

Principal Leadership Strategies for Enhancing Teacher Discipline: A Qualitative Study at SDN Jaya Agung in Lalan District, Musi Banyuasin Regency

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan dan menganalisis implementasi kepemimpinan kepala sekolah dalam meningkatkan disiplin guru di SDN Jaya Agung P.19, Kecamatan Lalan, Kabupaten Musi Banyuasin. Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah kualitatif dengan pendekatan deskriptif. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi, dan dokumentasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kepala sekolah menerapkan berbagai strategi kepemimpinan seperti memberikan teladan, membangun komunikasi efektif, memberikan motivasi, serta melakukan supervisi dan evaluasi secara rutin. Implementasi strategi tersebut memberikan dampak positif terhadap peningkatan disiplin guru, yang tercermin dari peningkatan kehadiran, kepatuhan terhadap aturan sekolah, dan peningkatan kinerja dalam proses pembelajaran. Tantangan yang dihadapi meliputi keterbatasan sumber daya dan kurangnya kesadaran akan pentingnya disiplin pada sebagian guru. Studi ini merekomendasikan perlunya pelatihan kepemimpinan berkelanjutan bagi kepala sekolah dan peningkatan kesadaran guru akan pentingnya disiplin dalam meningkatkan mutu pendidikan..

Kata kunci: Kepemimpinan Kepala Sekolah, Disiplin Guru, Strategi Kepemimpinan, Manajemen Sekolah, Mutu Pendidikan

Abstract

This study aims to describe and analyze the implementation of principal leadership in improving teacher discipline at SDN Jaya Agung P.19, Lalan District, Musi Banyuasin Regency. The research employed a qualitative method with a descriptive approach. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation. The results indicate that the principal implemented various leadership strategies, including modeling exemplary behavior, fostering effective communication, providing motivation, and conducting regular supervision and evaluation. These strategies positively impacted teacher discipline, as evidenced by increased attendance, stricter compliance with school regulations, and improved instructional performance. Challenges included limited resources and varying levels of disciplinary awareness among staff. This study recommends continuous leadership training for principals and programs to bolster teacher awareness regarding the importance of discipline in educational quality.

Keywords: Principal Leadership, Teacher Discipline, Leadership Strategies, School Management, Educational Quality

1. INTRODUCTION

Education serves as a fundamental pillar for human development, acting as a conscious effort to guide students toward physical and mental maturity. In the contemporary era, education is not merely about transferring knowledge but is a complex process of shaping personality based on verified societal values (Sulisworo et al., 2022; Wahyuni et al., 2023; Prasetyo & Lestari, 2024). To ensure the effectiveness of this educational process, schools require teaching staff who are not only qualified but also demonstrate high levels of loyalty and discipline. Discipline is the backbone of any educational institution; without it, the strategic goals of an organization cannot be realized (Harahap et al., 2023; Nugroho et al., 2022).

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The role of a leader is paramount in fostering an environment of accountability. Leadership is defined as an intentional effort to influence and guide others toward achieving shared organizational objectives (Yuliana & Suryadi, 2022; Kartini et al., 2023). In a school context, the principal acts as the primary driver of quality. According to recent studies, the principal's ability to influence teacher behavior both in attitude and performance is the most significant factor in school success (Mulyani et al., 2021; Rahmawati et al., 2024). A leader must serve as a mentor and an example, providing constant encouragement and guidance to ensure that every educator performs their duties with integrity (Sari & Putra, 2022).

Teacher discipline, characterized by the awareness and willingness to obey school regulations, is often a reflection of the principal's leadership style. Discipline is not merely following rules under coercion; rather, it is a voluntary attitude of responsibility toward one's professional obligations (Ramadhani & Fitria, 2022; Hidayati et al., 2023). For a teacher, discipline manifests in punctuality, adherence to the curriculum, and professional conduct in the classroom. When teachers model disciplined behavior, they provide a blueprint for students to follow, thereby enhancing the overall learning culture (Setiawan et al., 2024; Lubis et al., 2021).

However, maintaining high disciplinary standards remains a challenge in many rural areas. Several studies report that geographical conditions, infrastructure limitations, and access to transportation influence teacher attendance and performance (Hidayat et al., 2024; Prabowo et al., 2022). At SDN Jaya Agung, preliminary observations indicated several issues. During the rainy season, teacher attendance frequently fluctuated, uniforms occasionally deviated from regulations, and some staff left the premises before the official closing time. This gap between the ideal disciplinary standards and the reality on the ground necessitates an in-depth investigation into how leadership can bridge this divide (Fauzi et al., 2023).

