



Implementing Situational Leadership by School Principals to Enhance the Performance of Early Childhood Education Teachers

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Abstract

This study aims to describe and analyze the implementation of situational leadership of school principals in improving teacher performance at PAUD Pesantren Anak Sholeh Darul Qur'an Kalianda, Lampung. The research approach used is qualitative descriptive, with data collection through observation techniques, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Data analysis is carried out through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing which are systematically compiled based on field findings. The results of the study show that the implementation of situational leadership by school principals has a strategic role in increasing the effectiveness of teacher performance and creating a conducive, collaborative, and productive work environment. The implementation of situational leadership is reflected in four main styles, namely: (1) telling, providing clear directions to teachers in the implementation of tasks; (2) selling, encouraging teacher responsibility and motivation without pressure; (3) participating, strengthening teachers' participation in the decision-making process; and (4) delegating, providing trust and delegation of authority according to the capacity of each teacher..

Keywords: Situational Leadership; Teacher Performance; Educational Management

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan dan menganalisis implementasi kepemimpinan situasional kepala sekolah dalam meningkatkan kinerja guru di PAUD Pesantren Anak Sholeh Darul Qur'an Kalianda, Lampung. Pendekatan penelitian yang digunakan adalah kualitatif deskriptif, dengan pengumpulan data melalui teknik observasi, wawancara mendalam, dan dokumentasi. Analisis data dilakukan melalui tahapan reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan yang disusun secara sistematis berdasarkan temuan lapangan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa penerapan kepemimpinan situasional oleh kepala sekolah memiliki peran strategis dalam meningkatkan efektivitas kinerja guru serta menciptakan lingkungan kerja yang kondusif, kolaboratif, dan produktif. Implementasi kepemimpinan situasional tercermin dalam empat gaya utama, yaitu: (1) telling, memberikan arahan yang jelas kepada guru dalam pelaksanaan tugas; (2) selling, mendorong tanggung jawab dan motivasi guru tanpa tekanan; (3) participating, memperkuat partisipasi guru dalam proses pengambilan keputusan; dan (4) delegating, memberikan kepercayaan dan pelimpahan wewenang sesuai kapasitas masing-masing guru. Dengan demikian, model kepemimpinan situasional terbukti efektif dan relevan dalam.

Kata Kunci: Kepemimpinan Situasional; Kinerja Guru; Manajemen; Pendidikan

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INTRODUCTION

In the practice of early childhood education (PAUD), the application of situational leadership by school principals faces various real problems in the field.¹ One of the main problems is the differences in the character, ability, and educational background of PAUD teachers.² In many institutions, there are still teachers who do not have academic qualifications according to national standards, while others are experienced and professional.³ These diverse conditions require school principals to be able to adjust their leadership style according to the level of competence and motivation of teachers.⁴ However, in reality, many principals still find it difficult to apply this flexibility, so the leadership approach applied is often ineffective in improving teacher performance. In addition, there are still many school principals who apply traditional leadership patterns, tend to be authoritarian and less participatory.⁵ Two-way communication between principals and teachers has not been built optimally, so teachers are often not involved in the decision-making process.

Another problem that has worsened the situation is the low motivation and professionalism of some PAUD teachers due to low welfare and lack of training opportunities.⁶ In conditions like this, school principals are required to be able to adjust the approach between giving firm direction (telling) and building work spirit through persuasive communication (selling).⁷ However, not all school principals have adequate interpersonal skills to carry out this. On the other hand, training on the concept of situational leadership is still rarely given to school principals, so their understanding of the application of contextual leadership styles is still limited. As a result, the effectiveness of situational leadership has not been fully achieved, and efforts to improve the performance of PAUD teachers are not optimal.

A number of previous studies have examined the application of situational leadership in the context of education, especially in an effort to improve teacher performance. Mohammad Wahdan as the initiators of situational leadership theory explained that the effectiveness of a

¹ Ahmad Matinul Haq and Erny Roesminingsih, "Situational Leadership Skills of Foundation Heads in Human Resource Development for Early Childhood Education," *Munaddhomah: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam* 5, no. 1 (2024): 26–40.

