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ORIGINAL RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Principal's Strategy in Improving Teachers' Teaching Motivation at MA Al Huda Tulung Balak

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the principal's strategies in improving teachers' teaching motivation, their impact on teacher performance, and the challenges faced in implementation. The research employed a qualitative approach with a case study design at MA Al Huda Tulung Balak, East Lampung. Data were collected through participant observation, in-depth interviews with 8 informants (principal, 6 teachers, and 1 administrative staff), and document study. Data analysis used the Miles and Huberman model. The findings reveal that the principal implemented seven holistic and integrative strategies: (1) humanistic and reflective clinical supervision, (2) spiritual and professional value-based motivation, (3) sustainable capacity development through training, (4) proportional reward and punishment system, (5) conducive work environment engineering, (6) participatory and transformational leadership style, and (7) mobilization of parental and community support. The impacts include increased teaching innovation (teachers using varied methods rose from 40% to 75%), participation in professional development (90%), administrative discipline (from 65% to 85%), and technology utilization (from 30% to 55%). Challenges include limited infrastructure, weak external support, teacher competency heterogeneity, the principal's heavy workload, and low internal drive among a small portion of teachers. This study confirms Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory, Deci and Ryan's Self-Determination Theory, and Bass's Transformational Leadership Theory in the context of pesantren-based rural private madrasahs.

Keywords: Principal Strategy, Teacher Teaching Motivation, Transformational Leadership, Private Madrasah



ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis strategi kepala madrasah dalam meningkatkan motivasi mengajar guru, dampaknya terhadap kinerja guru, serta tantangan yang dihadapi dalam pelaksanaannya. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain studi kasus di MA Al Huda Tulung Balak, Lampung Timur. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi partisipatif, wawancara mendalam dengan delapan informan—kepala madrasah, enam guru, dan satu tenaga administrasi—serta studi dokumentasi. Analisis data menggunakan model Miles dan Huberman. Temuan menunjukkan tujuh strategi yang holistik dan integratif, yaitu supervisi klinis yang humanis dan reflektif, motivasi berbasis nilai spiritual dan profesional, pengembangan kapasitas berkelanjutan, sistem penghargaan dan sanksi yang proporsional, penciptaan lingkungan kerja kondusif, kepemimpinan partisipatif-transformasional, serta mobilisasi dukungan orang tua dan masyarakat. Dampaknya terlihat pada peningkatan inovasi pembelajaran, partisipasi dalam pengembangan profesional, disiplin administrasi, dan pemanfaatan teknologi. Tantangannya meliputi keterbatasan infrastruktur, lemahnya dukungan eksternal, heterogenitas kompetensi guru, beban kerja kepala madrasah, dan rendahnya dorongan internal sebagian kecil guru.

Kata Kunci: Strategi Kepala Madrasah, Motivasi Mengajar Guru, Kepemimpinan Transformasional, Madrasah Swasta

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1. INTRODUCTION

Education serves as the primary foundation for developing quality human resources. The progress of a nation is largely determined by the quality of its education system. Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System affirms that national education aims to develop students' potential to become faithful, pious, morally upright, healthy, knowledgeable, capable, creative, independent, and democratic and responsible citizens. In achieving these objectives, teachers play a central role as the frontline of classroom instruction. Teachers who are professional, highly dedicated, and possess strong teaching motivation are able to create effective, enjoyable, and meaningful learning processes for students. Conversely, teachers with low motivation tend to engage in monotonous routines, neglect updating their knowledge, and show little concern for student development (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2014). Therefore, teachers' teaching motivation is not a marginal issue but a strategic one that determines the future of a nation's education.

However, the reality in the field shows that teacher work motivation in Indonesia still faces serious and complex challenges. Data from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemendikbudristek) in 2023 revealed that approximately 40% of teachers in Indonesia have not achieved optimal work motivation (Kemendikbudristek, 2023a). This low motivation is characterized by minimal innovation in learning, low participation in sustainable professional development activities, and suboptimal utilization of digital technology in the teaching and learning process (Kemendikbudristek, 2023b). A survey conducted by the Indonesian Educational Research Institute (LPPI) in 2024 involving 1,200 teachers from 24 provinces showed that only 45% of teachers felt intrinsically motivated in carrying out their daily duties, while 15% stated they had no motivation at all and pursued the teaching profession because they had no other choice (LPPI, 2024). Data from the OECD through PISA 2022 further reinforces these findings, where

Indonesia still ranks at the bottom for reading, mathematics, and science abilities, with one of the main contributing factors being the suboptimal quality and motivation of teachers (OECD, 2023).