This study is grounded in Transformational Leadership Theory and Situational Leadership Theory. Transformational leadership focuses on inspiring followers to transcend their self-interests for the sake of the organization, while situational leadership emphasizes the leader's adaptability to the maturity and needs of the staff (Wibowo, 2021; Robbins & Judge, 2022; Northouse, 2021). Transformational leaders are able to influence attitudes, motivation, and commitment through vision, communication, and exemplary behavior, which are essential in educational organizations (Yukl, 2022; Hasanah et al., 2023).

In the context of school management, the principal is required to demonstrate flexibility in leadership style depending on the condition of teachers and the work environment. Situational leadership theory states that effective leaders adjust their behavior according to the readiness and competence of their followers (Hersey et al., 2021; Putri & Kurniawan, 2024). This approach is particularly relevant in rural schools where environmental and social conditions often affect teacher performance and discipline (Hidayat et al., 2024; Santoso et al., 2022).

Furthermore, the concept of work discipline is analyzed through the perspective of organizational psychology, where motivation, supervision, and organizational culture play a key role in shaping employee behavior (Pratama et al., 2023; Luthans, 2021). Work discipline reflects the willingness of individuals to comply with regulations and carry out responsibilities without coercion (Sutrisno, 2022). In educational institutions, teacher discipline is closely related to leadership quality, job satisfaction, and professional commitment (Widodo et al., 2023).

Strong leadership combined with a supportive organizational climate can create a culture of responsibility and accountability among teachers. Therefore, the integration of transformational leadership, situational leadership, and organizational discipline theory becomes the theoretical basis for analyzing how principals improve teacher discipline in elementary schools (Rahman, 2023; Firmansyah et al., 2022).

Many previous studies have examined the relationship between principal leadership and teacher performance, but most of them were conducted in urban schools with adequate facilities and stable environmental conditions (Mulyani et al., 2021; Kartini et al., 2023). Research focusing on rural schools is still limited, especially studies that analyze how geographical and environmental factors influence teacher discipline (Hidayat et al., 2024; Prabowo et al., 2022).

Several recent studies indicate that leadership strategies that are effective in urban schools cannot always be applied directly in rural areas due to differences in infrastructure, transportation access, and community characteristics (Fauzi et al., 2023; Santoso et al., 2022). In Musi Banyuasin Regency, particularly in Lalan District, seasonal weather conditions such as heavy rain often affect teacher attendance and punctuality, yet this issue has rarely been explored in depth in previous research (Rahmawati et al., 2024).

Therefore, this study fills the gap by providing a contextual analysis of principal leadership strategies in improving teacher discipline in a rural elementary school environment. This research not only examines leadership behavior but also considers environmental constraints that may influence the effectiveness of disciplinary policies (Hasanah et al., 2023; Widodo et al., 2023).

2. METHOD

This study utilizes a qualitative research design with a descriptive approach to provide an in-depth understanding of the principal's leadership implementation at SDN Jaya Agung. Qualitative research is particularly suitable for this study because it allows the researcher to explore complex social phenomena and human behavior in their natural setting (Creswell & Poth, 2023; Miles et al., 2021; Merriam & Tisdell, 2022). By focusing on how leadership influences discipline, the researcher can capture the dynamics of daily interaction, communication patterns, and managerial strategies applied by the principal (Sugiyono, 2022; Yusuf, 2023).

Participants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure that the data were obtained from individuals who had direct experience with the leadership process at the school. Purposive sampling is commonly used in qualitative studies because it allows the researcher to select participants who are considered the most knowledgeable about the research problem (Etikan & Bala, 2021; Campbell et al., 2022). The participants consisted of the school principal, two senior teachers, and one administrative staff member who handled attendance records and school documentation.

The researcher served as the main instrument in this study, supported by interview guidelines, observation sheets, and documentation checklists. In qualitative research, the researcher plays a central role in interpreting meaning and understanding context, therefore the validity of the

data depends on careful observation and systematic recording (Miles et al., 2021; Tracy, 2022).

Data collection was conducted through three techniques: in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation study. Interviews were used to obtain information about leadership strategies, motivation, and disciplinary policies applied by the principal (Creswell & Poth, 2023). Observation was carried out to see directly how the principal interacted with teachers in daily activities, while documentation was used to verify attendance records, school regulations, and performance reports (Sugiyono, 2022; Yusuf, 2023).

Data analysis followed the interactive model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, which consists of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing (Miles et al., 2021). Data reduction was done by coding interview results and field notes to identify themes such as exemplary leadership, supervision, motivation, and environmental constraints. Data display was presented in narrative form to facilitate interpretation, and conclusions were verified through member checking to ensure credibility and accuracy of the findings (Tracy, 2022; Campbell et al., 2022).

