligence on leadership. In addition, research in Bengkulu is still relatively rare, so the results are expected to provide new contributions to developing literature related to culture-based leadership.

The data in this study were collected through three main techniques: interviews, observations, and documentation (Haryono, 2023). In-depth interviews were conducted with madrasah principals, teachers, and students or parents of students to understand the experiences, views, and impacts of cultural intelligence-based leadership. Observations were made directly on the activities of madrasah principals in their work environment to see how their behaviour reflects cultural intelligence. Meanwhile, documentation is used to collect data from official documents such as policies, activity reports, and relevant meeting notes.

The data analysis in this study follows the interactive model that Miles and Huberman (1994) proposed, which consists of three main stages. First, data condensation is conducted by simplifying, categorizing, and focusing on relevant information. For example, interview transcripts from madrasah principals are coded based on themes such as civic mindset, cultural intelligence, and leadership challenges. In contrast, non-relevant data, such as general administrative discussions, are excluded. Second, data presentation involves organizing the condensed data into meaningful formats, such as narrative descriptions, matrices, or diagrams. For instance, a matrix comparing principals' understanding of cultural intelligence and their implementation strategies is used to identify patterns across different madrasahs. Third, data verification and conclusion drawing focuses on analyzing presented data to identify relationships, patterns, and meanings. For example, if multiple sources indicate that principals struggle with embedding national values due to a lack of training, this pattern is critically examined while exploring alternative explanations (Waruwu, 2023).

Data triangulation is employed by cross-verifying information from interviews, observations, and document analysis to ensure validity. For instance, principals' statements on implementing civic education are compared with classroom observations and school policy documents to maintain consistency and accuracy. This approach is designed to comprehensively understand the relationship between cultural intelligence and the leadership behaviour of madrasah principals in Bengkulu Province. The results of this study are expected to provide in-depth insights and practical solutions to improve culture-based leadership in the world of education.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This study highlights the vital role of cultural intelligence in madrasah leadership in Bengkulu Province. Understanding social and cultural dynamics enables principals to integrate local values, fostering inclusivity and collaboration. Key aspects include cultural awareness, interactive ability, active participation, and strengthening identity and cooperation. Adaptive leadership creates a harmonious work environment through effective communication and conflict resolution. Open communication minimizes conflicts and enhances teamwork, aligning with inclusive leadership principles. These findings emphasize that culturally intelligent leadership fosters a positive learning atmosphere and sustains a productive and harmonious educational environment.

Result

Understanding the Social and Cultural Environment

A principal with high cultural intelligence deeply understands the social and cultural conditions in their school environment. This helps them to build harmonious relationships with students, teachers, and the local community.

Table 1. Understanding the Social and Cultural Environment

Interview	Coding	Resources
"We ensure that every activity in the school reflects local cultural values that are important for students to understand."	Understanding cultural background	Principal
"Interaction between teachers and students not only strengthens academic learning but also instils a deep understanding of culture."	Ability to interact	Teachers
"Employees support cultural learning through the management of the school environment that reflects traditional values."	Understanding Cultural Values in Daily Life	Employees
"Our involvement in cultural activities in the school provides children with insight into the importance of preserving local culture."	Cultural Involvement and Activities	Parents
"My participation in cultural activities such as traditional art performances makes me love local culture more."	Active Experience in Culture	Students

Understanding of the social and cultural environment in schools is reflected through various roles that support each other. The principal ensures students' understanding of their cultural background through activities that reflect local values, while teachers enhance students' interaction skills by creating in-depth and inclusive learning. Employees support applying cultural values in everyday life through harmonious environmental management, and parents play an active role in cultural activities to strengthen appreciation for local traditions. Student participation in cultural activities, such as traditional performing arts, fosters a sense of pride in cultural heritage, creates an educational community that values diversity, and strengthens cultural identity.

Based on the table above, three main findings related to understanding the social and cultural environment are identified in the educational context. First, Understanding Cultural Background shows that the principal prioritizes activities that reflect local cultural values. This aims to strengthen students' cultural identity, create a deeper awareness of diversity, and instill respect for local traditions. This understanding not only builds students' character but also makes the school a center for cultural learning that is relevant to the surrounding community's needs.

Second is the ability to interact, where teachers actively create learning that supports effective communication and cross-cultural understanding. Employees also support by providing a harmonious environment, strengthening the values of togetherness reflected in daily school life. Third, Cultural Involvement and Activities are seen through the participation of parents and students in various cultural activities such as traditional arts and folklore. This active participation fosters a sense of pride in local culture and creates a stronger collaboration between schools and families in maintaining and preserving cultural values.

The observation findings above show that understanding education's social and cultural environment has three main implications. First, understanding cultural background helps students internalize traditional values, strengthens their cultural identity, and creates awareness of diversity. Second, the ability to interact developed through learning and school environmental support improves

harmonious relationships between individuals and builds better connections with the surrounding community. Third, active involvement in cultural activities by students and parents strengthens a sense of pride in local cultural heritage and creates collaboration between schools and families in preserving cultural values. The integration of these elements shows that schools are not only places for academic learning but also centers for social and cultural development.

