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COMPARATIVE STUDY OF LEADERSHIP STYLES IN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

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Abstract

Effective leadership is increasingly becoming a key concern in the context of Merdeka Belajar (Freedom to Learn) policy, which provides greater opportunities for educational institutions to innovate and adapt to the needs of local communities. The role of leadership in the education sector significantly impacts educator performance and the overall success of the institution. A principal who implements effective leadership principles can improve teacher performance and student learning outcomes. This study aims to analyze the differences in leadership styles between public and private elementary school principals in the context of the Merdeka Belajar era. The method used in this study is comparative, with data collected through interviews, questionnaires, and observations involving principals, teachers, and staff at both types of schools. The results show that public schools tend to implement a transactional leadership style, while private schools prioritize a transformational leadership style. This research is expected to provide insight into how both types of institutions should adopt a more flexible leadership approach. In public schools, principals are expected to be more open to innovation and input from various parties, and to create a broader space for collaboration between teachers and students.

Keywords: Leadership Style, Elementary School Principal, Public Elementary School, Private Elementary School, Independent Learning Era

Abstrak

Kepemimpinan yang efektif semakin menjadi perhatian utama dalam konteks Merdeka Belajar, di mana kebijakan ini memberikan peluang yang lebih besar bagi lembaga pendidikan untuk berinovasi dan beradaptasi dengan kebutuhan masyarakat setempat. Peran kepemimpinan dalam sektor pendidikan memiliki pengaruh yang besar terhadap kinerja para pendidik dan keberhasilan lembaga secara keseluruhan. Seorang kepala sekolah yang menerapkan prinsip-prinsip kepemimpinan yang efektif dapat meningkatkan kinerja guru serta hasil belajar siswa. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis perbedaan gaya kepemimpinan antara Kepala Sekolah Dasar Negeri dan Swasta dalam konteks Era Merdeka Belajar. Metode yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini bersifat komparatif, dengan pengumpulan data melalui wawancara, kuesioner, dan observasi yang melibatkan kepala sekolah, guru, serta staf di kedua jenis sekolah tersebut. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa sekolah negeri cenderung menerapkan gaya kepemimpinan Transaksional, sementara sekolah swasta lebih mengedepankan gaya kepemimpinan Transformasional. Penelitian ini diharapkan dapat memberikan wawasan bahwa kedua jenis institusi sebaiknya menerapkan pendekatan kepemimpinan yang lebih fleksibel. Di sekolah negeri, kepala sekolah diharapkan lebih terbuka terhadap inovasi dan masukan dari berbagai pihak, serta menciptakan ruang kolaborasi yang lebih luas antara guru dan siswa.

Kata Kunci: Gaya Kepemimpinan, Kepala Sekolah Dasar, Sekolah Dasar Negeri, Sekolah Dasar Swasta, Era Merdeka Belajar



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INTRODUCTION

The principal plays a pivotal role in shaping the success of an educational institution. As leaders within the education sector, principals bear extensive responsibilities that encompass not only managerial functions but also the cultivation of a conducive learning environment. Hidayatullah highlighted that effective leadership significantly enhances the motivation of both teachers and students, thereby contributing to better academic performance. Similarly, Imron stressed that a critical component of successful educational leadership lies in the principal's capacity to inspire and motivate teachers to excel. Because only through the development of high-quality human resources can genuine human dignity be elevated and upheld. Teachers with high levels of competence are better equipped to deliver effective instruction to children. Accomplished school leaders employ diverse motivational strategies, including recognizing teachers' efforts through rewards, facilitating professional development opportunities, achieving clear objectives, and fostering a collaborative work culture.

