



# Relationship-Oriented Leadership Behavior in Improving the Quality of Education at MTs N 9 Kediri

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## ABSTRACT

*To identify how the leadership of a madrasah principal oriented toward external stakeholder relations can strengthen support and collaboration from outside parties, it is crucial to understand that leadership within an organization determines the success or failure of an institution in achieving its goals. A leader who can inspire motivation, raise their own enthusiasm, and uplift their followers is essential in this era. This study will provide insights into understanding the application of leadership based on external stakeholder relations, focusing on collaboration with the community and government in the madrasah context. Not much research has delved into this qualitatively, especially in the madrasah context, as most previous studies only discussed the basic aspects of leadership without examining the in-depth interaction with external factors or the long-term collaborations happening on the ground. This qualitative research employs a case study approach at Madrasah Tsanawiyah Negeri 9 Kediri, with the research period from September 15, 2024, to November 25, 2024. The findings indicate that intensive communication enabled the principal to establish harmonious cooperation with community leaders. Through a proactive approach and effective communication strategies, the principal successfully convinced government officials about the importance of infrastructure support for the advancement of education in the madrasah. With careful negotiation and precise communication strategies, the principal achieved a partnership that resulted in SBSN (State Sharia Securities) funding.*

**Keywords:** *Relationship-Oriented Leadership Behavior, Educational Quality.*

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## 1. | INTRODUCTION

MTs Negeri 9 Kediri plays a vital role in shaping a young generation that is not only knowledgeable but also possesses strong morals and can positively contribute to society, both in religious and social aspects. To achieve this goal, it is essential for the madrasah to establish synergistic collaboration with various parties, including parents, the community, businesses, and the government (Mutohar et al., 2020a). According to Mutohar (2013), quality improvement management in madrasahs is a key strategy to enhance educational quality by granting authority and responsibility in decision-making to the head of the madrasah, involving the participation of individuals, including madrasah personnel and the community. Through this collaboration, it is hoped that more effective and efficient management can be achieved for better education.

Prim Masrokan Mutohar and Masduki (2023) state that leadership holds a highly significant position that must be carried out effectively. Thus, the success of educational institutions is determined by the quality of leadership responsible for running the madrasah. Yousef and Darwis A. (2000) argue that no other role in an organization has attracted as much attention as that of the leader. Leaders are the main actors and focal points among the stakeholders of educational institutions. According to Mutohar et al. (2020), institutional decisions made by leaders to improve internal and external service quality greatly contribute to the process of enhancing quality and competitiveness. Therefore, the leadership of the madrasah head is crucial in setting goals, allocating resources, focusing on madrasah objectives, organizing for change, establishing interpersonal relationships with teaching and administrative staff, and determining the correct or best direction in the event of failure.

This view is supported by research by Soraya et al. (2023) on the concept of leadership behavior in organizations and companies, which highlights that leadership is an essential part of an organization.

Leaders coordinate resources by utilizing their ability to guide others toward shared goals. The success of leadership is assessed by the leadership behavior applied and the satisfaction of subordinates.

The pace of change faced by various educational institutions today has led many stakeholders to call for more adaptive and flexible leadership. Adaptive leaders can work more effectively in a constantly changing environment if they understand the challenges and developments they face, and they respond appropriately to these challenges. Bennis (2001) states that adaptive leaders always collaborate with stakeholders to create creative solutions when complex problems arise and simultaneously develop themselves to handle broader leadership responsibilities.

Stephen P. Robbins (1996) asserts that leadership behavior is specific behavior that distinguishes leaders from non-leaders. With specific behaviors, leaders possess characteristics or actions that are unique to them. Meanwhile, Bass & Stogdill (1990) define leadership behavior as resulting from the performance of two functions: task functions and relational functions. Relational-oriented leadership behavior focuses on the quality of relationships with followers, while task-oriented leadership behavior is directed toward tasks that subordinates must complete. Therefore, relational-oriented leadership behavior emphasizes the quality of interactions between the madrasah head and madrasah stakeholders.

Such leadership shows attention to the welfare, needs, and feelings of madrasah stakeholders. Relationship-oriented leadership creates a harmonious and mutually supportive quality of relationships, motivating stakeholders because they feel the leader cares about them. This, in turn, impacts increased job satisfaction, loyalty, and commitment to the madrasah. This view is supported by research conducted by Rahmawati et al. (2022), which found that human-oriented behavior scored an average of 4.32, with a TCR (86.38%) falling into the "frequent" category. This

indicates that respondents rated leadership that focuses on interpersonal relationship quality very highly, with the majority agreeing that human-oriented leadership behavior is important.

