

Participatory Leadership of the Madrasah Principal in Addressing Bullying Cases in Schools (A Case Study at MTs Alkhairaat Sigimpu)

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ABSTRACT

This study examines participative leadership by the head of MTs Alkhairaat Sigimpu as an effective approach to addressing bullying through the collective empowerment of school stakeholders in a systematic and integrated manner. A qualitative case study approach was employed. Data were collected through participant observation, in-depth interviews with the head of the madrasah, teachers, and guidance and counseling teachers, as well as documentation. Data were analyzed using data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing techniques. The findings reveal that bullying at the school takes both verbal and non-verbal forms. Verbal bullying includes teasing, threats, and rumor spreading among students, while non-verbal bullying involves social exclusion, threatening gestures, and damage to peers' belongings. In addressing these issues, the head of the madrasah applies participative leadership by involving teachers and counseling staff in collective decision-making. This includes formulating anti-bullying policies, establishing intervention and mediation procedures, and implementing prevention programs through socialization and integrated supervision. Such collaborative involvement fosters a shared sense of responsibility in creating a safe and bullying-free learning environment.

ARTICLE INFORMATION

Keywords:

Participative leadership, bullying, madrasah, school management, student behavior, school safety.

1. Introduction

Schools are expected to serve as safe and supportive environments that foster the holistic development of students, encompassing academic, social, and emotional dimensions. However, in reality, schools often become settings where deviant behaviors such as bullying occur. Bullying in schools has become a serious issue that negatively affects students' mental health,

learning motivation, and future prospects. It is not limited to physical violence but also includes verbal, non-verbal, psychological, social, and digital forms (cyberbullying). If not properly addressed, bullying can cause long-term trauma for victims and create an unhealthy school climate. Therefore, appropriate and sustainable intervention from all school stakeholders is essential, particularly from the madrasah principal as

the highest leader within the educational institution (Intan Khoirun Nisa et al., 2025).

In this context, participatory leadership is an appropriate approach to be implemented. This leadership style encourages the active involvement of all school components, including subject teachers and guidance and counseling teachers, in decision-making and problem-solving processes (Ryandini & Nurhadi, 2020). The madrasah principal no longer acts in an authoritarian manner but instead serves as a facilitator and driver of collaboration in building a healthy and violence-free school culture. By prioritizing openness, two-way communication, and the empowerment of all stakeholders, participatory leadership enables the development of collective awareness in addressing bullying. This leadership style is expected not only to respond to problems reactively, but also to prevent similar cases from occurring through character building and strengthening positive values within the school environment (Susanto et al., 2024).

In this regard, the madrasah principal plays a key role, particularly through the implementation of participatory leadership. Participatory leadership is a leadership style that emphasizes the involvement of all school stakeholders, including subject teachers and guidance and counseling teachers, in the decision-making process (Mubarok et al., 2024). Under this approach, the madrasah principal does not merely act as a decision-maker, but also as a facilitator who encourages collaboration and open communication within the school environment. This approach can foster a positive and inclusive school climate, which in turn may reduce the occurrence of bullying among students.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Participatory Leadership

Participatory leadership is a leadership pattern that emphasizes the active involvement of members in the decision-making, planning, and implementation processes within an organization (Ibrahim et al., 2022). In this model, the leader does not make decisions unilaterally but instead provides space for members to express their ideas, input, and opinions before final decisions are made (Sari, 2020). Participatory leadership is a leadership style that prioritizes the active participation of team members in decision-making, planning, and the implementation of organizational activities. In this approach, the leader avoids unilateral decision-making and instead opens opportunities for members to share ideas, suggestions, and perspectives before final decisions are established (Prasetyo, 2022).

Participatory leadership is an approach in which leaders provide extensive opportunities for their subordinates to take part in decision-making, planning, and the implementation of tasks within an organization. Leaders with this style do not monopolize decision-making unilaterally but instead act as facilitators and guides (Yeni, 2020) (Prasetyo, 2022).

This leadership style also enhances creativity and innovation, as each member is given the opportunity to contribute their perspectives (Mutholib et al., 2021). However, despite these advantages, participatory leadership requires a longer time in decision-making and may lead to conflicts when disagreements are difficult to resolve (Susanti et al., 2024). Nevertheless, this style is most effective in situations

where decisions require in-depth consideration and full support from all team members to ensure collective success in achieving the organization's vision and mission.

The main characteristics of participatory leadership include intensive two-way communication, openness to diverse opinions, a more equitable distribution of authority, and collective decision-making. This style also enhances creativity, as each individual is given the opportunity to contribute (Abdullah, 2018).