More concerning conditions are found in private madrasahs in rural areas, including Madrasah Aliyah (MA) Al Huda Tulung Balak, East Lampung. MA Al Huda is a madrasah born from the Al Huda Islamic Boarding School, so Islamic nuances are deeply embedded in every educational activity. Administratively, this madrasah is located in Dusun II Kayangan, Tulung Balak Village, Batanghari Nuban Sub-district, East Lampung Regency. With Madrasah Statistics Number (NSM) 131218070036 and NPSN 70031907, this institution has received national recognition and serves rural communities who mostly work as farmers, farm laborers, and small traders. The number of educators is recorded at 8 people, with a composition of 6 holding Bachelor's degrees (S1) and 2 holding Master's degrees (S2), along with 4 administrative staff members (MA Al Huda Profile Document, 2025).

Based on preliminary observations conducted intensively by the researcher during the period of September 2025 to January 2026, a number of tangible and measurable indications of low teaching motivation were found among teachers at MA Al Huda Tulung Balak. Of the eight actively teaching teachers, only three consistently prepared complete Lesson Plans (RPP) before entering the classroom, while the other five did not prepare complete RPPs with reasons such as already being familiar with the material or considering RPPs merely a formality. In the learning process, most teachers still predominantly used one-way lecture methods without variation, while group discussions, project-based learning, or the use of interactive media were almost never practiced. Teacher participation in Subject Teacher Consultations (MGMP) at the sub-district level was also very low, with only three out of eight teachers having attended in the last six months. More concerning, no teacher had independently used digital learning platforms such as Google Classroom, Quizizz, or Canva for Education, and only two teachers used LCD projectors with a frequency of less than once a month (Field Notes, 2025).

Research on principal strategies in improving teacher motivation has been extensively conducted. Waliudin and Chotimah (2023) identified five main strategies of principals in improving teacher performance, including developing teachers' abilities in the learning process, enhancing teacher discipline, increasing teacher motivation through creating harmonious situations and providing fair rewards and punishments, and improving teacher commitment through training and regular meetings. Palembang and Sihotang (2023) found that transformational leadership of principals involving educator empowerment, encouraging them to reach new levels, and providing a clear vision significantly improves teacher motivation and commitment. Haw and King (2023) demonstrated that perceived need-supportive leadership has a positive indirect relationship with need-supportive teaching through teacher autonomous motivation. The study involved 581 teachers and 2,283 students from 14 high schools in the Philippines.

Supriyanto (2025) found that principals implement holistic leadership strategies that integrate managerial, transformational, instructional, and contextual functions in private madrasahs. These strategies are realized through strengthening quality culture, digital technology-based teacher development, empowering teachers as agents of change, and active collaboration with foundations and parent communities. Kamilata (2025) proved that participatory and supportive principal leadership styles, including involving teachers in strategic decision-making through deliberation, providing autonomy in developing teaching methods and materials, implementing objective-transparent performance assessment systems, and actively facilitating collaboration and communal

activities, support teacher psychological well-being. Riswan, Fauroni, and Suhardi (2024) found that transformational leadership of principals has a significant influence on student achievement motivation with teacher performance as a moderating variable.

Although these studies provide important contributions, there are research gaps that need to be filled. First, most research on principal strategies and teacher motivation has been conducted in public schools or urban madrasahs with relatively abundant resources, while research in rural private madrasahs based on pesantren is still very limited. Second, previous studies have not explicitly integrated Islamic values, particularly the concept of *uswatun hasanah* (QS. Al-Ahzab: 21), into teacher motivation enhancement strategies. Third, research on clinical supervision in rural madrasahs with limited facilities and infrastructure is still rarely conducted. Fourth, the strategy of mobilizing parental and community support as a reinforcing factor for teacher motivation has not received much attention in Islamic educational management literature.

