

The Implementation of Principal Leadership Styles in Shaping School Culture and Enhancing Teacher Motivation at SD Negeri 104 Palembang

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Abstrak

Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk memberikan gambaran rinci tentang bagaimana gaya kepemimpinan kepala sekolah diterapkan di SD Negeri 104 Palembang guna meningkatkan motivasi guru dan budaya sekolah. Metode studi kasus digunakan dalam penelitian ini dengan pendekatan kualitatif. Guru, tenaga pendidik, dan kepala sekolah termasuk di antara informan penelitian. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara, observasi, dan metode dokumentasi, yang kemudian dianalisis secara deskriptif kualitatif meliputi reduksi data, penyajian data, penarikan kesimpulan, dan verifikasi. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa administrator sekolah menggunakan gaya kepemimpinan demokratis, yang ditandai dengan komunikasi terbuka, partisipatif, dan dua arah antara pemimpin dan guru. Gaya kepemimpinan ini memupuk budaya sekolah yang positif yang menekankan prinsip akuntabilitas, disiplin, saling membantu, dan rasa syukur atas prestasi. Motivasi guru yang meningkat merupakan hasil dari budaya sekolah yang mendukung, seperti terlihat dari rasa tanggung jawab yang kuat dalam mengajar, kerja sama tim, dan akuntabilitas profesional. Secara keseluruhan, studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa pendekatan kepemimpinan demokratis sangat penting untuk menciptakan budaya sekolah yang positif dan meningkatkan motivasi guru. Untuk menciptakan atmosfer kerja yang positif dan meningkatkan standar pengajaran di sekolah dasar, kepemimpinan yang inspiratif dan partisipatif sangatlah esensial.

Kata kunci: *Kepemimpinan Kepala Sekolah, Gaya Kepemimpinan, Motivasi Guru, Budaya Sekolah, Kepemimpinan Demokratis.*

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to provide a detailed account of how the principal's leadership style was used at SD Negeri 104 Palembang to improve teacher motivation and school culture. The case study method was used to conduct the research using a qualitative approach. Teachers, education professionals, and school principals were among the research informants. Interviews, observations, and documentation methods were used to gather the data, which was then subjected to a qualitative descriptive analysis that included data reduction, data presentation, conclusion drawing, and verification. The study's findings demonstrate that school administrators use a democratic leadership style, which is demonstrated by leaders and teachers having open, participative, two-way communication. This leadership fosters a positive school culture that emphasizes the principles of accountability, discipline, mutual assistance and gratitude for accomplishments. Increased teacher motivation is a result of a supportive school culture, as seen by the strong sense of teaching, teamwork, and professional accountability. Overall, the study comes to the conclusion that democratic leadership approaches are crucial for fostering a positive school culture and boosting teacher motivation. In order to foster a positive work atmosphere and raise the standard of instruction in primary schools, inspirational and participatory leadership is essential.

Keywords: Principal Leadership Style, Teacher Motivation, School Culture, Democratic Leadership.

1. INTRODUCTION

Education is the main pillar in building human resources that are qualified, characterful, and highly competitive (Dewi & Siwi, 2024). Schools as formal educational institutions play an important role in producing the next generation of the nation who not

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only have intellectual intelligence, but also a balanced moral, social, and spiritual intelligence (Markauskaite et al., 2022). The success of a school in achieving its goals is highly determined by the quality of the principal's leadership style as a remote in building a vision with school residents (Su'udah, 2021). The leadership of the principal has a role in determining the direction of policy, and the quality of education in schools. The principal is not only an administrator, but also a leader who is able to mobilize all school resources to achieve educational goals (Dewi & Siwi, 2024).

A positive school culture reflects the values and habits that are mutually agreed upon by all school residents. This culture can develop optimally if the principal is able to apply a leadership style that is in accordance with the characteristics of the school environment (Krisna et al., 2021). School culture is the values, beliefs, and norms that are the basis for the behavior of all school residents in carrying out daily activities at school (Nabella et al., 2022). A strong school culture is reflected through togetherness, discipline, enthusiasm for learning, and shared responsibility in creating a conducive learning environment (Merta et al., 2023). Through his leadership style, the principal can instill positive values such as integrity, cooperation, responsibility, and innovation that will shape the school's distinctive identity and character (Suryana et al., 2020). Through the right leadership style, the principal can also foster a culture of lifelong learning among teachers. This is important because the world of education continues to experience changes and innovations, especially in the use of information and communication technology (ICT) in learning (Sari, 2025). School principals who are able to become *role models* in the implementation of innovation will motivate teachers to do the same. Thus, the leadership of the principal not only functions as a managerial, but also as a change agent in building a school culture that is adaptive to the development of the times (Antonopoulou et al., 2025).

