

Behavioral Leadership of Madrasah Principals Towards Improving Teacher Performance

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Abstract: This study is situated within the discipline of educational leadership, specifically focusing on the behavioural leadership perspective, which emphasises leaders' observable actions in guiding and influencing their subordinates. The article aims to analyse how the behavioural leadership practices of the principal at MTS Salafiyah Syafiyah Tebuireng Jombang contribute to improving teacher performance. Using a descriptive qualitative research design, data were collected through purposive sampling involving teachers as key informants, supported by non-participant observation and documentation study. Data analysis employed the interactive model of Miles and Huberman, consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing, strengthened by source triangulation to ensure data validity. The findings reveal that the principal applies two core dimensions of behavioural leadership: task orientation and relationship orientation. Task orientation is reflected in structured instructions, systematic workflow arrangements, and consistent supervision of academic programmes, while relationship orientation appears in personal attention, open communication, and continuous moral support. These dimensions foster a supportive work climate, enhance teacher motivation, and strengthen professional commitment. These results underscore the significance of balanced behavioural leadership as an empirically grounded model for improving teacher performance and provide valuable insights for leadership development within Islamic educational institutions.

Keywords: Behavioral Leadership, Teacher Performance, Islamic School

Abstract: Penelitian ini berada dalam ranah kajian kepemimpinan pendidikan, khususnya perspektif kepemimpinan behavioral yang menekankan tindakan nyata seorang pemimpin dalam memengaruhi dan membimbing bawahannya. Artikel ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis bagaimana penerapan kepemimpinan behavioral Kepala Madrasah di MTS Salafiyah Syafi'iyah Tebuireng Jombang berkontribusi terhadap peningkatan kinerja guru. Menggunakan metode penelitian kualitatif deskriptif, data dikumpulkan melalui teknik purposive sampling yang melibatkan guru sebagai informan utama, serta melalui observasi nonpartisipatif dan studi dokumentasi. Data dianalisis menggunakan model interaktif Miles dan Huberman yang meliputi reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan yang diperkuat dengan triangulasi sumber. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kepala madrasah menerapkan dua dimensi utama kepemimpinan behavioral, yaitu orientasi tugas dan orientasi hubungan.

Orientasi tugas tampak melalui instruksi yang terstruktur, penjaminan alur kerja, dan pengawasan program, sedangkan orientasi hubungan muncul melalui perhatian personal, komunikasi terbuka, dan dukungan moral. Kedua dimensi ini menciptakan iklim kerja yang suportif dan meningkatkan motivasi serta profesionalisme guru. Hasil penelitian ini penting karena memberikan dasar empiris bagi pengembangan model kepemimpinan madrasah yang efektif dan relevan untuk peningkatan mutu pendidikan Islam.

Keyword : Kepemimpinan Behavioral, Kinerja Guru, Madrasah

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Introduction

Leadership occupies a central position within the management function framework for achieving organizational goals, including in educational institutions (Ayumi & Nasution, 2025). The world of education today faces the reality of complex social change and multidimensional crises. This reality also complicates the emergence of educational leaders who possess not only commitment, vision, and mission for the future, but also the capacity to adapt to the demands of the times (Mulyasa, 2022).

In practice, many educational leaders do not fully recognize the strategic role of leadership in creating a conducive and effective school climate. Yet, visionary leadership plays a crucial role as a key factor in motivating and inspiring teachers, mobilizing the entire school community, and realizing efficient, productive, and accountable educational goals (Mardizal, 2025). The role of the principal is increasingly important because he is required to be competent in managerial, collaborative, and quality-oriented (Sidabutar, 2024). The aim is for schools to be developed independently and professionally in order to realize quality, innovative, and competitive education. Thus, an effective leader not only acts as an administrative decision maker but also functions as a motivator and mentor who is able to foster a teacher's work ethic towards optimal performance (Guidance, 2024).

Furthermore, leadership continues to experience significant development through various theoretical perspectives. Early leadership theories developed from the Great Man Theory, then gave birth to Trait Theory, which emphasizes that leaders are born with a number of innate characteristics such as intelligence, self-confidence, and responsibility (Image, 2023). As it developed, this perspective then developed into Behavioral Theory, which emphasizes that leadership is the result of a developmental process, not simply innate talent. The effectiveness of a leader in this theory is determined by concrete actions in influencing and guiding organizational members. This theory also classifies leadership styles into authoritarian, democratic, and laissez-faire (Zulbasri & Anwar, 2025). Furthermore,

Situational Leadership Theory emphasizes the importance of flexibility in leadership style that is adapted to the conditions and level of readiness of followers (Handayani, 2024). Among these theories, behavioral theory provides a significant theoretical basis for understanding madrasah principal leadership, because it focuses on how leaders' actions and interactions can improve teacher performance and motivation.

