



HEAD OF MADRASAH LEADERSHIP STRATEGIES IN IMPROVING TEACHER PERFORMANCE THROUGH ACADEMIC SUPERVISION AT MTs NEGERI BINJAI

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to describe the leadership strategies of the madrasah principal in improving teacher performance through the implementation of academic supervision at MTs Negeri Binjai. The research employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive method. Data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. The findings reveal a decline in teacher performance, characterized by poor punctuality, lack of instructional innovation, and insufficient attention to students' needs. The principal applied a humanistic and participative leadership strategy through a structured academic supervision process. These strategies included situational leadership styles, binding and bonding approaches, and collaborative reflection between teachers and leadership. Academic supervision served as a medium for teacher coaching and professional development through direct classroom observations, constructive feedback, and pedagogical dialogue. The results indicate that appropriate leadership strategies and continuous supervision can significantly enhance teachers' competence and motivation. This study recommends strengthening participatory leadership practices and developing adaptive academic supervision systems as efforts to improve the quality of education in madrasahs.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Education is the main instrument in creating quality human resources. Through education, moral values, knowledge, and skills are transformed and passed on to the next generation of the nation. In this context, madrasahs, as Islamic educational institutions, play a strategic role in developing students' potential so that they possess adequate Islamic integrity, academic abilities, and social skills (Depdiknas, 2008). The success of madrasahs in fulfilling their functions is greatly influenced by the quality of teachers as the main actors in the learning process.

Teachers hold a central position in achieving educational goals. They are not just presenters of lesson material, but also facilitators, motivators, and character builders for students. Therefore, the quality of education in madrasahs is greatly influenced by teacher performance. Teacher performance can be understood as the work results achieved in carrying out their professional duties, including in designing, implementing, and evaluating learning (Mathis & Jackson, 2010). From an educational management perspective, improving teacher



performance is part of a systematic effort that must be managed by the madrasah principal as the institution's leader.

However, the reality is that improved teacher performance does not happen automatically. Many teachers face challenges in learning, such as limited teaching innovation, lack of motivation, or minimal professional guidance. One of the main causes is the weak role of the madrasah head in conducting optimal academic supervision (Rozikun & Fahrurrozi, 2022). Academic supervision should be a strategic means of developing teacher competence, as it involves direct coaching of classroom teaching practices. Academic supervision is a coaching process carried out by the head of the madrasah to help teachers improve their professional abilities in planning, implementing, and evaluating learning (Sullivan & Glanz, 2000). Good supervision is not only evaluative, but also collaborative and constructive. (Wanzare & da Costa, 2000) emphasize that effective supervision can encourage teachers to reflect on their teaching practices, improve the quality of their interactions with students, and strengthen professional responsibility.

In practice, many madrasah heads still conduct academic supervision normatively and administratively. Supervision often focuses solely on checking learning materials, rather than on direct coaching of the teaching and learning process in the classroom. This impacts the low quality of teaching and the declining work motivation of teachers. The head of the madrasah needs to adopt a more adaptive and transformational leadership strategy in managing academic supervision, so that the goal of teacher development is truly achieved (Abdi Setiawan et al., 2021).

Leadership is a key element in driving change in educational institutions. The head of the madrasah, as the leader of the institution, is required to have a strong vision, integrity, and managerial ability. Effective leadership not only serves as a director but also as an inspirer and facilitator of change (J.P. Kotter, 1994). According to the situational leadership theory developed by Hersey and Blanchard in (Atiqoh et al., 2023), leadership effectiveness is determined by the leader's ability to adapt their leadership style to the readiness level of their subordinates. In the context of madrasahs, this means the head of the madrasah must be able to adjust their supervisory approach to the characteristics and needs of the teachers.

(T.J. Sergiovanni, 2006) introduced four principal leadership strategies that can be used to build teacher performance through professional development, namely bartering, building, binding, and bonding. Bartering emphasizes the exchange between the needs of the leader and their subordinates, while building creates psychological support that encourages achievement. Binding and bonding are higher-level strategies that focus on building shared values and emotional commitment to form a strong learning community. In the context of madrasahs, the binding and bonding approach is highly relevant, as it emphasizes strong moral values and collaboration among school members.

Furthermore, (J.P. Kotter, 1994) states that educational leaders must perform three main functions: setting the direction and vision for change, guiding and inspiring others towards that vision, and motivating and empowering staff to face the challenges of change. In the context of academic supervision, these three functions can be operationalized through planning the supervision program, open and persuasive communication with teachers, and providing constructive feedback. Such supervision not only enhances teachers' abilities but also builds their confidence and motivation in their work.

