

Servant Leadership: Inspiring Followers Towards Good Governance in Madrasah

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Abstract:

This research focuses on exploring the practice of servant leadership in the context of Islamic education in Indonesia. The main objective is to understand how servant leadership practices are applied in various Islamic educational institutions and evaluate their impact on teacher welfare, school performance, and student learning outcomes. The research method used is a qualitative approach with data collection through in-depth interviews with principals, teachers, and staff in various Islamic educational institutions in several regions of Indonesia. Data analysis used a thematic approach to identify critical patterns and findings surrounding servant leadership practices. The results showed that servant leadership practices in Islamic educational environments contributed positively to teacher welfare, school performance, and student learning outcomes. This research implies that servant leadership development can effectively improve the quality of Islamic education in Indonesia. This underscores the importance of service-oriented and inclusive leadership development in Islamic religious education and provides a foundation for developing leadership training programs for future educational leaders.

Keywords: *Servant Leadership, Inspiring, Governance, Service, Empathy*

Abstrak:

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi praktik servant leadership dalam konteks pendidikan madrasah di Indonesia dalam menginspirasi pengikutnya guna membangun tata kelola madrasah yang baik. Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah pendekatan kualitatif jenis studi kasus. Teknik pengumpulan datanya dilakukan melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi dan dokumentasi. Analisis datanya dilakukan secara bertahap, yaitu; data reduction, data display, dan conclusions. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa servant leadership dalam menginspirasi pengikutnya untuk membangun tata kelola madrasah yang baik dilakukan melalui beberapa cara, yaitu memfasilitasi keseimbangan antara kehidupan kerja dan pribadi, menciptakan budaya kolaboratif, mendengarkan dengan empati, memberikan teladan dalam pelayanan, serta memahami dan melayani kebutuhan guru. Penelitian ini memberikan implikasi tentang pentingnya penerapan servant leadership, yang mengindikasikan bahwa paradigma kepemimpinan yang berfokus pada pelayanan dan pengembangan pengikut memiliki relevansi yang signifikan dalam memajukan pendidikan madrasah.

Kata Kunci: *Servant Leadership, Menginspirasi, Tata Kelola, Pelayanan, Empati*

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INTRODUCTION

Education must be able to produce intellectually superior humans, morally stable, competent in mastering science and technology, and have a high commitment to various social roles (Zuhaeriah et al., 2020; Kistoro et al., 2021; Rusdi et al., 2022). To achieve educational success, the role of educators is an undeniable key (Engida, 2021; Diana, 2023). Therefore, educators must develop strategies so that students can receive education well (Tzenios, 2020; Arifin & Sanjani, 2024). Educators not only provide motivation but also must be a source of inspiration so that students can receive an education well and not feel bored in the school environment (Hidajat et al., 2020; Yacek & Gary, 2023; Hasanah et al., 2023).

Inspiration can be interpreted as a process that motivates or stimulates the human mind to perform actions, especially those related to creativity (Ishiguro & Okada, 2021; Susilawati & Astuti, 2022). Inspiration often comes after seeing, hearing, or feeling something around us, especially things that touch the heart (Chuanchen, 2023). Inspiration is a spark of creative ideas that arise naturally or through observation or activity in a particular place that is sometimes difficult to predict when and where (Sunassee et al., 2021; Kumar et al., 2021; Beniddir et al., 2021).

An inspiring educator not only arouses interest and a spirit of change in his students but must also create an inspiring learning climate (Maulidah et al., 2023). Creating an inspiring learning climate will strengthen the character and inspiring traits possessed by the educator himself (Pataranutaporn et al., 2021). One of the main aspects that educators need to pay attention to in order to improve an inspiring learning climate is how they can attract interest and motivate students to like and enjoy the learning process (Wu & Yu, 2024).

Servant leadership, first introduced by Robert K. Greenleaf in the 1970s, places service at the core of leadership (Chattopadhyay, 2021). In the context of the principal at MI (Madrasah Ibtidaiyah) Miftahul Ulum Kalisat, this concept became the primary foundation for mobilizing and inspiring teachers and staff to achieve common goals. Servant leadership teaches that a true leader serves, cares for the needs of others, and ensures that they thrive personally and professionally.