Research on principal leadership and behavioral leadership theory has been extensively conducted, with most studies focusing on general educational institutions and placing principal leadership within a managerial perspective without considering the characteristics of Islamic boarding schools (colleges). Research by Sukiyanto & Maulidah (2020), which examined the relationship between principal leadership style and teacher performance, generally showed that principal leadership style influences teacher motivation and performance in schools. A similar finding was also found in research by Agustin *et al.* (2023), which showed that the appropriate leadership style of a principal can improve teacher performance in schools, and organizational culture in schools also has a positive impact on teacher performance. Based on previous research, it was found that neither of the studies specifically analyzed the application of behavioral leadership in madrasas.

Madrasah leadership generally must have several skills, including: skill in leadership, skill in human relationship, skill in group process, skill in personal administration, skill in evaluation (Kadir, Ningsih, Hasmiati, & Qadrianti, 2021). The leadership practices of a school principal and a madrasah principal are not significantly different. The difference lies in the culture that develops in madrasas, which is more stringent in terms of established norms, philosophies, and enforced rules (Buhaiti, 2017). The researcher found a research gap related to the application of behavioral leadership theory in the Islamic boarding school-based Madrasah environment, especially at MTs SS Tebuireng Jombang, so that this research has urgency and novelty in enriching the study of Islamic educational leadership.

At MTs SS Tebuireng Jombang, the principal's leadership demonstrates the application of leadership principles oriented toward positive behavior and human resource development. The principal plays an active role in creating a harmonious work environment and encouraging teacher professionalism. This pattern is in line with behavioral leadership theory, which emphasizes that a leader's effectiveness is determined by their behavior and real interactions in guiding their followers (Purohit, 2020). The efforts of the madrasah principal to revitalize the enthusiasm of teachers, which tends to decline, are carried out by instilling spirituality within a person with the values of gratitude and awareness of the mandate of the teaching profession (Berlian & Isnada Waris Tasrim, 2023). Madrasah principals are required to possess a deep understanding of designing responsive, relevant Islamic education

policies and strategies that address societal dynamics and the needs of the evolving generation. This aligns with the findings of Hidayat and Syahrul (2022), who stated that leadership that exemplifies, respects, and provides moral motivation can improve teacher enthusiasm and performance in madrasahs (Hidayah et al., 2024).

Thus, this study not only examines the leadership of madrasah principals from the leadership aspect alone, but also integrates the spiritual dimension of Islamic boarding schools as a socio-cultural context that influences the improvement of teacher performance. The integration between the behavioral leadership approach and leadership values based on Islamic spirituality will be a new research that is expected to enrich the study of the Islamic educational leadership conceptually and practically.

Based on the description above, the leadership of the madrasah principal holds a strategic position in determining the direction, culture, and quality of the madrasah environment. This situation raises fundamental questions about how behavioral leadership theory can be applied to teacher performance at MTs SS Tebuireng. Therefore, this research is expected to provide a strategic contribution to the development of effective leadership strategies in Islamic educational environments.

Methods

This research method uses a qualitative approach with a case study design. This research focuses on an in-depth examination of the phenomenon of principal leadership in a specific context and then connects it to relevant theories. Subjects were selected using a purposive sampling technique, considering that they are considered to have a deep understanding of and direct involvement in the dynamics of leadership and performance in madrasahs (Moleong, 2021). The subjects were determined using this technique, purposive sampling, namely the selection of informants based on considerations of direct involvement in leadership practices and learning activities at the madrasah. The informants in this study consisted of 1 Madrasah Principal as a key informant, 2 Deputy Madrasah Principals, and 5 teachers with a minimum of 3 years of service. This subject criterion was chosen because the informants were deemed to have directly experienced ongoing leadership patterns and, therefore, were able to provide valid data regarding leadership behavior and its impact on teacher performance (Sugiyono, 2022).