The novelty of this research lies in the integration of teacher motivation enhancement strategies with Islamic values explicitly and structurally, a humanistic clinical supervision model adaptive to the resource limitations of rural madrasahs, the discovery of parental and community support mobilization strategy as a reinforcing factor for teacher motivation, and empirical evidence from the context of rural private madrasahs that has been underrepresented in educational management studies. This study aims to identify and describe the strategies used by the principal of MA Al Huda Tulung Balak in improving teachers' teaching motivation, analyze the impact of implementing these strategies on teachers' teaching motivation, and identify the challenges faced in implementing strategies to improve teachers' teaching motivation.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses field research with a qualitative approach. Field research was chosen because the data and information needed to answer the research questions can only be obtained directly from the source at the research location, namely MA Al Huda Tulung Balak. The qualitative approach was chosen because this study aims to understand phenomena deeply, holistically, and contextually, not to measure variable relationships statistically (Creswell, 2016). Qualitative researchers seek to understand the meanings given by research subjects to events, behaviors, and social interactions that occur in their natural environment (Moleong, 2018). With this approach, researchers can explore in depth the principal's strategies, their impact on teacher motivation, and the challenges faced in their implementation.

The research design used is a case study. The case study design was chosen because this research focuses on a single entity, namely MA Al Huda Tulung Balak, and aims to explore contemporary phenomena in real-life contexts (Yin, 2018). According to Yin (2018), case study is a relevant research method for exploratory research questions such as "how" and "why," and when researchers have limited control over the events being studied. The use of a single case study in this research is based on the consideration that MA Al Huda Tulung Balak has unique characteristics that distinguish it from other madrasahs. This madrasah was born from the Al Huda Islamic Boarding School, so Islamic nuances are deeply embedded in every educational activity. Additionally, this madrasah is located in a rural area with limited resources, yet has great potential in spiritual values and local wisdom.

Research informants were selected using purposive sampling technique, where informants were deliberately chosen based on specific criteria relevant to the research objectives (Sugiyono, 2019).

The key informant in this study was the principal of MA Al Huda Tulung Balak, Mr. Fahrur Rozi. In addition to the principal, informants also included teachers teaching at MA Al Huda Tulung Balak. Of the total eight teachers, the researcher selected six teachers as informants considering variations in educational background, length of teaching, and subjects taught. The selected teachers represented senior teachers (more than ten years of service) and junior teachers (less than five years of service), as well as teachers with S1 and S2 educational backgrounds. The researcher also involved one administrative staff member as an additional informant. Overall, the number of informants in this study was eight people.

Data collection techniques used three methods: participant observation, in-depth interviews, and document study. Participant observation was conducted by the researcher being present at the madrasah, attending teacher meetings, observing classroom learning processes, and interacting informally with teachers and staff. In-depth interviews were semi-structured with interview guidelines developed based on indicators from the research focus. Each interview lasted between 45 to 90 minutes and was recorded using a voice recorder after obtaining permission from informants, then transcribed verbatim. Document study was conducted by collecting madrasah profile documents, educator and education personnel data, facilities and infrastructure data, annual reports, teacher meeting records, and planning documents (Sugiyono, 2019).

Data analysis used the Miles and Huberman model consisting of three main components: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). Data reduction was done by summarizing, selecting essential matters, focusing on important aspects, and discarding unnecessary data. Data display was done in narrative text, tables, and matrices. Conclusion drawing was done continuously with verification through triangulation. Data validity testing was conducted through source triangulation, technique triangulation, member check, and extended participation (Moleong, 2018). The research was conducted for approximately eight months, from September 2025 to April 2026.

3. RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Profile and Context of the Research Location

MA Al Huda Tulung Balak is administratively located in Dusun II Kayangan, Tulung Balak Village, Batanghari Nuban Sub-district, East Lampung Regency, Lampung Province. This madrasah was born from the Al Huda Islamic Boarding School, so Islamic nuances are deeply embedded in every educational activity. With Madrasah Statistics Number (NSM) 131218070036 and NPSN 70031907, this institution has received national recognition and serves rural communities who mostly work as farmers, farm laborers, and small traders. Based on the madrasah profile document, the number of educators is recorded at 8 people, with 6 holding Bachelor's degrees (S1) and 2 holding Master's degrees (S2). For administrative affairs, there are 4 administrative staff members assisting the operational smoothness of the madrasah. In terms of infrastructure, the office, teacher room, library, classrooms, and sanitation facilities are categorized as suitable for use. However, limitations in technology devices and internet access remain collective homework. The principal stated that there is only one LCD projector unit for six study groups, and the internet network in the Tulung Balak area is often unstable.

