



## TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP OF INTEGRATED ISLAMIC SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

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### Abstract: Transformational Leadership of Integrated Islamic School Principal

Purposing of this study was to identify or obtain information about how the transformational leadership of school principals in improving the quality and performance of teachers in teaching activities at the Al-Ihsan Integrated Islamic School (SDIT) during the Covid-19 pandemi. This study uses a qualitative approach that is used to obtain information on decisions, constraints and consequences of the COVID-19 pandemi in teaching and learning activities at SDIT. The results of the principal transformation leadership research in improving the quality and performance of teachers in teaching activities at SDIT Al-Ihsan during the Covid-19 pandemi include: 1) setting good examples for teachers in facing challenges during the Covid-19 pandemi; 2) providing intellectual stimuli such as providing opportunities for SDIT Al-Ihsan teachers to take part in training and counseling activities on the brave learning system; 3) teacher motivation to be able to develop bold learning methods and models; and 4) evaluate the policies that have been implemented. The principal's transformational leadership is expected to be able to overcome learning obstacles by improving communication and coordination between parents and teachers so that parents can guide their children during the learning process at home.

**Keyword:** transformational leadership, principal, Integrated Islamic School

### Abstrak: Kepemimpinan Transformasional Kepala Sekolah Islam Terpadu.

Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mengidentifikasi atau memperoleh informasi tentang bagaimana kepemimpinan transformasional kepala sekolah dalam meningkatkan mutu dan kinerja guru dalam kegiatan mengajar di Sekolah Islam Terpadu (SDIT) Al-Ihsan selama masa pandemi Covid-19. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan metode kualitatif yang digunakan untuk memperoleh informasi keputusan, kendala dan akibat pandemi covid 19 pada kegiatan proses belajar mengajar di SDIT. Hasil dari penelitian kepemimpinan transformasional kepala sekolah dalam meningkatkan mutu dan kinerja guru dalam kegiatan mengajar di SDIT Al-Ihsan selama masa pandemi Covid-19 ini antara lain: 1) memberikan teladan yang baik kepada guru dalam menghadapi tantangan pada masa pandemi Covid-19; 2) memberikan stimulus intelektual seperti memberikan kesempatan bagi guru SDIT Al-Ihsan untuk mengikuti kegiatan pelatihan dan penyuluhan tentang sistem pembelajaran daring; 3) memotivasi guru agar mampu mengembangkan metode dan model pembelajaran daring; dan 4) melakukan evaluasi terhadap kebijakan yang sudah dilaksanakan. Kepemimpinan transformasional kepala sekolah diharapkan mampu mengatasi kendala pembelajaran

*daring dengan cara meningkatkan komunikasi dan koordinasi orang tua dengan guru sehingga orang tua mampu membimbing anak saat melakukan proses pembelajaran daring di rumah.*

**Kata Kunci:** kepemimpinan transformasional, kepala sekolah, SDIT

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## A. INTRODUCTION

The global world presents an era of disruption due to Covid-19 which began last year. The phenomenon that occurs when people shift activities that were originally carried out in the real world, switch to the virtual world with the era of disruption (Cholil, 2019). Rokhman (2017) revealed that the changes that occurred in the era of disruption were more like a volcanic explosion that destroyed the old ecosystem and replaced it with a new ecosystem that was much different from the previous state. Cholil (2019) said that disruption is part of globalization. Meanwhile, Kasali (2018) defines disruption in everyday life as a fundamental or fundamental change, namely the evolution of technology that targets a gap in human life.

Education is a very crucial aspect that has been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. There are many laws and regulations governing education in Indonesia. Based on law number 20 of 2003, the function of national education is to develop capabilities and shape the character and civilization ... .. responsible. Meanwhile, the purpose of national education is contained in law number 2 of 1989, namely to educate the nation's life and develop Indonesian people as a whole, namely ... .. society and nationality.

