PRINCIPAL LEADERSHIP STYLE TOWARDS TEACHER PERFORMANCE IN PRIVATE JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOLS IN DELI SERDANG DISTRICT

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the leadership style of the principal in an effort to improve teacher performance at a Private Junior High School in Percut Sei Tuan District. The method used is qualitative with a case study approach. Data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation collection. The results of the study indicate that principals who apply a transformational leadership style are proven to be more effective in increasing motivation, discipline, and innovation among teachers. In addition, the participatory leadership approach also makes a positive contribution to improving teacher performance through their involvement in the decision-making process. These findings provide valuable insights for principals in choosing the right leadership strategy to improve the quality of education.

1. INTRODUCTION

Teacher performance is a fundamental aspect that determines the quality of education in schools. Teachers who have high motivation, adequate pedagogical skills, and appropriate support from the principal can create an effective learning process. In this case, the principal as an educational leader has an important role in directing, guiding, and supporting teachers so that they can carry out their duties optimally. According to Northouse (2018), the principal's leadership style greatly influences the effectiveness of the school organization and has a direct impact on teacher productivity in teaching.

Various previous studies have shown that the principal's leadership style has a significant impact on teacher performance. Leithwood et al. (2020) found that principals who apply a transformational leadership style can increase teacher motivation and productivity through good communication, providing moral support, and recognizing teacher achievements. Another study by Robbins and Judge (2019) showed that participatory leadership can create a conducive work environment, increase collaboration, and encourage innovation in the learning process. Therefore, understanding the influence of the principal's leadership style on teacher performance is a very relevant topic for further research.

The title of this study is important because many private schools face various challenges in managing human resources, including in efforts to improve teacher performance. Unlike public schools that usually have more stable government regulations and support, private schools often rely on internal policies and principal initiatives to create a productive work environment (Goleman, 2000). Thus, this study aims to analyze how the principal's leadership style can contribute to improving teacher performance at Private Junior High Schools in Percut Sei Tuan District, as well as provide strategic recommendations for principals in improving their leadership effectiveness.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Principal's Leadership Style

Leadership is defined as a process of influencing others to understand and achieve shared goals (Northouse, 2018, p. 6). In the school context, the principal plays a key role as an educational leader. The principal's leadership style reflects the approach used to influence teachers and educational staff in achieving learning objectives.

According to Bass & Riggio (2006), leadership styles can be classified into several types, such as transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire. A principal who adopts a transformational leadership style is able to inspire teachers through long-term vision and emotional support. In contrast, transactional leadership is based on reward and punishment mechanisms, while laissez-faire leadership tends to give full autonomy without clear direction.

Leithwood et al. (2020) assert that transformational leadership is strongly correlated with increased teacher motivation and effectiveness. Similarly, Robbins & Judge (2019) emphasize that participative leadership, which

involves teachers in decision-making processes, helps foster trust and teacher responsibility.

2.2 Teacher Performance

Teacher performance refers to how effectively a teacher carries out professional responsibilities in planning, implementing, and evaluating the learning process. According to Uno (2016, p. 23), teacher performance is influenced by work motivation, competence, and the leadership of the immediate supervisor. Teachers working under supportive leadership are more likely to perform better.

Indicators of teacher performance include pedagogical competence, attendance, discipline, teaching innovation, and student learning achievement (Sagala, 2021).

2.3 Previous Research Relevance

Several previous studies have examined the relationship between principal leadership style and teacher performance:

- Simanjuntak et al. (2022) found that transformational leadership significantly influences teacher motivation and performance in private schools in Medan. However, the study did not explore other leadership styles such as authoritarian or delegative.

- Putri & Harahap (2021) investigated the effect of principal leadership on teacher discipline and performance in Deli Serdang but only focused on discipline as the sole indicator of performance.

- Lubis (2020) discovered that participative leadership enhances collaboration between principals and teachers, yet failed to describe how it impacts teaching innovation.

The weaknesses in these studies lie in the lack of localized context—especially regarding private schools in suburban districts like Percut Sei Tuan—and the dominance of quantitative approaches that do not explore teachers' subjective experiences in depth.

3. METHODS

In this study, the approach used is qualitative with a case study method. The qualitative approach was chosen because it can provide an opportunity to explore the phenomenon of principal leadership and their efforts to improve

teacher performance in depth. Through this case study, the purpose of the study is to understand how principals at Private Junior High Schools in Percut Sei Tuan District apply their leadership styles in specific contexts.