School leaders hold a vital responsibility in fostering constructive relationships by providing clear guidance, positive reinforcement, and ongoing support to educators. By implementing effective leadership strategies, they cultivate an environment where teachers feel appreciated, motivated, and empowered to enhance their instructional practices. This approach has a profound influence on school performance and the overall quality of student learning outcomes. In the current educational landscape, the role of school leaders has gained increasing significance, particularly in addressing the challenges of the Era of Merdeka Belajar, where innovation and adaptability are essential for the success of educational institutions. As the driving force within the school, the principal is tasked with ensuring that all components of the institution operate effectively to achieve educational objectives, encompassing both the professional growth of teachers and the academic success of students.⁵

Effective leadership has become a central focus within the Merdeka Belajar framework, a policy that expands opportunities for educational institutions to innovate and adapt to the needs of

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¹ N. Hidayatullah, S Marsidin, and S Sulastri, "Studi Literatur: Manajemen Kelas Untuk Meningkatkan Motivasi Belajar Siswa," *Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Konseling* 4, no. 6 (2022): 10980–86, https://doi.org/10.31004/jpdk.v4i6.10177.

² A Ridho and M Imron, "Penerapan Metode Mind Mapping Dalam Upaya Peningkatan Hasil Belajar Siswa," *Journal Creativity* 1 (2023): 88–95, http://creativity.masmubatabata.com/index.php/creativity.

³ Didik Sugeng Widiarto, Siska Armawati Sufa, and Citra Rani Angga Riswari, "Pengaruh Peran Komunikasi Orang Tua Terhadap Keputusan Mahasiswa Baru Dalam Memilih Program Studi Di Perguruan Tinggi (Studi Kasus: Universitas Dr. Soetomo)," *Vol 3 No 2 (2019): 6th Edition* 2, no. 1 (2018): 53–64, https://doi.org/10.23960/metakom.v2i1.20.

⁴ D. B. Tambunan, D. A. Krisprimandoyo, and W Hartono, "Peningkatan Kompetensi Guru Sekolah Minggu Di Lingkungan Gereja HKBP Resort Surabaya Selatan," *Book Chapter Konservasi Pendidikan JIilid* 7, 2024, 23–43.

⁵ Mulyasa, Manajemen Pendidikan Karakter (Jakarta: Bumi Aksara, 2020).

their communities. Leadership exerts a profound impact on educators' performance and the overall success of educational institutions. Principals who demonstrate strong leadership capabilities can enhance both teacher performance and student learning outcomes. Studies that compare various leadership styles aim to uncover the critical distinctions between these approaches across different types of schools, examining their influence on work culture, school climate, and student achievement. The findings from such research offer valuable insights into the effectiveness of leadership within diverse organizational contexts.⁶

The Manyar sub-district hosts a variety of primary schools, encompassing both public and private institutions, each encountering distinct challenges and opportunities in their efforts to enhance educational quality. According to data from the local education office, the area is served by approximately 16 public primary schools and five private institutions. Within this setting, school principals bear a critical responsibility, as they are expected to lead initiatives aimed at improving educational standards, even when operating with constrained resources.

Research by Muntatsiroh and Hendriani reveals that principals in private educational institutions possess greater flexibility in adapting curricula and instructional methods compared to their counterparts in public institutions. Harahap et al., further demonstrate that principal leadership exerts a positive and significant influence on teacher performance. The findings suggest that improvements in principal leadership quality are directly associated with improvements in teacher performance. Moreover, effective leadership combined with a robust organizational culture significantly contributes to the effectiveness of teachers' instructional practices. Consequently, stronger principal leadership and organizational culture lead to more optimal teacher performance. Conversely, weak leadership and organizational culture can negatively affect teacher performance, potentially diminishing the overall quality of instruction.

The leadership style of principals and their ability to foster work motivation significantly and positively impact teacher job satisfaction, both independently and in combination. Sudrajat emphasizes that an organization's success is shaped by various internal and external factors, with motivation emerging as the most influential element in driving work efficiency. In this regard, motivation is often compared to the engine and steering wheel of a vehicle, symbolizing the driving

⁶ D Puspitasari et al., "Gaya Kepemimpinan Kepala Sekolah Dalam Peningkatan Kinerja Guru," *Munaddhomah: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam* 3, no. 1 (2022): 70–83, https://www.pasca.jurnalikhac.ac.id/index.php/munaddhomah/article/download/196/121/828.

⁷ A Muntatsiroh and S Hendriani, "Strategi Kepala Sekolah Dalam Memfasilitasi Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka Di SMKN 3 Sijunjung," *JKIP: Jurnal Kajian Ilmu Pendidikan* 3, no. 2 (2023): 100–106, http://journal.al-matani.com/index.php/jkip/index.

