Optimizing Academic Achievement of Students through Effective Leadership of Principal

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Abstract:

This study aims to analyze how the leadership of the Madrasah Aliyah Ummul Quro al-Islami principal plays a role in improving the academic achievement of its students. This research method uses a descriptive qualitative approach. Observations are used to observe phenomena in the field. Key informants in this study were the head of the madrasa, deputy head of curriculum and student affairs, homeroom teacher, subject teacher, and students. Documentation studies are used to observe documents related to research topics. Data analysis techniques include coding, thematic grouping, identifying patterns, and drawing conclusions. The results of the study found that the leadership of madrasah aliyah in increasing academic achievement was initiated by standardizing prospective madrasah heads given foundations, exemplary character development, NU values, cooperation, strengthening academic improvement programs, and the principal's desire for the role of pesantren alums in working in all fields of the profession. The results of this study can be used as a practical guide for madrasa heads in developing their leadership competencies and creating a conducive learning environment through adequate management of resources in the context of madrasah to improve student academic achievement.

Keywords: *Principal Leadership, Academic Achievement, Character Values to NU's*

Abstrak:

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis tentang bagaimana kepemimpinan kepala Madrasah Aliyah Ummul Quro Al-Islami berperan dalam meningkatkan prestasi akademik peserta didiknya. Metode penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif. Observasi digunakan untuk mengamati fenomena yang ada di lapangan. Key informants dalam penelitian ini adalah kepala madrasah, wakil kepala madrasah kurikulum dan kesiswaan, wali kelas, guru pelajaran, dan juga santri. Studi dokumentasi digunakan untuk mengamati dokumen-dokumen yang berkaitan dengan topik penelitian. Teknik analisa datanya analisis meliputi pengkodean, pengelompokan tematik, identifikasi pola, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian menemukan bahwa kepemimpinan madrasah aliyah dalam peningkatan prestasi akademik adalah diawali dari standarisasi calon kepala madrasah yang diberikan yayasan, keteladanan, pengembangan karakter nilai-nilai ke NU-an, kerjasama, penguatan program peningkatan akademik, dan keinginan kepala madrasah akan peran alumni pesantren dalam berkiprah pada segala lini bidang profesi. Hasil penelitian ini dapat digunakan sebagai panduan praktis bagi para kepala madrasah dalam mengembangkan kompetensi kepemimpinan mereka dan menciptakan lingkungan belajar yang kondusif melalui pengelolaan sumber daya yang memadai dalam konteks madrasah untuk meningkatkan prestasi akademik siswa.

Kata Kunci: *Kepemimpinan Kepala Madrasah, Prestasi Akademik, Karakter Nilai-Nilai ke NU-an*

INTRODUCTION

Education is the spearhead of civilization that can prosper humanity (Maulana, 2020). Leadership is the essential element for the principal of the madrasah because leadership is closely related to activities influencing subordinates and also making decisions, and formulating visions and missions so that subordinates can do the work as expected (Banmairuroy et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2021). Permendikbud number 6 of 2018 explains the competencies that principals must have, namely personality, managerial, entrepreneurial, supervision, and social competencies. This competency includes knowledge, skills, and character.

In essence, the principal is a teacher tasked with leading the madrasa (Sahnan, 2108; Kouhsari et al., 2022). The principal acts as a leader in the madrasa who is responsible for leading the educational process related to improving the quality of human resources, increasing the professionalism of teachers, employees and all those related to the leadership of the principal (Grissom et al., 2019; Munajat, 2021). Therefore, principals need to master conceptual, drafting, technical and leadership communication skills so that education in madrasah can run well (Munir & Iqbal, 2018; Myende et al., 2021).

Principals play a vital role in creating a conducive learning environment and inspiring students to achieve high academic achievement (Kouhsari et al., 2022). However, to achieve this, the principal's leadership must be practical and able to direct all components of the madrasah (Supadi, 2022; Warisno & Hidayah, 2022).