Based on the law on education, it can be seen that education is the spearhead of development in Indonesia. The study of Tobari et al. (2018) supports this statement, which reveals that education is a conscious effort to build human resources (HR) to be able to compete. Human resources that are able to compete must have quality. Quality human resources can be realized if the educational process is good and comes from quality educational institutions (Asvio et al., 2019; Rahmadoni, 2018).

There are many factors that affect the quality of education, one of which is the leadership of the principal who heads a school. As leaders in schools, principals have an effective role in advancing the school they lead (Asvio et al., 2019; Yahdiyani et al., 2020; Yusup, 2018). Principals are teachers who are assigned the task of leading and managing educational units which include kindergartens (TK), ... .., or Indonesian Schools Abroad (Permendikbud, 2018). Based on the Permendikbud (2018), the principal duties of the principal include: 1) managerial main tasks; 2) entrepreneurship development; and 3) supervision of teachers and education staff. The effectiveness of the principal's managerial duties can be seen from the quality of education received in schools through the quality of learning as a product (Sergiovanni, 1987). The principal in improving the quality of education, among others, acts as: 1) educator; 2) manager; 3) administrator; 4) supervisors; 5) leaders; 6) innovator; and 7) motivator (Mulyasa, 2010; Rusmawati, 2013).

The Covid-19 pandemic has resulted in the process of teaching and learning activities (PKBM) in schools undergoing disruptive changes. So we need a leader or principal who has charismatic behavior, is able to generate inspirational motivation, provides intellectual stimulation and treats teachers by paying attention to individuals (Nguyen et al., 2022; Bass,

1999). This kind of leadership is transformational. Zumaeroh (2009) argues that leaders who use the transformational leadership style are called innovation leaders.

The principal's transformational leadership is expected to be able to make the online learning process or distance learning (PJJ) mediated by the teacher effective and efficient. PJJ is regulated in the circular letter of the Ministry of Education and Culture (Kemendikbud) of the Directorate of Higher Education Number 1 of 2020 which contains the prevention of the spread of Covid-19 in the world of education (Kemendikbud, 2020). The challenge in online learning is infrastructure that utilizes the latest technology at this time. This is in line with Handarini dan Wulandari (2020) who revealed that online learning requires adequate facilities and infrastructure, such as laptops, computers, smartphones and internet networks and that is one of the challenges for conducting online learning.

The learning process, which was formerly guided and directed by the teacher at school, must now be joined by parents at home via online learning. This is undoubtedly a new burden for parents, particularly parents of adolescents who work and attend school. According to the findings of interviews performed by researchers with the principal at SDIT Al-Ihsan Bengkulu Tengah, some students had numerous challenges when engaging in online learning due to a lack of facilities and a lack of understanding of technology. As a result, during the Covid-19 pandemic, the principal as a leader and teachers as educators must pay special attention to this aspect of the KBM process.

Previous research which is in line with this ongoing research, the first is research by Ulya (2019) which reveals that the role of school principals as educators in improving the quality of education is by providing guidance to students as well as teachers and employees so that they can directly receive training, coaching and also giving rewards and punishments. Second, research by Zumaeroh (2009) which reveals that the nature of transformational leadership that motivates exemplary employees will lead to high work commitment in employees. The third studies by Khairiah (2020) reveal that leadership has a strategic role in efforts to improve teacher competence, establishing collaboration with quality understanding institutions for achieving teacher competence in an effort to increase teacher competence. Based on the background description, expert theory and previous research that support this research, the researcher sees the importance of studying the transformational leadership of the SDIT head in this article.

This research will make an important contribution in organizing, especially in how to lead a principal to improve teacher performance in the learning process. In this study, it is suspected that transformational leadership can improve teacher performance in the online learning process. Principals who are expected to have transformational leadership have behaviors that are able to be imitated by their followers, are able to become motivators, are able to stimulate followers, and are able to evaluate policies that have been taken and implemented.