The interaction between the leader and stakeholders occurs frequently, with attention given to their welfare and emotional needs. This behavior is consistently practiced by the madrasah head, who demonstrates leadership that prioritizes good relationships and cooperation among all parties at the madrasah. The leadership behavior of the madrasah head is fundamentally aimed at achieving goals and motivating the desire to reach those goals, making it a set of actions or activities carried out by the madrasah head in running the institution they lead.

Aligned with this, Hidayat (2012) explains that leadership behavior refers to the extent to which a leader designs and defines their own roles and those of their subordinates to achieve organizational goals. Therefore, the leadership behavior of a madrasah head of this kind is exemplary, motivating subordinates to continually follow and improve their quality so that work processes achieve the desired results. As a leader in a madrasah, good leadership behavior is essential to apply, where every action taken by the madrasah head towards stakeholders will motivate and inspire the work enthusiasm of internal stakeholders and the collaborative spirit of external stakeholders with the madrasah.

According to Fuadi et al. (2021), educational success is also influenced by the role of parents and the community. Full parental support, in terms of funding and decision-making, and acceptance from the surrounding community can impact the mental development and progress of the madrasah. This educational progress requires collaboration between the madrasah head and various parties comprehensively. Based on the above description, the researcher is interested in conducting a study titled *The Role of Relationship-Oriented Leadership Behavior in Empowering External Stakeholders*. The objective of this study is

to identify how the leadership of a madrasah head oriented toward external stakeholder relations can strengthen support and collaboration from outside parties at Madrasah Tsanawiyah Negeri 9 Kediri.

## **2. | LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1. Behavioral Theory of Leadership**

The Managerial Grid model by Blake and Mouton, also known as the Blake Mouton Grid, describes the extent to which a manager or leader focuses on production, on human aspects, or on both. An individual's position on this grid allows for the identification of their behavioral or managerial style (Blake & Mouton, 1978). Leadership is a collective effort to achieve common goals, often through teamwork (Virgiawan et al., 2012). According to Meng & Berger (2019), in organizational behavior, leadership is characterized as the skill to direct a group toward achieving goals. Leadership studies have already shown the importance of behavioral traits and personality attributes in an organizational setting (Hapsari et al., 2021). According to Sun & Anderson (2012), leadership is currently a central focus in management because it is considered essential to understanding and responding to complex social dynamics. Collings (2012) argues that while leadership was initially viewed as an innate trait, contemporary thinking supports the idea that leadership can be developed through experience and learning.

In the context of behavioral leadership theory, Northouse & Petter G (2013) state that a behavioral leadership approach provides guidance, support, participation, and achievement-oriented leadership, which includes directive and supportive leadership. In the late 1940s, researchers began exploring the idea that a person's behavior determines the effectiveness of their leadership. Rather than seeking inherent traits, they examined the influence of behavior on the achievement and satisfaction of followers.

Related to this, Fred E. Fiedler & Martin M Chemers (1974) mention that leaders with a people-oriented style prioritize self-motivation over controlling subordinates. A madrasah head with this style, in implementing leadership to effectively reach the madrasah's goals, establishes friendly, trustworthy, and respectful relationships with stakeholders, who are consistently given the opportunity to participate in decision-making for the organization's benefit. Such a condition has a significant influence on stakeholders in performing their tasks as contributions to achieving the madrasah's goals.

A study by the University of Michigan (Gibson et al., 1996) examined leadership conducted at the University of Michigan's Research Center and Survey. It aimed to identify characteristics of leadership behavior associated with measures of performance effectiveness. Through interviews with leaders and their followers, researchers identified two distinct leadership styles, known as job-centered and employee-centered leadership. Leaders who prioritize relationship behavior focus on creating good relationships with stakeholders. A madrasah head who is more concerned with the welfare and emotional needs of stakeholders emphasizes that the madrasah head's behavior has a direct impact on stakeholders and the madrasah. This shows that a relationship-oriented approach produces a more motivated and productive team.

## 2.2. Transformational Leadership Theory

According to Bass (1990), a leader inspires and motivates followers to achieve higher goals, transforming them into more than mere followers of commands. Bass describes the components of transformational leadership as follows:

### 1. Idealized Influence (II):

Transformational leaders behave in ways that allow them to become role models for their followers, admired, respected, and trusted. Leaders are endowed by followers with extraordinary abilities, persistence, and determination. Thus, there are two

aspects of idealized influence: the leader's behavior and the elements attributed to the leader by followers and colleagues. The idealized influence attributed to followers is that "the leader reassures others that obstacles will be overcome." Additionally, leaders are willing to take risks, act consistently and reliably, do what is right, and display ethical and moral behavior.