Madrasah Aliyah Ummul Quro al-Islami in Bogor is an educational institution with great potential to produce students who excel academically. However, some challenges and problems need to be overcome so that student academic achievement can be optimized. One of the factors that can influence the increase in academic achievement is the effective leadership of the principal.

Madrasah heads must be able to carry out the vision and mission and improve student achievement through various programs (Beattie et al., 2021; Greenacre et al., 2022). Madrasah heads can improve the quality of learning achievement in madrasah because principals people who play an essential role in implementing programs at madrasah (Jambo et al., 2020; Riski et al., 2021). Of course, the program that is made must be related to all the targets of education, one of which is academic achievement. Student learning achievement is vital in growing madrasah' learning process (Hou et al., 2019; Rivale-Bell, 2022). Of course, in improving learning achievement, the principal must cooperate in the three functions of education: the madrasa, students, and the community (Diding et al., 2020).

The principal plays a significant role in supporting the success of learning achievement for madrasah, and there must be an explanation of their responsibilities and duties (Harris & Spillane, 2008; Özdemir, 2019). The principal can communicate well with his subordinates (Ceballos et al., 2019) so that what the

educational institution aspires to can be achieved together, especially in increasing students' academic achievement.

As a leader, the principal of the madrasah must be able to set an example for his subordinates to continuously improve their capacity and capabilities as *kholifah fil ardhi* in the field of education. This example is a spiritual aspect that gives meaning to life so that subordinates will pursue academic achievements not solely for worldly interests but for *ukhrowi* interests. Spirituality will provide a healthier and more reasonable view of the reality that is currently happening (Brooks & Ezzani, 2022) to make students more sensitive to other people and their environment.

Through his leadership style, the madrasah's principal must be able to raise the awareness of his students about the importance of increasing academic achievement, which one day will benefit them. Academic achievement, of course, requires formulations and standards that these educational institutions must make through policies made by the principalh (Aprilianto et al., 2022) so that the value of this academic achievement is relevant and full of meaning which will impact the social life of students.

Leadership based on the spirit and Islamic values will be the driving force for the principal in implementing programs and systems created by the madrasa to support the success of increasing student learning achievement. These Islamic values become the roots of transforming leadership in madrasah (Hidayat, 2023) in increasing students' academic achievement. Therefore, there is a need for commitment between madrasah components in improving academic achievement as one of the mandates given by God to humans (Cansoy et al., 2022).

In this context, it is essential to pay attention to the leadership role of the principal in creating appropriate strategies and policies to improve student academic achievement (Huang et al., 2020; Yalçın et al., 2023). Through effective leadership, principals can create a positive learning culture, improve teaching quality, facilitate teacher professionalism development, and foster good cooperation between all components of the madrasa.

The principal, supported by his subordinates, is a force for increasing the academic achievement of their students so that many of their graduates continue their studies abroad, both at State Universities in Turkey and Egypt. This is, of course, related to the leadership role of the madrasah head in carrying out the roles and functions of the standards provided by the foundation, the example of the madrasah head, decision making, leadership style and also the development of Islamic characters within the framework of *ahlussunnah wal jamaah,* as well as strengthening achievement Therefore, the focus of this research is to try to unravel how the leadership of the Aliyah Ummul Quro al-Islami principal plays a role in improving students' academic achievement.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach because this study aims to explain the leadership process of the principal in improving student learning achievement. A qualitative policy explains the reality on the ground using symbols in the form of words (Creswell, 2019). This research will use a qualitative research

design with a case study approach. This approach will enable researchers to gain an in-depth understanding of optimizing student academic achievement through effective principal leadership at Madrasah Aliyah Ummul Quro al-Islami Bogor.

Data collection techniques use interviews, observation, and documentation (Sugiono, 2020). Interviews were conducted with the principal, deputy head of curriculum, deputy of student affairs, homeroom teacher, subject teacher, and also with students. Observations were made at MA Ummul Quro al-Islami by observing the existing realities and interactions. Documentation is done by analyzing data in student achievement results and madrasah work programs related to improving student achievement.