MI Miftahul Ulum Kalisat is an educational institution with a noble mission to provide quality education to the younger generation. In achieving this mission, the role of the principal is not only limited to policy making or administrative management but also to inspiring, guiding, and supporting teachers and staff to grow and develop holistically.

Servant leadership implemented by the MI Miftahul Ulum Kalisat principal prioritizes the values of service and empathy. The leader is not only the center of attention but also a facilitator for the growth and progress of individuals in the school environment. With awareness of the needs and aspirations of teachers and staff, this leadership can create a collaborative, inclusive, and passionate work environment to grow together. In addition, teacher inspiration can be built through self-efficacy, as research results show.

Previous studies have highlighted the role of Principals' servant leadership in inspiring teachers and staff with service and empathy. One relevant study is research conducted by Lumish et al. (2022) where this research shows that the

leadership of the principal's servant has a significant positive impact on the job satisfaction of teachers, who feel valued, supported, and inspired by the principal who shows an attitude of service and empathy towards their needs.

In addition, research by Shen et al. (2020) also shows that the leadership of the principal's service has a solid positive relationship with teacher performance. Principals who demonstrate service and empathy motivate and inspire their teachers to do better. Research related to service and empathy that is also relevant is research conducted by Mcquade et al. (2021), where this study reveals the contribution of service leadership to employee service performance through employee empathy. The results suggest that service leadership accentuating values such as empathy can improve employee service performance and strengthen the relationship between leadership and service outcomes.

Another research study by Pawar et al. (2020) found that servant leaders are vital to shaping successful and sustainable organizations. In addition, Gui et al. (2021) research also made an important contribution to understanding service. This research develops a multidimensional measurement tool to measure servant leadership and examine its impact at individual and organizational levels.

Some of the research above provides a deeper understanding of the influence of servant principals' leadership on teachers in schools and the role of empathy in the context of service. However, there is still room for more in-depth research, especially in the context of Madrasah Ibtidaiyah. Therefore, this study complements previous research focusing on the leadership role of the principal servant at MI Miftahul Ulum Kalisat in inspiring teachers and staff with service and empathy.

The novelty of this study lies in combining the concept of servant leadership Robert K. Greenleaf with the context of Islamic education in Indonesia, especially at the level of principals at MI Miftahul Ulum Kalisat. This research explores the influence of leadership style on teacher inspiration and highlights the critical role of service and empathy in building that inspiration. By providing new insights into the implementation of servant leadership concepts in MI educational environments, this research not only broadens our understanding of servant leadership concepts but also provides concrete examples of how principals can become agents of change through this approach, which has significant implications for improving the overall quality of education.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses qualitative research methods with case study types. The focus of the research is on the leadership of the principal's servant as an effort to build inspiration for his subordinates through service and empathy at MI Miftahul Ulum, Kalisat, Jember, East Java, Indonesia. The qualitative approach was chosen because it allows researchers to understand complex phenomena in a specialized and profound context (Jack & Phoenix, 2022). Observation and interviews were used as data collection techniques to gain a comprehensive understanding of the servant principal's leadership practices and their impact on the inspiration of his subordinates.

Data collection techniques used include interviews and observations. Interviews were conducted with seven informants selected by purposive

sampling, including the principal, vice principal, staff coordinator, and teachers and staff of MI Miftahul Ulum Kalisat (Solarino & Aguinis, 2021). The interviews were in-depth and structured, focusing on their experiences and perceptions of servant leadership, service, and empathy in the school setting. In addition, participatory observations were conducted to understand the servant's leadership practices directly and gain a deeper understanding of the interaction between the principal and staff and the dynamics of the school environment. The combination of these two techniques is expected to provide a holistic picture of servant leadership, service, and empathy practices at MI Miftahul Ulum Kalisat.