In the context of education, the implementation of participatory leadership is highly relevant for school principals and educational institution leaders. Through this approach, teachers, staff, and students can be involved in the formulation of school policies, ensuring that the resulting programs are more aligned with actual needs in the field.

In addition, participatory leadership is closely related to the concept of empowerment. Through this style, subordinates are given opportunities to learn, express their opinions, and actively participate in solving organizational problems. This not only strengthens relationships among members but also fosters a sense of collective responsibility.

Participatory leadership provides various benefits in enhancing the motivation of organizational members. When members are involved in decision-making, they feel valued and recognized for their contributions. This condition generates greater motivation to work wholeheartedly, as they feel they play an important role in the organization's success.

From a psychological perspective, such participation fulfills fundamental human needs for autonomy and competence. Members are given the freedom to choose their own work approaches (autonomy) as well as opportunities to demonstrate their full potential in problem-solving processes (competence). As a result, intrinsic motivation—internal drive arising from personal interest and satisfaction—increases significantly. A sense of ownership over collective decisions further strengthens members' commitment to their implementation. They do not merely comply with instructions but take full responsibility for the ideas they have contributed. This strong commitment is essential in overcoming obstacles and dynamic changes, as members are willing to exert additional effort to realize the shared vision they support. Therefore, participatory leadership acts as a catalyst that transforms passive compliance into proactive and responsible participation (Abbeduto et al., 2019).

The primary objective of participatory leadership is to enhance the professionalism of educators and educational staff. By involving teachers and staff in the decision-making process, participatory leadership fosters a sense of ownership and shared responsibility.

2.2 Bullying

Bullying is a form of aggressive behavior intended to harm another individual, whether physically, verbally, psychologically, or socially. This behavior is carried out intentionally, repeatedly, and typically involves a power imbalance

between the perpetrator and the victim. This imbalance may include physical strength, social status, popularity, or technological dominance, as seen in cases of cyberbullying.

Bullying refers to repeated aggression intended to harm others, characterized by a power imbalance between the perpetrator and the victim. This phenomenon appears in various forms, such as physical violence, verbal abuse, emotional exclusion, and cyberbullying through digital platforms. Its consequences for victims are highly destructive, including severe mental health problems such as depression and anxiety, declining academic performance, and social isolation. A comprehensive understanding of its definition and various forms is a crucial foundation for effectively identifying and addressing this issue in different contexts.

Schools, families, and communities need to collaborate to create a safe and supportive environment through educational programs, strict regulations, and the internalization of empathy values. The main goal is to break the cycle of such aggression and ensure individual development, particularly for children and adolescents, in an environment free from intimidation and violence. Through collective action, we can prevent the long-term effects of bullying and protect the well-being of victims.

The impact of bullying on victims can be very serious, ranging from decreased self-confidence, declining academic performance, and emotional disturbances such as depression and anxiety, to a desire to withdraw from social environments. In the long term, victims may experience deep psychological trauma.

Bullying is not merely mischief or joking; rather, it is an abuse of power that

causes suffering to victims. This distinguishes it from ordinary conflict, as bullying involves elements of domination and is carried out systematically to weaken the victim. Bullying is often reinforced by the presence of bystanders—individuals who witness the incident but take no action. Their passive “watching” can strengthen the perpetrator, whereas the courage to help the victim and reject bullying can become an agent of change. Therefore, a culture of silence in schools often becomes an obstacle in efforts to stop bullying (Hulkin et al., 2024).

Bullying includes several main forms, namely physical bullying, verbal bullying, social bullying, and cyberbullying. Each type has its own characteristics and impacts; however, all of them have the potential to cause severe negative effects on victims, both physically, psychologically, and socially (Ni et al., 2024). Therefore, a deep understanding of the various forms of bullying is essential to support appropriate and effective prevention and intervention efforts (Mulawarman & Nurfitri, 2017).

Bullying not only has physical impacts but also causes serious psychological effects such as low self-esteem, depression, and anxiety. These psychological risks can lead to trauma and reduce the overall quality of life of victims. Therefore, it is important for schools, parents, and society to recognize the various forms of bullying in order to carry out appropriate prevention and intervention measures (Hermalinda et al., 2007).

Bullying occurs due to various interrelated factors, including individual, family, school, as well as social and cultural aspects. From an individual perspective, perpetrators of bullying generally exhibit characteristics such as aggressiveness, impulsivity, and difficulty in controlling emotions. In addition, the desire to feel

powerful or dominant within a social group is also often a motivating factor. Negative childhood experiences, such as violence or neglect within the family, as well as low levels of empathy, also contribute to this behavior.