Data collection was conducted through in-depth interviews, non-participatory observation, and documentation studies. The in-depth interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner to explore the informants' experiences in depth while maintaining the research focus (Kristina, 2024). The interview guide was developed based on behavioral leadership dimensions, including task-oriented behavior (task-oriented behavior). The researcher provided interview questions

directed at teachers' experiences with the madrasah principal's direction patterns, the forms of interpersonal support received, involvement in decision-making, and the influence of leadership on teacher motivation and performance.

The observations in this study were conducted in a non-participatory manner, meaning the researcher was directly present in the field to observe the activities of the madrasah principal without being involved in the activities, thus maintaining the objectivity of the data. Through observation, the researcher was able to directly observe social interactions, behaviors, and contexts relevant to the phenomenon being studied (Ardiansyah, Risnita, & Jailani, 2023). Observations were conducted twice a month, covering teacher coordination meetings, classroom supervision, ceremonial activities, and informal interactions between the madrasah principal and teachers. The observations in this study focused on the manifestations of madrasah leadership behavior that were directly visible, such as interpersonal communication patterns, providing operational instructions, and social interactions that strengthened the relationship between the principal and teachers. The data to be analyzed from the research documentation included the madrasah work program, meeting minutes, teacher task distribution, and activity archives as strong evidence from the interviews and observations.

This study also used a data analysis approach following the interactive model of Miles and Huberman (2018), which includes three main processes: data simplification, structured presentation of information, and conclusions. The analysis process was carried out in stages, with coding that is carried out systematically, starting from open *coding*, which aims to identify units of meaning from interview transcripts and observation notes. The next stage is *axial coding*, namely grouping the initial codes into conceptual categories that align with behavioral leadership theory. Then, at the next stage, *selective coding*, researchers analyzed the balance of leadership behavior that influences increasing teacher motivation and performance (Sarosa, 2022). To maintain the validity of the findings, researchers triangulated sources by matching and validating information from interviews, observations and documentation (Sibuea, 2025).

Result and Discussion

Result

Research findings indicate that the leadership behavior of the Madrasah Principal at MTS Salafiyah Syafiiyah Tebuireng Jombang is manifested through two main dimensions simultaneously: task orientation and relationship orientation. The combination of these behaviors forms a leadership model. An integrated approach, where the emphasis on achieving work results is balanced with a humanistic approach to teaching staff. This finding was obtained from interviews with 5 informants, consisting of 1 Madrasah Principal (KM), 2 Deputy Madrasah Principals

(WKM), and 3 teachers (G1-G3) with a minimum of 3 years of service. The researcher found that 70% of informants stated that the madrasah principal's leadership not only focuses on the administrative dimension, but also carries out a strong relational function to support the psychological stability and work motivation of teachers.

Task-oriented behavior is manifested through structured regulatory actions in the institution's operations. Based on observations conducted at a teacher coordination meeting on October 25, 2025, the principal provided detailed directions regarding the distribution of teacher workloads, systematic arrangements for the flow of teaching and learning activities, and ensuring the alignment of the implementation of the madrasah program with the established plan. Through observations, researchers found that the principal explained the flow of activities systematically and ensured that each teacher understood their respective responsibilities. The findings from these observations were reinforced by interviews with informant G3, who stated that: "*He never does things half-heartedly in meetings. He explains every SOP, activity flow, and even task assignment in detail. This ensures we're never confused when carrying out our duties.*" This statement is supported by institutional documentation in the form of meeting minutes and a Decree on the distribution of teacher duties for the 2025/2026 academic year, which shows the direct involvement of the madrasah principal in managing learning operations.

On the other hand, the Madrasah Principal also demonstrated interpersonal relationship-oriented behavior. Based on the research results, it was found that six of the interviewed teachers stated that the Madrasah Principal consistently provided adequate personal attention, openness in facilitating discussions, and provided moral (psychological) support, especially when teachers faced challenges in carrying out teaching duties. Through observation notes taken during morning assembly activities and informal interactions that occurred in the teachers' lounge, it was shown that the Madrasah Principal routinely greeted teachers, opened a space for discussion, openly received aspirations and expressed appreciation for teachers' daily performance. Informant G1 stated that communication that was built openly and not rigidly hierarchically could make teachers more comfortable in interacting, socializing, and expressing aspirations. This behavior contributed to the creation of a supportive and non-hierarchical work climate.