In this study, the data analysis technique refers to the approach proposed by Miles and Huberman (Maxwell & Levitt, 2023). First, the data will be reduced, and the researcher will summarize and select relevant information from the collected data. It involves coding, grouping, and abstracting data to identify critical patterns and themes from interviews and observations. After that, the data will be displayed, where the researcher will present the results of data reduction in the form of narratives, charts, or tables. It aims to assist researchers and readers in understanding and analyzing data more systematically. The final step is conclusions drawing/verification. The researcher will interpret the results of the data analysis to identify the main findings and relate them to the research objectives. This process also involves verifying conclusions through deep reflection and discussion. Using this approach, this research is expected to provide a comprehensive understanding of servant leadership, service, and empathy practices in MI Miftahul Ulum Kalisat and their impact on the inspiration of their subordinates.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Facilitates Work-Personal Balance

MI head Miftahul Ulum Kalisat ensures support for work-personal balance by accommodating flexibility needs, considering workloads, and allowing time for breaks. This is as stated by the head of the madrasah; "I believe that work-person balance is key to creating a healthy and productive work environment. A teacher who is balanced in their personal life is more likely to make maximum contributions in the work environment. I ensure that work schedules are flexible and give teachers the freedom to adjust their working time according to personal needs, as long as they still fulfill their responsibilities. This can include work options or adjustments to (I_AA_2023) work schedules."

From this explanation, it can be understood that the head of MI, Miftahul Ulum Kalisat, strives to empower his teachers to reach their full potential through servant leadership that encourages personal growth and development for his team members. One aspect that is considered is the balance between work life and personal life, which is an essential concept in improving the well-being and productivity of individuals. Work-life balance ensures that job demands do not interfere with personal and family needs, so employees can feel successful and fulfilled holistically. The headmaster considered concrete efforts to create policies and practices that support this balance as a form of commitment to the overall well-being of MI Miftahul Ulum Kalisat teachers and staff. This reflects an awareness of the importance of supporting the holistic well-being of team

members, which will ultimately have a positive impact on the quality of education in schools: "I realized that stress can be a challenge. Therefore, I provide support to teachers to manage stress by providing comfortable break rooms, supporting health activities, and providing time for breaks between work hours. We organize various well-being programs, such as time management training, mental health seminars, and refreshing activities that can help teachers develop strategies to achieve work-personal (I_AA_2023) balance."

From this presentation, it can be understood that the efforts of the head of MI, Miftahul Ulum Kalisat, in supporting the balance between work and personal life of teachers by providing comfortable break rooms, supporting health activities, and providing time for breaks, time management training, mental health seminars, and refreshing activities. Work and personal imbalances can negatively impact employee well-being, satisfaction levels, and organizational performance. Teachers who feel inspired can better balance work and personal life. They will be more motivated to achieve success holistically. This is as stated by the deputy head of the madrasah; "I feel valued and supported. The principal thinks about academic achievement and our well-being as individuals. It makes me more motivated to give my best (I_BB_2023)."

From this exposure, it can be understood that with the support of the principal in work and personal balance, teachers are motivated to put their best efforts into teaching at MI Miftahul Ulum Kalisat. Factors that influence work-life balance are work flexibility, workload, family needs, support from superiors and companies, time management skills, technology and connectedness, physical and mental health, recognition and rewards, organizational culture, career challenges and opportunities, adequacy of social support, individual perception of priorities (Howard & Eddy - Imishue, 2020). Organizations that actively promote a good balance between work and family will have smaller absenteeism and increased well-being and productivity (Sonntag et al., 2023). Several important things are closely related to the work-life balance program for companies, according to experts, including (1) reducing the rate of absenteeism and lateness, (2) increasing productivity, (3) employee commitment and loyalty, (4) increasing customer retention; and (5) reduced employee turnover. As for employees, the benefits of the work-life balance program include (1) increased job satisfaction, (2) higher job security, (3) increased control over the work-life environment, (4) reduced levels of work stress, and (5) improved physical and mental health.

Table 1. Program Work-Life Balance

| Facilities | Indicator |
|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| Comfortable resting room | Better work-person balance |
| Care for staff health | |
| Break time | |
| Time management training | |
| Mental health seminars | |
| Refreshing | |

Table 1 presents a program aimed at promoting work-life balance in the organization. Each facility provided corresponds to an indicator that contributes to better work-person balance. These facilities include a comfortable resting room,

care for staff health, designated break times, time management training, mental health seminars, and opportunities for refreshment.