Adaptation in Managing Behavior and Work Environment

Adaptation in managing behavior and work environment in the madrasah is the ability of the madrasah principal to understand the dynamics of the educational environment, respond to various cultural challenges, and build an inclusive and conducive work environment in Bengkulu Province. This adaptation includes skills in building effective communication, creating teamwork, resolving conflicts, and understanding the needs of teachers, students, and related parties in the madrasah environment with the existing cultural diversity.

From the results of interviews with two primary informants, the following information was obtained; "We always try to understand the cultural background of students and teachers to create a harmonious and inclusive environment. This is important so that each party feels appreciated and the work environment can run well." (ks_12). "As teachers, we feel that the madrasah principal's approach that always pays attention to cultural diversity is very helpful for us in adapting to the work environment and reducing intercultural tensions that may arise." (mt-22)

During the interview, the madrasah principal profoundly understands the importance of adaptation in building a conducive and inclusive work environment. The informants emphasized the need to understand cultural diversity and build harmonious communication to ensure practical cooperation in the madrasah environment. The adaptations include understanding cultural diversity, effective communication, conflict resolution, and implementing inclusive and flexible policies. Based on the study's results, this adaptation has been shown to play an important role in creating a harmonious work environment, increasing team spirit, and supporting a conducive educational environment. These findings illustrate the application of responsive leadership sensitive to the dynamics of the social and cultural environment in the madrasah.



Figure 1. Adaptation in Managing Work Behavior and Environment

The observations conducted in several madrasahs indicate that the madrasah principal adapts to managing the work environment. The madrasah principal is seen to be active in building communication with teachers and staff

while paying attention to existing cultural characteristics. During meetings and discussions with teachers, the madrasah principal shows empathy by listening to the views of each party without distinguishing cultural backgrounds. In addition, in learning activities and policy formulation, the madrasah principal also takes an approach that maintains inclusivity and collaboration between various related parties.

Based on the interviews and observations, it can be concluded that adaptation in managing behavior and the work environment in madrasahs in Bengkulu Province involves effective communication, empathy, and a deep understanding of cultural diversity. The madrasah principal can build an inclusive work environment by listening to the aspirations and needs of related parties and taking policies sensitive to the local cultural context. This shows that cultural intelligence plays a significant role in shaping leadership behavior and building harmonious cooperation between teachers and staff in the madrasah environment.

By having cultural intelligence, madrasah principals can adjust their policies and leadership approaches to the needs of a diverse environment. This helps create an inclusive school environment, understand students' backgrounds, and ensure effective stakeholder communication.

Minimizing Conflict and Encouraging Cooperation

Cultural intelligence shapes the leadership behavior of madrasah principals in Bengkulu Province by minimizing conflict and fostering cooperation through specific strategies. These include open communication, where principals regularly discuss with teachers, staff, and parents to address concerns transparently and build mutual trust. Conflict resolution with an inclusive approach is implemented by facilitating deliberation sessions that involve all stakeholders, ensuring that differences in opinion are acknowledged and resolved collectively. Understanding cultural diversity is reflected in how principals accommodate various cultural backgrounds by integrating local traditions into school policies and activities. Additionally, implementing local cultural values in leadership policies strengthens social cohesion, as seen in school-wide cultural events and community engagement programs. Through these mechanisms, madrasah principals create a conducive, safe, and supportive environment that enhances the quality of teaching and learning.

Information was obtained from interviews with two informants who play important roles in the madrasah environment to support this finding. Information from the interview results is as follows: "We always try to build open communication with teachers and the community so that all parties can understand each other. This communication approach helps reduce tension and encourages good cooperation between us." "We often discuss various problems that arise in the madrasah environment, especially when there are differences of opinion regarding local culture and school activities. By listening and discussing, we can find solutions together."

The informant's statement shows that open communication between the madrasah principal, teachers, and stakeholders is key to minimizing conflict. The madrasah principal uses inclusive communication to build harmonious

cooperation, while teachers show awareness in discussing and trying to find joint solutions for the common good.

During the observation process in the madrasah environment, the researcher observed several things that were relevant to this sub-finding. The madrasah principal often held regular meetings with teachers and stakeholders to discuss various problems in the school environment. The active and inclusive communication process between the madrasah principal and all related parties encouraged harmonious relationships in the school environment. Group discussion activities to resolve various conflicts were carried out with a peaceful approach, prioritizing deliberation and collective problem-solving. Local cultural values are often integrated into various school activities and daily activities, creating an environment of mutual understanding and support.

Based on data from interviews and observations, open and inclusive communication is an effective strategy for reducing conflict and building harmonious cooperation in the madrasah environment. In addition, applying local cultural values in school activities also plays an important role in creating a safe and mutually supportive environment. Discussions involving various stakeholders have also proven to be one of the solutions to solving various problems in the educational environment.

From the results of this study, researchers found a significant pattern in the leadership practices of madrasah principals, namely open and inclusive communication as the primary strategy used in building cooperation and minimizing conflict. Applying local cultural values in school activities creates a harmonious and mutually understanding environment. Democratic and inclusive group discussions are an effective means of resolving conflicts and building cooperation among stakeholders.