The issue of weak leadership strategy implementation in academic supervision also occurs at MTs Negeri Binjai. Based on initial observation results, there is a tendency for declining teacher performance, indicated by low work discipline, monotonous teaching methods, and minimal meaningful interaction with students. Additionally, the supervision conducted by the head of the madrasah tends to be limited to checking administrative documents, without direct guidance within the classroom. This indicates that leadership strategies in academic supervision have not been effectively implemented.

Many teachers feel they don't receive meaningful support from the leadership. Formal reprimands are considered less effective, while a more personal and dialogic approach is actually better received by teachers. In this regard, the democratic, humanistic, and communicative leadership style of the madrasah head is highly necessary. Leaders who can build positive interpersonal relationships with teachers will find it easier to motivate and encourage them to improve their performance (Amudi, 2017).

Several studies have examined the relationship between principal leadership and teacher performance. Research by (Aslam et al., 2022) shows that instructional leadership has a significant impact on teacher performance, but it does not delve deeply into how academic supervision strategies are implemented. (Istikomah, 2018) emphasizes the importance of an inspiring and communicative leadership approach, but has not comprehensively linked it to the implementation of academic supervision. Meanwhile, (Adiyono et al., 2023) emphasizes that academic supervision is capable of improving the quality of learning, but does not analyze in detail the underlying leadership strategies.

This research aims to fill this gap by integratively analyzing the relationship between madrasah head leadership strategies, the implementation of academic supervision, and teacher performance improvement in the context of state madrasahs. The research focuses on how madrasah heads effectively design, implement, and evaluate academic supervision as part of their leadership strategy. Using a qualitative approach, this study is expected to describe real-world practices and provide strategic recommendations for the development of better Islamic education management.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

Context and research informants

This research is field research with a descriptive qualitative approach. This method is used to obtain data directly from field sources through observation, in-depth interviews, and document studies, without intervening in the conditions being researched (Moleong, 2018). The data applied in this study includes three main methods: observation, interviews, and documentation (Creswell, 2019). Interviews were conducted with the head of the madrasah, the vice-head of curriculum, and eight teachers at MTs Negeri Binjai who met the following criteria: (a) senior teacher status, (b) junior teacher status.

Table 1. Research Reports

No	Initials Name	Education		Gender	Department	Working hours
		S1	S2			
1.	WY		√	Man	School Principal	15 Year
2.	SM	√		Man	Vice Principal for Curriculum	15 Year
3.	TSR	√		Woman	Social Studies Teacher	19 Year
4.	DP	√		Woman	Islamic Religious Education Teacher	21 Year
5.	SK	√		Woman	Arabic Language Teacher	22 Year
6.	MI	√		Woman	Indonesian Language Teacher	21 Year
7.	PD	√		Woman	Social Studies Teacher	2 Year
8.	MF	√		Man	Civics Teacher	2 Year
9.	RD	√		Man	Islamic Religious Education Teacher	2 Year
10.	IS	√		Woman	Guidance Counselor	3 Year

Data collection procedure

The researcher collected data through observation, interviews, and document analysis to understand the head of madrasah's leadership strategies for improving teacher performance through academic supervision at MTs Negeri Binjai. Observations were conducted directly with the head of the madrasah and teachers for six days, recording the head of the madrasah's activities every 30 minutes and observing the teachers' teaching process for 45 minutes per session. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the head of the madrasah, the vice principal, and two teachers, lasting 20-30 minutes, with recordings for data analysis. Additionally, important documents such as annual work plans, supervision schedules, and teacher performance evaluation reports were collected to support the research data, providing information on work targets, teaching practices, and teacher performance.

Data analysis

Data analysis in this study involved organizing and structuring data from interviews, observations, and documents in a structured manner. For interviews, the researcher used themes and coding categories that emerged from the data, comparing interview results with field notes and observations to identify patterns of relationships. This process is done using the Nvivo application until no new themes emerge. Observational data were analyzed using the principal's task typology, classifying tasks into administrative, instructional, professional development, and relationship-building categories, and calculating the duration of time for each task. Meanwhile, document study analysis is conducted by ensuring the quality and relevance of the documents, and comparing them with the results of interviews and observations.

3. RESULT AND ANALYSIS

Based on the analysis of the interview data from this study, there are three themes: (1) Teacher Performance, (2) Madrasah Principal Strategies, and (3) Implementation of Academic Supervision.