Creating a Collaborative Culture

In his leadership, Head of MI Miftahul Ulum Kalisat seeks to encourage creating a collaborative culture among teachers. Principals organize team meetings, collaborative projects, or forums to share ideas and resources. This is as stated by the head of the madrasah; "In the ever-evolving world of education, collaboration between teachers opens the door to sharing ideas, innovations, and resources that can enhance students' learning experience. I started by understanding each teacher's unique strengths and expertise. I recognize that everyone brings a valuable contribution to the table, and by supporting collaboration, we can optimize our potential" (I_AA_2023).

This presentation shows that the head of MI, Miftahul Ulum Kalisat, is trying to create a collaborative culture to optimize the potential of human resources in schools. According to Azmil R. Hakim, collaboration is the unification of expertise and ability to achieve agreed common goals. A collaborative culture creates shared strengths based on mutual respect, care, and support for each other and creates an atmosphere of knowledge sharing within the organization. In the context of education, a collaborative culture becomes an important element in determining the success of the school as a whole, with benefits not only for the school but also for teachers and students. Collaborative culture includes fundamental values such as long-term view, communication and dialogue, empowerment, risk assumption, teamwork, tolerance for ambiguity, and encouragement for diversity. Head of MI Miftahul Ulum Kalisat strives to build a strong community within the organization by prioritizing cooperation, mutual support, and the formation of meaningful interpersonal relationships by the principle of servant leadership. This is expected to provide solutions to complex problems and opportunities for sharing knowledge and experience, which will ultimately increase the organization's added value.

The efforts of the head of MI, Miftahul Ulum Kalisat, in building a collaborative culture include creating transparent communication, receiving input, designing new curricula and learning strategies if teachers face problems, and involving all components in making a decision. This is as stated by the head of the madrasah; "We emphasize three main pillars. First, communication is open and transparent. We actively listen to input from all parties, whether from teachers, teachers, or students. Second, we encourage teaching teams to collaborate in designing curriculum and teaching strategies. Finally, we ensure that every decision is taken through consensus, involving multiple stakeholders. We use various evaluation methods, including improvements in student academic performance, teacher and teacher satisfaction levels, and the results of collaborative projects involving the entire school community. We also have regular forums where all school members can submit feedback and suggestions" (I_AA_2023).

From this presentation, it can be understood that there are various forms of efforts by the head of MI, Miftahul Ulum Kalisat, in building a collaborative culture, ranging from transparent communication to the involvement of various

parties in making a decision. Behavior that shows a collaborative attitude is receiving opinions and suggestions in completing work, praising the excellence and achievements of others, dividing duties, responsibilities, rights, and obligations to each member of the work team proportionally, volunteering to be involved in the project, voluntarily, synergize with related parties in completing work, admit when making mistakes, encourage colleagues, superiors, and subordinates to be actively involved in achieving The purpose of the agency, building effective communication in coordination with the work team, optimizing resources that support the achievement of agency performance (Li et al., 2023). The creation of a collaborative culture at MI Miftahul Ulum Kalisat then became an inspiration for staff to stimulate their creativity and innovation. Inspired staff tend to be more courageous in trying new things, thinking creatively, and contributing innovatively to problem-solving solutions. This is as expressed by one of the teachers at the madrasah; "The collaborative work culture makes the atmosphere at this school much more positive. We feel we support each other and have collective resources that we can utilize" (I_DD_2023).

From this presentation, the collaborative culture created at MI Miftahul Ulum Kalisat can be the reason for the increased creativity and innovation of the staff. The collaborative culture implemented in schools benefits schools, teachers, and students. Benefits at the school level, such as collaborative culture, positively impact schools, making schools more effective because of implementing a culture with a collaborative orientation and creating a learning environment that supports learning. For teachers, the benefits of a collaborative culture include teachers being better prepared to deal with external pressures, reducing stress, fatigue, and workload, and improving knowledge and skills (Hammoudi Halat et al., 2023). The benefits of a collaborative culture for students include increased student achievement, performance, and learning.