From a social and cultural perspective, norms that justify violence as a means of resolving problems also contribute to an increase in bullying behavior. Media and technology also play a role, particularly when children are exposed to violent content or use social media without supervision, leading to cyberbullying. Social inequality and discrimination based on social status, religion, race, or gender are also common triggers (Hidayat et al., 2024). Thus, bullying is the result of a complex interaction between personal, family, school, and societal cultural factors. Addressing bullying must be carried out through a comprehensive approach involving various stakeholders to achieve effective outcomes.

Improving understanding of bullying through education in schools, families, and society is essential. Educational programs aimed at students, teachers, and parents help them recognize the signs of bullying and understand its impacts. Character education that instills empathy from an early age is also crucial.

Collaboration between teachers and parents, each playing an active role in preventing bullying, is essential. This can be done by providing attention, maintaining open communication, and educating children about positive attitudes and non-violent conflict resolution. Supervision of children's activities, including their use of social media, is also important to prevent cyberbullying (Erwin Eka Saputra, 2025).

Technology can be utilized by developing anonymous bullying reporting applications that make it easier for students

to report incidents. Education on healthy social media use should also be provided to prevent cyberbullying. Schools play an important role in creating a safe and comfortable environment by implementing anti-bullying policies and conducting intensive supervision in areas that are prone to bullying. Training for teachers and students on how to recognize, address, and prevent bullying is also essential. Parents have a significant role by providing proper supervision, maintaining open communication with their children, and serving as role models for positive behavior at home.

Indicators of success in handling bullying in schools reflect the extent to which prevention and intervention efforts are effective. One of the most commonly used key indicators is a reduction in the number of reported bullying cases. If there is a consistent decrease in bullying reports over time, it indicates that the implemented prevention, monitoring, and intervention strategies are beginning to show positive results (Tiara et al., 2025).

The role of participatory leadership in efforts to prevent bullying in the school environment goes far beyond merely formulating formal regulations or administrative policies. Instead, this approach focuses on building an inclusive and sustainable educational ecosystem in which all elements of the school community—ranging from teachers, students, parents, to support staff—are actively involved in the decision-making process (Erwin Eka Saputra, 2025).

3. Methodology

This study uses a qualitative approach, which was chosen because the main focus of the research is to gain an in-depth understanding of the processes and

practices of participatory leadership by the madrasah principal in handling bullying cases within the school environment (Nurdin, 2017) (Sugiyono, 2017). The research design employed is a case study, in which the researcher conducts an in-depth exploration of a specific case, namely the participatory leadership practices of the madrasah principal at MTs Alkhairaat Sigimpu and how the principal involves all school members in addressing the issue.

Through this qualitative approach, the researcher is able to capture the meaning of the principal's actions as well as how the principal's leadership is actually implemented in resolving social conflicts such as bullying.

The primary data source consists of human participants (informants) who are directly or indirectly involved in bullying cases and school leadership practices. In addition to human sources, data are also obtained from relevant official school documents such as anti-bullying policies, records of previous bullying cases, school regulations, and meeting minutes discussing bullying interventions. These documents complement field data and provide a formal overview of the management system and policies implemented.

Data collection methods include in-depth interviews using a semi-structured approach, allowing informants to express their views and experiences freely while remaining focused on the research topic. Direct observation was also conducted to examine behaviors and interactions within the school environment, particularly those related to leadership practices and bullying management.

4. Result and Discussion

4.1 Forms of bullying that occur at MTs Alkhairaat Sigimpu

Based on the researcher's observations regarding the forms of bullying at MTs Alkhairaat Sigimpu, verbal and non-verbal bullying were found. This finding indicates the presence of bullying within the school environment, in both verbal forms such as mocking and insults, and non-verbal forms such as social exclusion. This result is considered highly significant because bullying violates two core values upheld by the institution: educational values that promote a safe and respectful learning environment, and Islamic teachings that emphasize compassion, justice, and brotherhood. Bullying directly undermines moral values and integrity within both the school and the wider social environment. The purpose of highlighting this issue is twofold: to preserve educational and Islamic values as the main behavioral guidelines, and to protect students from harmful actions that can negatively affect their well-being. Overall, this reflects a strong commitment to taking corrective action in order to create a bullying-free environment in accordance with ethical principles and religious teachings.

