

# Principal Leadership Vs Teacher Professionalism: Contribution to Organizational Climate in Islamic Schools in Medan, Indonesia

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## RESEARCH ARTICLE

### Abstract

Creating a positive school climate is a real challenge in today's school management. Meanwhile, a positive conducive school climate will contribute to improving school performance. This paper aims to look at the contribution of teacher leadership and professionalism to the school organizational climate. The method used in this study is quantitative, while the data instrument is collected by distributing questionnaires. The study involved 155 teachers spread over three public madrasas in Medan city. The study results show that teacher professionalism has a more discernible impact on efforts to establish a conducive school organizational climate. The originality demonstrated by this study is that the contribution of leadership is no longer a determinant in the organizational climate of schools. This study offers to strengthen teacher professionalism as an effort.

**Keywords:** Principal Leadership, Teacher Professionalism, Madrasah Climate

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

Whether we realize it or not, each organization has its climate. It becomes a follow-up question of whether the climate positively impacts the organization or vice versa. Organizational climate is shaped by the organization and becomes a certain characteristic. The rules, whether written or not, but agreed upon by the organization and its members, are part of the organizational climate.

Various research results show that a positive climate in schools will increase students' academic achievement (Bradshaw et al., 2014; F. L. Huang et al., 2015; Jain et al., 2015; Wong et al., 2021). This shows the importance of developing a school/madrasah organizational climate. However, many educational institutions have not considered a conducive school climate an important priority. If it is analogous that a conducive environment for learning will have an impact on increasing achievement, then a bad school climate will have a negative impact on achievement. Existing studies on climate tend only to show that leadership is the most contributing factor to the organizational climate in schools (Bosworth et al., 2018; McCarley et al., 2016; Tajasom & Ahmad, 2011; Wang, 2019). From the existing studies, not many have examined the role or contribution of teacher professionalism in forming a positive organizational climate. Even though professional teachers are an essential aspect of educational institutions (Araghieh et al., 2011; Mahini et al., 2012; Terano, 2018)

This paper aims to complement previous studies on the organizational climate of schools, which did not pay attention to the position of teachers as professional educators. This paper wants to show that teachers have the most crucial role in educational institutions. In line with that, two questions are answered in this paper: (a) how the influence of the leadership of the madrasah principal in is shaping the organizational climate, and (b) how is the influence of teacher professionalism in the formation of organizational climate. The answers to these two questions will provide a more comprehensive picture of efforts to establish an organizational climate, especially in madrasah.

This paper is based on the argument that organizational climate is an important aspect that needs to be developed by educational institutions. Educational institutions should focus on creating an effective and conducive school climate. This is because the climate has proven to be an essential aspect of developing students' academic achievement. This paper is also based on the lack of attention by the administrators of educational institutions on the most critical aspects/components in shaping the school's organizational climate.

## 1.1 Madrasah Climate

The number of studies on organizational climate recently has resulted in various meanings and definitions. Ehrhart, Schneider, and Macey identified five main themes in organizational climate definitions (Ehrhart et al., 2014):

- Theme 1: organizational climate emerges through various mechanisms, including leadership, communication, training, and so on
- Theme 2: organizational climate stems from the resulting experiences and the meanings attached to them
- Theme 3: organizational climate is not owned by individuals, but units/organizations formed from shared experiences and shared meanings
- Theme 4: there is a natural interaction within the unit/organization
- Climate is a descriptive abstraction of people's experiences at work and the meanings attached to them.

Based on the analysis of various experts, organizational climate is the overall atmosphere of the organization, which is a system and shared meaning held by all members and is reflected in the way of interaction, behavior, shared learning, innovative responses to threats from the external environment, creating new opportunities and making a difference between organization and other organizations (Bateman et al., 2019; Bateman & Snell, 2015; Daft & Marcic, 2016; Luthans & Doh, 2018; Judge & Robbins, 2017). This means that every handle in running an organization that is believed to be together and distinguishes one organization from another can be said to be an organizational climate. This definition highlights four essential characteristics of organizational climate:

1. Shared concept. Organizational climate consists of beliefs and values shared among a group in the organization.
2. Learn from time to time. This is passed on to new employees through orientation, socialization, and mentoring.
3. Influence our behavior at work.
4. Impact on outcomes at various levels of the organization. Climate affects outcomes at the individual, group/team, and organizational levels.