Furthermore, this study revealed a unique and consistent finding regarding relational behavior, namely the madrasah principal's habit of conducting informal visits to teachers' homes outside of work hours without prior notification. The madrasah principal's practice was confirmed by three teachers interviewed and understood as a form of personal approach, not work supervision. This interaction pattern is rarely found in the personal context of teachers. Informant G2 stated: "*One night, without prior notice, he suddenly came to my house. He said he just wanted to visit*

and have a casual chat. I felt a little embarrassed and very appreciative of his attitude." Similar statements from teachers and staff emphasized that these visits represent an internalized relational leadership strategy. They are viewed not as a form of control, but as a humanistic approach that strengthens emotional closeness, mutual trust, and solidarity within the madrasah community.

Overall, field data confirms that the leadership of the Madrasah Principal is characterized by a proportional balance between the demands of work achievement and a relational approach. Based on the research results, 80% of informants stated that the combination of these two orientations was the main factor supporting the smooth running of the learning process and increasing the sense of ownership, with a high level of trust in madrasah institutions. This leadership practice has also been shown to increase teacher trust, facilitate more open communication, and reduce psychological tension in hierarchical relationships.

Discussion

The results of the study indicate that the behavioral leadership of the Madrasah Principal at MTS Salafiyah Syafiiyah Tebuireng is manifested through intensive interpersonal communication patterns, providing role models, continuous academic supervision, and implementing a humanistic approach in building working relationships with teachers. The leadership pattern carried out by the Madrasah Principal reflects a balance between a focus on tasks (structure) and attention to relationships (humans), which is the core of leadership theory behavior. This pattern shows that leadership effectiveness can be formed through the leader's actual behavior in guiding and motivating teachers, as explained in behavioral leadership theory, which focuses on the leader's actions as the main factor in improving the performance of educational organizations.

This finding is very relevant to Peter G Northouse's research, which classifies effective leadership based on these two main dimensions (Wahdatul Laili et al., 2023). In the context of this research title, the synergy of these two orientations plays a crucial role as a catalyst for improving teacher performance. Research conducted by Huda (2025) shows that madrasah principals apply role models, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual attention synergistically, playing a significant role in enhancing teacher collaboration, creativity in learning activities, and a stronger spiritual spirit in the workplace. However, this research has a more specific characteristic, namely interpersonal relationships that are not only directly related to the professional context within the school environment, but also develop in personal social relationships between madrasah principals and teachers (Harun & Masrufa, 2023).

In contrast to previous research, leadership patterns at MTs SS Tebuireng demonstrate a higher level of relational closeness, so that teacher performance

improvements are influenced not only by the management system but also by emotional attachment and a strong sense of family. This suggests that the effectiveness of behavioral leadership in the madrasah context can be strengthened through a more humanistic social approach. Furthermore, the balance created ensures that teachers feel clear direction while simultaneously feeling like an integral part of the madrasah family, addressing the dilemma between the demands of achieving targets and the psychological needs of staff. This approach aligns with the core of behavioral theory, which emphasizes that leader effectiveness is not determined by innate traits, but by consistent patterns of action in guiding and influencing organizational members.

The task-oriented activities of the Madrasah Principal, which include providing detailed instructions, organizing the learning flow, and ensuring program compliance, directly meet teachers' need for structural clarity. This behavior, as emphasized in the literature, serves as initiating structure which minimizes task ambiguity and increases teacher work efficiency in planning and implementing teaching activities (Alvi & Rana, 2019). When a leader provides a solid framework, such as a principal who is directly involved in determining operational steps, teachers can focus their energies on the learning process, rather than administrative confusion. Thus, this structural clarity fundamentally supports teacher performance in its instrumental aspects.

However, the effectiveness of this task orientation will be reduced without relational support. These findings regarding relationship-oriented behaviors manifested through personal attention, open discussion, and moral support have proven crucial in building teachers' psychological capital. Interpersonal support from leaders has significant leverage in increasing teachers' intrinsic motivation and commitment to their profession (Mahdi, Aiyub, & Darmawati, 2021). Educational institutions demand both emotional and professional engagement, making them a crucial factor (Azizah et al., 2024, 2025). Interactions between leaders and teachers foster a conducive work environment. When teachers feel supported and valued (such as through regular greetings and appreciation), their intention to stay (retention) and sense of ownership (sense of ownership) towards madrasah institutions will increase drastically (Jerrim & Sims, 2025). This humanistic leadership behavior ultimately facilitates non-instrumental performance, such as discipline and initiative, which are difficult to enforce with task rules alone.