Table 2. Collaborative Culture Program

| Collaborative Culture | Indicator |
|--|---------------------------------|
| Creating transparent communication | Staff creativity and innovation |
| Receive feedback | |
| Designing new curriculum and learning strategies | |

In Table 2, three programs aim to develop a collaborative culture within the organization. The first program will create transparent communication, hopefully encouraging staff creativity and innovation. The second program is to receive feedback from staff, which is essential in building trust and participation. The third program is to design new curricula and innovative learning strategies, which reflect collaboration between various parties within the organization to achieve the common goal of improving the quality of education.

Listening with Empathy

In his leadership, MI head Miftahul Ulum Kalisat also created a space to listen to teachers and staff with empathy. The headmaster allows time for individual or group meetings to listen to inputs, concerns, or ideas from teachers

and staff at MI Miftahul Ulum Kalisat. This is as expressed by one of the teachers at the madrasah; "I always make time to listen to them. Not only when there are formal meetings but also in informal situations. I actively visit classrooms, teachers' offices, and staff workspaces to create an open space for them to talk. In addition, I also hold individual meetings periodically to discuss the needs and aspirations of each (I_AIA_2023)."

From this explanation, it was illustrated that the head of MI, Miftahul Ulum Kalisat, showed empathetic leadership practices by always giving time to listen to input, ideas, and problems faced by his subordinates. The concept of empathy, as explained by Bullmer (Djafri, 2020), highlights the importance of feeling and understanding the feelings of others and communicating them with high sensitivity. Empathy is not just about feeling compassion but also understanding the other person's perspective by personalizing the narrative to oneself. It creates a trusting relationship and allows for a deep understanding of the needs and thoughts of others. The empathy practices implemented by the principal can be the basis for building a harmonious and productive work environment at MI Miftahul Ulum Kalisat.

The principal strives to recognize and understand others, especially his subordinates, by always mingling, being in good communication, and not reducing assertiveness as a leader. The principal can put where and when to build a good relationship with his subordinates (Canavesi & Minelli, 2022). Realized by the principal who not only confines himself in his room but also interacts and cooperates with subordinates, has empathy for his subordinates, has organizational awareness, inspires and guides subordinates, becomes a catalyst for change, and can overcome conflicts that are occurring, and can grow and maintain relationships. Head of MI Miftahul Ulum Kalisat can be said to have succeeded in building partnerships, namely the ability of leaders to manage educational institutions well, move and direct towards goodness, empathize, establish and foster relationships and communication to form good partnerships. This is as stated by the deputy head of the madrasah; "First of all, I always try to understand their perspective seriously. I listen without judgment, trying to understand their feelings and experiences. Then, together, we look for solutions that can meet their needs. By giving genuine attention, we can create a better working environment.

Leader Miftahul Ulum Kalisat encourages the openness and comfort of teachers and staff through a thorough understanding of topics and collaboration in finding solutions. The principle of an effective leader is to accommodate and develop its members' potential (Sudika, 2020). According to Lolly Daskal (Sudika, 2020), six ways of empathy shape leadership: building attachment, providing understanding, being present when needed, and improving social skills. Empathic leaders understand the needs and motivations of their subordinates, creating an environment that supports their development (Pujianto, 2022). This creates happiness and a strong and trusting relationship between the principal and his subordinates, This is as expressed by one of the teachers at the madrasah; "The principal listens when there is a formal meeting and gives time to talk privately. He shows empathy for the personal or professional problems we face. Empathy

provides a sense of being valued and heard. This makes me feel more motivated to give my best in my work, because I know that the principal cares about the welfare and happiness of teachers and staff (I_CC_2023)."

From this exposure, inspired teachers and staff tend to be more involved. The level of involvement can be measured through active participation, dedication, and a sense of ownership of one's responsibilities or work. Indicators of the empathetic nature of a leader are: (1) listening to the subordinates' conversations well, meaning that individuals can pay attention and be a good listener of all problems expressed by subordinates; (2) accepting the subordinates' point of view, meaning that the leader can see problems from the subordinates' point of view so that the leader has a tolerant nature and accepts differences, (3) sensitive to the feelings of subordinates, meaning that the leader can read the feelings of subordinates from verbal and non-verbal cues such as tone speech, facial expressions, gestures and another body language. Empathy can increase members' sense of belonging and trust in the organization. Departing from this, they will develop a sense of confidence, and later, the performance of members or subordinates will increase.