² Anita Kresnawaty et al., "Implementation of P5 Project in Paud: Curriculum Innovation and Assessment System for Character Education," *IJOBBA: International Journal of Bunga Bangsa Cirebon* 3, no. 2 (2024): 279–90.

³ Sana Iqbal and Akhtar Ali, "Education and Professional Development: Opportunities and Challenges for in-Service Teachers: A Review," *Gomal University Journal of Research* 40, no. 1 (2024): 117–33.

⁴ Letambari Godwin Lenée et al., "Communication and Leadership Styles for Effective Employee Motivation and Performance Management in Select Secondary Schools in the Post-COVID-19 Era," *GVU Journal of Research and Development* 1, no. 1 (2024): 39–54.

⁵ Muhammad Rafiq-uz-Zaman et al., "Comparative Analysis of Authoritative and Democratic Leadership Styles and Their Impact on School Management Effectiveness," *Inverge Journal of Social Sciences* 4, no. 2 (2025): 105–17.

⁶ I. Gusti Ngurah Darmawan et al., *Indonesian Education: Past, Present, and Future* (Taylor & Francis, 2024), <https://books.google.com>.

⁷ Thomas William Wrege, "Understanding How Communication Practices Led by the Head of School Inform the Culture of a Christian Elementary Staff" (PhD Thesis, Concordia University Wisconsin, 2024), <https://search.proquest.com>.

leader depends on his ability to adapt his leadership style to the level of readiness, maturity, and motivation of his subordinates.⁸ This theory was then widely adapted in the world of education to explain how school principals can play the role of leaders who are adaptive to the characteristics and needs of teachers under their leadership. Furthermore, Evi Kurniasari et al. emphasized that the flexibility of leadership style has a positive correlation with improving teachers' performance and work motivation. Leaders who are able to adjust their leadership style are considered more effective in creating a conducive and productive work atmosphere.⁹ In the context of early childhood education, Amy M. Moore found that school principals who implement situational leadership by considering teachers' competency and motivation levels can increase learning effectiveness while strengthening a collaborative work climate.¹⁰

A similar study was conducted by Andini Rianti which shows that the application of four situational leadership styles telling, selling, participating, and delegating has a significant effect on improving the performance of PAUD teachers in Indonesia. Principals who are able to apply these four styles proportionally are considered more successful in guiding teachers towards increasing professionalism.¹¹ This finding is in line with Rahmawati and Nurhayati (2021) who highlight that although there are still limitations in leadership training for PAUD principals, the implementation of situational leadership is still effective in increasing job satisfaction, responsibility, and collaboration within educational institutions.¹²

The novelty or novelty of the research lies in the contextual focus and applicative approach used in analyzing situational leadership practices in Islamic educational institutions based on Islamic boarding schools, especially PAUD Pesantren Anak Sholeh Darul Qur'an Kalianda Lampung. Different from previous studies that generally discuss situational leadership in the context of public schools or conventional formal education, this study highlights the integration of spiritual values, pesantren culture, and adaptive leadership principles in improving the performance of early childhood teachers. Another novelty of this research is its approach that not only examines situational leadership styles theoretically, but also explores the social and emotional dimensions that emerge in the relationship between principals and teachers in religious values-based educational environments.

Thus, this study expands the understanding of how the leadership style of telling, selling, participating, and delegating can be applied contextually in a work atmosphere that is loaded with family values, spirituality, and typical pesantren. In addition, this research makes a

⁸ Mohammad Wahdan, *Leadership in the Company's Activity Management System*, n.d., accessed December 3, 2025, http://eprints.kname.edu.ua/68884/1/4%20m073_Wahdan%20Mohammad.pdf.