At MTs Alkhairaat Sigimpu, there are two forms of bullying that harm students psychologically and socially, namely verbal and non-verbal bullying. Verbal bullying is carried out through intentionally degrading speech, such as mocking, insults, giving derogatory nicknames, and spreading rumors. These actions contradict the teachings of noble character (*akhlaq al-karimah*) because they can destroy the victim's self-esteem and confidence.

Meanwhile, non-verbal bullying consists of behaviors that are more difficult to detect but equally harmful, such as social exclusion, threatening stares (intimidation),

and damaging others' belongings. Both forms of bullying represent serious behavioral deviations that hinder the development of students' potential, and therefore require immediate and serious intervention.

The Madrasah principal and all staff acknowledge that bullying contradicts the educational values and Islamic principles that form the foundation of the institution. Therefore, prompt intervention is essential to protect students while also maintaining the integrity of the institution. This commitment is realized through preventive and educational measures aimed at creating a conducive school environment that supports the optimal development of students.

4.2 Participatory Leadership of the Madrasah Principal in Addressing Bullying

The participatory leadership adopted by the principal of MTs Alkhairaat Sigimpu represents an innovative strategy that emphasizes the active involvement of all school stakeholders in decision-making and the implementation of bullying prevention programs. This approach goes beyond conventional authoritarian models, ensuring that the handling of bullying cases is no longer limited to the authority of the principal or guidance and counseling teachers alone, but is carried out in a more comprehensive and open manner. Students become more willing to report incidents because they believe their voices are valued, while resolution processes—including mediation and the imposition of sanctions—are determined through collective deliberation rather than unilateral decisions. As a result, repeated bullying cases have significantly decreased, while also fostering an inclusive and supportive school culture.

The anti-bullying policy developed through deliberation among the board of teachers, students, and parents has resulted in more equitable decisions with a high level of legitimacy. Qualitatively, this approach has successfully transformed the school culture by empowering students as "Agents of Goodness." As a result, the prevention paradigm has shifted from enforced compliance driven by fear of sanctions to a collective ethical awareness of mutual responsibility and care.

These positive changes are reflected in an increase in reported cases, driven by students' sense of safety and trust in the fairness of the school system. In addition, the recurrence rate (recidivism) of cases has significantly decreased due to a consistent restorative approach that actively involves parents, enabling perpetrators to gain a deeper understanding of the consequences of their actions.

Although this participatory leadership model faces challenges such as teachers' heavy teaching loads and a prevailing culture of silence within the school community, this approach has proven effective in building a collective sense of ownership over school safety. Through a comprehensive distribution of authority, the Guidance and Counseling (BK) team is now fully supported as the main driving force, actively coordinating with classroom teachers, parents, and students who are assigned as "School Agents of Goodness." The active involvement of all these elements has created an effective early detection system, shifting the paradigm of bullying management from being solely the responsibility of individual actors (BK teachers) to becoming a shared

responsibility across the entire madrasah ecosystem.

In concrete terms, the principal of MTs Alkhairaat Sigimpu implements this leadership consistently by holding regular teacher council meetings as an inclusive deliberation forum for every strategic decision. In these forums, teachers who interact directly with students in classrooms and dormitories are actively involved in providing real-world perspectives, discussing fair sanctions, and formulating appropriate restorative mediation strategies. This approach has transformed teachers' roles from mere implementers of instructions into fully responsible stakeholders, ensuring that every policy produced is holistic, carries strong legitimacy, and is fully supported by majority consensus.

The Guidance and Counseling (BK) teacher is officially appointed as the central coordinator with full authority to lead the Anti-Bullying Task Force and to manage restorative mediation interventions in a holistic manner. This participatory leadership strategy has proven effective in creating a school ecosystem that is transparent, accountable, and inclusive at MTs Alkhairaat Sigimpu. Through a clear distribution of roles, open deliberation, and an anonymous reporting system, all elements of the madrasah—from leadership, teachers, and students to parents—now share a collective sense of responsibility (sense of ownership) in fostering a culture of mutual care to ensure a safe and supportive learning environment.

5. Conclusion

The principal of MTs Alkhairaat Sigimpu implements participatory leadership in addressing verbal bullying (mockery and insults) as well as non-verbal

bullying (exclusion and intimidation) by involving the entire school community, particularly teachers and the Guidance and Counseling (BK) unit. Through a firm stance grounded in religious values and educational ethics, this approach has successfully united the institution's commitment to identifying cases based on factual conditions in the field in order to maintain a safe and dignified madrasah environment.

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