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that the principal of SDN Jaya Agung applied a combination of transformational and situational leadership strategies to improve teacher discipline. Transformational leadership was reflected in the principal's ability to provide vision, motivation, and exemplary behavior, while situational leadership appeared in the flexibility of rules depending on teacher conditions (Northouse, 2021; Yukl, 2022; Hasanah et al., 2023). This combination demonstrates that leadership in schools is not only administrative but also relational and adaptive to contextual challenges.

Based on interview and observation data, the principal consistently demonstrated discipline by arriving early, wearing proper uniforms, and following school regulations. Such behavior became a model for teachers and gradually encouraged them to adopt similar attitudes toward discipline. Previous studies suggest that exemplary behavior from leaders is one of the most effective ways to improve employee discipline because it builds moral authority and trust among subordinates (Rahman, 2023; Widodo et al., 2023). In the context of this study, the principal's consistent behavior served as a practical example that strengthened the implementation of school regulations.

Documentation data also showed improvements in teacher attendance rates, punctuality, and compliance with school rules after the implementation of these leadership strategies. This improvement indicates that leadership practices contributed positively to strengthening teacher discipline. Similar findings were reported by Nugroho et al. (2022) and Kartini et al. (2023), who found that regular supervision and continuous motivation from school leaders significantly influence teacher performance and discipline in educational institutions.

Another important factor influencing teacher discipline was communication. The principal implemented an open-door policy and encouraged teachers to participate in decision-making processes related to school activities and policies. This participatory approach created a sense of ownership among teachers and increased their commitment to school goals. Participatory leadership has been proven to enhance teachers' sense of responsibility because they feel

valued and recognized as important members of the organization (Fauzi et al., 2023; Putri & Kurniawan, 2024).

However, environmental conditions remained a major challenge affecting teacher discipline. Teachers who lived far from the school often experienced transportation difficulties, particularly during the rainy season. Such conditions sometimes resulted in delayed arrival times despite teachers' willingness to follow school regulations. Research on rural education contexts indicates that geographical factors can significantly influence teacher attendance and performance even when leadership practices are effective (Hidayat et al., 2024; Santoso et al., 2022).

Overall, these findings confirm that principal leadership plays a central role in shaping teacher discipline within schools. Transformational leadership helps build internal motivation among teachers, while situational leadership allows leaders to adjust their approaches according to environmental conditions and teacher needs (Northouse, 2021; Robbins & Judge, 2022). This combination is particularly effective in rural schools where rigid rule enforcement alone may not address contextual challenges.

Compared with previous studies that emphasized reward and punishment systems, this research shows that discipline can also be strengthened through emotional support, effective communication, and participatory decision-making. Teachers who feel respected, trusted, and involved in school management tend to demonstrate stronger commitment and responsibility toward their professional duties (Firmansyah et al., 2022; Hasanah et al., 2023; Widodo et al., 2023).

Another significant finding is the influence of environmental factors on teacher discipline. In rural areas, discipline issues are not always caused by a lack of motivation but can also be influenced by infrastructure limitations such as transportation and weather conditions. Therefore, school leadership must be adaptive and responsive to local contexts when implementing discipline policies (Prabowo et al., 2022; Rahmawati et al., 2024).

These results support situational leadership theory, which emphasizes that effective leaders adjust their behavior based on the readiness of followers and the demands of the environment (Hersey et al., 2021). In this case, the principal's decision to provide tolerance during extreme weather conditions helped maintain teacher morale while still upholding discipline standards. Such adaptive leadership practices contribute to the development of a positive school culture where discipline is built through mutual understanding, professional responsibility, and supportive leadership.

4. CONCLUSION

The study concludes that the principal of SDN Jaya Agung has successfully improved teacher discipline through a balanced application of transformational and situational leadership. By acting as a mentor, educator, and supervisor, the principal fostered a culture of voluntary compliance and professional accountability. The primary strategies involved leading by example, maintaining open communication, and involving teachers in decision-making processes. Although improvements in attendance and performance are evident, external factors such as poor infrastructure and seasonal weather continue to pose challenges to perfect disciplinary standards.

For teachers, it is suggested that they maintain the current momentum of self-discipline as a core professional value. For the principal, there is a need to advocate for better school facilities and to continue providing adaptive support for teachers facing geographical hurdles. Future researchers should consider conducting quantitative studies across the entire Lalan District to determine if these findings are generalizable across more schools in the Musi Banyuasin Regency.

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