⁹ Evi Kurniasari et al., "Transformational Leadership, Work Motivation, and School Climate as Predictors of Teacher Performance: A Quantitative Study in Public Primary Schools of Tempel Subdistrict, Sleman Regency, Indonesia," *Journal of Innovation and Research in Primary Education* 4, no. 3 (2025): 620–29.

¹⁰ Amy M. Moore, *Exploring Leadership Competencies of School Principals of High and Low-Performing K-12 Schools in Delaware: A Qualitative Case Study* (American College of Education, 2025), <https://search.proquest.com>.

¹¹ Andini Rianti, "Factors Influencing Teachers' Readiness In Implementing The Independent Curriculum In Indonesia," *JPI (Jurnal Pendidikan Indonesia)* 14, no. 2 (2025): 454–66.

¹² Syamsul Ghufuron et al., "Evaluating the Impact of Teachers' Personal and Professional Resources in Elementary Education on School-Based Human Resource Management: A Case Study in Indonesia," *Sage Open* 14, no. 1 (2024): 21582440241231049, <https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440241231049>.

practical contribution through a model of situational leadership implementation that is oriented towards a balance between professionalism and spirituality of early childhood education teachers, which has not been explored much in previous studies. While previous research has tended to emphasize the technical aspects of performance improvement, this study highlights the synergy between situational leadership styles and character formation and intrinsic motivation of teachers in the Islamic educational environment.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive design, because it aims to deeply understand the application of situational leadership of school principals in improving teacher performance at PAUD Pesantren Anak Sholeh Darul Qur'an Kalianda, Lampung. This approach was chosen so that the researcher can explore the meaning and process behind the leadership practices carried out by school principals in a real context.¹³ The research informants consisted of principals, teachers, and staff selected through purposive sampling based on the criteria of experience, direct involvement in learning activities, and willingness to provide in-depth information. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation, then analyzed interactively with the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing according to the Miles and Huberman model.¹⁴

To maintain the validity of the data, this study applies triangulation of sources and techniques by comparing the results of interviews, observations, and documentation from various informants. The validity of the results is also strengthened through member checking, which is confirming research findings to informants to ensure the accuracy of the data.¹⁵ The entire research process was carried out by paying attention to research ethics, including maintaining the confidentiality of the informant's identity and obtaining voluntary participation consent. With this methodology, the research is expected to be able to provide a clear and contextual picture of the effectiveness of situational leadership of school principals in improving the performance of PAUD teachers and contributing to the development of adaptive Islamic education leadership models in the era of globalization.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Development of PAS Darul Qur'an and the Role of Leadership in Building Public Trust

The Pesantren Anak Sholeh (PAS) Darul Qur'an Early Childhood Education (PAUD) was established in 2011 and is currently the only PAS institution based in Lampung. At the time of its founding, the surrounding community was not accustomed to enrolling their children in PAUD institutions, making it a unique challenge for the school principal and teaching staff to introduce Early Childhood Education through various activities. Over time, the community became more open, and PAS Darul Qur'an gained trust as an Islamic-based Early Childhood

¹³ Sumadi Suryabrata, *Metodologi Penelitian* (PT. Raja. Grafindo, 2005).

¹⁴ Matthew B. Miles, "Qualitative Data Analysis: An Expanded Sourcebook," *Thousand Oaks*, 1994, <https://books.google.com>.

¹⁵ Matthew B. Miles and A. Michael Huberman, *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Expanded Sourcebook* (sage, 1994), <https://books.google.com>.

