

The Role Of School Principal Leadership In Improving Teacher Discipline

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Abstract: Teacher discipline is a crucial factor in supporting the quality of education in schools. However, in practice, there are still teachers who lack discipline in carrying out their duties, both in terms of attendance and professional responsibility. This study aims to describe the role of school principal leadership in improving teacher discipline at MTs Islahiyah Kalitidu. The research uses a qualitative approach with a case study method. Data were collected through interviews, observation, and documentation involving the principal and teachers. The results show that the principal plays a strategic role as a role model, rule enforcer, motivator, communicator, and evaluator. The strategies implemented include regular coaching, the application of rewards and punishments, personal approaches, and the development of a positive work culture. Supporting factors for leadership success include institutional support and open communication, while the inhibiting factors involve low individual awareness and heavy workloads. In conclusion, humanistic and adaptive leadership by the principal has proven effective in shaping sustainable teacher discipline.

Keywords: principal leadership, teacher discipline, case study, educational management.

INTRODUCTION

Education is the fundamental foundation in developing high-quality human resources (Ardhiya et al., 2022; Mardhiyah et al., 2021; Taqdiraa et al., 2024). Through the educational process, individuals are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and values needed to face life's challenges. Schools, as formal educational institutions, play a crucial role in realizing these goals. To achieve quality education, effective management and a structured learning system are essential. Teachers, as the primary implementers of learning in schools, are required to demonstrate high levels of professionalism and discipline. Teacher discipline is one of the key factors that determines the success of classroom learning and the achievement of educational objectives (Akhmedianova et al., 2019; Azainil et al., 2021; Foncha et al., 2017). Therefore, efforts to improve teacher discipline are important issues that warrant further study.

The principal holds a central role in managing and leading all activities within the school environment (Alhabsyi et al., 2022; Cahyani et al., 2024; Suhaedin et al., 2024). One of the key aspects of school principal leadership is the ability to guide and enhance teacher performance, particularly in terms of discipline. Effective leadership is not merely administrative but also transformational and inspirational (Sadeghi & Pihie, 2012; Van Knippenberg & Sitkin, 2013). A principal is expected to serve as a role model, an effective communicator, and a driver of positive change within the school. In this context, the principal holds the authority to implement policies, provide guidance, and cultivate a culture of discipline among the school community. Strong leadership can have a significant impact on teachers' disciplinary behavior in carrying out their duties and responsibilities. Therefore, it is essential to explore more deeply how principals carry out their role in improving teacher discipline.

Several previous studies have examined the relationship between school principal leadership and teacher performance in general. For example, a study by Hariri (2021) showed that transformational leadership styles have a positive impact on teacher motivation and discipline. Another study by Suryani (2019) revealed that participative leadership can enhance a work climate that supports teacher discipline. However, most of these studies focus more on leadership styles or final teacher performance outcomes without detailing how the disciplinary development process is carried out. In-depth qualitative studies on the actual leadership practices of principals in the context of teacher discipline remain limited. Thus, there is still room to explore the principal's role more specifically in shaping a culture of discipline in schools.

Although many studies have discussed principal leadership and its relationship with teacher performance, few have specifically addressed real-world leadership practices in the context of improving discipline. Most prior research has used quantitative approaches that only measure impact, without describing the processes, strategies, or challenges faced by principals. Yet, understanding the leadership process in a contextual and practical manner is essential to provide a more comprehensive picture. Furthermore, there are limited studies that capture the direct experiences of principals and teachers in building a culture of discipline. This indicates the need for qualitative, case-based research that can capture real conditions in the field more deeply and thoroughly. Therefore, this study seeks to fill that gap.

This research offers novelty in both its approach and focus. Unlike previous studies, this research adopts a qualitative case study method to explore more deeply the role of school principals in shaping and improving teacher discipline within a specific educational setting. The study does not merely describe outcomes, but also traces leadership strategies, forms of intervention, and the challenges principals face. In addition, this study will explore perspectives from both principals and teachers, providing a more comprehensive view. It is expected to make a concrete contribution to school management practices, particularly in fostering teacher discipline. The findings from this study may serve as a reference for other principals in implementing effective leadership. Thus, the research offers new and relevant insights in the field of education.