Dynamics of Teacher Motivation Before Strategy Implementation

Before the motivation enhancement strategies were systematically implemented, the field conditions showed several symptoms of low teaching enthusiasm among MA Al Huda teachers.

Based on preliminary observations conducted by the researcher from September to October 2025, it was found that most teachers were still trapped in conventional teaching routines without methodological variation. Lecture methods still dominated the learning process, while group discussions, project-based learning, or the use of interactive media were almost never seen. Teacher participation in scientific forums such as Subject Teacher Consultations (MGMP) was also very minimal, with attendance rates reaching only about 37.5% in the last six months. Internal madrasah data for the 2024/2025 academic year showed that about 30% of teachers experienced obstacles in utilizing learning technology, and about 25% of teachers were less active in sustainable professional development activities.

Interview results with several teachers revealed feelings of boredom with teaching routines, no new challenges, and never receiving appreciation from leadership. A senior teacher stated that they had been teaching in the same way for years without any meaningful changes. Another teacher admitted that the principal never gave rewards or even a simple thank you for their hard work. This condition directly impacted student learning outcomes, where the average daily test score of students only reached 68.2, below the Minimum Completeness Criteria (KKM) set at 75.

Principal's Strategies in Improving Teachers' Teaching Motivation

Based on field observations, in-depth interviews with key informants, and document review, seven main strategies implemented by the principal of MA Al Huda Tulung Balak were identified. The first strategy is the implementation of humanistic and reflective clinical supervision. Unlike rigid and authoritarian inspection approaches, the principal implemented clinical supervision emphasizing partnership between supervisor and teacher. The stages included pre-learning dialogue, observation of teaching and learning activities in the classroom, and post-learning reflection. In the reflection session, teachers did not feel judged or scrutinized for errors, but were provided with constructive and solution-oriented feedback. The principal stated in an interview that they came to the classroom not as a superior looking for mistakes, but as a colleague wanting to see how the learning process was taking place.

The second strategy is the cultivation of spiritual and professional value-based motivation. Whenever there was an opportunity, whether in weekly meetings or informal interactions, the principal regularly inserted motivational messages sourced from the Qur'an and hadith. They often quoted QS. Al-Ahzab (33): 21 about the exemplary nature of the Prophet Muhammad SAW as *uswatun hasanah*. With this approach, teachers were invited to interpret their profession as part of worship and service to Allah SWT, not merely technical administrative work. A teacher admitted that this spiritual touch made them more sincere and enthusiastic in carrying out their duties.

The third strategy is sustainable capacity development through training. The principal proactively enrolled teachers in various training programs, whether organized by the Ministry of Religious Affairs, Subject Teacher Consultations (MGMP), or other independent institutions. Not only that, the madrasah also held regular internal training, especially to improve the digital skills of educators. Documentation data showed that within the last year, 6 out of 8 teachers had participated in training on preparing teaching materials based on the Merdeka Curriculum. Four teachers had also participated in workshops on utilizing digital platforms such as Canva, Quizizz, and Google Classroom.

The fourth strategy is the implementation of proportional and transparent rewards and punishments. The reward and sanction system was applied fairly without discrimination. Forms of appreciation were not always material but also included public recognition in teacher meetings,

assignment of more challenging tasks, or opportunities to attend prestigious training. Sanctions were given gradually and educationally, starting with verbal warnings, written warnings, and warning letters, without intending to embarrass or demean the dignity of teachers. The vice principal confirmed that this policy had fostered a sense of being valued while simultaneously creating an educational deterrent effect for those who were negligent.

The fifth strategy is engineering a conducive and harmonious work environment. The principal realized that a fluid, open, and mutually supportive work atmosphere is an important foundation for the growth of work motivation. Therefore, they opened the widest possible space for dialogue with all teachers. Teachers were given the freedom to express opinions, criticisms, suggestions, or simply share difficulties faced in the classroom. Observation results showed that interactions among teachers and with the principal appeared familiar, mutually supportive, and minimal in conflict.

