

The Impact of Teacher Leadership on Teaching Practices: The Mediating Role of Teacher-Student Relationship

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ABSTRACT

Leadership in an educational institution is seen more in school leadership. While on the other hand there is teacher leadership which is very urgent for its existence teaching quality. This teaching practice is an activity that is directly in contact with users of educational services, namely students. Many things related to teacher leadership have an impact on teaching practice. This study seeks to explain the influence of teacher leadership on teaching practice by using the teacher-student relationship as mediation. The quantitative method was used in this study through an electronic questionnaire filled out by 130 teachers from eight private Islamic elementary schools in the city and district of Mojokerto. Using SEM (structural equation modeling) techniques through the SMART PLS 4.0 application, we examined the data to ascertain the direct and indirect influence of teacher leadership on teaching practice. The indirect effect was observed using the teacher-student relationship as the mediating variable. The observation results show that teacher leadership has a significant direct or indirect effect on teaching practice. The mediating nature of the teacher-student relationship is partial mediation. The findings in this study show the urgency of teacher leadership in teaching practice through institutional, professional development and collaboration with fellow teachers. Furthermore, teacher-student relations which include handling conflicts and building closeness with students also play a role for quality teaching practices. This research provides additional evidence regarding the urgency of the role of teacher leadership aspects in teaching, in addition to professional, pedagogic, social and personality aspects which have been used so far in the world of education in Indonesia.

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Many changes been made as an adaptation during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, including in the field of education. The Distance Learning Policy (Pembelajaran Jarak Jauh, PJJ) is an adaptation so that education remains organized in the midst of a pandemic emergency (Donnelly & Patrinos, 2022). One of the impacts of implementing PJJ is learning loss. It is a condition which students' knowledge and skills are decrease (Pier, L., 2021).

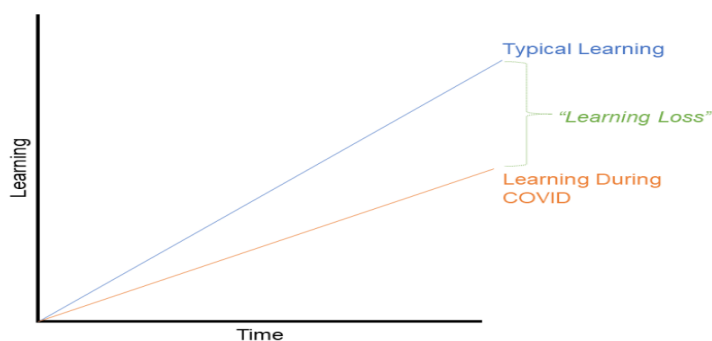


Figure 1. The Description of Learning Loss is Associated with COVID-19 Generally

Meanwhile in Indonesia, there are results of research which stated that online learning in the pandemic period not only causes learning loss but also students' stress and the habit of online learning causes students become bored and lazy due to

disturbances that may occur in the habit of online learning (Jatira, 2021), this is shown by the data below (Kurikulum Kedaruratan Kemendikbud).