The purpose of this study is to describe and analyze the role of principal leadership in improving teacher discipline. It aims to identify the strategies and steps taken by the principal in fostering teacher discipline within the school environment. Moreover, it seeks to understand teachers' perceptions of the principal's leadership practices related to discipline. Through a case study approach, this research is expected to capture the actual dynamics occurring in the field. The results of this study are anticipated to provide both theoretical and practical contributions to the development of educational leadership. It also aims to offer recommendations for principals and policymakers in enhancing teacher discipline management effectively and humanely.

METHOD

This research uses a case study method with a qualitative approach to describe and analyze the role of school principals' leadership in improving teacher discipline at MTs Islahiyah Kalitidu (Trisna Rukhmana, 2022). This type of research is an exploratory study that aims to deeply understand the phenomenon of leadership in the school environment comprehensively. The research design follows case study procedures with a focus on data collection through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and document studies. The data obtained includes primary data from interviews with the school principal, teachers, and administrative staff, as well as secondary data such as documents, personnel reports, and records of discipline development activities. The source of data at MTs Islahiyah Kalitidu was chosen because this school has representative characteristics to examine leadership practices in the educational environment. This

multi-source data approach is expected to uncover the processes and strategies of leadership in depth.(Khilmiyah, 2016).

The data collection techniques in this research include semi-structured interviews, direct observation, and documentation studies to obtain a real picture of the implementation of school principal leadership (WIjaya, 2019). Semi-structured interviews allow respondents to provide in-depth explanations and share experiences related to the policies and practices of teacher discipline management. Direct observation techniques are used to record interactions and behaviors that occur during the learning process and administrative activities. Meanwhile, documentation studies help trace archives and reports related to discipline management in schools. The data analysis technique used is thematic analysis, where the collected data is coded and grouped based on main themes. A data triangulation process is carried out to ensure the validity and reliability of the research findings, resulting in a holistic understanding of the role of school leadership at MTs Islahiyah Kalitidu.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Role of the Principal in Improving Teacher Discipline

The principal has a strategic role in managing and leading all aspects of activities within the school environment (Artanti et al., 2024; Muspawi, 2020; Sholeh, 2016). The principal does not function solely as an administrative manager but also as an instructional leader responsible for creating a school climate that is conducive, professional, and focused on improving the quality of education. The role of the principal includes planning, organizing, implementing, and evaluating school programs, including the development of teachers and staff. In carrying out this role, the principal is expected to be a role model, a wise decision-maker, an effective communicator, and a facilitator in fostering collaboration among all school stakeholders(Sirad, 2023; Sunaengsih et al., 2019). Strong and responsive principal leadership is crucial in establishing a disciplined, productive, and competitive work culture within the educational environment.

At MTs Islahiyah Kalitidu, the principal plays a central role in shaping and directing teacher behavior, particularly in matters of discipline. Based on interviews and observations, it can be concluded that the principal carries out several key roles, both formally and informally, that have

a direct impact on improving teacher discipline. These roles include serving as a role model, rule enforcer, motivator, communicator, and evaluator.

1. As a Role Model and Example

The principal is viewed by the teachers as a figure who possesses integrity and a high commitment to school rules. He is always punctual, consistently participates in all activities, and shows professionalism in various situations. This attitude has a strong psychological influence on teachers to follow in their leader's footsteps. Based on interviews with several teachers, they feel encouraged to be more disciplined because they do not want to disappoint the principal who has set a real example. This shows that leadership by example is effective in shaping a culture of discipline within the school environment.

2. As a Regulator and Enforcer of Rules

The school principal also plays a role as the organizer and enforcer of discipline rules at the school. He establishes internal regulations governing attendance, task execution, and teacher conduct. Not only does he create rules, but the principal also consistently enforces consequences for teachers who violate them, whether in the form of verbal warnings, written reprimands, or performance evaluations. In this regard, the principal applies principles of fairness and consistency, so there is no impression of favoritism. Consistent enforcement of rules creates an orderly work atmosphere and encourages teachers to be more responsible for their duties.

3. As a Motivator and Personality Developer

In addition to enforcing rules, the principal also strives to nurture teachers through a persuasive and humanistic approach. He often provides motivation to teachers, both in official forums such as meetings and in informal interactions. The principal understands that discipline cannot only be enforced through sanctions but also through guidance that builds awareness and personal commitment. For example, in the case of teachers who are often late, the principal prefers to take a personal approach and seek out the root causes of the issues faced by those teachers. Such an approach creates a supportive work environment and encourages more sustainable behavioral changes.