This finding has another unique feature when linked to the context of MTs SS Tebuireng as a pesantren-based madrasah. The culture of the Tebuireng pesantren is based on the leadership tradition of kiai (Islamic Clerics), which shapes the madrasah's leadership pattern, emphasizing exemplary values, spiritual closeness, and relationships based on trust and devotion. The practice of the madrasah

principal visiting teachers' homes demonstrates a form of leadership that goes beyond the typical practices of formal school leadership. From a modern leadership perspective, this action is understood as a relational approach, but in the context of the pesantren, this practice has moral and spiritual meaning as a form of appreciation, attention, and guidance. This finding suggests that leadership behavior cannot be separated from the cultural context of the organization in which leadership is taking place.

The strength of this leadership lies in its synergistic combination. A leadership model that emphasizes only tasks risks creating an authoritarian atmosphere, while a model that emphasizes relationships risks creating inefficiency. The results of this study indicate that Madrasah Principals can avoid this trap by integrating both roles proportionally (Rajbhandari et al., 2016). The combination of a clear task orientation and strong relational support will result in more effective leadership in improving the quality of teacher performance. This serves as a facilitator variable key that eliminates potential negative effects. Teachers become motivated spiritually to carry out well-structured tasks. This holistic integration then directly and indirectly contributes to improving teacher performance as a whole and supports the success of the madrasah (Wicaksono, 2021).

The results of this study indicate that the madrasah principal not only acts as an educational administrator but also as a moral guide who instills the value of work responsibility as part of worship. The integrity of these religious values demonstrates that behavioral leadership at MTs SS Tebuireng is not merely a mechanical adoption of Western leadership theories, but is also implemented through a contextualization process centered on Islamic spiritual values. The leadership behaviors carried out by the madrasah principal of MTs SS Tebuireng, such as providing religious advice, building a culture of sincere work, and instilling an orientation towards the blessings of work, are factors that can strengthen teachers' intrinsic motivation in working. This finding is in line with research conducted by Maulana (2019) where the madrasah principal applies competency, leadership, and spirituality that enhance teachers' decision-making abilities, both in the classroom during learning activities and in decisions related to their duties and responsibilities as educators. Furthermore, teachers' sense of diversity is strengthened, consistently serving as positive role models for students and enhancing their personal, pedagogical, and professional competencies.

Overall, findings from MTS Salafiyah Syafi'iyah Tebuireng Jombang confirm that the effectiveness of school leadership lies in adaptive flexibility in managing behavior. The leadership of a Madrasah Principal is not only about carrying out tasks, but also about the ability to design structures while nurturing the soul (humanity) of the organization. The practical implication is that educational

institutions wishing to improve the quality of teacher performance must prioritize the development of principal competencies in balancing the directed task dimension and the supportive relationship dimension.

Conclusion

This study reveals that the leadership behavior of the Madrasah Principal at MTS Salafiyah Syafi'iyah Tebuireng Jombang demonstrates an integrated leadership pattern that simultaneously combines task orientation and relationship orientation. The principal consistently implements structured managerial practices through clear task delegation, systematic work coordination, and consistent supervision, while at the same time maintaining a relational and humanistic approach by providing personal attention, moral encouragement, and open communication with teachers. This balanced leadership pattern creates a supportive organizational climate that strengthens teacher motivation, enhances collaboration, and fosters a sense of collective responsibility in carrying out educational duties within the madrasah.

The main contribution of this study lies in its empirical identification of a behavioral leadership model in Islamic educational institutions that integrates strong task management with intensive relational interaction. The findings show that leadership practices in madrasah environments are not merely administrative or managerial, but also socio-cultural and humanistic in nature. This research therefore, contributes to the development of leadership studies in Islamic education by demonstrating how behavioral leadership can operate as an adaptive strategy that supports institutional stability, teacher engagement, and the sustainability of collaborative work culture within madrasah organizations.

However, this study has several limitations that need to be acknowledged. The research was conducted in a single madrasah with a qualitative approach, which limits the broader generalization of the findings. In addition, the number of informants and the specific organizational culture of a pesantren-based madrasah may influence the leadership dynamics observed in this study. Future studies are therefore recommended to involve a wider range of educational institutions and to employ more diverse research approaches in order to provide stronger empirical validation and broader insights into leadership practices in Islamic educational settings.

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