Qomar (2013) describes several functions of climate in Islamic education management, including a) Climate affects the mindset of the Muslim community, b) Climate affects the whole process of Islamic Education Management, c) Climate affects the priority scale of activities set by leaders, d) Climate affects the appearance of educational institutions Islam, e) Climate affects the rhythm of changes in Islamic educational institutions

People in the organization sometimes can not theoretically understand the climate in the organization, but they feel it. Even without realizing the behavior and actions taken are part of the climate or shape the climate in the organization. The organizational climate will be the value that differentiates organizations from one another. Climate will affect people in the organization, and people will affect that climate.

Various experts' analyses and studies show various factors that can form a healthy organizational climate. There are some differences in determining the factors in organizational climate. However, from various studies, it can be concluded that the most widely used for forming organizational climates are a) involvement, b) empowerment, c) environment, d) leadership and e) innovation.

## **1.2 Madrasah Principal Leadership**

Just like in other organizations, to make an organization better and increase its quality, leadership is one of the essential factors that must be a concern. Almost all the existing literature does not dispute the magnitude of the principal role in efforts to achieve effective schooling. Both become inseparable parts of each other. Effective educational leaders will bring educational institutions to a good level of quality. Regarding the leadership of effective principals, Parylo and Zepeda (2014) revealed that there are eight main characteristics of effective principals: a) having a track record, b) instructional leaders, c) good managers, d) data leaders, e) forming teams, f) community leader, g) very suitable/appropriate for school, h) passionate leader.

Principals need to have the ability to lead their institutions. Drysdale, Goode, and Gurr review the core aspects of successful school leadership. Successful school leadership involves: 1) establishing a vision and setting direction, 2) understanding and developing people, and 3) redesigning the organization and managing teaching and learning programs (Drysdale et al., 2009). Furthermore, Wexler (2018) analyzes themes related to good principal leadership, including: (1) being able to develop leadership that can work together, shares the workload, and maintains work balance, (2) sharing leadership and decision making together, and (3) being able to cooperate with district government.

Effective principal leadership must have the ability to influence to: bring about change, set common goals, have a track record in leadership, form a solid team, always show high morale, motivate teachers, staff, and students, make decisions together and be able to build networks to external parties, both government and private.

## **1.3 Teacher Professionalism**

Professional teachers can also be interpreted that teachers can compare theoretical knowledge and practical experience in certain situations to accommodate both abstract and concrete learning materials at school (Werler, 2015). Professional teachers have a positive influence on learning. Professional teachers are characterized by their competence. These competencies will shape and become a measure of a teacher being said to be professional.

Regarding teacher professionalism, Blömeke (2017) divides it into two main competencies: professional knowledge and affective-motivational characteristics. Meanwhile, professional knowledge consists of a) content knowledge, b) pedagogical content knowledge, and c) general pedagogical knowledge. While affective-motivation characteristics consist of a) beliefs, and attitudes about content, instructions, and b) work motivation, personality, and anxiety.

Révai and Guerriero (2017) characterize the professionalism of teachers. They mention various professions; teachers need comprehensive knowledge about the profession and the material they teach. A collection of knowledge in teacher professionalism, as follows 1) General pedagogical knowledge (principles and strategies of classroom management and cross-curricular organization); 2) Content knowledge (knowledge of subject matter and organizational structure); 3) Knowledge of pedagogical content (knowledge of teaching science); 4) Curriculum knowledge (knowledge of subject-specific materials and programs); 5) Knowledge of students and their characteristics; 6) Knowledge of the educational context/classroom management (knowledge of classrooms,

governance, and financing, school community culture); 7) Knowledge of educational goals (its goals, values, philosophical and historical foundations).

Getting a teacher with high professionalism is not easy and fast. Comprehensive and sustainable efforts are needed from the central government to the school level. It is because professional teachers are formed and influenced by various factors, not only internal but also external teachers. Webb, in Lai and Lo's study, conducted a study of teachers in Finland who felt that the government's role in reducing unnecessary workloads was needed, giving more freedom to be creative, making time for the work they considered most important, such as preparing learning tools and help students with various needs. As teachers become more familiar with the reforms, they can rethink their work to incorporate their professional and moral values (Lai & Lo, 2007). Several main factors can be applied to make teachers have competence and work with high professionalism. Some of these factors are:

1. New professional development: collaboration, accepting heterogeneous groups, research-oriented, and having a professional community. However, this will only develop if teachers are given greater autonomy and school leadership supports a professional approach to teaching (Nairz-Wirth & Feldmann, 2019).
2. The implementation of good teaching practices can also contribute to the formation of teacher competence (Saloviita, 2019).
3. Providing communication space can also improve teacher professionalism (Nordin, 2016)
4. Since the teacher as a profession is still being debated, a global approach to its professional and social status is needed. This includes efforts to affirm the teacher's identity as a highly professional occupation (Monteiro, 2015)

Professional teachers have academic qualifications that can support their professional knowledge in understanding learning. Teachers have this competence: understanding science in the field they teach, having pedagogical knowledge for the use of models and various learning strategies, having knowledge in the curriculum, understanding students and their characteristics, knowledge of the context of education/class management, and have knowledge of educational goals both historical and philosophical. Furthermore, professional teachers have received certification/recognition for their qualifications and competencies.

## 2 METHODS

This research on the organizational climate in madrasah is quantitative in nature and related to the leadership of the madrasah principal and teacher professionalism. This study looks at the magnitude of the impact given by the leadership variables of the madrasah principal and teacher professionalism on the formation of organizational climate.

To collect data about the organizational climate in madrasah, the researchers conducted their research at State Islamic Junior High School (MTsN), located in the Medan City area. There are three MTsN in Medan: MTsN 1, MTsN 2, and MTsN 3. From these three MTsN, a sample of 155 teachers will participate in this study. Teachers were chosen as respondents because they have the capacity and are the primary keys in Madrasahs. Furthermore, the selection of respondents was carried out by proportional random sampling, which was selected proportionally and represented the three madrasahs (Fitri & Haryanti, 2020).

In collecting data in this study, the technique used is a questionnaire in the form of a questionnaire. The questionnaire was compiled to reveal and provide a complete picture of the three variables: Principal Leadership, Teacher Professionalism, and School Climate. To measure each variable, the researchers used an attitude measurement questionnaire with a rating scale type of assessment (rating scale) with a numerical rating scale. Questionnaires were given to the teacher using google forms. The data obtained through the questionnaire instrument in this study were described. Quantitative data analysis in this study uses path analysis to see the pattern of causal relationships between variables, either directly or indirectly, between independent variables (exogenous) and dependent variables (endogenous) (Riduwan & Kuncoro, 2012).

### 3 FINDINGS

The data analysis results show that the madrasah principal's leadership and teacher professionalism positively affect the organizational climate, which is indeed essential. Each variable (leadership and teacher professionalism) contributes significantly to the school's organizational climate. More details can be seen in Table 1.

**Table 1. Statistic Analysis**

ANOVA <sup>a</sup>					
Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	24266.913	2	12133.457	272.510	.000b
Residual	6767.771	152	44.525		
Total	31034.684	154			
a. Dependent Variable: Madrasa climate					
b. Predictors: (Constant): Teacher Professionalism, Leadership					

Coefficients <sup>a</sup>					
		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta	t Sig.
1	(Constant)	-3.399	2.015		-1.687 .094
	Leadership	.275	.076	.308	3.632 .000
	Teacher Professionalism	.421	.060	.598	7.057 .000
a. Dependent Variable: Madrasah climate					

### 4 DISCUSSION

#### 4.1 Influence of Leadership on Madrasah Climate

In principle, leadership has a strong role in an organization, including educational organizations. Existing studies have shown that leadership contributes directly to improving the overall quality of education (Crisol Moya et al., 2020; Mukhtar et al., 2020; Nur'aini et al., 2020). This further confirms that the quality of education is determined by leadership as the most dominant factor. However, this study found that leadership was a factor that contributed less to the formation of the school's organizational climate. This research is supported by various currently developing studies.

This finding which states that leadership is not the most dominant factor in shaping the madrasah climate in Indonesia, can be caused by various reasons, including a pattern of recruitment of principals that is less transparent, causing low competence of principals, lack of education and training for principals, supervision against the principal is still not well planned, the existing regulations do not support the principal to be able to develop the school properly, and even hinder, a lot of the principal's time is taken up by administrative work rather than substantive.