## B. METHODS

This research was conducted at SDIT Al-Ihsan Bengkulu Tengah. Participants in this study consisted of the principal as the key informant and the teacher as the main informant. Researchers used interview guidelines, observation sheets, or field notes, recordings, and documentation in collecting the required research data. Interviews with school principals were conducted three times, while interviews with teachers were conducted twice, this aims to explore the dissimilarity between the data obtained from one informant with other informants which is called data triangulation.

The approach in this research is qualitative with descriptive method. Moleong (2014) argues that what distinguishes other studies from this research is its quality. Creswell (2018) suggests that qualitative research begins with collecting as much information as possible

from participants and then categorizing or systematically organizing this material in qualitative research as a technique. Information and data such as writings from interviews, field notes, documentation, visual materials such as antiques, photos, recordings, information from the web, reports of human presence encounters were dissected subjectively (non-quantitatively) (Sugiyono, 2017). This study intends to identify or obtain information about how the principal's transformational leadership improves the quality and performance of teachers in teaching and learning activities at SDIT Al-Ihsan during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The research subjects or key informants in this study were school principals and teachers. The sample was taken using a purposive sampling technique, namely the sampling technique as a source of data or information on the basis of certain considerations (Sugiyono, 2010). Collecting data using this qualitative method by conducting interviews between school principals and teachers, with questions about leadership at SDIT Al-Ihsan and the learning system during the current pandemic. Other techniques used are photos, observations, recordings, and documentation, as well as information from the web. The research location is at SDIT Al-Ihsan, Central Bengkulu Regency. The Miles & Huberman (2009) paradigm, which comprises of data reduction, data presentation, and deriving conclusions, was utilized to analyze the data.

### C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Field findings reveal that the importance of the principal's transformational leadership in improving the quality and performance of teachers in teaching and learning activities at SDIT Al-Ihsan during the Covid-19 pandemic. The transformational leadership indicators applied at SDIT Al-Ihsan during the Covid-19 pandemic include: 1) the principal of SDIT Al-Ihsan has behavior that his followers can imitate; 2) able to be a motivator; 3) able to stimulate followers; and 4) able to evaluate policies that have been taken and implemented.

First, the transformational leadership of the SDIT head can be seen from setting a good example for teachers in facing challenges during the Covid-19 pandemic. The principal of SDIT Al-Ihsan revealed that SDIT implemented an online or online learning system. The principal is willing to implement this online learning system because according to him the online learning system is a learning system that is one of the solutions in breaking the chain of the spread of Covid-19, especially in the educational environment. The principal admits that it is indeed difficult to change the learning system from face-to-face to online. However, the school principal realized that in this case, both the central and regional governments had also ordered to temporarily cancel face-to-face learning. Thus, the principal does not want to take the risk of continuing to do face-to-face schooling at SDIT Al-Ihsan. Although the principal realizes that there are indeed a lot of complaints from students and their parents in online learning. However, the principal still makes the decision to follow the rules that have been set by the government (Kuncahyo, 2021). Meanwhile, one of the SDIT Al-Ihsan teachers has the same opinion as the principal and is willing to implement an online learning system because according to him online learning is the right solution in a pandemic condition (Khadijah, 2021).

Based on the findings of interviews with school principals, it can be concluded that school principals set a good example for teachers in dealing with challenges during the Covid-19 pandemic by adhering to and enforcing government regulations regarding learning, which was previously done face-to-face but is now done online during this pandemic. The school administrator recognizes the government's good intentions in hoping that the online learning system can help break the chain of Covid-19 distribution. Teachers will undoubtedly support the government's agenda if the principal sets a good example for

them. This will undoubtedly transform the face-to-face learning system into an online learning system that students and their guardians would readily accept.