In addition to shaping school culture, the principal's leadership style significantly influences teacher motivation and professional performance (Suprayogi et al., 2024). Teachers are the main actors in the learning process, and their level of motivation greatly affects the quality of instruction delivered in the classroom. When principals demonstrate supportive, participatory, and inspirational leadership, teachers tend to feel valued, trusted, and empowered in carrying out their duties (Wulogening & Timan, 2020). This positive psychological climate encourages teachers to improve their competencies, collaborate with colleagues, and commit to continuous professional development. Conversely, ineffective leadership may result in low morale, limited innovation, and reduced commitment among teachers (Akbarani, 2024).

Furthermore, in the context of primary education, the role of the principal becomes even more strategic because elementary schools serve as the foundational stage of students' academic and character development (National Reading Panel, 2022). At this level, the establishment of discipline, responsibility, and positive learning habits requires strong coordination between school leaders and teachers. Therefore, the leadership approach adopted by the principal must emphasize communication, mutual respect, and shared decision-making. A democratic leadership style, for instance, allows teachers to actively participate in school programs and policy formulation, thereby strengthening their sense of ownership and responsibility toward school improvement initiatives (Sidik & Fahmi, 2021).

Considering the crucial relationship between leadership, school culture, and teacher motivation, it is important to examine how these elements interact within a specific educational setting (Berkovich & Hassan, 2024). An in-depth analysis of the principal's leadership practices can provide valuable insights into strategies that effectively foster a supportive school environment. By understanding how leadership contributes to the

development of a positive culture and enhanced teacher motivation, schools can design more effective management practices that ultimately improve the overall quality of education (Kustyarini & Umamy, 2024).

2. METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study method. This approach was chosen to gain a deep understanding of how the principal's leadership style is applied in shaping the school culture and motivating teachers. The research process is carried out through several stages as follows:

1. The preparation stage is to conduct initial observations and prepare interview guidelines and data collection instruments.
2. The data collection stage is by conducting interviews, direct observations, and documentation of teachers' activities at school. The data analysis stage, which is to examine the results of interviews and field notes to find patterns of meaning.
3. The conclusion stage is to conclude the results of the research based on data that has been analyzed and verified.

This study seeks to analyze the relationship between the principal's leadership style, the formation of school culture, and the increase of teacher motivation as a system unit within SD Negeri 104 Palembang. Unlike previous research that only highlighted the influence of leadership on one variable, such as discipline or teacher performance, this study focuses on how a democratic leadership style can be the main instrument in building a positive school culture while increasing teachers' motivation to work (Herdina & Ningrum, 2023). The results of this research are expected to provide a deeper understanding for school principals regarding the importance of participatory leadership styles in creating a healthy and productive school culture. In addition, this research can be used as a reference for education policymakers in formulating leadership development strategies that are oriented towards increasing teacher motivation and strengthening a school culture with character (Jubaedah & Wirza, 2022). Theoretically, this study contributes to the enrichment of the literature on the relationship between the principal's leadership style, school culture, and teacher motivation in the context of public elementary schools in Indonesia (Jaja, 2024).

The research subjects consisted of the principal, teachers, and several education staff members of SD Negeri 104 Palembang who were selected using purposive sampling techniques (Puspita & Andriani, 2021). Informants were chosen based on their direct involvement in school management processes and daily teaching activities, ensuring that the data obtained were relevant and rich in information (Oktaviani & Marliana, 2021). The selection of participants considered their length of service, roles in school programs, and active participation in school development initiatives. This approach enabled the researcher to obtain comprehensive perspectives regarding the implementation of the principal's leadership style and its impact on school culture and teacher motivation (Herdina & Ningrum, 2023).

To ensure the validity and credibility of the data, this study employed triangulation techniques, including source triangulation and method triangulation (Oe et al., 2022). Data obtained from interviews were cross-checked with observation results and supporting documentation such as school programs, meeting records, and internal policy documents. Member checking was also conducted by confirming key findings with several informants to avoid misinterpretation of the data. Through these validation strategies, the research aimed to

enhance trustworthiness, dependability, and confirmability of the findings (Hien & Phuong, 2023).

Data analysis was carried out continuously throughout the research process using an interactive model of qualitative analysis (Fitria et al., 2024). The researcher systematically organized the data, coded important themes, categorized patterns related to leadership practices, school cultural values, and motivational indicators, and interpreted the relationships among these elements (Dash, 2022). The findings were then described narratively to provide a holistic understanding of how democratic leadership practices contribute to building a positive school culture and strengthening teacher motivation within the institutional context (Hussain et al., 2023).