### 2. Inspirational Motivation (IM)

Transformational leaders behave in ways that motivate and inspire those around them to foster team spirit, enthusiasm, and optimism. Leaders articulate an appealing vision and hopeful expectations for the future, wanting followers to engage with and commit to a shared vision and goals.

### 3. Intellectual Stimulation (IS)

Transformational leaders encourage their followers to be innovative and creative, reframing problems and approaching them in new ways. There is no public criticism of individual members' mistakes. New ideas and creative problem-solving solutions are sought from followers. Followers are encouraged to try new approaches, and their ideas are not criticized publicly even if they differ from those of the leaders. In other words, leaders make others see problems from different perspectives.

### 4. Individualized Consideration (IC)

Transformational leaders position themselves as coaches or mentors for the achievement and growth of their followers' potential. Leaders provide new learning opportunities within a supportive climate. They demonstrate acceptance of individual differences by increasing personal interaction with followers and viewing individuals as whole persons, not just as employees. Leaders delegate tasks

as a means to develop followers' potential. Delegated tasks are monitored to see if followers need further guidance or support and to assess their progress. Thus, followers do not feel they are being examined or supervised.

The approach of a madrasah head that emphasizes the importance of inspiration and motivation in influencing followers to achieve higher goals makes the transformational madrasah head inspire stakeholders to contribute more in self-development. A transformational madrasah head shows emotional concern for stakeholders (Prastiwi & Widodo, 2023). The madrasah head listens to stakeholders' needs, aspirations, and concerns, building strong, trusting relationships. They are willing to face change and challenges. The madrasah head not only manages change but also becomes an agent of change, helping followers adapt to changes occurring in the madrasah.

### 2.3. Relationship-Oriented Leadership Behavior

According to Pfeffer (1992), leadership behavior suggests that a leader can use influence to achieve organizational goals. This perspective views an effective leader as one who must understand and wisely utilize various resources. It involves building good relationships, managing information carefully, and using resources strategically to achieve organizational goals. There are five dimensions of relationship-oriented leadership behavior according to Hersey and Blanchard in Stephen P. Robbins (1996):

- a. Providing Support  
Leaders should show care and support to team members. This creates a sense of confidence and security, essential for building good relationships.
- b. Participation in Decision Making  
A good leader involves team members in the decision-making process, so they feel

valued and have a stake in the outcomes achieved.

- c. Skill Development  
Leaders need to focus on developing the skills of team members through training and development. This enhances individual capacity and supports the overall team performance.
- d. Encouraging Open Communication  
Leaders should create an environment where communication is open and honest. This facilitates the exchange of information and reduces the likelihood of miscommunication.
- e. Appreciating Team Members' Contributions  
Leaders should recognize and appreciate the contributions of each team member. This acknowledgment can boost motivation and commitment to the team.

## 3. | RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study type. This approach was chosen because it allows the researcher to deeply explore the phenomenon of the relationship-oriented leadership of the madrasah principal with external stakeholders. According to Robert K. Yin (1984), as translated by M. Djauzi Mudzakir (2022), qualitative research emphasizes understanding phenomena in a natural context, where the data collected is expressed verbally, such as through interviews, observations, and documentation, and then analyzed without using statistical techniques. The case study as a research method focuses on a single unit of analysis, namely MTs N 9 Kediri. The process used in this study involves data reduction, categorization, and triangulation techniques to ensure the validity and reliability of the data obtained. The research period spans from August 15, 2024, to October 25, 2024. Through this approach, the researcher gains a holistic understanding of the phenomenon being studied.

When the data is deemed credible, it is then analyzed to draw conclusions, particularly regarding madrasah leadership and its relationship with external stakeholders.

## **4. | RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **4.1. Building Collaboration with External Stakeholders**

A madrasah not only functions as a place for knowledge exchange between teachers and students but also as a setting for conducting daily administrative and bureaucratic activities. These activities require leadership by a principal with strong leadership skills to foster healthy interactions, whether between teachers and students, teachers and madrasah staff, or between parents and madrasah management. This healthy relationship pattern is generally supported by effective and optimal communication among them, especially in achieving the goals set by the madrasah.

Binti Maunah (2019) emphasizes that leadership is a key element driving organizational effectiveness. Leadership significantly impacts an organization's success or failure in achieving its goals. The role of a leader, particularly a madrasah principal, is crucial in setting the direction for building collaboration with external stakeholders. Effective leadership is essential for designing strategies, directing vision, and facilitating productive communication between the madrasah and external parties such as parents, the community, the government, and businesses.

