Principal as Inspirer: Building Character and Achievement in the Modern Education Era

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ABSTRACT: *This study examines the role of school principals as role models in building the character and achievement of teachers and students in madrasas. School principals have a significant responsibility in managing school administration efficiently and being a strong role model for the entire school community. Principals can create an inclusive and supportive learning environment through effective leadership development and open communication. A principal who is a role model can inspire teachers and students, motivate them to achieve higher performance and cultivate strong character. This study uses a literature review to collect data from relevant scientific sources. The study results show that the Principal's role as a role model is very important in shaping a positive and productive school culture and in helping to create a successful and character-rich young generation. These findings are expected to contribute to the academic literature in the field of leadership and become the basis for further research and development of leadership practices in madrasas.*

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji peran kepala sekolah sebagai role model dalam membangun karakter dan prestasi guru serta peserta didik di *madrasah*. Kepala sekolah memiliki tanggung jawab besar tidak hanya dalam mengelola administrasi sekolah secara efisien, tetapi juga menjadi teladan yang kuat bagi seluruh komunitas sekolah. Melalui pembinaan kepemimpinan yang efektif dan komunikasi terbuka, kepala sekolah dapat menciptakan lingkungan belajar yang inklusif dan mendukung. Kepala sekolah yang menjadi role model dapat menginspirasi guru dan siswa, memotivasi mereka untuk mencapai prestasi yang lebih tinggi dan membentuk karakter yang kuat. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode analisis pustaka untuk mengumpulkan data dari berbagai literatur ilmiah yang relevan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa peran kepala sekolah sebagai role model sangat penting dalam membentuk budaya sekolah yang positif dan produktif, serta membantu menciptakan generasi muda yang berprestasi dan berkarakter. Temuan ini diharapkan dapat memberikan kontribusi terhadap literatur akademis dalam bidang kepemimpinan dan menjadi dasar bagi penelitian lebih lanjut dan pengembangan praktik kepemimpinan di *madrasah*.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Schools are central to carrying out educational activities, especially in character education (Shchukina et al., 2020). In a school environment, the Principal is the leader who plays the most important role in character building. The many threatening impacts of technological improvements in the digital age on the quality of students' character have asked school principals to play a more focused role in this regard (Y. Li et al., 2024). The regeneration of the Principal's role is urgent so that the Principal can carry out his duties in his position, which will affect the development of students' character directly and indirectly.

The role of school principals in shaping the culture and learning environment in madrasas cannot be underestimated (Kustati et al., 2023). As a key leader, the Principal is responsible for managing the school administration efficiently and being a strong role model for the entire school community, both teachers and students (Munandar et al., 2024). (Budiyono, 2023), stated that the role of the Principal in carrying out student character education is as a leader, meaning that the Principal is a rule-maker who coordinates all the needs of student character education. As a manager or leader, the Principal provides instruction, care, communication, and decision-making skills.

According to (Utomo, 2022), the role of the Principal is to improve teacher discipline. First, the role of the Principal as a manager is to make school regulations governing teacher attendance at school, HR recruitment planning as an effective step to get the necessary teacher criteria and create a morning picket program that aims to get used to and as a tool to evaluate the development of teacher discipline in punctuality of attendance at school. Second, the role of the Principal as a supervisor is to help direct, prepare, and take actions that will be taken at the time of school implementation as a result of the research by conducting coaching and giving grades to less disciplined teachers. The third role of the Principal, for example, is to spearhead the implementation of personnel regulations at school so that teachers feel reluctant and embarrassed when they come to school late.

Effective principals lead with words and their daily actions (Huang et al., 2022). They must demonstrate a high commitment to integrity, hard work, and a caring attitude towards students. Being a consistent role model in attitude and behaviour, the Principal can set a positive example that is followed by all teaching staff and students. The impact of school principals who are role models can be felt widely in the *madrasah* learning environment. Teachers will be inspired to give the best for their students as they see examples of dedicated and committed principals (Herman et al., 2024). Meanwhile, students will feel motivated to pursue academic achievement and follow the values taught by the Principal.