The subjects of the study included principals and teachers from several Private Junior High Schools in Percut Sei Tuan District, who were selected using purposive sampling techniques. This method allows researchers to select individuals who have direct experience related to principal leadership and teacher performance, so that the data obtained is more relevant and in-depth.

Data collection was carried out through a series of in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. Semi-structured interviews were used to explore the views of principals and teachers regarding the leadership styles applied and their impact on teacher performance (Sugiyono, 2020). Participatory observation was carried out by observing interactions between principals and teachers in the school environment, in order to understand leadership practices directly. In addition, document analysis includes school policies, teacher quality development programs, and teacher performance evaluation reports.

Data analysis follows the model proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994), through three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. Data reduction is done by filtering and simplifying the information obtained to facilitate further analysis. Data presentation is presented in the form of descriptive narratives, tables, or diagrams so that existing patterns are easier to recognize. Drawing conclusions involves in-depth data interpretation to understand how the principal's leadership style impacts teacher performance.

The validity of the data in this study was confirmed through several methods, such as source triangulation, member checking, audit trail, and in-depth researcher involvement. Source triangulation was carried out by comparing data obtained from interviews, observations, and documentation to ensure the consistency and validity of the findings (Creswell, 2018). The member checking process aims to confirm the results of interviews with respondents to ensure the accuracy of the information received. The audit trail shows the entire research process so that it can be traced back, while ensuring transparency in data analysis. Finally, in-depth involvement was carried out through intensive interaction with research subjects to gain a more comprehensive understanding.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research result

Based on research conducted at a Private Junior High School in Percut Sei Tuan District, it was found that the principal's leadership style has a significant influence on improving teacher performance. The leadership style applied by the principal tends to be transformational, where the principal does not only focus on achieving administrative targets, but also on teacher professional development. This can be seen from the principal's efforts in providing motivation, building effective communication, and creating a collaborative and supportive work environment. In addition, the principal also applies a participatory leadership style by involving teachers in the decision-making process, so that teachers feel appreciated and have a greater sense of responsibility for their duties.

Discussion

Leadership is the ability of a person to influence, direct, and motivate others to achieve common goals. In the context of education, especially in schools, the principal's leadership style plays an important role in determining the success of the learning process and improving teacher performance. Various leadership styles have been developed and studied, each with its own characteristics, advantages, and disadvantages. Here are some leadership styles that are relevant in the context of education:

1. Transformational Leadership

The transformational leadership style emphasizes the leader's ability to inspire and motivate team members to achieve higher goals. Transformational leaders do not only focus on routine tasks, but also on developing individual potential. For example, principals who apply this style will encourage teachers to innovate in teaching methods, provide constructive feedback, and create an inspiring shared vision. Research by Bass and Avolio (2020) shows that transformational leadership is effective in increasing teacher commitment and performance because it creates a sense of belonging and shared goals.

2. Transactional Leadership

The transactional leadership style focuses on a reward and punishment system, where leaders provide rewards for certain achievements and sanctions for failure. Although this style is effective in achieving short-term targets, it does not encourage innovation and creativity. In the context of schools, principals who apply this style may provide incentives for teachers who achieve certain targets, such as improving student grades. However, research

by Northouse (2020) warns that this style tends to be less effective in building intrinsic teacher motivation.

3. Participative (Democratic) Leadership

A participative leadership style involves team members in the decision-making process, creating a greater sense of ownership and responsibility. A democratic principal will involve teachers in formulating school policies, planning learning programs, and evaluating their results. This not only increases teacher job satisfaction but also encourages collaboration and innovation. According to research by Yukl (2020), active participation of team members in decision-making can increase commitment and productivity.

4. Authoritarian Leadership

An authoritarian leadership style is characterized by full control by the leader, where decisions are made unilaterally without involving team members. Although this style can be effective in crisis situations or when decisions must be made quickly, it can lead to dissatisfaction and demotivation among team members. In the context of schools, an authoritarian principal may determine all policies without involving teachers, which can create a rigid and less innovative work environment. Research by Goleman (2020) shows that this style tends to be less effective in the long term because it can reduce teacher creativity and initiative.

5. Situational Leadership

The situational leadership style emphasizes the flexibility of the leader in adjusting his or her approach based on the situation and needs of the team. A principal who applies the situational style will use a different approach depending on the teacher's level of experience and motivation. For example, new teachers may need more guidance and direction, while more experienced teachers may need more autonomy. According to research by Hersey and Blanchard (2020), the situational style is effective because it allows the leader to respond dynamically to the team's needs.