4. As an Effective Communicator

Communication becomes the main tool for the principal in building closeness and

influencing the behavior of teachers. He regularly holds meetings to express expectations, provide feedback, and open a space for discussion regarding teachers' challenges and aspirations. With open communication, the principal is able to bridge various differences in perception and reduce conflicts that could disrupt discipline. Teachers admit to feeling valued because their opinions are heard and involved in decision-making. This attitude fosters a sense of ownership and shared responsibility towards school rules.

5. As an Evaluator and Feedback Provider

The evaluative role is also well-executed by the principal. He regularly conducts class supervision, assesses teachers' attendance, and observes the implementation of daily tasks. The results of these evaluations are not only used for grading but also to provide constructive feedback. Teachers who show positive changes usually receive appreciation, while those who are still lacking in discipline are given additional guidance. This mechanism makes evaluation not a tool for punishment but a means to improve the quality and professionalism of teachers. Teachers become more open to criticism because the evaluation process is conducted objectively and with the intent for improvement.

The Principal's Strategies in Improving Discipline

The principal's strategy refers to well-planned and targeted actions undertaken to achieve educational goals within the school, including efforts to improve teacher performance and discipline (Atika et al., 2024; Khana et al., 2023; Ningsih & others, 2024). These strategies encompass a variety of approaches, including regular coaching, motivational support, rule reinforcement, and the creation of a positive and supportive work environment. The principal must adapt the strategies to the specific characteristics of the teachers, the school culture, and the challenges being faced. In practice, these strategies are implemented through open communication, personal approaches, continuous supervision, and the fair application of rewards and sanctions. With the right strategies, the principal can build collective awareness, enhance individual responsibility, and cultivate a disciplined work ethic among teachers and school staff.

In the effort to improve teacher discipline at MTs Islahiyah Kalitidu, the principal applies a range of strategies designed in a systematic, contextual, and long-term development framework. These strategies are implemented in a structured yet flexible manner, taking into account the

characteristics of the teachers and the organizational culture of the school. The approaches used combine preventive, persuasive, and corrective strategies, blending rule enforcement with personal guidance. This balance ensures that discipline is not only imposed but also nurtured from within, creating a more sustainable and meaningful impact.

1. Periodic Guidance

One of the main strategies implemented by the principal is regular coaching through teacher meetings, individual mentoring, and professional development activities. In every routine meeting, the principal includes discussions on discipline, work motivation, and values of integrity in teaching. In addition, personal coaching is provided to teachers who show a decline in performance or frequently violate school rules. This coaching is not judgmental but rather encourages two-way dialogue to find mutual solutions. Such a strategy has proven effective in fostering a sense of discipline that comes from within the teachers themselves.

2. Reward dan Punishment

To reinforce disciplinary behavior, the principal implements a proportional system of rewards and sanctions. Teachers who demonstrate a high level of discipline are given recognition in the form of public praise, assignments to important school activities, and even recommendations for promotion. On the other hand, teachers who violate discipline receive warnings in stages, starting with verbal reminders, followed by written notices, and, if repeated, it impacts their performance evaluations. The principal emphasizes that sanctions are not intended as punishment, but as part of a professional development process. The presence of both positive incentives and clear consequences motivates teachers to maintain and improve their discipline.

3. Personal and Humanistic Approach

Another strategy implemented is a personal approach toward teachers who exhibit signs of low discipline. The principal strives to understand each teacher's background and personal circumstances in order to identify the root causes of their behavior. In several cases, poor discipline is found to be influenced by family problems, health issues, or an excessive workload. By recognizing these factors, the principal is better able to adjust the approach—for example, by temporarily reducing the teacher's workload or providing emotional support. This humanistic strategy fosters a warm and supportive relationship between the leader and staff, which ultimately

enhances the teacher's self-awareness and loyalty.

4. Empowerment of the Management Team and Internal Coordination

The principal also empowers key elements of the school management structure—such as vice principals, homeroom teachers, and subject teacher group (MGMP) leaders—to actively participate in guiding and monitoring teacher discipline. A solid internal coordination system is established, allowing information about teacher behavior to be gathered comprehensively and processed fairly. In addition, the principal fosters a healthy reporting culture, where disciplinary violations are not concealed but discussed constructively to find solutions. This empowerment builds a collective supervision system that strengthens the culture of discipline within the school.