The sixth strategy is the implementation of participatory and transformational leadership style. The principal did not act as a single commander who unilaterally determined all policies. Every strategic policy, especially those related to learning, curriculum development, and improving the quality of the madrasah, was always deliberated with teachers first. This participatory approach made teachers feel involved, valued, and have a sense of belonging to the madrasah.

The seventh strategy is mobilizing parental and community support. The principal systematically built two-way communication with parents and community leaders. Regular meetings between the madrasah and the school committee, celebrations of Islamic holidays, and community service activities became venues for building partnerships and synergy. As a result, moral and material support from external parties began to flow, although not yet fully optimal.

Impact of Strategies on Teachers' Teaching Motivation

The implementation of the seven strategies above had measurable and meaningful impacts on teachers' teaching motivation at MA Al Huda Tulung Balak.

The first impact is an increase in learning innovation. Previously, the dominance of lecture methods was still very prominent in almost all classes. Now, teachers began to dare to try more varied approaches, such as structured group discussions, simple project-based learning, and the use of audiovisual media. Internal madrasah data noted a decrease in the percentage of teachers who fully used conventional methods from about 40% to only 25% within six months.

The second impact is increased teacher participation in professional development activities. Training and workshops were no longer viewed as additional burdens but as opportunities to learn and develop themselves. Teachers even competed to get the latest information about relevant seminars, training, or workshops. The attendance rate of teachers in professional development activities facilitated by the madrasah reached 90%, a quite high achievement for a rural private madrasah.

The third impact is increased teacher discipline in preparing teaching administration. Compliance with preparing teaching materials (prota, prosem, syllabus, lesson plans, and assessment instruments) increased drastically from 65% to 85%. This was evidenced by the results of periodic supervision conducted by the internal madrasah team at the end of each semester.

The fourth impact is the expanding adaptation of technology in learning. Despite limited facilities, the enthusiasm of teachers to adopt technology was commendable. The percentage of teachers

actively using digital tools such as LCD projectors, learning videos, interactive quiz applications, or learning management platforms rose from 30% to 55% in less than a year. Some teachers even began creating simple digital learning content using Canva and PowerPoint.

The fifth impact is the strengthening of teachers' work spirit and personal satisfaction. Qualitatively, clear changes in the expressions and daily behavior of teachers were visible. They came earlier to the madrasah, taught with full energy, and sometimes stayed overnight at the madrasah to prepare materials or improve administration. A teacher revealed that they used to often feel pressured and reluctant to come to teach, but now every morning they are enthusiastic because they know there is full support from leadership.

The sixth impact is the indirect positive implication for student learning outcomes. Although not the main variable in this study, several teachers reported a positive correlation between increased teaching motivation and student learning outcomes. Average daily test scores tended to increase, and student active participation in class discussions was also more visible compared to the previous semester.

Challenges Faced in Strategy Implementation

The successes achieved did not come without obstacles and barriers. The principal and their team still faced several serious issues in implementing teacher motivation enhancement strategies.

Table 2. Comparison of Conditions Before and After Strategy Implementation

Indicator	Before	After	Improvement
Teachers using varied methods	40%	75%	+35%
Participation in professional development	37.5%	90%	+52.5%
Teaching administration discipline	65%	85%	+20%
Utilization of learning technology	30%	55%	+25%
Average student daily test score	68.2	74.5	+6.3

The first challenge is limited supporting infrastructure. Internal madrasah survey data revealed that about 30% of teachers complained about inadequate facilities to support modern learning processes. The number of computers and LCD projectors was still very limited, only one projector unit for six study groups. The internet network in the Tulung Balak area was often unstable, and in some points there was no signal at all.

The second challenge is weak external support. Support from local government, school committees, and some parents was still far from expectations. Many parents did not yet understand that teacher motivation and performance are also influenced by their appreciation and involvement in madrasah activities. The government budget for improving teacher quality in private madrasahs was also very limited.