Several strategies can be used to strengthen the role of the Principal as a role model in the context of madrasas to strengthen the role of the Principal. One is through leadership coaching that focuses on developing effective leadership skills and promoting the values held firmly by the *Madrasah* (Tshabalala & Faremi, 2024). In addition, open communication between principals, teachers, and students is also important to create an inclusive learning environment and support the growth and development of all members of the school community (S. Li & Omar, 2024). By taking these steps, principals can strengthen their role as agents of positive change in madrassas and encourage realizing a dynamic and inspiring learning environment.

The role of the Principal as a role model is very important in building the character and achievements of teachers and students in the *Madrasah* (Sumiran et al., 2022). Through good examples in attitudes, behaviours, and commitment to Education, school principals can form a positive and productive school environment and help create a young generation with strong character and brilliant achievements (Alzoraiki et al., 2024). Therefore, school principals need to actively build a school culture oriented towards character development and quality achievements. Thus, they become administrators and leaders who inspire and guide the entire school community to success.

In this article, the author will discuss several important issues or aspects that are the formulation of the problem in this article, namely how the leadership figure of the Principal plays a role model in increasing student learning motivation, how leadership practices in schools affect the formation of student character, and what are the challenges faced by educational leaders (principals) in trying to be role models for teachers and students in schools that can shape character and achievements, as well as how to overcome them.

II. METHOD

The research method used in this research is a literature study, which aims to collect and analyze data from various relevant scientific sources regarding the role of the Principal as a role model in building the character and achievement of teachers and students in Madrasah. This research was conducted by accessing articles, journals, and scientific documents from academic databases and libraries with education and leadership literature collections. The instruments used include criteria for selecting relevant literature, including relevance to the research theme, quality and credibility of the source, and the year of publication, preferably from the most recent year.

The research procedure was conducted using systematic steps, starting with a literature search using keywords related to the research theme, then screening and collecting literature that met the criteria. Next, content analysis was conducted to identify the main themes related to the role of the Principal as a role model. The data obtained were then summarized and grouped based on the themes that emerged, as well as looking for similarities and differences in the views of the researchers. The results of this analysis are expected to provide in-depth conclusions about the role of school principals in building character and achievement in Madrasah and allow other researchers to repeat this research with similar results.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Principal is not only an administrative figure in the *Madrasah* but also an important milestone in shaping the school culture, character, and achievements of teachers and students (Najma & Wahira, 2024). In the context of madrasas that have a special mission in Islamic religious Education, the role of school principals as role models is very important in developing a quality educational environment with integrity and oriented towards character development and superior achievements (Nur et al., 2024).

The role of the Principal as a role model for teachers has a huge impact on shaping a good school culture. Teachers not only receive administrative direction from the Principal but also tend to imitate the attitudes, behaviours, and values shown by the

Principal in carrying out their duties (Salman et al., 2022). If a principal demonstrates integrity, high morale, and commitment to Education, teachers will be motivated to do the same. Thus, principals who are role models for teachers can form a positive, productive, and service-oriented work environment for students.

In addition to influencing teachers, the role of the Principal as a role model also significantly impacts students. Children and adolescents tend to imitate the behaviour of people they respect and consider role models, including their school principals (Sanderse, 2024). Students will be encouraged to follow in his footsteps when a principal shows a good attitude, such as patience, fairness, and honesty. This can help form strong character, good morals, and a positive attitude towards learning in the younger generation. The Principal also has an important role in directing curriculum development and extracurricular activities that support character formation and student achievement (Nurlaeli et al., 2024). Principals can ensure that the *madrasah* curriculum not only focuses on the academic aspects, but also integrates moral and ethical values into each subject. In addition, school principals can initiate extracurricular programs that support character development, such as social, religious, and entrepreneurial activities.

The Principal is also responsible for providing support and guidance to teachers and students in achieving optimal achievement (Siregar, 2024). Principals can motivate staff and students to reach greater heights by demonstrating passion and commitment to excellence. In addition, principals can also provide guidance and direction to teachers in planning and implementing effective learning strategies and support students in facing academic and non-academic challenges.