The collected data will be analyzed using a qualitative analysis approach. The analysis steps will include coding, thematic grouping, identifying patterns, and drawing conclusions. The analysis will examine the relationship between the principal's leadership and student academic achievement. In order to increase the validity and reliability of the research, several steps will be taken. First, data triangulation will be done using various data sources, such as interviews, observations, and document analysis. Second, researchers will use analytical techniques that are systematic and repeatable to ensure consistency of results.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Standardization of Principal

Leadership is crucial in running an education in educational institutions. Leadership is a directive system to adjust a group's activities towards achieving predetermined goals. Education leadership will be effective if the human resources have high motivation to increase cooperation to enable all subordinates to work well (Ulum & Mun'im, 2023). About leadership in madrasah, there are at least the characteristics of a good principal, namely;

Table 1. Characteristics of a good Principal

Principle	Context in Madrasah
Visionary	Has far-sightedness and is able to see what people don't see
Passionate	Energetic, and has great passion
Creative	Being able to do different things every day
Flexible	Not stiff and rigid
Inspiring	Able to inspire his subordinates to be more passionate about what they do
Innovative	Have a variety of ideas
Courageous	Have courage
Imaginative	Able to imagine what kind of madrasa he leads
Experimental	Not afraid to experiment
Initiates change	Initiate change.

Ministerial Regulation number 6 of 2018 explains that the assignment of teachers as school principals is a standard the government sets so that madrasah heads can provide the best in their educational institutions. This rule is essential for managing the election of madrasa heads which must be carried out properly so that educational institutions must set standards to improve the quality of these madrasah. MA Ummul Quro al-Islami Bogor has standards for determining

madrasa heads; these standards include: (1) never been involved in a crime; (2) have served at least five years; (3) have completed or are currently completing undergraduate education (S2).

The selection of madrasa heads at MA Ummul Quro al-Islami is conducted through written tests and interviews. The written test is carried out by giving questions regarding the vision and mission of the Ummul Quro al-Islami MA, the competence of the principal, and also future strategic plans. The interview is the result of the written exam answers. Madrasa's head competencies include personality, managerial, entrepreneurship, supervision, and social. Personal competence includes 1) noble character; 2) integrity; 3) open attitude; 4) self-control; 5) a leadership spirit. Personal competence requires that the principalh be a role model for his subordinates so that the organized educational process can run smoothly. Personality competence in MA Ummul Quro al-Islami is strengthened by the values of piety, which are the spirit of the principal and his subordinates in carrying out their respective duties and functions.

Managerial competence includes; 1) administration arrangement; 2) organizational development; 3) managing change; 4) creating a conducive madrasah climate; 5) empowerment of human resources; 6) establishing relations with external parties; 7) managing finances. This managerial competence supports the madrasah head in managing collaboration with external parties, which leads to the formation of the quality of education in madrasah. Entrepreneurial competencies, namely: 1) innovative; 2) goal-oriented; 3) never give up; 4) have an entrepreneurial spirit. This competency is related to the intelligence of the madrasah head in preparing and getting targets and developing the independence of the madrasa.

Supervision competence includes; 1) supervision program planning, 2) implementation of supervision, and 3) evaluation. This competency is used by the principal to carry out measurement and evaluation activities in the madrasah program. Social competence includes 1) establishing relationships with outsiders, 2) participating in community social activities; (3) having social sensitivity. The standards made by Madrasah Aliyah Ummul Quro al-Islami, which still refer to Ministerial Regulation number 6 of 2018, are educational institutions' efforts to improve the quality of education, especially in improving learning achievement.

Theoretically, competent madrasa heads deeply understand Islamic education, including curriculum, teaching methods, and religious values (Rahman et al., 2023). With good knowledge, madrasa heads can design relevant curricula, integrate religious teachings into learning, and provide spiritual guidance to students. This will help improve students' academic achievement and strengthen their Islamic identity.