⁸ Rasyid Ridho Harahap et al., "Pengaruh Kepemimpinan Kepala Sekolah Dan Budaya Organisasi Terhadap Kinerja Guru," *Ideguru: Jurnal Karya Ilmiah Guru* 8, no. 2 SE-Research Articles (January 31, 2023): 226–31, https://doi.org/10.51169/ideguru.v8i2.537.

⁹ A Sudrajat, "Penerapan Kepemimpinan Kepala Sekolah Dalam Meningkatkan Kinerja Guru," *Journal on Education* 5, no. 3 (2023): 7245–65, https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.31004/joe.v5i3.1513.

force and guiding mechanism. The principal, as the leader, serves as the primary source of motivation, playing a pivotal role in aligning the performance of students and teachers with the broader objectives of the educational organization. Through effective leadership, principals have the capacity to advance school progress by fostering self-awareness and organizational insight.

This study will examine the differences in principal leadership styles at the primary level between public and private educational institutions within the framework of Merdeka Belajar. The research aims to identify the key elements that differentiate these leadership styles and evaluate their impact on educational quality. Accordingly, the study will analyze both the differences and similarities in leadership practices across the two types of schools. Furthermore, it seeks to uncover the factors influencing the leadership styles adopted in each context. By gaining deeper insight into these leadership approaches, the study aspires to provide valuable recommendations for the professional development of school leaders. The findings are anticipated to contribute positively to the advancement of education in the Manyar sub-district.

RESEARCH METHODS

The research on comparing principals' leadership styles in public and private primary schools within the Merdeka Belajar era employs a comparative descriptive method. This method seeks to describe and compare the leadership styles implemented in both types of schools and to analyze the factors influencing these styles. Data were gathered through interviews, questionnaires, and observations involving principals, teachers, and staff from public and private schools. The study was conducted during the odd semester of the 2024–2025 academic year at two schools: SD Muhammadiyah Manyar and UPT SDN 40 Gresik. The research subjects included teachers, students, and principals from both institutions. Data collection techniques encompassed interviews, questionnaires, observations, and document analysis. The research on Comparative Study of Leadership Styles in Public and Private Elementary Schools is depicted in the following diagram:

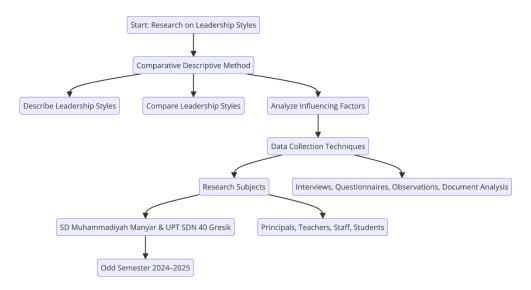


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Differences in Leadership Styles between Muhammadiyah Manyar Primary School and UPT SDN 40 Gresik

This study identified notable differences in the leadership styles of principals in public and private primary schools within the Merdeka Belajar framework. Public school principals predominantly adopt a transactional leadership style, emphasizing the achievement of government-mandated objectives, whereas private school principals tend to employ a transformational approach, fostering teacher innovation and professional development.¹⁰ Findings from interviews and observations conducted in two schools reveal that each principal tailors their leadership style to align with the unique characteristics of their respective institutions. These differences are summarized in the table below:

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M. S Mulyadi, "Penggunaan Model Pembelajaran Peer Tutoring Dalam Mengatasi Kesulitan Belajar Siswa Pada Mata Pelajaran Pendidikan Agama Islam Di Kelas X IPS 1 SMA Negeri 5 Pamekasan," Program Studi Pendidikan Agama Islam Di Kelas X IPS 1 SMA Negeri 5 Pamekasan," Program Studi Pendidikan Agama Islam, 2020, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jnc.2020.125798%0Ahttps://doi.org/10.1016/j.smr.2020.02.002%0Ahttp://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/810049%0Ahttp://doi.wiley.com/10.1002/anie.197505391%0Ahttp://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/B9780857090409500205%0Ahttp://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/B9780857090409500205%0Ahttp://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/B9780857090409500205%0Ahttp://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/B9780857090409500205%0Ahttp://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/B9780857090409500205%0Ahttp://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/B9780857090409500205%0Ahttp://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/B9780857090409500205%0Ahttp://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/B9780857090409500205%0Ahttp://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/B9780857090409500205%0Ahttp://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/B9780857090409500205%0Ahttp://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/B9780857090409500205%0Ahttp://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/B9780857090409500205%0Ahttp://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/B9780857090409500205%0Ahttp://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/B9780857090409500205%0Ahttp://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/B9780857090409500205%0Ahttp://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/B9780857090409500205%0Ahttp://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/B9780857090409500205%0Ahttp://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/B9780857090409500205%0Ahttp://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/B9780857090409500205%0Ahttp://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/B9780857090409500205%0Ahttp://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/B9780857090409500205%0Ahttp://www.science/article/pii/B97808570904095

Table 1. Observation Results on Teachers, Students and Principal at SD Muhammadiyah

Manyar Elementary School

Aspects	Students	Teacher	Principal
Communication	Students feel that the	The principal	The principal
	principal listens to	provides feedback on	regularly gives
	their feedback. This	teacher performance	feedback to teachers
	shows that the	regularly, at least	on their performance
	principal is open and	every semester after	and is open to
	responsive to	supervision, and is	suggestions from the
	students' needs and	open to suggestions	school community.
	opinions, which is	from teachers. This	This builds positive
	important for building	creates constructive	and constructive
	trust.	communication and	communication and
		allows teachers to	helps teachers to
		understand areas for	continuously improve
		improvement while	their teaching
		participating in	methods.
		improving the quality	
		of education.	
Involvement in school	The principal	The principal actively	The principal has a
activities	frequently interacts	involves teachers in	vision and mission
	directly with students,	the decision-making	focused on
	at least once a week.	process through	developing aspects of
	This shows active	various means such as	science, technology
	engagement that	regular meetings,	and English
	allows students to feel	discussion forums,	(Scientechlis), which
	close and comfortable	surveys, and work	shows an orientation
	with the principal.	team empowerment.	to make the school
		This demonstrates a	superior in science
		collaborative	and technology
		approach, where	innovation with a
		teachers are given the	culture of literacy and
		opportunity to express	Islamic values. This
		their opinions and be	encourages students
			and teachers to

		involved in decisions	develop in the field of
		that affect the school.	science with an
			environment that
			supports
			communication in
			daily English.
Decision-making	The principal is	The principal handles	The principal
	perceived as fair in	conflicts between	involves teachers,
	dealing with	teachers with a	staff and students in
	problems, involving	mediation approach,	
	relevant parties such	clear policies, open	process through
	as teachers and	communication, and	various mechanisms
	parents. This shows	emotional support.	such as open
	that the principal	This shows leadership	meetings, work
	endeavors to address	that not only focuses	teams, surveys and
	the issue thoroughly	on solving the	•
	and ensure fair	problem, but also on	
	conflict resolution.	preventing and	that all parties feel
		addressing the long-	valued and have a
		term impact of the	contribution to make
		conflict.	to the development of
			the school, as well as
			increasing ownership
			of the decisions made.
Motivation and	The principal's	The principal	Principals provide
support	presence in	supports the	various forms of
Support	extracurricular	development of	support for teachers'
	activities or other	teachers'	professional
	student activities	competencies by	development,
	gives the impression	providing	including training,
	of direct support and	opportunities for	mentoring programs,
	supervision, which	training and	access to resources
	can increase students'	professional	and support for
	motivation and	development. This	innovative teaching
	enthusiasm.	demonstrates	methods. This
	VIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIII	a controlled with	monious. This