Teacher performance

Teacher performance is a fundamental aspect in reflecting the quality of education at MTs Negeri Binjai. Based on the results of observations and in-depth interviews, it was found that the performance of teachers in this madrasah is quite diverse. Some teachers demonstrate a high level of professionalism in their teaching, take responsibility for their duties, and strive to innovate in their lessons. However, others show signs of weak work commitment, such as arriving late to school, minimal variation in teaching methods, and inconsistent updates to lesson administration. This is illustrated in the following interview data.

"... I noticed that not all teachers perform equally. There are teachers who are very disciplined, diligently create lesson plans, arrive on time, and are active in class. But there are also teachers I see who are constantly late, never modify their teaching methods, and lecture from beginning to end. I even found some people who made lesson plans on the spot when they were about to be supervised. This means that some of our teachers are still working based on the moment, not out of professional awareness. This is what concerns me and requires intervention from the leadership". (Interview with the Head of the Madrasah, June 20, 2025)

Based on the interview data, the head of the madrasah has conducted a thorough observation of their teachers' performance and recognizes the importance of continuous development. Problems such as delays, lack of innovation, and weak learning administration are not merely individual oversights, but indicate the need for deeper and more sustainable leadership and supervision strategies.

Interviews were also conducted with the Vice Principal for Curriculum, who explained that the decline in teacher performance did indeed occur, especially in the area of discipline.

I've noticed that not all teachers perform the same. There are teachers who are very disciplined, diligently create learning materials, arrive on time, and are active in class. But there are also teachers I've seen who are constantly late, never modify their teaching methods, and teach using a lecture style from beginning to end. I even found some people who made lesson plans on the spot when they were about to be supervised. This means that some of our teachers are still working based on the moment, not out of professional awareness. This is what concerns me and requires intervention from the leadership." (Interview with the Vice Principal for Curriculum, June 23, 2025)

The results of the interview indicate that the Vice Principal for Curriculum emphasized that mentoring teachers in the field of technology and digitalization of learning plays a very important role in today's modern era. Teachers not only need to be directed to simply complete routine administrative obligations, but they also need to be encouraged and mentored to improve the quality of the learning they provide. This includes utilizing various technological devices, digital media, and innovations in teaching methods that are relevant to students' needs and the times. With targeted guidance, teachers are expected to create a more interactive, engaging, and adaptive learning process that is increasingly integrated with information and communication technology.

Interviews were also conducted with teachers to gain a deeper understanding of their performance at MTs Negeri Binjai. Through these interviews, we were able to understand teacher performance and also identify the causes of the decline in teacher performance at MTs Negeri Binjai. This is important to ensure that the strategies to be used by the head of the madrasah are truly in line with the needs on the ground.

"I realize that in my daily teaching practice, I still often rely on the lecture method because I feel it's the easiest and most efficient, especially if time is limited or the material is quite dense. But actually, I also have a strong desire to develop more engaging approaches, such as project-based learning, group discussions, or using digital media to make students more enthusiastic." (TSR Teacher Interview, June 23, 2025)

Interviews with teachers indicate that the principal actively ensures the teaching performance improvement program aligns with the school's needs. The principal regularly conducts periodic evaluations through direct supervision and discussions with teachers to monitor the progress of teaching and learning activities.

"Menurut saya pribadi ya sesuai karena kepala sekolah ini dia aktif memastikan bahwasanya program peningkatan keterampilan mengajar itu sesuai dengan kebutuhan guru itu kelihatan waktu beliau itu sering mengadakan evaluasi berkala baik melalui supervisi langsung maupun diskusi dengan guru jadi memang kepala sekolah ini aktif untuk nanya nanya perkembangan mengenai kegiatan belajar mengajar dengan guru." (Wawancara Guru SK, 24 Juni 2025)

According to the teacher's opinion, the principal actively ensures that the teaching performance improvement program aligns with the school's needs. This is evident from the periodic evaluations conducted through direct supervision and discussions with teachers. The principal regularly asks questions about the progress of teaching and learning activities, demonstrating their commitment to supporting and improving the learning process at the school.



Madrasah principal's strategy

In an effort to improve the quality of education, the madrasah principal emphasized the importance of setting a clear and easily understandable example for teachers. The principal took a personal approach and used motivational techniques through praise, so that each individual could contribute with their best abilities. This approach aims to create a more suitable and effective educational environment.