Likewise, the competence of the madrasa head must be possessed by each individual, which includes efficient management skills (Lambert et al., 2019; Vuuren et al., 2023). Madrasah heads who can manage resources effectively, including teaching staff, facilities, and budgets, will create an environment that supports the learning process. With good management, madrasah principals can allocate resources wisely, ensure efficient time use, and set up an evaluation

system to monitor student progress. This will have a positive impact on improving student achievement.

The competence of madrasa heads also involves collaborating with teaching staff, parents and the surrounding community. Competent madrasah heads can foster cooperation between all relevant parties to improve student achievement (Abinnashih et al., 2023; Ali, 2023). In addition, they also encourage the professional development of teaching staff through training, workshops or other continuous learning activities. With good collaboration and professional development, madrasah principals can strengthen teaching capacity and directly improve teaching quality, leading to increased student achievement.

Exemplary

The exemplary principal is closely related to the character possessed by the principal. Exemplary is the most critical factor in leading a madrasa which is reflected in discipline, being able to protect teachers, and having a clear vision for the future. The exemplary principle of the MA Ummul Quro al-Islami madrasah is reflected in discipline and setting good examples such as entering on time, respecting subordinates, giving opportunities to teachers and implementing the concept of *ibda bi nafsik* (starting from oneself).

In addition, the exemplary instilled by the principal is exemplary regarding the awareness of continuing to learn so that this becomes an inspiration for teachers and also students to continually learn all kinds of knowledge, both general science, religion, and life sciences, as a provision for future students. One of the factors for the success of the principal in leading the madrasa is being able to be a role model for his subordinates and students.

The following example given by the principal to his subordinates is a democratic example which is carried out through discussions with subordinates, exemplary love for the motherland, which is reflected by cultivating to become a helpful human being for the nation and state, and social exemplary which is reflected in the *husnudzhon* mindset for everyone.

The essence of exemplary is imitation, where students imitate their teachers, families, and environment (Munawwaroh, 2019). Often the process of imitating this example occurs both consciously and unconsciously. The process of imitation that occurs consciously is an imitation of students by teachers or people they admire, which causes changes in student behaviour. In contrast, imitation that is not realized is imitation when students do something that they do not realize that they have imitated.

The example of the madrasa principal has a vital role in improving student achievement (Suaidi, 2022; Gatfield et al., 2023). A madrasa principal who is a good role model can positively impact students, teaching staff, and the entire madrasah community. The example of the head of the madrasa as an inspirational and dedicated figure in the field of education can be a source of motivation for students. Students tend to be inspired by madrasa heads who are highly committed to advancing education. Having a dedicated principal makes students feel motivated to follow in the principal's footsteps and achieve better academic performance.

A madrasa principal who shows an exemplary work ethic and discipline will positively impact students. Learners will be encouraged to adopt the same attitude towards discipline and responsibility in their academic assignments (Embu, 2022). Madrasah principals who consistently and regularly carry out their duties will provide a clear example of the importance of discipline in achieving good academic achievement.

In addition, the example of the madrasa principal in terms of integrity and morality is significant in shaping students' character. A madrasa head who has high integrity and acts with moral values will help create an ethical madrasa environment (Salim, S. 2022). This can influence students positively, encourage them to develop good moral and ethical values and encourage better academic achievement.

Overall, the exemplary principal of the madrasa has a significant role in increasing student achievement. By being a good role model in inspiration, work ethic, integrity, teaching quality, and effective communication, madrasah principals can positively impact students and encourage them to achieve higher academic achievements (Samiuddin, 2022). The principal of the madrasa, as the central figure in the madrasa, has a great responsibility to create an educational environment that motivates and supports the holistic development of students.

Planting Values into NU's

MA Ummul Quro al-Islami is *manhaj ahlussunnah wal jammah* which adheres to the principles, values of piety drawn from the Koran, Sunnah, Ijma, and Qiyas. Apart from that, the learning at MA Ummul Quro al-Islami uses two religious curricula and a general curriculum. The religious curriculum refers to the Gontor Islamic Boarding School, developed to teach Salafi books such as Nahwu Sharaf, Tafsir al-Quran, Hadith, and Fiqh, taught in Arabic and English. At the same time, the general curriculum includes subjects in the Science and Social Studies majors.