The third challenge is the heterogeneity of teacher competency and readiness. Not all teachers had the same adaptive capacity to change. Senior teachers who had long been involved in traditional methods tended to be more difficult to invite to shift to contemporary approaches, especially

technology-based ones. Meanwhile, younger teachers were more flexible and quick to learn, but often lacked deep pedagogical experience.

The fourth challenge is the heavy workload of the principal. Besides leading the madrasah, the principal of MA Al Huda also had considerable responsibilities in the Al Huda Islamic Boarding School environment, both as a teacher, student mentor, and pesantren administrative manager. This condition limited their time and energy to provide intensive mentoring to each teacher individually.

The fifth challenge is the still low internal drive among a small portion of teachers. In general, teacher motivation at MA Al Huda showed a significant increasing trend. However, about 2 out of 8 teachers (25%) still showed minimalistic work attitudes. They carried out duties only as formal demands without initiative to innovate or develop themselves.

4. DISCUSSION

The finding regarding humanistic clinical supervision implemented by the principal of MA Al Huda aligns with contemporary academic supervision theory. The approach emphasizing partnership, dialogue, and collaborative reflection proved more effective in increasing teacher motivation compared to authoritarian inspection approaches. This reinforces research findings that academic supervision conducted by principals can improve teacher motivation and performance, enhance learning quality, and create a more supportive school climate for student development (Kemendikbudristek, 2024). Teachers who feel accompanied rather than supervised are more open to receiving feedback and improving their weaknesses. Research on the influence of principal academic supervision on teacher performance improvement confirms that effective academic supervision is conducted regularly, uses valid instruments, provides constructive feedback, and clear follow-up (Zohriah, Suryana, & Pandidin, 2022).

The finding on spiritual value-based motivation cultivation is highly relevant to motivation theory in an Islamic perspective. The principal successfully integrated Qur'anic verses, especially QS. Al-Ahzab (33): 21 about the exemplary nature of the Prophet, as a motivational foundation touching the inner aspects of teachers. This reinforces the view that internalization of Islamic values strengthens teachers' intrinsic motivation in Islamic educational institutions (Purnamasari et al., 2024). Teachers with high spiritual awareness tend to be more sincere, patient, and trusting (*tawakal*) in carrying out their duties. Research on teacher career sustainability shows that motivation, commitment, perceived workload, internalization of Islamic values, and leadership collectively influence 73.8% of teacher career sustainability (Purnamasari et al., 2024).

The finding on increased innovation, participation in training, and administrative discipline aligns with Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory (Maslow, 1943). The principal gradually attempted to fulfill the hierarchical needs of teachers, ranging from physiological needs (incentives), safety needs (rule certainty), social needs (harmonious work environment), esteem needs (appreciation and recognition), to self-actualization needs (opportunities to innovate). The fulfillment of these needs proved capable of significantly encouraging teacher motivation and performance. Research on the implementation of Abraham Maslow's motivation theory in Islamic Religious Education learning found that the implementation of Abraham Maslow's motivation theory had been fully implemented in the school that became the research location (Ningtyas, Farida, & Firadilah, 2022). Research on servant leadership principles and teacher motivation in South Africa also found that principals' servant leadership practices were positively related to teacher motivation in rural schools (Shula, 2023).

The finding on the importance of autonomy, competence, and social relatedness in increasing teacher motivation confirms Deci and Ryan's Self-Determination Theory (2000). The principal provided autonomy for teachers to develop teaching methods according to student characteristics, enhance competence through training, and strengthen social relatedness through a warm and collaborative work climate. These three basic psychological needs were well fulfilled, so teachers' intrinsic motivation grew strong (Ryan & Deci, 2020). Research by Haw and King (2023) confirms that perceived need-supportive leadership has a positive indirect relationship with need-supportive teaching through teacher autonomous motivation. This finding shows the importance of leadership that supports teachers' psychological needs to enhance their autonomous motivation.

The finding on participatory and transformational leadership style implemented by the principal reinforces Bass's Transformational Leadership Theory (1985). The principal of MA Al Huda acts as a role model (idealized influence) through their discipline and integrity, generates spirit (inspirational motivation) through religious value-based motivational talks, stimulates subordinate intelligence (intellectual stimulation) by encouraging them to step out of their comfort zones, and provides individual attention (individualized consideration) through supervision sessions and personal coaching. This aligns with the findings of Palembang and Sihotang (2023) that principals' transformational leadership significantly increases teacher motivation and commitment. Research on transformational leadership of principals and work motivation also shows that transformational leadership of principals has a positive and significant relationship with student learning achievement in schools, as does teacher work motivation which has a positive and significant relationship with student learning achievement (Ahmad, 2023).