Transformational leadership has one indicator that the leader has charismatic behavior (Arokiasamy et al., 2016; Bass & Avolio, 1996; Pillai, 2003). Furthermore, Bass & Avolio (1996) argue that sub-indicators of charismatic leader behavior include: gaining respect to be trusted, having trust in others, being able to communicate a strong mission to followers, displaying high moral standards, establishing challenging goals for followers, serve as a model for their followers. In this case the principal has the duty as an educator and leader to provide direction, examples, and suggestions to teachers. This finding is in accordance with the opinion of Mulyasa (2007) who said that the principal has a role as a driver as well as a determinant of the direction of school policy so that a goal is achieved. Based on this theory and field findings, it can be concluded that the transformational leadership of the head of SDIT Al-Ihsan by setting a good example for teachers in facing challenges during the Covid-19 pandemic is going well.

These field findings are in line with the findings of Ajan et al. (2018) which revealed that Kyai's charismatic leadership was able to improve teacher performance. The indicator studied in the variable of Kyai's charismatic leadership is that the teacher believes that the Kyai's opinions and beliefs are true. This study is also supported by the findings of research by Yahdiyani et al. (2020), which revealed that the principal acts as a leader by trying to realize what is the vision, mission in educational institutions. Meanwhile, research by Addin et al. (2020) revealed that there is a positive and significant relationship between the transformational leadership of madrasah principals on teacher performance. From expert theory, field findings and previous research that support this research study, it can be concluded that the transformational leadership of the SDIT head has the first indicator, namely setting a good example for teachers in facing challenges during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The second research conclusion is that the principle's transformational leadership may be seen in the intellectual stimulus provided to teachers, such as the principal offering opportunities for SDIT Al-Ihsan teachers to participate in online learning system training and counseling. Teachers and school employees are included in training or counseling about the online learning system conducted by schools and affiliated agencies by principals. This demonstrates that the principal has taken a decision about SDIT Al-readiness Ihsan's to conduct online learning. In terms of facilities and teachers, the principal stated that the school was prepared to face online learning. Teachers at SDIT Al-Ihsan were provided counseling about what online learning is and how to implement it before beginning to do online learning. It is hoped that, in the future, teachers and students will be able to conduct online learning that is as effective as face-to-face learning. The school also provides help to instructors and students in the form of free quotas. As a result, the principal is certain that SDIT Al Ihsan is up to the challenge of online learning (Kuncahyo, 2021).

In this case, the training will take the form of curriculum training, which will be used during the COVID-19 pandemic and will include a variety of activities such as training on teaching methods in distance or online learning situations, as well as training on issues that must be considered when conducting online learning. The principal hopes that teachers and school staff who participate in training activities at both schools and related agencies will be able to further develop their teaching abilities and educate students, especially given the current situation's far greater challenges than the traditional educational system. With the holding of training or counseling, the principal hopes that at SDIT Al-Ihsan, teachers can teach well and can be as effective as when learning face-to-face. In addition, the principal also hopes that the training can add insight and can exchange ideas or thoughts of school HR.

HR training aims to improve the capabilities and skills of employees (Syafri & Alwi, 2014). Training is a series of individual activities in systematically increasing skills and knowledge so that they are able to have professional performance in their fields (Widodo, 2015). Meanwhile, Pareraway et al. (2018) argues that training means a systematic change of knowledge, skill, attitude and behavior that continues to increase which is owned by every employee so that it can realize the goals that an organization or company wants to achieve in fulfilling the desired HR standards. This is in line with the opinion of Khan et al. (2020; Ngang, 2011) who revealed that transformational leadership is able to improve the institutions they lead. As a result, it can be inferred that teacher training and education can improve teachers' talents and skills in the process of teaching and learning activities (PKBM).

The findings in this study are supported by the research of Noprika et al. (2020) which revealed that the principal's strategy in improving the quality of education was carried out by involving teachers in training activities and seminars on education. However, this study contradicts research conducted by Suparto (2016) which revealed that the training and human resource development program at MI Al-Islam Bengkulu City has not fully influenced the quality of teachers in the learning process. Furthermore, this study also contradicts the research conducted by Pareraway et al. (2018) which found that job training for existing employees within the scope of work of the management of PT PLN Suluttenggo Region has not had a significant impact on the level of employee job satisfaction. Based on field findings, expert theory and relevant findings, it can be concluded that it is important for school principals to stimulate the intellectuals of teachers by involving teachers in training and education according to the relevant knowledge.