The madrasah principal, as a collaboration driver, plays a role as the driving force in fostering cooperation with community figures. According to As'aril Muhajir & Moh Arif (2018), through proactive and innovative leadership, a madrasah leader can encourage strategic collaboration. An effective principal will seek opportunities to involve external parties in madrasah activities, such as educational seminars, teacher training, and madrasah infrastructure development projects.

This study focuses on the leadership behavior of madrasahs oriented towards relationships with external stakeholders, including students' parents, the surrounding community, and government institutions in supporting the madrasah's advancement. Externally-focused leadership aims to build strong collaboration and communication between the madrasah principal and various parties outside the madrasah's internal environment.

### **4.2. Building Collaboration with Community Figure Stakeholders**

Based on the interviews conducted by the researcher, the principal of MTs Negeri 9 Kediri, Mr. Sunarto, M.Pd., revealed that through intensive efforts and communication, he has successfully established a harmonious partnership with community leaders. This collaboration has not only strengthened the relationship between the madrasah and the community but also created mutual trust and a shared commitment to advance education within the madrasah environment. As a result of this positive collaboration, community leaders donated a 1-hectare piece of land in 2018, an additional 560 square meters in 2023, and 280 square meters in 2024, located in Dusun Doko, Ngasem Village, Wates District, Kediri Regency, East Java. This land donation forms a solid foundation to support the development of the madrasah, both in terms of infrastructure and educational programs currently being implemented and planned for the future. With this support, the madrasah can more optimally provide quality education services for students and the surrounding community.

This aligns with the leadership function as outlined by Siagian (1988), which includes the leader as a direction-setter, representative and spokesperson of the organization, active communicator, mediator, and integrator. In connection with these results, the madrasah principal emphasized the importance of intensive efforts and communication in building harmonious

cooperation with community leaders. This reflects the role of the leader as an active communicator. In this role, the principal not only serves as a messenger but also as a good listener, capable of fostering constructive dialogue with various parties. This effective communication creates understanding and mutual comprehension, ultimately strengthening the relationship between the madrasah and the community.

The established collaboration not only reinforces relationships but also fosters mutual trust and a commitment to advancing education. This is consistent with Yukl's (2013) view that leaders act as integrators, able to unify various interests and resources to achieve shared goals. In this case, the principal successfully engaged community leaders to contribute to the madrasah's educational development, thus creating positive synergy. The land donation totaling 10,840 square meters from community leaders serves as tangible evidence of the success of this collaboration. This donation provides not only physical support but also a strong foundation for the future development of the madrasah. The principal functions as the direction-setter and representative of the organization, capable of conveying the vision and mission of the madrasah to the community and representing the madrasah's interests in negotiations with external parties.



Figure 1. Madrasah Principal Communication Stage

The leadership skills possessed by the Principal of MTs Negeri 9 Kediri, Mr. Sunarto, M.Pd., are highly focused on human relations. This is evident in his ability to build familial interpersonal relationships with local community leaders. In fostering these relationships, he not only emphasizes professionalism but also creates an emotional bond based on mutual respect, trust, and reciprocal support. This aligns with the views of Damasio (1994), who described emotions arising from assessments or available choices as "integral emotions." Such emotions strongly and consistently influence the decision-making process because integral emotions originate directly from the situation at hand. They play a crucial role in how individuals weigh risks and benefits in the options available.

In this context, it can be related to how the emotions of community leaders emerging from the situation influence effective decision-making processes. The principal, in his efforts to establish collaboration with the community and the government, is likely influenced by these integral emotions. Emotions such as a sense of responsibility toward the development of the madrasah and a strong desire to enhance the quality of education may drive the principal to make strategic decisions and take actions to achieve significant results, such as securing land donations.

Integral emotions, in this case, guide the principal to assess the risks and benefits of relationships with community and government leaders, ultimately resulting in beneficial cooperation for the madrasah. This aligns with the study by Wibowo et al. (2024) on the influence of emotional intelligence in undergraduate student leadership development, which significantly highlights the importance of managing emotions in personal leadership and effective decision-making. The study examines how the principal uses an intensive communication approach and negotiation strategies to build collaboration and gain support from external parties.

The human-relation-based leadership demonstrated by this Principal has succeeded in creating a conducive environment for productive cooperation (Januariani et al., 2023). With a friendly approach that respects differing perspectives, the communication bonds built become stronger and more effective. As a result, the established collaboration focuses not only on short-term goals but also on long-term sustainability, with the community fully supporting the madrasah's development efforts (Masrokan Mutohar & Eva Trisnantari, 2021; Mutohar et al., 2020b; Prim Masrokan Mutohar & Masduki, 2023).