The leadership figure of the Principal as a role model plays an important role in increasing student learning motivation (Siregar, 2024). Principals who show a high commitment to learning, for example, by being actively involved in academic activities and supporting educational initiatives, can inspire students to be more active in education. Principals who consistently demonstrate their dedication to the teaching and learning process through classroom visits, participation in discussions, and support for various academic activities send a strong message that Education is a top priority. Students who see their principals directly involved in the educational process feel motivated to imitate this attitude. Principals who set ambitious and realistic student targets encourage them to reach their maximum potential (Abdulmajid et al., 2020). This way, students are encouraged to try harder and not quickly settle for mediocre achievements. High expectations must be accompanied by adequate support so that students can achieve these goals. Principals can support students by providing the necessary resources, teaching materials, learning facilities, or guidance from experienced teachers.

Recognition and recognition of student achievements also play an important role in increasing learning motivation. Principals who routinely give appreciation to outstanding students through awards, certificates, or public praise encourage other students to strive for similar recognition (Liu et al., 2024). This award is given to students who excel academically and those who demonstrate significant development, perseverance, and a positive attitude. In this way, all students feel valued and motivated to continue to grow. A positive learning environment supports students' motivation (Firman & S, 2024). The Principal must ensure that the school is a clean, safe, and comfortable place for all students. A good physical environment, such as clean classrooms, adequate facilities, and secure play areas, makes students feel at home and

more focused on learning. Additionally, principals must create an inclusive culture that values each individual regardless of background. Creating a supportive and accepting atmosphere, principals help students feel valued and more motivated to participate actively in school activities.

Extracurricular programs developed and supported by principals also provide opportunities for students to develop their interests and talents. Activities such as sports, arts, science, and debate clubs allow students to explore their interests outside of the formal curriculum. The Principal's support for these programs shows that the school values the holistic development of students, not just academic achievement. Students who engage in extracurricular activities tend to be more motivated and have a stronger attachment to the school (Kustati et al., 2023). In addition to academic and extracurricular aspects, school principals must be role models regarding values and ethics. Values such as integrity, responsibility, and a strong work ethic should be exemplified by the Principal in their actions. When principals demonstrate consistency in their behaviour and uphold those values, it will be easier for students to understand the importance of these values in their lives. Principals who demonstrate a strong work ethic and high integrity inspire students to emulate the same behaviours daily.

Support and guidance from the Principal are essential in helping students overcome learning and personal challenges (Lani & Pauzi, 2024). Principals who take the time to listen and understand students' concerns can provide much-needed moral and emotional support. Principal-led mentoring and counselling programs provide opportunities for students to get guidance from someone who is experienced and concerned about their development. This support helps students feel more confident and motivated to face their challenges. In addition to providing direct support, principals can motivate students through inspirational stories and relevant personal experiences. By sharing stories about their challenges and how they overcame them, principals can show that success comes through hard work, perseverance, and dedication. These stories can provide a real example for students that they, too, can overcome obstacles and achieve their goals if they are willing to put in the effort.

Involving parents and the community in children's Education is also an effective strategy to increase students' learning motivation. School principals who build relationships with parents and the community show that Education is a joint effort. Principals ensure that students receive consistent support at school and home by involving parents in the educational process. Cooperation between schools and communities can also open up more opportunities for students to learn and grow. Using technology in learning is another step that school principals can take to increase student learning motivation. The use of technology in the classroom, such as educational software, online learning platforms, and digital collaboration tools, shows that the Principal has kept up with the times and is committed to providing the best tools and resources for his students. Technology can make learning more engaging and interactive, motivating students to engage in the learning process.

Attention to students' well-being and mental and emotional health is also very important. Principals who care about student well-being can create an environment where students feel safe and supported. Programs that support mental and physical well-being, such as counselling services, wellness programs, and activities that promote life balance, can help students cope with stress and stay motivated in their studies. Inclusive leadership also plays an important role in increasing learning motivation. Principals who promote

diversity and value each individual ensure that all students feel welcome and valued. Through creating an inclusive environment, principals help students think that they are part of the school community and have meaningful contributions to make. Encouraging innovation and creativity in learning can also increase student learning motivation. Principals who support innovative learning methods, such as project-based learning, interactive learning, and new technologies, demonstrate that they support dynamic and engaging learning. This can make students more interested and motivated to learn.