Table 3. Indicators and Forms of Empathy

| Forms of Empathy | Indicator |
|--|-------------------|
| Taking time just to listen to input, ideas, and problems faced by subordinates | <i>Engagement</i> |
| Understand the topic with sincerity | |
| Together find solutions to the problems at hand | |
| Understand the topic with sincerity | |

Table 3 presents different forms of empathy along with their respective indicators. The first form emphasizes the importance of actively engaging by dedicating time to listen to subordinates' input, ideas, and problems, which is indicated by increased engagement. The second form highlights the significance of sincerely understanding the topic, promoting a deeper empathy level. The third form underscores the collaborative aspect of empathy, wherein the leader and subordinates work together to solve the problems at hand.

Be an Example in Service

MI head Miftahul Ulum Kalisat demonstrates service as a principal by being directly involved in the day-to-day activities of the school, supporting teachers in administrative tasks, or helping to overcome obstacles they may face. This is as stated by the head of the madrasah; "I always try to stay calm and solutive. In the face of challenges, I focus on finding fair and beneficial solutions to all parties. I believe that showing a positive and solutive attitude can inspire those around me to face problems with the same spirit. I communicate openly with teachers and students about the values and expectations of service. In addition, I am always open to feedback and create an environment where everyone feels valued for providing quality service (I_AA_2023)."

From the description above, it can be seen that the head of MI, Miftahul Ulum Kalisat, tried to be an example for his subordinates through the services provided at school. One form of service is to assist teachers or staff in finding

solutions to problems, communicating openly, and being willing to be evaluated by them. Service leadership is a leadership style rooted in a sincere desire to serve others, creating soul satisfaction when providing the best service (Canavesi & Minelli, 2022). Service leaders put the needs of followers as a top priority and treat them as colleagues, building close and transparent relationships. Inspiration from service leaders can influence relationships between colleagues, open opportunities for better collaboration, and create a positive work atmosphere. This is as expressed by the administration at the madrasah; Our principal leads by good example. He taught the values of service through words and demonstrated them in his daily actions. It inspires all of us. This creates a positive and cooperative work climate. Seeing the principal care about service encourages us to provide the best service to students and parents (I_EE_2023)."

From this explanation, the service shown by the head of MI, Miftahul Ulum Kalisat, is an example for his subordinates and a source of inspiration to improve the quality of work relations. A leader is expected to be an example who influences positive behavior in his subordinates. Servant leadership emphasizes the importance of serving the needs of subordinates and developing them into "servants" for themselves and others (Salsabilla et al., 2022). This is believed to motivate subordinates, especially in serving the community. The characteristics of servant leaders are considered capable of providing inspiration and motivation for subordinates to perform positive service, which will impact better service to the community.

Table 4. Indicators and Forms of Service

| Forms of Service | Indicator |
|--|----------------------------------|
| Assist teachers or staff in finding solutions to a problem | Quality of working relationships |
| Open communication | |
| He is willing to be evaluated by his subordinates | |
| Build relationships | |

Table 4 illustrates various forms of service along with their respective indicators. The first form emphasizes assisting teachers or staff in finding solutions to problems, which is indicated by the quality of working relationships. The second form underscores the importance of open communication. The third form highlights the leader's willingness to be evaluated by their subordinates, fostering transparency and trust. Lastly, the fourth form focuses on building relationships, crucial for fostering a positive and supportive work environment.

Understanding and Serving the Needs of Teachers

Head of MI Miftahul Ulum Kalisat actively communicates with teachers to understand their needs, both in terms of professional development, work-personal balance, and other things that affect their performance, as stated by the head of the madrasah; "I believe that teachers who feel heard and supported can contribute the most to teaching. Therefore, understanding and serving the needs of teachers is a top priority in my leadership. Every teacher has unique needs and challenges. I approach each teacher personally when they face difficulties (I_AA_2023)."