We schedule academic supervision in a planned and phased manner, considering the number of teachers, subjects, and the time available in a semester. Supervision was conducted through direct observation inside the classroom during the learning process, so we could see firsthand how teachers deliver material, manage the class, and interact with students. After the observation was complete, we held a reflective meeting with the relevant teacher to discuss the findings. During this discussion, we expressed appreciation for the teacher's strengths and provided constructive feedback on areas that still needed improvement. We also encourage teachers to review and improve their Lesson Implementation Plans (LIPs), both in terms of goal alignment, method selection, and the learning media used. Additionally, we motivate teachers to innovate in their teaching, such as by using active learning approaches, technology integration, or differentiation strategies to make learning more engaging and effective. The purpose of this supervision is not solely to evaluate, but also to nurture and empower teachers so they can continue to grow professionally. (Interview with the Head of the Madrasah, June 20, 2025)

The head of the madrasah did not immediately impose sanctions or punishments, but rather chose to use a personal and persuasive approach. He is able to communicate directly with the teacher in question, listen to the problems they are facing, and provide motivation so that the teacher can consciously and willingly improve their behavior. This approach reflects a situational leadership pattern, where the head of the madrasah adjusts their leadership style based on the individual characteristics and needs of the teachers.

Interviews were also conducted with teachers for a more comprehensive understanding of the madrasah principal's leadership strategies. Through these interviews, we were able to understand how all teachers viewed the policies and strategies implemented by the madrasah principal.

Previously, I often procrastinated on preparing Lesson Plans (RPP) because I felt there was no direct supervision and they weren't needed immediately. However, since the head of the madrasah began conducting regular supervision and directly checking the RPPs we created, I have become more disciplined and responsible in completing them on time. Besides just checking, the head of the madrasah also provided input and guidance that helped me improve the quality of my lesson planning.

This makes me more motivated to prepare my lessons well, because I feel cared for and professionally guided. This support is very helpful in improving my performance in class. (Interview with Teacher DP, July 9, 2025)

The teacher explained that after the head of the madrasah began actively conducting academic supervision, including directly checking the teachers' work results and providing constructive feedback, there was an increase in discipline and professional awareness among the teachers. This reflects the importance of the head of the madrasah's role in providing continuous guidance, mentoring, and systematic evaluation of teachers' academic tasks.

Interviews were also conducted with teachers to gain their perspectives on the effectiveness of the personal approach. This helps reveal how the principal's personal approach with teachers motivates their academic performance.

When I was creating new learning materials to use in class, the head of the madrasah specifically expressed appreciation for my initiative during a meeting of the teaching staff. He openly stated that the learning materials I created were very helpful in improving the quality of teaching and could serve as an example for other teachers. That expression of appreciation made me feel valued for the effort I had put in, and indirectly gave me a boost of encouragement to continue innovating in my teaching. Such recognition, though simple, is very meaningful to teachers because it shows that the head of the madrasah notices and appreciates the teachers' performance, especially when there is extra effort in preparing engaging and effective lessons." (Interview with Teacher PD, July 9, 2025)

According to the teacher, the effectiveness of the personal approach taken by the head of the madrasah is very significant, even though it is simple, it has a significant impact. The approaches used, such as simple motivation or praise, indicate that the strategies implemented in the personal approach are working well and yielding positive results in improving teacher performance.

"In my opinion, we are starting to see a personal approach being taken by the head of the madrasah towards the teachers, and this is a more effective step compared to formal reprimands. A personal approach allows for more open, warm, and non-intimidating communication, so teachers who receive feedback feel valued as individuals." Formal reprimands, such as warning letters or written statements, are often perceived as too rigid and can actually create distance or cause offense, so the intended message is not truly received with an open

heart. Conversely, if the head of the madrasah approaches teachers personally, invites them to discuss, and delivers criticism gently and empathetically, teachers are more likely to receive the input well and be motivated to improve themselves. This kind of approach not only builds positive emotional relationships between leaders and teachers but also creates a more harmonious and supportive work environment." (Interview with Teacher MF, June 24, 2025)

The teacher stated that in the process of teacher development, the personal approach taken by the madrasah principal was considered more effective than the formal approach. The personal approach allows for warmer, more empathetic, and less intimidating communication, making teachers feel valued as individuals and more open to receiving feedback.

Implementation of academic supervision

The head of the madrasah acknowledges that academic supervision has primarily been conducted through classroom observation and document review, but has not been fully accompanied by in-depth mentoring and reflection on learning processes. This has resulted in supervision outcomes not having a significant impact on improving teacher performance, particularly in terms of developing teaching methods and classroom innovation.