Third, the findings in this study are that the principal's transformational leadership is seen in motivating teachers to develop learning methods that will be used when conducting online learning activities. Many teachers at SDIT Al-Ihsan use the Zoom application, Whatsapp, or other learning applications to conduct their teaching and learning activities virtually or online. This daring learning system, according to the professors, is the solution to the current problem. The principal has also reached a decision about the learning system and methods used at SDIT Al-Ihsan in this case. As a result, the principal not only directs the learning system that will be used, but also provides examples of learning approaches that will be employed in this school's online learning process. In terms of online learning, there must be aspects that encourage success in conducting effective learning, such as giving free quotas to facilitate teaching and learning activities (Kuncahyo, 2021).

According to Bass & Riggio (2006), transformational leaders excite and inspire others around them through offering significance and challenges at work. The team spirit has been sparked, and there will be an outpouring of joy and optimism. As a result, leaders gain followers who are actively involved in intense communication patterns and show devotion to the school's aims and vision.

The findings of this study confirm Setiyati's (2014) research, which reveals that effective principal leadership and high work motivation, backed up by a positive school culture, contribute to good and professional teacher performance. This study supports the findings of Yahdiyani et al. (2020), who found that school principals must be able to direct educators to always use learning methods that are appropriate to the level of development of students, use diverse learning methods, create a pleasant learning environment, and give assignments based on students' abilities. Based on the research results, relevant theories and findings, it can be concluded that school principals who have a transformational leadership style are able to motivate teachers to carry out innovative learning methods.

Fourth, the principal's leadership is demonstrated by conducting an evaluation of the decisions made and those that have been implemented. During the covid-19 epidemic, this pertains to the performance of teachers, educators, learning techniques, problems faced by



school staff, and the condition of students participating in online learning at SDIT Al-Ihsan. The evaluation process is separated into three stages: at the start of the semester, in the middle of the semester, and at the end of the semester.

The principal said that he had to be wise in making decisions. The principal of SDIT Al-Ihsan makes the problems that occur as homework for him to be able to evaluate himself in finding solutions to problems experienced by students. The principal sees that the policies he has taken are correct and appropriate. The principal also sees that he does not force the situation with the situation, but the principal is aware of the obstacles faced by schools in online learning. Thus, the principal is able to find solutions to overcome these obstacles.

In overcoming learning obstacles during this pandemic, it is not only the role of the principal who is very important, but there are also educators, namely teachers who in this case are the executor of tasks in the teaching and learning process. One of the teachers revealed that PJJ is the right solution during a pandemic, but people or parents are not used to it and fail to understand this online learning system. Teachers are of the opinion that providing opportunities for students to take turns learning at school is a more appropriate solution so that there is an opportunity for face-to-face learning. This is because there are students who always complain to the teacher about online learning which is very difficult to understand if done online (Khadijah, 2021).

Transformational leaders pay special attention to the needs of each individual follower, so that a school principal will always evaluate himself and his followers both in terms of policies that have been implemented and the individual abilities of his followers. Potential followers and teachers will be developed at a higher level. Leader behavior indicates acceptance of individual differences, for example: some teachers receive more motivation, more autonomy, and clear standards. Two-way communication is encouraged and interaction with followers is personalized, for example: the leader remembers previous conversations, is aware of individual problems, and sees the individual as a whole person not just a subordinate. Leaders listen more to their followers. Task delegation as a means of developing delegated tasks by following up on whether followers need direction or support to assess progress (Bass & Riggio, 2006).

