

**PRINCIPAL LEADERSHIP TO KEEP TEACHERS MOTIVATED IN
VIRTUAL TEACHING THROUGH PANDEMIC DISRUPTION
(A CASE STUDY OF AL FATH ISLAMIC JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL)**

Andry Priharta,
Faculty of Economics and Business,
University of Muhammadiyah Jakarta, Indonesia

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Nur Asni Gani,
Faculty of Economics and Business,
University of Muhammadiyah Jakarta, Indonesia

Corresponding Authors:
andry.priharta@umj.ac.id

Medo Maulianza,
Faculty of Economics and Communication,
Bina Nusantara University, Indonesia

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Jaharuddin,
Faculty of Economics and Business,
University of Muhammadiyah Jakarta, Indonesia

Rony Edward Utama,
Faculty of Economics and Business,
University of Muhammadiyah Jakarta, Indonesia

Abstract: *Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has brought many changes to all industries, including schools. The place where teachers, students meet in the same class, regular face-to-face meetings with parents, and everything changed quickly. This sudden change was due to implementation regulation by the Ministry of Health regarding large-scale social restrictions, including face-to-face restrictions at schools. School meetings are still being held through various online media to avoid the spread of COVID-19, which continues to increase daily and attacks various ages. This rapid change is testing the leaders and the Leadership at Al Fath Islamic Junior High School, South Tangerang, in motivating teachers to continue to innovate in educating students during the pandemic. This study uses a qualitative method with a case study. Data is collected through interviews with principals and teachers. In conclusion, the principal identifies the primary resource, namely the Learning Management System, conducts refresher training for teachers, and motivates teachers in changing the way of teaching and learning by bringing in experts, providing delegation to the team, and continuing to receive input from parents regarding the learning methods applied during the pandemic.*

Keywords: Leadership, Motivation, School, Pandemic.

Introduction

Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic emerged in China in 2019 and spread evenly throughout the world, then spread to Indonesia in early 2020. This pandemic condition forced the government to implement Large-Scale Social Restrictions to prevent the transmission of the COVID-19, which has continued to increase since the end of 2019.

Large-Scale Social Restriction, often abbreviated as PSBB (*Pembatasan Sosial Berskala Besar*), put into effect according to regulations issued by the Ministry of Health in the Acceleration of Handling COVID-19 that they can be implemented immediately in various regions. The PSBB rules in handling COVID-19 are recorded in Minister of Health Regulation No. 9 of 2020. The implementation of this regulation is closing down schools and workplaces, restrictions on religious activities, restrictions on activities in public places or facilities, restrictions on socio-cultural activities, restrictions on transportation modes, and restrictions on social as well as cultural activities, other activities such as wedding celebrations, social gathering and other kinds of gathering.

The health minister's regulation number 9 of 2020 was enforced immediately, and it was implemented starting in March 2020, which caused schools to dismiss their students in the middle of the learning process. Various schools have made various efforts to prepare various materials to be delivered to students using distance learning methods.

As a result of the implementation of the PSBB, distance learning caused problems for the world of education. The incompleteness of facilities and infrastructure for the distance learning process is an obstacle for schools, teachers, students, and parents.

Schools, especially junior high schools with only three years of study time, should consider various efforts to carry out this teaching and learning process. The limitations of teachers as educators in teaching achievement, beginning with the limitations of communication networks such as the internet, less focus when teaching from home than at school. For students who are accustomed to meeting teachers in the classroom and getting direct guidance, studying from student home itself is an obstacle to concentrate when having limited means of communication because there are 2 or 3 brothers or sisters in one house who carry out the learning process at the same time and in different school years.

These obstacles occur not only in public schools but also in private schools. Private schools with teachers and students at a higher social level and more facilitated learning from home have the same problem.

This change in the learning and teaching process is a problem for teachers to keep teaching and educating students during the pandemic. For this reason, researchers want to dig deeper into school leadership. *Principal Leadership To Keep Teachers Motivated In Virtual Teaching Through Pandemic Disruption (Case Study of Al Fath Islamic Junior High School)*.

Theory and Concept

- **Leadership**

Many studies discuss leadership and leaders. They write about the theory of how to become a leader. Leadership theory focuses on the process of a leader in leading an organization and making his team the successor.

Many leadership theories build a leader to have a soul with strengths such as: "strong ethics and high moral standards, great self – organizational skills, efficient learner, nurtures growth in employees, fosters connection and belonging."