		leadership that is	supports demonstrates
		concerned with	a commitment to
		growing the quality of	improving teachers'
		teaching and learning	competencies, which
		in the school.	has a direct impact on
			the quality of
			education in the
			school.
Leadership style	The principal is	The principal	The principal acts as a
	considered a good	encourages	transformational
	role model for	innovation by giving	leader who
	students, reflecting	space for creativity	encourages teachers
	exemplary attitudes	and resources for	and students to
	and actions, such as	collaborative	develop innovative
	integrity and	learning. Respect for	teaching and learning
	responsibility.	innovation,	methods, such as
		evaluation and	project-based learning
		reflection show that	and technology
		the principal	integration. On the
		encourages a	school management
		transformational	side, principals also
		approach, which is	implement
		important for creating	technology and
		a progressive and	involve all
		adaptive learning	stakeholders in
		environment.	strategic planning,
			which creates an
			atmosphere that
			supports positive
			change.
Time management	The principal's	Regular	The principal
	leadership style that	communication and	regularly gives
	emphasizes positive	social activities show	feedback to teachers
	values such as	that the principal	on their performance
	cooperation, integrity	cares about teachers'	and is open to

and	inno	ovation	work-life balance and	suggesti	ons from the
creates	a	better	personal well-being.	school	community.
learning	atmo	sphere		This bu	ilds positive
in the sch	ool.			and	constructive
				commun	nication and
				helps	teachers to
				continuo	ously improve
				their	teaching
				methods	

Principals commonly adopt a collaborative, supportive, and transformational leadership approach. This method prioritizes not only enhancing teachers' competencies and performance but also addressing their emotional well-being while fostering a positive and supportive work environment. Such a leadership style aligns closely with the vision of Merdeka Belajar, which underscores the significance of collaboration, innovation, and the holistic well-being of all stakeholders within the school community.

Table 2: Observation results for teachers, students and principals at UPT SDN 40 Gresik

Aspects	Students	Teacher	Principal			
Communication	The principal provides	The principal	The principal gives			
	opportunities for	communicates	specific directions to			
	students to express	frequently with	teachers and staff on			
	their opinions or	teachers, staff and	what is expected of			
	suggestions so that	students in both formal	them in carrying out			
	students feel that they	and informal activities.	their duties. In addition,			
	are treated fairly. This	The principal pays	she ensures that school			
	attitude shows the	close attention to input	rules and procedures are			
	principal's commitment	at and opinions from all well communicated				
	to creating an inclusive	parties.	understood by all			
	environment and	The principal gives	parties.			
	supporting student	direct instructions to	The Principal also			
	participation.	teachers and staff in a	receives feedback on			
		gradual and very clear	the tasks assigned,			
		manner.	especially if there are			
			problems.			

Involvement in school	The principal is	The principal always	The principal tries to be
activities	considered to be very	makes time to attend	present in every
	kind and caring	school activities in the	activity, both extra and
	towards students,	midst of his busy	other school programs.
	reflected in direct	schedule as principal.	The support provided
	interaction in various	The principal is very	by the school principal
	activities, such as	supportive of student	is expected to contribute
	competitions and other	and teacher activities,	and motivate teachers
	events. This shows that	both academic and	and students to be more
	the principal plays an	non-academic, which	active.
	active role in school	has a positive impact	
	activities and is always	on all parties.	
	present among the		
	students.		
Decision-making	In dealing with	The principal listens to	The principal involves
	problems or conflicts,	the opinions of all	teachers and staff in
	the principal uses an	parties before making a	decision-making, and
	educative approach,	decision with the	determines the steps to
	advising students not to	consent of all parties.	be taken. Any conflict
	repeat their mistakes.	The principal mediates	resolution is directed to
	This approach helps	between conflicts or	resolve it with solutions
	students learn from	differences by listening	and in accordance with
	mistakes and shows a	to both parties before	school rules and
	leadership attitude that	making decisions that	policies.
	prioritizes coaching	do not harm both	
	over punishment.	parties.	
Motivation and support	The principal also	The principal is a	The principal motivates
	motivates students in	motivator who	teachers and students by
	academic and non-	encourages teachers	giving awards for
	academic matters, such	and students to move	performance and results
	as encouraging them to	forward and conducts	that have been
	take part in	regular coaching for	achieved, either in the
	extracurricular	teachers.	form of certificates, or
	activities so that they	The principal always	other awards to further
	study harder. This	rewards and recognizes	