Education institution. Furthermore, PAS Darul Qur'an has undergone four leadership changes up to the present. Currently, the institution is led by Suryati, with three class teachers and 38 students. The leader bears a great responsibility due to the strategic role they play in determining the direction of the organization/institution they lead. Therefore, a leader must possess authority and competence in formulating innovative steps that can effectively address the needs of the community.^{16,17}

The results of the interview with the school principal revealed that the current number of enrolled students is the highest throughout the leadership period. This achievement has brought a sense of gratitude and further motivation to continue improving the quality of the institution. The principal is increasingly motivated to apply a better leadership style to maintain the community's trust in PAS Darul Qur'an as the best non-formal educational institution for their children. This success also serves as a push to continue innovating and making strategic decisions that will support the institution's growth in the future. Additionally, the results of the interview and observation also indicated that the situational leadership approach applied by the principal at PAS Darul Qur'an has positively impacted the quality of teaching and the number of students. The principal uses an adaptive approach based on the individual needs and the situations faced. This outcome is evidenced by the increased productivity of educators and the growing interest of students in joining the institution. Bizany, Z., et al. further supports this, emphasizing that situational leadership styles can be a key factor in improving organizational performance. With flexibility in approach, the principal is able to adjust leadership styles according to the institution's needs and the characteristics of the staff, making it highly suitable for implementation in Early Childhood Education institutions.¹⁸

Moreover, the principal of PAS Darul Qur'an consistently practices leadership with family values, emphasizing fairness, motivation, and providing guidance and encouragement to the teachers so that they can perform their tasks to the best of their ability. This approach is more easily achieved due to the younger age of the teachers compared to the principal, fostering a relationship of mutual respect and giving the principal the opportunity to demonstrate wisdom and greater attention to all staff members. The compassionate and wise leadership of the principal plays a significant role in creating a conducive work atmosphere. The implementation of situational leadership at PAS Darul Qur'an has also proven to be effective in managing the educational process. The principal is able to adjust the approach to the dynamics present, ensuring that the learning process takes place optimally. Based on observations, all educational activities and interactions within the institution are carried out well and efficiently. The selection of appropriate teaching methods, effective time management, and smooth communication among all parties involved serve as clear evidence

¹⁶ Nur Fazillah, "Konsep Kepemimpinan Pendidikan Islam," *INTELEKTUALITA: Journal of Education Sciences and Teacher Training* 12, no. 1 (2023): 172–74.

¹⁷ Athia Nur Kamilah and Miftah Hur Rahman Zh, "The Management of Study Time and Part-Time Work for Sharia Economics Students Uin Sunan Ampel Surabaya," *Proceeding IConIGC: International Conference on Islamic and Global Civilization Faculty of Islamic Studies – University of Islam Malang THE*, 2022, 52–61.

¹⁸ Zibran Bizany, "Penerapan Pendekatan Kepemimpinan Situasional Oleh Kepala Sekolah SMK Islamiyah Ciputat," *Management of Education: Manajemen Pendidikan Islam* 10, no. 1 (2024): 77–84.

of the successful application of this leadership style, which has contributed to improving the quality of teaching and the learning experience for the students. The application of this leadership style can be illustrated as follows.

The situational leadership style applied by the principal in this indicator focuses on efforts to maintain and improve the quality of education at PAS Darul Qur'an. Based on field studies, the principal applies this style primarily to teachers who have recently joined the institution. Given that these teachers are relatively new and may not fully understand the culture and system in place, the principal feels the need to provide a deeper and more detailed explanation of the tasks and responsibilities to be carried out in the classroom. This explanation covers various aspects, from the teaching methods that need to be implemented to the ways of interacting with students, ensuring that the teaching and learning process remains effective and enjoyable, even as the teachers are still in the adjustment phase.

The principal also organizes routine morning briefings before the teaching process begins. This activity serves a dual purpose: to provide clear and comprehensive guidance to all teachers and to motivate them so they feel more prepared and energized for the day. With structured direction at the start of the day, the teachers feel more confident and focused in carrying out their tasks. This approach aligns with the views of Taufiqurahman et al., who state that the telling method in situational leadership is highly effective in providing motivation and support to teachers, as well as to policymakers, in addressing challenges that may hinder their performance and job satisfaction. Through this approach, the principal provides clear and specific instructions, helping teachers not only understand their tasks but also find appropriate solutions to overcome various obstacles that may arise during the learning process.¹⁹ The telling style also allows the principal to provide direct guidance that can boost the confidence of new teachers, preventing them from feeling overwhelmed by tasks they may perceive as difficult to accomplish. The principal emphasizes the importance of open communication between themselves and the teachers, so any issues that may arise in the classroom can be quickly identified and addressed together. Through these steps, the principal aims to create an environment that supports professionalism and high work enthusiasm among educators, ultimately contributing to the achievement of better learning outcomes.