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The results of the study show that the principal of SD Negeri 104 Palembang implements a democratic leadership style that emphasizes active participation, openness, and two-way communication with teachers and education staff. The principal plays the role of a leader as well as a supervisor who moves all school residents to participate in every decision-making. This participatory approach fosters a sense of shared responsibility and creates harmonious working relationships in the school environment (Redjeki & Muhajir, 2020). In carrying out their duties, the principal not only directs, but also listens to and accommodates the aspirations of teachers, so that every policy taken is the result of deliberation and mutual agreement. This democratic leadership has a real impact on the formation of a positive and productive school culture. The principal consistently instills the values of discipline, responsibility, cooperation, and mutual cooperation through various habituation programs such as apples and morning prayers, Clean Friday activities, the application of 5S culture (Smile, Greeting, Greetings, Politeness, Manners), and giving awards to outstanding students and teachers (Rakha, 2023).

These programs have succeeded in forming the character of school residents who are disciplined, caring, and committed to their duties (Wulogening & Timan, 2020). This positive culture is reflected in the increased work spirit of teachers, an orderly school atmosphere, and harmonious interpersonal relationships between principals, teachers, and students. In addition to strengthening the school culture, the principal's democratic leadership style also has a significant influence on teachers' work motivation (Syafitri, 2023). The principal plays the role of a motivator by providing moral, emotional, and appreciation for the teacher's performance. These forms of support include giving awards to outstanding teachers, involving teachers in the preparation of school programs, conducting academic supervision that is coaching, and creating a family and open work atmosphere. Teachers feel valued and motivated to improve competence and performance in the learning process. This study shows that the principal's leadership, school culture, and teacher motivation are closely intertwined (Darmawan & Pujiastuti, 2023).

Principals who apply a democratic leadership style are able to form a strong school culture that is adaptive to change, while a positive school culture is a reinforcing factor that encourages the emergence of teachers' work motivation (Israel-Fishelson & Hershkovitz, 2020). These results are in line with (Ainscow, 2020) theory which states that democratic leadership styles increase the participation and responsibility of organizational members, and (Zarazaga-Peláez et al., 2024) theory which asserts that reward factors and interpersonal relationships affect work motivation. In addition, these findings support the opinion of Deal and (Ulfa & Shalahuddin, 2023) that school principals play the role of *cultural architects*

who create a conducive and meaningful learning environment. It can be concluded that the principal's leadership style at SD Negeri 104 Palembang which is democratic, participatory, and communicative has succeeded in building a disciplined, collaborative, and characterful school culture (Ardliana et al., 2021). This strong school culture is the basis for the emergence of high teacher work motivation, which ultimately contributes to improving the quality of learning and achieving the school's vision. Humanist and inspirational leadership has proven to be a key factor in creating effective, harmonious, and quality-oriented schools (Jaja, 2024).

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the research and discussion, it can be concluded that the principal applies a democratic leadership style, which is characterized by openness, active participation, two-way communication, and providing space for teachers to express their opinions. The principal also plays a key role in building a positive school culture through example, habituation of disciplinary values, mutual cooperation, and appreciation for achievements. The school culture at SD Negeri 104 Palembang shows the characteristics of an orderly, harmonious, and quality-oriented environment. This has an impact on increasing the work spirit, discipline, and commitment of teachers to their duties. In addition, the democratic leadership style implemented by the principal strengthens collegial relationships among teachers and fosters a sense of shared responsibility in achieving school goals. Through participatory decision-making and transparent communication, teachers feel more valued and trusted in carrying out their professional roles. This condition not only enhances individual motivation but also promotes collaborative teamwork, which ultimately contributes to more effective teaching and learning processes within SD Negeri 104 Palembang. The findings of this study also emphasize that sustainable school improvement cannot be separated from the principal's ability to become a role model and a driver of change. By consistently demonstrating integrity, discipline, and commitment, the principal indirectly shapes teachers' attitudes and work ethics. A positive and supportive school culture becomes a strategic foundation for strengthening professional accountability and maintaining educational quality in the long term.

Therefore, it is recommended that school principals continue to develop participatory and inspirational leadership competencies to respond to the dynamic challenges of education. Efforts to strengthen communication, encourage innovation, and provide continuous professional support for teachers should remain a priority. By maintaining a democratic leadership approach, schools can create a conducive work environment that not only enhances teacher motivation but also improves the overall quality of primary education.

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