From this presentation, the role of the head of MI, Miftahul Ulum Kalisat, in meeting the needs of teachers and staff and providing a personal approach has great significance. The importance of the services and support provided by the headmaster not only ensures the physical and mental well-being of the teachers but also enables them to overcome the challenges faced in the learning process. In addition, support for changes in learning and improving teacher professionalism also positively impacts the quality of education in schools. Transparent and authentic leadership creates a culture where openness and sincerity are valued, creating a positive and inspiring work environment for teachers and staff (Howard & Eddy - Imishue, 2020). Thus, the head of MI, Miftahul Ulum Kalisat, has fulfilled the principle of servant leadership, namely "*transparency, and authenticity*". Inspired teachers and staff have a high level of resilience. They are better prepared to face challenges, learn from failure, and continue to grow. This is as expressed by the administration at the madrasah; "The principal views us as employees and individuals with unique personal and professional lives. This is what makes it different. I once faced challenges in managing my classes, and the principal immediately offered to help with additional training. This proved that he understood my need to improve my teaching skills. I feel motivated to give my best because I know the principal appreciates my efforts and is ready to help when needed (I_DD_2023)."

From this explanation, it can be understood that MI Miftahul Ulum Kalisat's staff were inspired by the principal, making him more responsible for his work. Providing various learning equipment according to the needs of teachers in each subject will further spur teachers to do their best to achieve the learning goals that have been set. The actions taken by the principal have adapted the understanding that one of the supporting factors for the emergence of teacher motivation to be more creative and innovative in improving the quality of learning is the fulfillment of teacher needs, both personal and professional needs.

The head of MI Miftahul Ulum madrasah describes a servant leader who inspires the people's growth, development, and well-being, promoting mutual respect, honesty, and teamwork. Servant leaders drive decision-making using collective processes and inviting input from team members. Distinctive servant leader traits include collaboration, good listening, and commitment to employee growth, which are inherent in MI head Miftahul Ulum. Additional traits of a servant leader include empathy, caring, and self-awareness. Kepala MI Miftahul Ulum applies active listening skills to build healthy team relationships with teachers and staff.

The servant leadership practices implemented by MI Miftahul head Ulum Kalisat have positively impacted the quality of relationships between principals, teachers, and staff at the school. The empathetic leadership and service shown by the principal have created a collaborative work culture and motivated team members to reach their full potential. In addition, collaborative culture building and team member empowerment have also proven to be essential factors in improving school performance and individual well-being. These findings are consistent with servant leadership theory and previous research highlighting the importance of service, empathy, and collaboration in educational contexts.

However, there are some aspects that need further attention, such as measuring school performance in more detail and evaluating the long-term impact of servant leadership practices in improving educational outcomes and team member well-being. Therefore, more in-depth follow-up research can help reinforce these findings and provide better insight into implementing servant leadership practices in Indonesia's Islamic education context.

This research significantly contributes to Islamic educational leadership by exploring the practice of servant leadership and collaborative culture building in MI Miftahul Ulum Kalisat. Through a deep understanding of service, empathy, and empowerment of team members, this research provides practical guidance for principals and education managers in improving the quality of education and individual well-being. In addition, the research highlights the importance of work-life balance between teacher and staff personal life, which can form a foundation for developing policies and practices that support the holistic well-being of team members as well as the development of advanced research in educational leadership and management.

CONCLUSION

Based on this explanation, it can be concluded that the head of MI, Miftahul Ulum Kalisat, is a leader who adheres to servant leadership. The servant's leadership is reflected in several efforts, including facilitating work-personal balance, creating a collaborative culture, listening with empathy, being an example in service, and understanding and serving the needs of teachers. From these efforts, they can then build the inspiration of teachers and staff at MI Miftahul Ulum Kalisat. These forms of inspiration are better work-person balance, creativity, and innovation, level of engagement, quality of work relationships, resilience, the ability to overcome challenges and morale. This research can be a reference for managers of educational institutions in building inspiration for their subordinates. This research is limited to effort and inspiration only; further research is needed on things that hinder and support during the implementation process.

Future studies may involve broader and geographically representative research to compare the effectiveness of servant leadership practices in various Islamic educational institutions. By expanding the geographical scope, this research will provide a deeper understanding of how local and cultural factors influence the implementation and results of servant leadership practices in the context of Islamic education in Indonesia. Thus, the findings of this study can provide more comprehensive insights and serve as a basis for developing more effective education policies in the future.

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