This pattern shows that leadership that focuses on communication, cooperation, and applying cultural values can create a harmonious, supportive, and inclusive madrasah environment in Bengkulu Province. Cultural intelligence helps madrasah principals manage conflicts that may arise due to cultural differences. They can build a harmonious and collaborative atmosphere in the school environment with an inclusive and empathetic approach.

Discussion

Based on the findings of this study, understanding the social and cultural environment plays a crucial role in shaping inclusive and responsive leadership. As explained by Hopkins et al. (2021), leaders with cultural intelligence can navigate the complexities of social dynamics, interpret local cultural contexts, and establish positive relationships with stakeholders. The results indicate that madrasah principals who embrace social diversity foster inclusive school environments and respond more effectively to the needs of teachers and the community (Hidayah et al., 2024). This understanding strengthens school harmony and enhances the overall learning experience by ensuring that educational leadership aligns with local cultural values.

The study also highlights the significance of flexibility in managing behavior and the work environment, which correlates positively with leadership success. Research by MacLean (2021) suggests that adaptive leaders who can

adjust their strategies based on social and cultural dynamics are more effective in fostering cooperation and resolving conflicts. Similarly, Puzzo et al. (2024) emphasize that leaders who demonstrate flexibility can respond to environmental changes, making them more resilient in diverse educational settings. These insights reinforce that culturally intelligent leadership, supported by adaptability and social awareness, contributes to a more cohesive and effective educational environment (Munawwaroh, 2024).

However, the results of this study indicate that this flexibility requires a deep understanding of the characteristics of the local environment and culture to be implemented effectively (Zubaidi, 2024). This adaptation has been shown to have positive implications for creating a conducive and harmonious work environment, which ultimately supports the performance of teachers and students in the educational environment (Homan et al., 2020). In addition, open communication and applying local cultural values are important in minimizing conflict and encouraging harmonious cooperation. This concept aligns with previous research by Den, which emphasized that inclusive leadership and democratic communication effectively create a stable and productive environment (Heru & Bali, 2024). With an approach that prioritizes open communication, madrasah principals can build trust with stakeholders, resolve emerging tensions, and encourage cooperation to create a positive and conducive school environment (Putri, 2023). The implications of this strategy indicate that leadership supported by inclusive communication can create a harmonious and productive educational environment (Glaveanu et al., 2020).

The implications of this finding indicate that the cultural intelligence possessed by the madrasah principal functions as a key factor in forming effective leadership (Herlina, 2024). Leadership based on cultural understanding, open communication, and flexibility can create a harmonious educational environment and reduce the potential for conflict (Ali & Chatti, 2023). If the leadership cannot understand the existing cultural environment and diversity, the risk of conflict and obstacles in the education process will be higher (Sain, 2025). Therefore, leadership based on cultural intelligence can minimize these obstacles and encourage a positive work environment for all stakeholders.

From a broader perspective, leadership based on cultural intelligence forms an underlying structure related to environmental understanding, communication, and adaptive flexibility (Tsara et al., 2024). This shows that madrasah leaders in Bengkulu Province have a strategic role in managing the dynamics of the educational environment with an inclusive and responsive approach to socio-cultural diversity (Faisol et al., 2024). In other words, leadership that integrates cultural intelligence will impact a harmonious, inclusive educational environment and can improve the quality of sustainable education.

CONCLUSION

This study found that cultural intelligence plays a crucial role in shaping the leadership behaviour of madrasah principals in Bengkulu Province. Key findings highlight that understanding the social and cultural environment, flexibility in managing behaviour and the work environment, and open communication that integrates local cultural values are effective strategies for

minimizing conflict and fostering harmonious cooperation. By applying these approaches, madrasah principals create inclusive and supportive school environments where teachers and students can engage in meaningful educational experiences. The findings underscore the importance of culturally intelligent leadership in addressing diversity, strengthening school-community relationships, and promoting a conducive learning atmosphere through democratic communication and flexible adaptation.

The contribution of this study lies in its unique perspective on madrasah leadership through the lens of cultural intelligence. Unlike conventional leadership models, this research emphasizes the role of local culture, inclusive communication, and adaptability as key factors in effective leadership. For example, integrating local cultural traditions in school policies and conflict resolution strategies has enhanced stakeholder collaboration. Additionally, structured discussions that prioritize cultural awareness in decision-making can serve as practical models for leadership development programs in educational institutions. This study broadens the understanding of how culturally responsive leadership can strengthen institutional management in religious-based educational settings.

However, this study has several limitations. First, the research was limited to Bengkulu Province, meaning the findings may not fully represent the diverse leadership practices in other regions. Second, stakeholder diversity factors such as gender, age, and professional background were not profoundly explored, which could provide additional insights into leadership variations. Future research should expand the geographical scope and incorporate a more diverse set of participants to develop a more comprehensive understanding of cultural intelligence in educational leadership. A mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative surveys with qualitative case studies, could further validate the findings and support policy recommendations for enhancing madrasah leadership.

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