According to Hersey & Blanchard (1996), relationship-oriented leadership can create a conducive work environment and enhance collaboration. The principal's ability to build harmonious relationships with community leaders reflects this principle, enabling the creation of productive cooperation.

#### 4.3. Building Collaboration with Kediri Regional Government Stakeholders

The Principal of MTs Negeri 9 Kediri, Mr. Sunarto, M.Pd., has not only succeeded in establishing good relationships with community leaders but also demonstrated exceptional ability in building constructive collaboration with the Kediri Regency Government. This aligns with the view of Bass & Avolio (1994) that transformational leadership focuses on the leader's ability to inspire and motivate followers to achieve common goals. The principal has not only built strong relationships with community leaders but also inspired them to support the advancement of education at the madrasah, creating a shared vision for a better future in education.

Through a proactive approach and effective communication strategies, the principal successfully convinced the government of the importance of infrastructure support for the advancement of education at the madrasah. This aligns with the theory of effective communication proposed by Hackman & Johnson (2009), which

emphasizes that good communication strengthens relationships and facilitates successful collaboration. This effort resulted in a positive outcome, with a land grant from the Kediri Regency Government for MTs Negeri 9 Kediri, which is used for the development of educational facilities.



Figure 2. Communication Stage of Madrasah Principal with Kediri Regency Government

With this land grant, the madrasah has the opportunity to expand its learning space and create a better environment for students. Mr. Sunarto's initiative not only reflects visionary leadership, but also illustrates a strong commitment to improving the quality of education in the region. The cooperation established with the Kediri Regency Government is expected to continue and provide long-term benefits for the development of education at MTs Negeri 9 Kediri and the surrounding community.

#### 4.4. Building Collaboration with Government Stakeholders Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia

The Principal of MTs Negeri 9 Kediri, Mr. Sunarto, M.Pd., has not only succeeded in establishing constructive collaborations with community leaders and the Kediri Regency Government, but also demonstrated exceptional ability in building effective relationships with the Ministry of Religious Affairs. Through careful efforts, negotiations, and the right communication strategies, the principal successfully secured a

partnership that resulted in significant impact, including a grant of 10 billion rupiahs for the construction of the SBSN building in 2022 and an additional grant of 7 billion rupiahs in 2024. The funds allocated by the government are part of a strategic effort to support the provision of adequate educational infrastructure at the madrasah. Through this leadership, the principal has transformed subordinates through a positive change process, enabling new goals to be realized. This leadership model aligns with Burns' view (Marc R. Summerfield, 2014), which is more intellectually inspiring and considers individuals as such.



**Figure 3.** Stages of Communication between the Head of Madrasah and the Ministry of Religion

Through the leadership applied by the principal, he has been able to encourage and inspire teachers and staff at the madrasah to experience positive change, making the process of individual development and the achievement of new goals that were previously difficult to attain now possible. The principal not only functions as an authoritarian manager but also as a motivator who pays attention to their needs and aspirations. By prioritizing an inclusive and collaborative approach, the principal has created a better work environment, where harmonious relationships with community leaders, local government, and

the Ministry of Religious Affairs have also been established.

This aligns with the view of Vroom & Yetton (1973), which emphasizes the importance of involving team members in decision-making and promoting collaboration. The principal has shown exceptional ability in building constructive cooperation with the government. As a result of this collaboration, community leaders and the Kediri Regency Government have agreed to donate land, and the Ministry of Religious Affairs has facilitated funding for the construction of the SBSN building at MTs Negeri 9 Kediri, providing tangible support for the development of the madrasah. This land donation has become a symbol of joint commitment in achieving broader educational goals effectively, with the hope that this initiative will strengthen the educational foundation in the madrasah environment.

## 5. | CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis conducted, it can be concluded that Mr. Sunarto, as the principal of MTs Negeri 9 Kediri, adopts various relevant leadership and collaboration theories. Some of the theories that reflect his approach and achievements include: The principal has successfully inspired and motivated community leaders to participate in the advancement of education at the madrasah. His participatory approach is evident in his ability to build constructive cooperation with the government. He involves all parties in decision-making, ensuring that everyone feels they contribute to overcoming the existing educational challenges. Through a proactive approach and effective communication, he is able to respond to the needs and feelings of the community and the government, thereby building sustainable support. By integrating these various leadership theories, the principal has demonstrated that effective leadership in an educational environment involves inspiration, participation, strong relationships, and good communication skills.

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