The situational leadership style applied by the principal at PAS Darul Qur'an is clearly demonstrated when the teacher of Class Abu Bakar requested leave from school. With a flexible attitude, the principal assigned the teacher of Class Ali bin Abi Thalib to merge the students from Class Abu Bakar into his class. Before assigning this task, the principal first asked Teacher Ali bin Abi Thalib about his readiness, recognizing that a teacher's preparedness greatly influences the smooth execution of the task. The principal did not force the teacher to accept the task but instead provided space for the teacher to consider and assess whether they were ready to take on the additional responsibility. This approach made the teacher feel valued and entrusted with responsibility, resulting in the task being carried out with full commitment.

¹⁹ Hafizh Taufiqurahman et al., "Implementasi Kepemimpinan Situasional Kepala Sekolah PAUD IT Bait Nurul Ilmi," *Jurnal Pendidikan Tambusai* 6, no. 2 (2022): 14624–30.

As a result, the students transferred from Class Abu Bakar to Class Ali bin Abi Thalib showed high enthusiasm in participating in the lessons. This indicates that the task was carried out smoothly without diminishing the quality of teaching. This reflects the implementation of the selling style, where the principal provides motivation and encouragement to the teacher to carry out the task with full awareness and responsibility. This leadership style not only assigns tasks but also ensures that the teacher feels prepared and motivated to carry out the task. It highlights the importance of situational leadership for the advancement of an organization. As explained by Khoironi & Hamid, a flexible leadership style, tailored to individual conditions and needs, plays a significant role in driving the overall progress of the organization, as it strengthens the sense of responsibility and ownership among members for the tasks assigned.²⁰

The situational leadership style of the principal at PAS Darul Qur'an involves teachers in decision-making regarding matters directly related to the school's activities and development. For instance, the principal invites teachers to participate in determining the culminating activity for a specific theme. This step is taken to provide a sense of involvement and appreciation for the teachers, so they feel they play an important role in the planning and implementation of such activities. Involving teachers in decision-making not only aims to increase their sense of responsibility but also motivates them to be more enthusiastic in carrying out their teaching duties. The decisions made collectively create a sense of ownership and strengthen the relationship between the principal and the teachers, ultimately enhancing the quality of work and the overall atmosphere of the school. This participating leadership style is also evident in meetings between the school and parents. In this activity, the principal not only involves teachers but also the school committee, who plays a significant role in the success of the event. This approach reflects the principal's understanding that collaboration among various parties is key to achieving shared goals. By involving parents, the committee, and teachers, the principal strives to create a more inclusive work environment, where every individual feels valued and given the opportunity to contribute to the development of the institution.

Implementation of Situational Leadership Style in Teacher Management, Decision Making, and Work Environment Formation

The implementation of this leadership style does not solely rely on teacher involvement in decision-making but also incorporates the use of the telling and selling styles. The telling style is used to provide clear directions and manage task implementation, while the selling style is employed to motivate and inspire teachers to be more enthusiastic in performing their duties. Through the combination of these three leadership styles, the principal ensures that teachers and other stakeholders not only understand their tasks but also feel motivated to contribute more towards achieving the institution's goals.²¹ An analysis of the application of

²⁰ Nur Khoironi and Abdulloh Hamid, "Kepemimpinan Situasional Dalam Pendidikan Islam," *Jurnal MUDARRISUNA* 10, no. 4 (2020): 670.