Learning in schools alternately, the goal is for teachers to continue to interact with students. The next obstacle felt by teachers and students is that many students do not understand how to use smartphones. In this case the teacher must be patient in delivering the material such as not being too hasty in delivering teaching material. Because of course elementary school children must get supervision from their parents in using smartphones, and there are also students who don't have smartphones because of economic factors. For this reason, this is a challenge for teachers in carrying out the teaching and learning process. This is in accordance with the statement of a teacher named Khadijah regarding the obstacles encountered during the teaching and learning process.

The most crucial obstacle in online learning at SDIT Al-Ihsan is not getting a free quota every month for the PKBM process. In the online learning process, quotas and networks are important factors to support the effectiveness of the learning process. With the need for a quota, it certainly adds to the costs or dependents of the students. For this reason, schools here provide free quotas for students, even though it is not evenly distributed, but at least it can relieve the burden of the guardians of students. The principal chose a solution in this case, using BOS funds or school funds as an alternative so that the quota is free for students and can be given a quota every month. So, the role of the principal is not only to evaluate the performance of teachers in all aspects, from the readiness of learning materials to what obstacles are encountered by teachers and students in this online learning system. Not only teachers are evaluated by the principal, but also themselves whether the decisions and policies that have been implemented have gone well or have not been carried out by other educators.

In essence, every action made by the principle includes advantages and disadvantages, but the principal's leadership is critical in this case (Yusup, 2018; Yusup & Marzani, 2018). Because the principle holds the highest position in the school, all of his actions and leadership styles have a significant impact on all of the school's constituents. As a result, school administrators must make clear decisions that will ensure the success of schools and educators in the current pandemic.

The principal at SDIT Al-Ihsan applies leadership styles and strategies to improve the performance of teachers and education personnel during the pandemic. The type of leadership adopted is transformative leadership. This can be seen from several indicators of the transformational leadership style of the principal of SDIT Al-Ihsan which consists of: 1) establishing a good example for teachers; 2) providing intellectual stimulus; 3) motivating teachers; and 4) paying attention to teachers through evaluations.

The success of teachers when carrying out their main tasks and functions cannot be separated from the expertise of the principal in applying leadership styles, communication skills, motivators, creativity, innovation, discipline, interest and attention to colleagues in educational institutions (Prananosa et al., 2018). Teacher performance shows the ability of teachers in carrying out their duties. If the work ability of a teacher is good, the performance will be even better, and vice versa if the work ability of a teacher is not good, the performance will be even lower (Farmawaty et al., 2018). The importance of the principal's transformational leadership in improving teacher performance during the Covid-19 pandemic at SDIT Al-Ihsan can be proven by the principal's ability to provide solutions to online learning constraints.

The learning system implemented at SDIT Al-Ihsan is an online learning system during the Covid-19 pandemic. Student PKBM is disrupted due to the high Covid-19 distribution chain. In this situation, PKBM is switched to activities that can be completed at home using an online system or internet. The transition from a face-to-face to an online learning environment is a challenging one to make. But how else could the federal and provincial governments have ordered the immediate elimination of face-to-face learning? Because the pandemic's effects have begun to spread into the field of education, it is intended that all educational institutions would cease operations as usual (Purwanto et al., 2020). The learning system applied at SDIT Al-Ihsan is still a lot of problems that make students have difficulty when following the online learning process. So that the principal's ability to optimize transformational leadership is highly expected.

#### **D. CONCLUSION**

The findings of the principal's transformational leadership research in improving the quality and performance of teachers in teaching activities at SDIT Al-Ihsan during the Covid-19 pandemic include: 1) setting good examples for teachers in facing challenges during the Covid-19 pandemic; 2) providing intellectual stimulus such as providing opportunities for SDIT Al-Ihsan teachers to take part in training and counseling activities about the online learning system; 3) motivate teachers to be able to develop online learning methods and models; and 4) evaluate the policies that have been implemented and ask each individual teacher about the obstacles to online learning. The principal's transformational leadership is expected to be able to overcome the obstacles of online learning by improving communication and coordination between parents and teachers so that parents are able to guide their children when carrying out the online learning process at home.



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