6. Servant Leadership

The servant leadership style focuses on the leader's service to team members, with the main goal of meeting their needs and developing their potential. A principal who applies servant leadership will care more about the welfare of teachers, listen to their complaints, and help overcome the challenges they face. This style creates a supportive and collaborative work environment. Research by Greenleaf (2020) shows that servant leadership can increase teacher job satisfaction and loyalty because they feel valued and supported.

7. Visionary Leadership

Visionary leadership style emphasizes the leader's ability to create a long-term vision that inspires and motivates team members. A visionary principal will have a clear picture of the future of the school and be able to communicate it effectively to teachers. This style is effective in creating a clear direction and purpose for all team members. According to research by Kotter (2020), visionary leadership can drive positive change and innovation in an organization.

The principal's leadership style plays a crucial role in improving teacher performance at Percut Sei Tuan District Private Junior High Schools. The transformational leadership style applied by the principal has proven effective in encouraging teachers to achieve their best potential. The principal not only focuses on administrative aspects and achieving curriculum targets, but also pays special attention to teacher professional development. For example, the principal often holds training and workshops to improve teacher competency in innovative teaching methods. In addition, the principal also provides regular constructive feedback, which helps teachers to continuously improve and enhance the quality of their teaching. This is in line with research conducted by Leithwood and Sun (2018) which states that transformational leadership can increase teacher motivation and commitment through capacity building and providing ongoing support.

In addition to the transformational leadership style, the principal also applies a participatory leadership style. In this style, the principal involves teachers in the decision-making process, especially those related to school policies and learning program planning. By involving teachers, the principal not only increases teachers' sense of ownership and responsibility for the school, but also creates a more democratic and inclusive working atmosphere. Teachers feel that their opinions are valued, so they are more motivated to actively contribute to achieving school goals. Research conducted by Supriyanto et al. (2020) supports this finding, where teacher participation in decision-making has been shown to increase their job satisfaction and performance.

Effective communication is also key to the success of the principal's leadership style. The principal at a private junior high school in Percut Sei Tuan District has been shown to be able to build open and transparent communication with teachers. This allows for a constructive exchange of ideas and concepts, and minimizes misunderstandings or conflicts in the work environment. With good communication, teachers feel more comfortable conveying the problems or obstacles they face, so that the principal can provide appropriate and timely solutions. According to research conducted by

Mulyasa (2020), effective communication between the principal and teachers is an important factor in creating a positive school climate and supporting improved teacher performance.

A collaborative and supportive work environment is also an important factor in improving teacher performance. The principal strives to create a supportive work atmosphere, where teachers can share experiences and knowledge with each other. For example, the principal often holds regular meetings to discuss learning developments and find joint solutions to the challenges faced. In addition, the principal also provides appreciation for the achievements made by teachers, both in the form of awards and verbal recognition. This not only improves teacher morale but also encourages them to continue to innovate and improve the quality of teaching. Research by Wahyuni and Fitri (2021) shows that a collaborative and appreciative work environment can significantly increase teacher motivation and productivity. Overall, the principal's transformational and participatory leadership style, coupled with effective communication and a supportive work environment, has succeeded in improving teacher performance at SMP Swasta Percut Sei Tuan District. Teachers feel more motivated, appreciated, and supported in carrying out their duties, which ultimately has a positive impact on the quality of education provided to students. This finding is reinforced by previous studies showing that effective leadership and a positive work environment are key factors in improving teacher performance (Leithwood & Sun, 2018; Supriyanto et al., 2020; Mulyasa, 2020; Wahyuni & Fitri, 2021).

5. CONCLUSION

Based on the research and discussion that has been conducted, it can be concluded that the principal's leadership style has a significant impact on improving teacher performance at SMP Swasta Kecamatan Percut Sei Tuan. The transformational and participatory leadership style applied by the principal has proven effective in encouraging teachers to achieve their best potential. In addition to focusing on achieving administrative targets, the principal also pays great attention to teacher professional development, through various trainings, workshops, and constructive feedback. Furthermore, teacher involvement in decision-making creates a higher sense of ownership and responsibility. Coupled with effective communication and a collaborative and supportive work environment, all of this has succeeded in increasing teacher motivation and productivity. Overall, the combination of effective leadership style, good communication relationships, and a positive work environment has
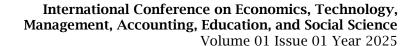
contributed to improving teacher performance, which in turn has an impact on the quality of education at the school.

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