²¹ Siti Chomsiatin Binti Ni'matul Ummah et al., "Internalization of Social Care Character among Female Santri through the Safari Dakwah Program," *International Journal of Learning and Education* 1, no. 1 (2025): 47–54.

this situational leadership style shows that the principal utilizes the flexibility of leadership styles to adjust their approach to the existing conditions. In this case, involving teachers and the school committee in decision-making is a form of adaptation to the evolving needs of the institution. By providing opportunities for teachers to participate, the principal not only strengthens their involvement but also enhances the effectiveness of decision-making, as decisions made collectively are more likely to be accepted and effectively implemented. This approach also minimizes potential resistance to change, as teachers feel they have greater control over the direction of the school's development.

Overall, the situational leadership style applied by the principal of PAS Darul Qur'an School leads to improvements in the quality of teaching and school management. The involvement of various stakeholders in decision-making fosters a sense of shared responsibility, which is crucial for the long-term success of an educational institution. This approach also reflects an understanding that every individual in the school plays a vital role in creating an effective and productive learning environment. Additionally, it underscores the importance of clear and open communication to ensure all parties work toward the same goals.

The principal's situational leadership style is implemented by delegating tasks to team members, while considering the capacity and abilities of each teacher receiving the task. This delegation is not only aimed at distributing the workload but also ensuring that each team member can contribute maximally according to their expertise and assigned responsibilities. By delegating tasks, the principal ensures that work, which cannot be completed individually by either the principal or the teachers, can still be accomplished effectively through solid and organized teamwork. This delegation also has a positive impact on the professional development of teachers. When given additional responsibilities, teachers gain new experiences that can enhance their skills in management and task organization. These experiences increase their confidence, which contributes to an improvement in their performance in carrying out teaching duties. Furthermore, by providing teachers with the space to make decisions and carry out tasks more independently, the principal also encourages them to take on more responsibility and become more proactive in innovating the teaching process.

Through the delegating leadership style, the principal not only facilitates the smooth operation of the school but also plays a role in developing the individual capacities of the teachers. This helps create a more competent team that is better prepared to face challenges in the educational environment. In the long term, task delegation can strengthen teamwork, improve efficiency in achieving institutional goals, and enrich the professional experiences of each team member, ultimately contributing to better quality education. Based on the description above, the situational leadership style of the principal at PAS Darul Qur'an has a very positive impact, leading to an increase in the enthusiasm and performance of the teachers at the school. Moreover, the familial atmosphere within the institution is clearly evident in the interactions between the members of the school. This phenomenon aligns with the findings of

Fitriyani et al., who state that a leader is someone who possesses leadership abilities, meaning the capacity to influence others or groups regardless of the reasons behind it.²²

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that the situational leadership practiced by the principal of PAS Darul Qur'an Kalianda Lampung has significantly contributed to the improvement of institutional quality, particularly in enhancing teacher performance and strengthening community trust. The implementation of situational leadership is reflected through four key approaches: (a) the telling style, which provides clear, structured guidance for newly recruited teachers to ensure the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process; (b) the selling style, which employs persuasive communication to encourage teachers' readiness in assuming additional responsibilities, thereby fostering motivation and accountability; (c) the participating style, which involves teachers and relevant stakeholders, such as the school committee, in decision-making processes to promote collaborative engagement and shared ownership of institutional goals; and (d) the delegating style, which allocates tasks based on individual teacher competencies, supporting both operational efficiency and the professional growth of educators. Overall, the results indicate that the situational leadership model adopted by the principal not only enhances teacher productivity and work enthusiasm but also strengthens collegial relationships and reinforces the community's confidence in the institution. Consequently, PAS Darul Qur'an Kalianda Lampung has developed into a credible, adaptive, and effective Islamic-based Early Childhood Education institution capable of responding to internal and external challenges in a sustainable manner.

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²² Fitriyani Fitriyani et al., "Analisis Gaya Kepemimpinan Kepala Sekolah Yang Ideal," *El-Ghiroh* 19, no. 2 (2021): 177–85, <https://doi.org/10.37092/el-ghiroh.v19i2.332>.

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