"We do conduct academic supervision according to schedule, but I admit we haven't been fully effective in following up. We need a new strategy, not just administration, but an approach that can build teacher morale. And we conduct supervision here twice a year, usually at the beginning of the even and odd semesters. The purpose is, of course, to see how the teachers are implementing the learning. But indeed, it must be admitted, we haven't been able to follow up on everything yet due to limitations of time and manpower. Up until now, the follow-up to supervision has tended to be administrative in nature. In fact, teachers need more technical guidance and practical support to improve the quality of their teaching. Therefore, we feel it is necessary to implement a new strategy in the implementation of academic supervision. It's not just about administrative completeness, but also about a more spirit-building approach for teachers and providing the practical support they need." (Interview with the Head of the Madrasah, June 23, 2025)

The head of the madrasah explained that academic supervision has indeed been carried out periodically every semester as part of efforts to improve teacher performance. However, in practice, this supervision tends to be done formally, just to fulfill administrative obligations without truly addressing the substantive aspects of the learning process. This is evident from the lack of follow-up mentoring and the absence of an in-depth evaluation of the supervision results.

Interviews were also conducted with teachers to get their perspectives on the implementation process of academic supervision. This helps understand how the madrasah head improves teacher performance through academic supervision.

Actually, what we need is not just correction from formal supervision, but also professional and emotional bonds with the head of the madrasah. If teachers are only constantly corrected without a family-like approach or constructive communication, we can eventually feel bored and lose our enthusiasm. We hope there can be more open dialogue, informal meetings, or light discussions that can boost motivation and a sense of belonging towards the madrasah. It would be better if the head of the madrasah could facilitate activities such as teacher study groups, small training sessions, or experience-sharing forums. Such activities are far more beneficial for improving teachers' competence and morale than simply filling out supervision instruments. We want supervision to be not just an evaluation, but also a means of fostering and strengthening teachers' professionalism comprehensively." (RD Teacher Interview, June 23, 2025).

The teacher explained that in an effort to improve teacher performance and create a healthy work environment, two main strategies are needed: binding and bonding. The binding strategy refers to the professional attachment built through directed and sustainable academic guidance. This includes supervisory activities that are not only administrative but also provide real guidance in improving teacher competence, such as mentoring in preparing learning materials, implementing active learning methods, and effective learning evaluation.

Interviews were also conducted with the Vice Principal for Curriculum to delve deeper into the personal approach taken by the head of the madrasah with the teachers. This provided insights into how the headmaster's approach contributes to the teachers' comfort and performance effectiveness.

The headmaster has a very friendly nature and is very close personally to the teachers, because he used to be our comrade-in-arms in this very teacher's room. Yes, he started as a teacher at MTs Negeri Binjai, and was later appointed as the head of the madrasah. Therefore, he had a high level of respect for the teachers, which resulted in his professionalism not being very visible to them." (Interview with the Vice Principal for Curriculum, July 9, 2025).

The Curriculum Working Group states that two strategic approaches considered relevant and necessary are binding and bonding strategies. The binding strategy refers to the professional connection between teachers and the head of the madrasah. This approach emphasizes the importance of systematic academic coaching, such



as competency enhancement training, mentoring in developing learning materials, monitoring the learning process, and evaluations focused on quality improvement. With the binding in place, teachers will feel more professionally responsible for their duties and performance as educators.

4. CONCLUSION

The performance of teachers at MTs Negeri Binjai is due to low motivation and a lack of attention from the head of the madrasah, particularly towards teachers who demonstrate low discipline in carrying out their duties. The absence of follow-up training after supervision, coupled with weak two-way communication between the head of the madrasah and the teachers, has resulted in minimal awareness and commitment from the teachers to improve the quality of their performance. The leadership strategies implemented by the head of the madrasah are also not fully effective, especially in the aspect of human relations. Therefore, it is necessary to implement binding (strengthening professional relationships) and bonding (strengthening emotional relationships) strategies to build a more supportive work environment where teachers feel valued, motivated, and supported in the process of developing their competencies and performance. This strategy can be realized through a personal approach, informal mentoring, joint reflection forums, and recognizing positive teacher performance. In addition, the academic supervision that has been routinely carried out by the madrasah head still tends to be administrative and formalistic, with an emphasis on checking the completeness of learning device documents, but has not substantially addressed the aspect of improving the quality of the learning process in the classroom.

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