The situation faced by a leader can awaken the Spirit of Leadership in the leader. Various leaders with their leadership styles exist in leadership theory such as "behavioral theory of leadership, contingency theory of leadership, great man theory of leadership, management theory of leadership, participative theory of leadership, power theory of leadership, relationship theory of leadership."

This research focuses on two theories of leadership from many other leadership theories. The theory and the concept of leadership in this research is the relationship theory of leadership.

Leaders with leadership styles who use this relationship theory focus on their interactions and relationships with other people or the team they lead. The leader usually acts as a mentor, part of the team, to help them fulfill employee needs. Leaders like to create a positive atmosphere in their work environment with satisfying interpersonal relationships so that employees are willing to work with all their hearts.

This relationship theory describes a leader ready to help employees understand their work and encourage openness and the courage to take risks. Leaders build quality relationships and always create an atmosphere of "what we can create together." The assignment of this responsibility is usually highly appreciated by employees.

On this theory, the Chinese philosopher, Lau Tzu, says, "to lead people, walk behind them," In essence, this is what the relationship theory of leadership is trying to achieve: the workforce's empowerment through positive relationships.

- **Characteristic of relationship theory**

Relationship theory is built on the excellent relationship between the leader and the employees he leads. Leaders do not only talk about organizational success or efficiency in carrying out organizational activities. Leaders speak charismatically and build good relationships to be happy to perform their work with full responsibility.

Emotional connection is a keyword in relationship theory. It has been shown that some of the charismatic leaders in history used more emotional expressions, words, and images. For example, Martin Luther King said, "I have a dream," not "I have an idea" because the word dream is considered more emotional than the word idea.

- **The three types of relationship**

Popper (2004) states that there are three types of emotional relationships between leaders and employees in relationship theory as follows:

1. "Emotional relationships are not always progressive, and sometimes they can be regressive. A possible consequence of a traumatic experience is the significant decrease of differences between people, such as age, education, or social attitudes. This type of relationship can lead to the growth of charismatic leaders perceived as saviors when usually they are not due to a post-traumatic lack of rationale. An example of a regressive emotional relationship would be a case of Stockholm Syndrome.
2. Symbolic relations grow when leaders are expected to represent and emphasize specific messages, ideologies, and values. For example, the Allied Powers went to war in 1939 to fight against Nazism and fascism in the name of democracy, and Winston Churchill was the embodiment of British values at the time. Churchill is best remembered for his awe-inspiring speeches and gestures that have become symbolic of Allied victory over Nazi-Germany to this very day.
3. The regressive or symbolic explanations for leader-follower relations are more characteristic of descriptions of political or social leaders. The leadership style that best reflects the relationship theory between manager and employee, including a charismatic and emotional element, is the type known as developmental leadership. This leadership style is characterized by the emotional influence of leaders to encourage employees to be a better version of themselves than they were before their relations with the leader."

The relationship theory used in this study perceives the role of the principal as a leader in a school that was experiencing sudden changes in learning due to a pandemic situation that occurred over a relatively long period of more than 1.5 years. The principal motivates teachers and employees to continue playing their roles and providing the best service to students and parents.

Research Method

This study uses a qualitative method with a case study at Al Fath Islamic Junior High School in South Tangerang. The research location was chosen because it is one of the private Islamic schools established in almost 20 years, so researchers want to investigate how the school implements distance learning during the pandemic.

The research was conducted at Al Fath Islamic Junior High School, Cireundeu. The procedure of this research went through three stages. They are (1) data collection through interviews with the principal, informant, and one of the teachers; (2) data analysis; and (3) concluding.

Results And Discussion

- **Principal Leadership**

Leadership is the process of influencing others in an organization to achieve goals. Many leadership concepts are often used in leadership training: Be – Know –

Do. This concept which is stated in Poniman and Hadiyat (2015), is simple, meaning "If you want to Be a Leader, you must know and understand what leadership is and how to lead people effectively, and you must Do what you know and understand for leadership and how to lead people." This concept has a powerful message that an effective and successful leader must be everyone's wish and choice.

The pandemic in 2019 and attacked Indonesia in 2020 for about 1.5 years has shocked and attacked various businesses, including schools. Schools that usually hold face-to-face learning systems suddenly have to deliver it indirectly (online)—the online or daring learning system. According to the KBBI (Indonesian Dictionary), *daring* is an acronym for *dalam jaringan*. It is a learning process using computer networks, the internet, and various online media.