#### 4.2 The Influence of Teacher Professionalism on Madrasah Climate

This study indicates that teacher professionalism has a more dominant impact on forming a conducive madrasa climate. This study shows differences from previous research (Bosworth et al., 2018; McCarley et al., 2016; Tajasom & Ahmad, 2011; Wang, 2019), which states that

leadership is the dominant factor in shaping the school's organizational climate. This finding is different because, in Indonesia, the madrasah principal will change every four years (or even less than that) and a maximum of 8 years (Ministry of Religious Affairs Regulation Number 58 of 2017 concerning the Madrasah principal Article 11 after that, the head of the madrasa will be transferred to another madrasah. This means that educators/teachers are madrasah human resources who are always there (not experiencing displacement/turnover) which are extreme and like the madrasah principal. In addition, the teacher is the key and most sensitive factor in the development of students, both academic and non-academic developments (Mitchell et al., 2010; Wong et al., 2021).

As a key factor in forming a madrasah climate, teachers need support to achieve their performance and professionalism. Based on the results of the study, there are aspects of teacher support that contribute to the formation of the school climate, including 1) increasing teacher job satisfaction, 2) increasing teacher commitment, 3) getting support from school principals, 4) collaborating in schools, 5) teacher career development, and 6) have the sensitivity to changes. The description of the six core components of the relationship between teacher professionalism and the formation of a positive climate (see Figure 1) is as follows:

1. **Teacher Job Satisfaction.** Teacher job satisfaction is important in establishing a good school organizational climate. A positive and significant improvement will follow the increase in teacher job satisfaction in the organizational climate. For this reason, policymakers at madrasah need to develop programs to increase teacher job satisfaction (Aldridge & Fraser, 2016; Ghavifekr & Pillai, 2016; Zakariya, 2020).
2. **Teacher Commitment.** High work commitment from teachers is needed for the madrasah organizational climate. Teacher commitment revealed a significant positive relationship between innovative organizational climate. Many aspects contribute to teacher commitment, while commitment impacts a positive climate in the madrasah environment. Therefore, the commitment to teaching teachers needs to be placed as one of the priorities in the madrasah development (Collie et al., 2011; Manla, 2021; Pa'wan & Omar, 2018; Raman et al., 2015).
3. **Support from the Principal.** Supporting teachers is one of the main jobs of school leaders. Teachers will have a better perception if they get support from the principal it has an impact on their success and attitudes (Johnson et al., 2017; Rhodes et al., 2009; Weisel & Dror, 2006). Various forms and leadership models will positively impact, provided that these models and structures are placed in the right situations and conditions. However, collective and collegial leadership between principals and teachers has a concrete impact on climate formation (Almessabi, 2021; Hu et al., 2019)
4. **Collaboration between teachers and school principals.** In the current era, competition is not the proper practice to do. Familiarization with collaborative practices is a policy that can be carried out among teachers. The right collaboration encourages cohesiveness between teachers, realizes a shared vision, and supports each other. Collaboration among teachers and between principals and teachers can encourage the formation of a climate in schools (Beets et al., 2008; Debnam et al., 2021; X. Huang & Wang, 2021; Weisel & Dror, 2006).
5. **Career development.** Career development for the teaching profession positively impacts creating a strong school climate and increasing perceived value conformity (Treputtharat & Tayiam, 2014; Van Beurden et al., 2017). Teacher career development in Indonesia needs attention because it has been proven to improve the climate of educational institutions. Meanwhile, on the other hand, the path of teacher career development in Indonesia has not shown the right direction.
6. **Sensitive to Changes.** The increasingly rapid changes in the fourth industrial revolution era require schools, especially teachers, to be able to follow and adapt. Hamzah et al., (2018) pointed out that the outside community pressures educational institutions to continue to make changes, which has implications for the school climate. Bențea (2013) found that

school organization members, especially teachers, must be sensitive to changes, adaptive, and flexible in dealing with them to create a positive climate.



**Figure 1. The relationship between teacher professionalism and climate formation.**

## 5 CONCLUSION

In contrast to previous findings, which place the principal/leadership as the most crucial component in forming the madrasah climate, this study shows that teacher professionalism has the most vital part. There are six core components supporting teacher professionalism that contribute to the formation of a school climate, including 1) increasing teacher job satisfaction, 2) increasing teacher commitment, 3) getting support from school principals, 4) collaborating in schools, 5) developing teacher careers, 6) having sensitivity to change. This research is only limited to quantitative data, so it has not been able to see the madrasah climate formation comprehensively. Further research is needed to see (qualitatively) that helps teachers form the school climate. The recommendation for future research is to examine what aspects support teachers in establishing effective madrasah/schools.

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