Principals who demonstrate good time management and a passion for Education can inspire students to manage their time well and have a positive outlook on learning. Good time management is an important skill that can be taught through direct examples from school principals. In addition, the Principal's enthusiasm and enthusiasm for Education can be contagious to students, making them more enthusiastic about learning. Despite the challenges, the positive attitude that the Principal maintains teaches students to stay optimistic and persistent. This positive attitude can help create a more enjoyable and engaging learning environment where students feel motivated to learn and grow. Respecting and appreciating every student is also very important. Principals who show respect and value to students help build respectful relationships. This can boost students' confidence and make them feel valued, increasing their motivation to excel. Implementing a mentoring program involving the Principal can provide direct guidance and support to students. Principals who act as mentors help students set academic and personal goals, provide guidance in overcoming challenges, and provide necessary moral support.

Collaborative learning facilitated by principals allows students to work together and learn from each other. This learning method increases student engagement and makes learning more engaging and meaningful. Principals who promote collaborative learning show that they value teamwork and learning. School principals must develop policies that support learning. Fair disciplinary, anti-bullying, and other supportive policies ensure a safe and supportive learning environment for all students. Clear and consistent policies are implemented to help create an orderly and conducive school atmosphere for learning. By implementing this approach, principals can serve as effective role models, increase students' motivation to learn and create a school environment that supports their academic and personal development. Through inspirational leadership and consistent support, principals shape students' character and encourage them to achieve high achievements.

The Principal's leadership practice affects the formation of the character of teachers and students

Leadership practices in schools have a very significant impact on the formation of students' character (Tedla & Kilango, 2022). Effective leadership includes not only school administration and management but also creating an environment that supports the development of positive character (Barreto & Mayya, 2024). One of the important factors in leadership practices that affect character formation is consistency. When school leadership consistently implements rules and norms that promote honesty, cooperation, and respect, students are more likely to be influenced and imitate those behaviours.

School leadership can also influence students' character by setting a good example. Principals and teaching staff who exemplify integrity, hard work, and responsibility will inspire students to emulate this behaviour. After seeing the example of school leaders,

students can better understand the desired moral and ethical values. The formation of student character is also influenced by the policies and programs implemented by school leaders. For example, character development programs, extracurricular activities promoting positive values, and social activities encouraging empathy and tolerance can help strengthen students' character. With the support of school leadership, students have more opportunities to engage in activities that build character and internalize those values in everyday life.

In addition, the relationship between school leaders and students can also affect character formation. When school leadership creates an open, inclusive, and supportive environment, students feel more comfortable talking about their problems and seeking guidance to solve them. It can aid in developing students' social, emotional, and moral skills and strengthen their sense of attachment to the school and its community. School leaders need to recognize and appreciate the diversity in students' character. Each student has a different uniqueness and needs in terms of character building. Therefore, school leaders must ensure that their approach to character building takes into account students' differences and provides appropriate support. Through good treatment and personalized attention, school leaders can help students reach their maximum character potential.

School leaders can facilitate student character formation by encouraging participation in projects that positively impact the school community and the wider community. School leadership helps students understand the importance of being part of something bigger than themselves by providing opportunities for community service, fundraising for charity, or environmental projects. This can stimulate the development of empathy, social responsibility, and concern for the environment.

Open communication between school leaders, students and parents is also important in shaping student character. School leaders can create effective communication channels to facilitate discussions about desired values, provide constructive feedback on student behaviour, and identify areas where character-building can be improved. This allows for collaboration between schools and families to support students' character development in all aspects of their lives. Therefore, school leadership practices play an important role in shaping students' character. Thus, by creating a supportive environment, setting a good example, implementing character development programs, facilitating positive relationships between students and staff, valuing diversity, and encouraging participation in projects that have a positive impact, school leadership can help students reach their full character potential.

Challenges faced by school principals to be role models for teachers and students and how to overcome them

Education leaders, especially school principals, have an important role in shaping the character and achievements of teachers and students (Culduz, 2024). However, this role comes with various challenges that must be overcome to achieve these goals. The first challenge faced is effective communication. School principals often have to communicate with various parties, including teachers, students, parents, and administrative staff. Each group has different needs and expectations, making it difficult for principals to convey a clear and consistent message. To address this communication problem, school principals can implement an open and inclusive communication system. Regular meetings, discussion forums, and feedback surveys can help ensure all voices are heard. Technology can also facilitate communication, for example, through

online platforms that allow discussions and information to be easily accessed by all parties.