This change requires school leaders and teachers to think hard in delivering lessons to students, especially students of Al Fath Islamic Junior High School. As a school leader, The Principal, through his leadership process, makes various efforts to provide optimal learning delivery to students.

Based on the results of interviews regarding leadership with the informant, Mr. Aos Uswadi, who is the principal of the Al Fath Islamic Junior High School, it is explained that he is also a teacher in the field of science studies since 2010, was trusted as a teacher and assessment coordinator in 2012, was elected as deputy principal for curriculum in 2015, and has been the principal since 2018.

The above is a provision for Mr. Aos as the principal to lead, including teachers' motivation to deliver the best teaching activity to students, especially during this pandemic. Mr. Aos, in the early stages of implementing PSBB and the online learning process, also experienced some confusion, but as a leader, he pondered for a while, then held discussions with the team and empowered the existing resources in the school.

Al-Fath Islamic Junior High School, located in Cireunde Raya, Cireunde, Ciputat, Banten, has an organizational structure led by Mr. Aos as the principal accompanied by a vice principal and several coordinating teachers.

The principal maximizes his team's role in motivating educators, in this case, the teachers, to optimally deliver teaching activity to students and keep it interactive and exciting.

The principal utilizes existing resources in the school, which already has a Learning Management System (LMS) since 2015. This system has not been fully utilized, but almost all teachers attended LMS training in 2015.

For this reason, the principal called the IT team to provide teachers with LMS refresher training in order to deliver teaching materials to students. The principal also reminded teachers that delivering teaching materials through LMS is a great strength and minimizes parents' anxiety with learning methods during this pandemic.

The principal also held discussions with the team, especially the vice principal, regarding this LMS on the school curriculum's alignment and tried to make it interactive so that students still feel like a face-to-face learning activity.

The principal also receives feedback or input from teachers regarding the LMS to improve the learning process and conducts periodic layered discussions for solutions between the principal and vice-principal through the WhatsApp group to obtain a faster response. Discussions with teachers were carried out weekly and monthly, including discussions through the WhatsApp group.

The principal also carries out the delegation process to teachers, especially homeroom teachers, in dealing with obstacles or questions from parents. If questions cannot be answered, the homeroom teacher can discuss them with the vice-principal and principal.

- **Motivation**

The motivations carried out by school principals start from being a role model for teachers by being on time at virtual meetings with students, looking neat and attractive, delivering teaching materials with appropriate vocal variety, and delivering attractive examples of exercises to grab students' attention.

The principal realizes that providing an exciting learning process is not necessarily owned by all teachers. For this reason, the principal invited motivators who are also educational practitioners from outside the school to provide information or tips and tricks in delivering teaching materials to junior high school students.

The principal always holds regular meetings in his team, with teachers and education staff such as the IT team, administrators, cleaners, and school guards.

The principal and the teacher team also hold periodic meetings and parent representatives in a forum held for all students called the Parent-Teacher Conference. This meeting aims to provide information to parents about learning methods delivered by the school and receive input from parents.

This established communication keeps improving the services through the online learning process, including, if necessary, extracurricular activities that require face-to-face meetings with strict health protocols.

This motivation can be elevated because of the leadership carried out by the principal with a leadership style called team management. In Poiman and Hadiyat, 2015, it is stated that managers have a significant concern for people and production.

- **School Achievement during the Pandemic**

Al Fath Islamic Junior High School is known for its myriad of achievements, and pandemic does not diminish the role of teachers and students to keep up the excellent work during the pandemic. Principals and teachers continue to involve students in national-scale competitions such as spelling-bee, English conversation, and even skill competitions such as educational games, which Al-Fath Junior High School students can still win.

Conclusion

As the highest leader in the Al-Fath Islamic Junior High School, the principal takes an important role, especially during this pandemic, facilitated with the LMS that has been available since 2015. The principal has optimized this LMS by conducting refresher training for teachers to recall its use, and it is successfully and smoothly used.

The principal motivates teachers and school teams to deliver students' services and learning activities.

The process of delegating to the team, starting from the deputy principal, coordinating teacher, to homeroom teachers and school teams such as IT, admin, and support, is also one of the keys to the principal's leadership style of team management.

Periodic meetings with parent representatives or with all parents about two times a semester become a forum for schools to convey learning methods and receive input from parents.

Optimizing school leaders and teachers in delivering school materials and applying the technology enables the school to produce students who gain achievements at the national level competition for English subjects such as speaking-bee, English conversation, and online games even though learning is conducted online.

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