shows the principal's	the achievements of	motivate teachers and
attention to developing	both teachers and	students.
students' potential in	students.	
various fields.		
The principal's	The principal strongly	More structured and
leadership style is	encourages innovation	focused on achieving
recognized by students	and change that can	results. I give clear
as creating a good and	have a positive impact	instructions and
comfortable learning	on the progress of the	emphasize the
atmosphere. An	school	importance of achieving
inclusive and caring	The principal always	targets. Each individual
leadership style creates	analyzes changes and	must be responsible for
a supportive learning	collaborates with all	his or her duties in order
environment and	school parties to find	to achieve the agreed
positively influences	opportunities to	goals.
students' enthusiasm.	overcome challenges.	
Students expect the	Very effective in	Time must be efficient
principal in the future	managing time.	in completing tasks in
to be more attentive to	The principal is always	order to run according
their needs, reflecting	present at important	to a predetermined
students' aspirations for	activities	schedule.
leaders who are		Makes time to attend
increasingly responsive		every activity,
to their academic needs		especially evaluation
as well as their well-		activities, important
being.		meetings or other
		activities that support
		the school's vision and
		mission.
	attention to developing students' potential in various fields. The principal's leadership style is recognized by students as creating a good and comfortable learning atmosphere. An inclusive and caring leadership style creates a supportive learning environment and positively influences students' enthusiasm. Students expect the principal in the future to be more attentive to their needs, reflecting students' aspirations for leaders who are increasingly responsive to their academic needs as well as their well-	attention to developing students' potential in various fields. The principal's The principal strongly leadership style is recognized by students as creating a good and comfortable learning on the progress of the atmosphere. An inclusive and caring leadership style creates a supportive learning environment and supportive learning environment and positively influences students' enthusiasm. Students expect the principal in the future to be more attentive to their needs, reflecting students' aspirations for leaders who are increasingly responsive to their academic needs as well as their well-

Interviews conducted at the two schools revealed significant differences between them. This study highlights that the leadership style of school principals has a substantial impact on the performance of educational institutions. In public schools, the application of a transactional leadership style has proven effective in achieving government-mandated targets. However, this approach tends to be less adaptive to the changes and innovations required in the current context of

autonomous learning. Conversely, private school principals who adopt innovative leadership approaches have successfully fostered a more creative and open environment, which has, in turn, improved teacher performance, parental satisfaction, and student learning outcomes. Moreover, the implementation of participative and transformational leadership in private schools has significantly enhanced teacher motivation and engagement, positively influencing educational quality and learning outcomes. In contrast, the more bureaucratic approach commonly observed in public schools, while effective in maintaining stability, is often perceived as less responsive to the dynamic changes necessitated by the Merdeka Belajar policy. 12

DISCUSSION

Leadership Style Factors of Muhammadiyah Manyar Elementary School and UPT SDN 40 Gresik

Several factors influence the leadership styles of school principals in Manyar sub-district, both in public and private educational institutions, including government regulations, institutional autonomy, and organizational culture. In public schools, strict government regulations compel principals to adhere to established procedures, often resulting in a transactional and bureaucratic leadership style. Conversely, private schools benefit from greater institutional autonomy, enabling principals to adopt more innovative approaches that emphasize teacher participation and the development of creative learning processes. Additionally, organizational culture plays a crucial role in shaping leadership styles. In private schools, a more flexible and innovation-driven culture encourages participative and collaborative leadership, whereas the formal and hierarchical culture of public schools tends to promote a more conservative leadership approach.

Comparison of the Leadership Styles of the Principals of SD Muhammadiyah Manyar and UPT SDN 40 Gresik

The findings of this study further validate the differences in leadership styles observed between public and private educational institutions. The analysis reveals significant differences

¹¹ R. Rohmat, S. Utomo, and G Setiadi, "Pengaruh Kepemimpinan Kepala Sekolah, Budaya Organisasi Dan Motivasi Kerja Terhadap Kinerja Guru Di Yayasan Al Asyhar Tulakan Donorojo Jepara," *Jurnal Ilmiah Wahana Pendidikan* 8, no. 18 (2022): 335–46, https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.7134648.