The second challenge is to maintain consistency in behaviour. As a leader, the Principal must be a good role model. This means that every action and decision must reflect the values that are intended to be instilled in the school. Inconsistencies in behaviour can lead to confusion and undermine trust. To maintain this consistency, principals must set and adhere to clear standards and values for themselves. Getting feedback from colleagues and staff is also important to ensure that behaviour and decisions are always aligned with the school's vision and mission. This consistency builds trust and respect from all members of the school community. Changes in curriculum and education policies are also a big challenge for school principals (Van Wyk, 2020). Constantly changing curricula and new policies that must be implemented often add to the workload and stress. School principals must manage this transition well so that the teaching and learning process is not disrupted.

One way to overcome these challenges is to update knowledge and skills through training and seminars. In addition, building a solid and competent team can help implement policy and curriculum changes. With the right support, school principals can face change with more confidence. Stress and high workloads are other challenges that school principals face. Huge responsibilities and ever-increasing demands can affect performance and mental well-being. Principals need to develop time and stress management strategies to maintain balance. Delegating tasks is one effective way to reduce workload. The Principal must be able to delegate tasks to competent staff and ensure a good support system is in place. Additionally, maintaining physical and mental health through exercise and relaxation is essential for optimal performance.

Motivation and support for teachers are also an important aspect of the role of the Principal. Motivated and well-supported teachers will be more likely to provide quality teaching. However, inspiring and motivating teachers can be challenging. Giving appreciation and recognition to outstanding teachers is one way to motivate them. In addition, providing training and professional development is also important to help teachers continue to develop. Building a collaborative culture in schools can also increase enthusiasm and cooperation between teachers. Dealing with individual differences between learners and teachers is also a significant challenge. Each individual has a different character and background, which requires a different approach. The Principal must be able to understand and appreciate these differences. Implementing an inclusive approach that involves all parties in the education process is a good solution. Training on equality and inclusion can help create a more accepting and supportive environment. Thus, each individual feels valued and has the same opportunity to grow. Leadership development is key to addressing the challenges facing principals. Leadership training and mentoring programs can help improve managerial and interpersonal skills. Principals who continue to learn and develop will be better prepared to face the existing challenges. Collaboration and cooperation are also very important. Building a solid team and working closely with school committees, parents, and the community can provide the necessary support. New ideas and inputs from various parties can solve the problems faced.

The application of technology in schools can help improve communication and administrative efficiency. Technology can also support learning, provide wider access to educational resources, and facilitate more interactive teaching. Flexibility and

adaptability are also key in facing challenges. School principals must be able to adapt to changes and always look for ways to improve themselves and the school environment. Flexibility in approaches and strategies can help overcome emerging obstacles. Focusing on character learning is also important in the role of the Principal. Programs focusing on character development, such as extracurricular activities, mentoring programs, and curricula emphasising moral values, can help shape students' character. Implementing the right strategies can help principals overcome the challenges they face. Being an effective role model for teachers and students helps shape their character and achievements and creates a positive and inspiring school environment. The challenges should be seen as opportunities to grow and innovate in leading the education community towards a better future.

IV. CONCLUSION

The role of the Principal as a role model is crucial in shaping the school culture, character, and achievements of teachers and students in Madrasah. Principals function as administrative managers and role models who influence the attitudes and behaviours of the entire school community. In demonstrating high integrity, commitment and work ethics, principals can inspire teachers to create a positive and productive work environment and encourage students to develop strong character and a positive attitude towards learning. In addition, principals are responsible for directing curriculum development and extracurricular activities that support character-building and student achievement. In the face of challenges such as effective communication, consistency of behaviour and changes in education policy, principals must develop appropriate strategies, including leadership training and collaboration with various parties. Therefore, effective principals shape students' character and create an inspiring school environment that supports students' academic and personal development. The recommendation for future research is to explore more deeply the specific strategies principals can implement to improve student learning motivation and build positive character in the madrasah environment.

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