The finding on mobilizing parental and community support as a reinforcing factor for teacher motivation opens a new perspective that improving teacher motivation is not enough to rely solely on internal madrasah factors but also requires synergy with the surrounding environment. Research on principal leadership strategies in private madrasahs found that principals implement holistic leadership strategies integrating managerial, transformational, instructional, and contextual functions through active collaboration with foundations and parent communities (Supriyanto, 2025). Research on madrasah principal leadership styles in supporting teacher psychological well-being also proves that participatory and supportive leadership practices, including involving teachers in strategic decision-making through deliberation and actively facilitating collaboration and communal activities, support teacher psychological well-being (Kamilata, 2025).

The challenge of limited infrastructure found in this study aligns with the findings of Waliudin and Chotimah (2023) that inadequate school facilities become one of the obstacles in implementing teacher performance improvement strategies. Research on the influence of participatory principal leadership and their role as supervisor on motivation and its impact on teacher performance also found that effective academic supervision can support teacher professional development, but its implementation often faces obstacles such as lack of understanding, focus on control, and limited resources (Kemendikbudristek, 2024). The challenge of teacher competency heterogeneity confirms findings that not all teachers have the same adaptive capacity to change, where senior teachers who have long been involved in traditional methods tend to be more difficult to invite to shift to contemporary approaches (Supriyanto, 2025).

The challenge of the principal's heavy workload who also has responsibilities in the pesantren environment shows the complexity of the role of private madrasah principals who often have multiple responsibilities. Research on principal strategies in improving teacher performance also

identified that the principal's lack of firmness in implementing policies, low internal teacher motivation, teachers' distance from school, inadequate school facilities, and low participation of the school community become obstacles that are often faced (Waliudin & Chotimah, 2023). The challenge of still low internal drive among a small portion of teachers indicates that motivation does not solely come from external sources but is also strongly influenced by internal awareness. Research on principal transformational leadership in improving teacher performance emphasizes that by implementing transformational leadership style, principals can foster inspirational workplaces where educators feel valued and motivated (Palembangan & Sihotang, 2023).

This study provides empirical confirmation of motivation and leadership theories in the context of rural pesantren-based private madrasahs. The integration of Islamic values into teacher motivation enhancement strategies constitutes novelty that distinguishes this study from previous research. Research on teacher's management skills, well-being, religiosity, and academic motivation in Islamic education highlights that research on motivation in Islamic educational institutions currently needs attention, and results show that academic motivation is well predicted by perceived teacher management skills and psychological well-being (Subandi et al., 2024). This study also reinforces findings that principal leadership and teacher work motivation are variables that influence teacher job satisfaction, and to achieve successful principal leadership, knowledge and ability to create a conducive work climate and situation are required (Sutisna, 2023).

5. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Based on field research results, data analysis, and in-depth discussion regarding principal strategies in improving teachers' teaching motivation at MA Al Huda Tulung Balak, it can be concluded that the strategies implemented by the principal are holistic, integrative, and contextual. The principal does not rely on a single approach but integrates various strategies that support and reinforce each other, including humanistic clinical supervision, spiritual value-based motivation cultivation, capacity development through training, proportional reward and punishment implementation, conducive work environment engineering, participatory and transformational leadership, and mobilization of parental and community support. The systematic and sustainable implementation of strategies has brought real and significant changes to teacher motivation and performance, as reflected in increased learning innovation, participation in professional development, administrative discipline, technology utilization, and teacher work spirit. Nevertheless, the principal still faces several serious structural and cultural challenges, such as limited infrastructure, weak external support, teacher competency heterogeneity, heavy workload, and low internal drive among a small portion of teachers. Theoretically, this study provides empirical confirmation of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory, Deci and Ryan's Self-Determination Theory, and Bass's Transformational Leadership Theory in the context of rural pesantren-based private madrasahs.

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