¹² A. H Fattah, *Kepuasan Kerja Dan Kinerja Pegawai (Budaya Organisasi, Perilaku Pemimpin, Dan Efikasi Diri)* (Yogyakarta: Elmatera, 2019).

¹³ S. Sriyanto, K. Kartono, and M. G Sembiring, "Gaya Kepemimpinan Transformasional Kepala Sekolah Dasar Menyongsong Merdeka Belajar Di Era Industri 4.0," *Jurnal Basicedu* 6, no. 6 (2023): 10259–10266, https://doi.org/10.31004/basicedu.v6i6.4794.

¹⁴ R. Robani and T. A Mustofa, "Implementasi Gaya Kepemimpinan Demokratis Kepala Sekolah Untuk Meningkatkan Kinerja Guru Di SMA Negeri 1 Wonogiri," *Ideguru: Jurnal Karya Ilmiah Guru* 9, no. 3 (2024): 1930–38, https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.51169/ideguru.v9i3.1196.

between these two types of schools. Public schools predominantly adopt a transactional leadership style, whereas private schools place greater emphasis on transformational leadership. Although public school principals often have formal educational backgrounds and operate within the constraints of government bureaucratic regulations, they still possess opportunities to innovate and incorporate transformational leadership practices. In contrast, private school principals are more empowered to innovate and make autonomous decisions, reflecting the more liberal and self-governing nature of private institutions. Furthermore, private school principals often have broader experience in managing schools with flexible and participative approaches, while their public school counterparts are primarily focused on implementing policies mandated by the central government.

Table 3. Comparison of Student Achievements at SD Muhammadiyah Manyar and UPT SDN 40 Gresik

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The documented championships won by the two schools represent only a fraction of the competitions they have participated in. UPT SDN 40 Gresik has demonstrated remarkable success across various academic and cultural arts competitions. The principal's transactional leadership style is reflected in the establishment of clear goals and specific targets for both students and teachers. These efforts have resulted in numerous competition wins, with the principal actively recognizing and rewarding outstanding achievements as a motivational strategy. Additionally, a transformational leadership approach is evident in the principal's encouragement of innovative teaching methods among teachers and the active involvement of students in extracurricular activities. This approach ensures that student accomplishments in competitions contribute meaningfully to their overall character development.¹⁵

CONCLUSION

This study reveals that the leadership styles exhibited by students, teachers, and principals in each institution are tailored to the specific conditions and context of their schools. In public primary schools, the transactional leadership style predominates, characterized by an emphasis on formal structures, strict adherence to procedures, and the application of rewards and sanctions as primary management tools for teachers and students. However, principals in public schools may

¹⁵ Katerina Antonopoulou, Christos Begkos, and Zichen Zhu, "Staying Afloat amidst Extreme Uncertainty: A Case Study of Digital Transformation in Higher Education," Technological Forecasting and Social Change 192 (2023): 122603, https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.techfore.2023.122603.

also incorporate elements of transformational leadership, albeit within limited parameters. This is evident from the feedback provided by students, teachers, and the principals themselves. Conversely, private schools demonstrate a more explicit and comprehensive application of the transformational leadership style. Principals in private institutions often adopt a participative approach that prioritizes innovation, collaboration, and the personal development of both teachers and students, aligning closely with the principles of Merdeka Belajar. This leadership style fosters a more inclusive and supportive environment for all stakeholders involved in the educational process.

SUGGESTIONS

This study recommends that principals from both public and private institutions adopt more flexible leadership approaches to address the challenges of the Merdeka Belajar era. In public schools, principals should demonstrate greater openness to innovation and actively seek input from diverse stakeholders while fostering increased collaboration between teachers and students. For private schools, principals are advised to sustain their innovative practices while enhancing evaluation mechanisms and establishing measurable targets to promote stability. These strategies aim to create a learning environment that is adaptive, equitable, and supportive of the growth of all stakeholders. Additionally, this research aspires to identify the factors influencing leadership styles in both types of schools, thereby making a meaningful contribution to the literature and practice of educational leadership in Indonesia.

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