5. Cultivating a Positive Work Culture

The final strategy that is strongly emphasized is the creation of a positive work culture based on exemplary leadership, a sense of family, and shared responsibility. The principal not only establishes rules but also fosters a work environment that is enjoyable, supportive, and motivating. He encourages collaboration, clarity of roles, and transparency in communication. This culture helps teachers feel appreciated and comfortable, leading them to uphold discipline voluntarily for the collective good. The principal firmly believes that lasting behavioral change can only occur when supported by a healthy and values-driven organizational culture.

Supporting and Hindering Factors

Teacher discipline is one of the essential aspects in supporting the achievement of effective and quality education goals (Mukarromah et al., 2021; Sirad, 2023; Ubaidah, 2014). In general, teacher discipline reflects their level of responsibility and commitment to duties and the regulations that apply within the school environment. This includes punctual attendance, preparedness for teaching, completion of instructional administration, and adherence to professional codes of ethics. A disciplined teacher serves as a role model for students, fosters an orderly learning environment, and strengthens a professional work culture within the school. Discipline is also a key indicator in evaluating teacher performance and determining the overall success of educational programs. Therefore, fostering and maintaining teacher discipline must be a shared concern among the principal, teachers, and the entire school management team.

In the effort to improve teacher discipline, the principal at MTs Islahiyah Kalitidu faces

various conditions that both support and hinder the implementation of leadership strategies. These factors originate from both within and outside the school and greatly influence the effectiveness of the approaches applied. Understanding the supporting and inhibiting factors is essential in designing an adaptive and sustainable leadership strategy. Based on interviews and observations, several key elements have been identified that either strengthen or weaken the principal's efforts in guiding and developing teacher discipline.

1. Supporting factors

One of the main supporting factors is the full support from the school committee and foundation, which gives the principal the trust and authority to implement disciplinary policies. This support is not only moral but also administrative and policy-based, providing the principal with strong legitimacy. In addition, the existence of a collective work culture and solidarity among teachers serves as an internal strength that accelerates the implementation of discipline. Teachers remind each other and set positive examples in maintaining discipline.

Another highly supportive factor is the close relationship between the principal and the teachers, built on mutual respect and open communication. Teachers feel comfortable sharing their concerns and accepting feedback because the principal shows genuine care. Furthermore, the principal's leadership style firm yet humanistic is a key to success. They are able to balance their role as a formal leader and a moral guide. The availability of attendance records and a well-organized performance evaluation system also aids in monitoring and making objective decisions regarding teacher discipline.

2. Obstacles factors

On the other hand, the principal also faces several inhibiting factors in carrying out their role. One common obstacle is the lack of disciplinary awareness among some teachers, particularly those who have been teaching for a long time and feel they are already "experienced." This mindset can lead to resistance toward guidance or a belief that change is unnecessary. In addition, the heavy workload—both administrative and academic—makes it difficult for teachers to consistently maintain time discipline and task completion. This is further exacerbated by the lack of training in time management or self-regulation for teachers.

Another challenge arises from teachers' personal conditions, such as family issues, health

problems, or psychological stress, which directly affect their performance and discipline. Principals often find it difficult to intervene in such matters due to their personal nature, which falls outside the scope of school management. The limited availability of human resources, including supervisory staff or support personnel, also hinders the principal's ability to monitor teacher discipline comprehensively. Furthermore, in some cases, there is still a strong reliance on formal approaches, which means that the discipline-building process has not yet been fully internalized by the teachers.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research conducted at MTs Islahiyah Kalitidu, it can be concluded that the principal's leadership plays a significant role in improving teacher discipline through various strategic approaches, such as regular coaching, the application of reward and punishment, personal mentoring, and the creation of a positive work culture. The principal functions not only as a manager but also as a role model, mentor, communicator, and evaluator who is capable of fostering internal awareness of discipline among teachers. The success of this leadership is supported by a strong work culture and effective communication, despite challenges such as low individual awareness and heavy workloads. Overall, humanistic, firm, and adaptive leadership has proven to be effective in shaping sustainable teacher discipline.

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