With the existence of two curricula, of course, the orientation of academic achievement is expected not only to be proficient in the fields of religion and general affairs but also to provide benefits to all of nature as an illustration of Islam Rahmatan lil 'Alamin. Aswajaan values are also strengthened in students' worship practices such as praying five times a day, carrying out the traditions of *maulid*, *tahlil*, pilgrimage to graves, reading *rathib al-Athos, Al-Hadad*, and *Al-Idrus*, and also *barzanzi*.

With the preservation of *amaliyah*, it is hoped that it can become a spirit for students in navigating their lives. Furthermore, Ummul Quro al-Islami MA Students are taught to have the characteristic mindset of *ahlussunnah wal jamma'ah* (2018), namely; 1) *fikroh tawasuthiyyah* (moderate mindset); 2) *fikroh tassamuhiyha* (moderate mindset); 3) *fikroh islahiyyah* (reformative mindset); 4) *fikroh tatawuriyyah* (dynamic mindset); 5) *fikroh manhajiyyah* (methodological mindset). To further clarify how the derivative of this characteristic will be presented through the Table 2.

Table 2. Explanation of Ahlussunnah Wal Jama'ah Values

Fikroh Tawasuthiyyah	Fikroh Tassamuhiyha	Fikroh Islahiyyah	Fikroh Tatawwuriyyah	Fikroh Manhajiyyah
Accountable	Altruistic	Adaptable	Ambitious	Courageous
Decisive	Caring	Bold	Cautious	Creative
Fair	Compassionate	Dedicated	Hard-Working	Determined
Focused	Considerate	Forgiving	Patient	Innovative
Gentle	Cooperative	Leader	Polite	Inquisitive
Good-Citizen	Dependable	Responsible	Positive	Open-Minded
Honest	Dignified		Self-Confident	Resourceful
Humble	Generous		Self-Disciplined	
Open-Minded	Helpful		Self-Reliant	
Sense of Humor	Joyful		Thorough	
Team Player	Loyal		Visionary	
Trustworthy	Respectful			
Wise	Sensitive			
	Tolerant			
	Tolerant			

Partnership Cooperation

The madrasah head has a social function, namely establishing relations with external parties of his madrasa solely to improve student achievement and the development of the madrasa. The collaboration carried out by the head of the madrasa certainly has an impact on student achievement through programs that have been adapted to external parties at the madrasa. Madrasah or madrasah collaboration with the community can be interpreted as a communication process to increase citizen understanding of what is needed by education. These needs can later be formulated together to achieve the educational goals stated in Law Number 20 of 2003.

Learning achievement is whatever students achieve success, and measurement is based on report cards with high accumulated scores and can be used as a form of student learning success (Güneş et al., 2020; Yunita & Bahriah, 2021). Academic achievement can be reflected, namely from students' desires and ability to solve problems. One way to improve students' academic abilities is to collaborate with the community (Ansyah et al., 2021; Tan et al., 2022).

The head of the Ummul Quro al-Islami madrasa has collaborated with BAZNAS. This program is implemented by training students to continue their studies at well-known campuses in Indonesia. The purpose of holding this program is so that students studying at MA Ummul Quro al-Islami can positively contribute to the society in which they live. Anyway, the results are as follows:

Table 3. Number of Students Absorbed in PTN and PTLN

No	Year	Number of Students	Number of Students Absorbed in PTN* and PTLN**		Percentage
			PTN	PTLN	
1	2019-2020	457	85	5	19,7%
2	2020-2021	450	53	2	12,2%

* Public Universities
** Overseas Universities

In addition, in the field of competition, the head of the madrasa delegates to the vice head of the madrasa curriculum and the deputy head of the student madrasa to send their representatives to take part in the Olympics, which are carried out on a national, regional and local scope. Delegation as a component in management. In the Olympics, the Ummul Quro al-Islami MA won the Bogor district/city and provincial levels in August-October 2022. However, the Ummul Quro al-Islami MA was still limited to a regional scope in its championship. However, this will continue to be improved by the head madrasah through a science deepening program carried out outside class hours. The explanation regarding the data for the 222 Ummul Quro al-Islami Olympic champion is as follows:

Table 4. Data for 2022 Ummul Quro Al-Islami Olympiad Champions

No	Race Type	Level	Organizer	Rating
1	Madrasah Science Competition	District/ City	IPB	Biology Champion II
				Economic Champion II
				First Place Winner of Geography
				Third Runner Up in Mathematics
				Runner Up II for Junior Statistics
				Runner Up II for Junior Statistics
2	National Science Competence	Province	West Java	10 Representatives of West Java Province
				10 Representatives of West Java Province

Academic Program Strengthening

Strengthening the academic program is carried out by the head of the madrasa by delegating the deputy head of curriculum and student affairs. The deputy head of the madrasah curriculum at least regulates such issues, namely; 1) Curriculum development; 2) academic calendar; 3) preparation of learning programs; 4) assessment of student learning outcomes; 5) academic regulations. The preparation of the curriculum refers to the output desired by MA Ummul Quro. In general, graduates understand religious knowledge and general science by looking at the objectives of the curriculum, the material to be taught, the strategies to be used, and the evaluation.

According to Maulana (2023), curriculum components (objectives, materials, learning strategies, and evaluation) are important things to pay attention to. In addition, the creation of an academic calendar, the teacher's obligation to make a strategic plan, RKT, lesson plan and additional study hours is an effort to increase the strengthening of academic programs and also as an effort to make teachers responsible, focused, and ready to carry out their duties.

In practice, the strengthening of the academic program is strengthened by the deputy head of student affairs, who has the duties of 1) providing counselling services to students; 2) carrying out extra and curricular activities for students; 3) conducting superior achievement coaching; 4) tracking alums. MA Ummul Quro al-Islami provides counselling services to students regarding the potential and talents of students so that this will become data for students to choose a major in college or work in a place that suits their talents and interests.

Extracurricular activities related to increasing academic potential achievement through deepening science material for students. The deepening of science is also an effort to prepare cadres with religious and general knowledge skills to compete out there. Leading achievement development is carried out with BAZNAS by holding training related to natural and social sciences. This effort equips students to increase their willingness to learn continually continuously. Alums tracking is carried out using a database and in collaboration with alums both in academic strengthening and programs related to academics.

All components of the madrasa, leaders, teachers and employees also help improve students' academic achievement. Although indirectly, the increase in academic programs carried out by the deputy head of student affairs is divided into two ways, first through the program, namely holding college socialization, and second is controlling students who skip class. This is done to minimize truant students and maintain quality learning. Students who are found to have skipped class will be reported to their respective homeroom teachers to be punished and reported to their parents. This is, of course, important because it is related to improving student academic achievement.

CONCLUSION

The leadership of the head of the Ummul Quro Al-Islami madrasah in improving academic achievement is carried out by formulating through; 1) standardization of madrasa heads; 2) Provide an example that is reflected in discipline, lifelong learning, democracy, love of the motherland, and social example; 3) religious values that are based on the Koran, sunnah, ijma, and Qiyyas and follow the products of the thoughts of earlier pious scholars, this becomes the spirit for the head of the madrasa in carrying out his leadership; 4) collaboration with BAZNAS to prepare graduates who can continue their studies at state universities; 5) increasing academic achievement carried out by the head of the madrasa by delegating the deputy head of curriculum and student affairs.

The importance of effective leadership lies in the Principal's ability to formulate a clear vision and commit to achieving academic excellence. By building an inclusive learning culture and encouraging collaboration between teachers and students, effective leadership helps create a climate that supports academic growth. The effective leadership of the Madrasah Principal is a crucial factor in improving student academic achievement. By establishing a clear vision, creating an inclusive learning environment, encouraging collaboration, and ensuring the availability of adequate resources, effective leadership can provide a positive boost to student academic achievement and lead to better outcomes.

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