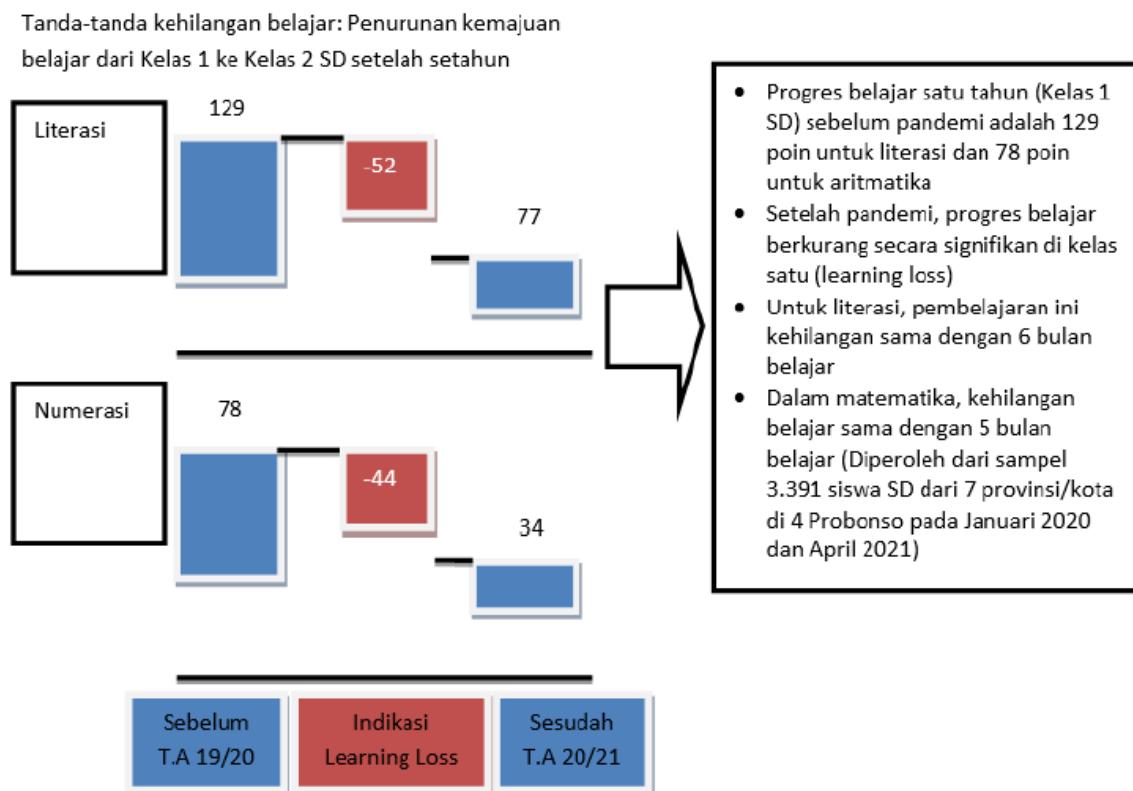


Figure 2. Data on decreased interest in learning Kemendikbud (Jojo & Sihotang, 2022)

Based on the conditions above, the government through the Ministry of Education and Culture continues to review and execute policies that can establish an adjustment curriculum during pandemic that awaken us of the students uniqueness. This is offered by Kurikulum 2013 and Kurikulum Darurat. However, because the two curricula could not overcome the learning loss that occurred, the Ministry issued a new policy, namely the implementation of Kurikulum Merdeka. Kurikulum Merdeka is a program that is expected to recover learning process, which offers 3 characteristics including project-based learning for soft skill and character development according to the profile of Pancasila students, learning on essential material and a more flexible curriculum structure. Besides that, Kurikulum Merdeka also wants to make a breakthrough which is a gap among scientific fields (Jojo & Sihotang, 2022).

Curriculum development by the Ministry that offers 3 characteristics needs to be balanced with quality of teaching practices (TP). It is crucial due to learning loss that occurred during COVID-19 pandemic where students need more touch and direct interaction with their teachers. Teaching practices are carried out through process-oriented instructions (process based instruction). Process based instruction is a teaching model that facilitates and enhances independent learning. The use of this method is associated with the frequency of a student's independent learning during the COVID-19 pandemic (Bolhuis & Voeten, 2001; Vermunt, 1995; Volet, 2016). The process is carried out gradually by shifting external control on learning process by the teacher towards internal control over learning process by the students themselves. Here, students are formed gradually to be lifelong learners. The dimensions used in this teaching practice are:

1. Cognitive Engagement (CE),
2. Problem Solving and Critical Thinking (PCT),
3. Affective Engagement in the Content (AE),
4. Instructional Monitoring (IM), (Li et al., 2022).

This learning model requires a quality teacher-student relationship, so we associate it with literacy regarding teacher-student relationships (TSRs). Positive TSRs can increase students' motivation, effort, engagement, happiness, and self-confidence, which have a significant impact on TP (van der Lans et al., 2020). The quality of the teacher-student relationship is indicated by two measurement dimensions, the level of conflict and closeness (Spilt, J. L. et al., 2011). The discussion of both (TP and TSRs)

begins with teacher leadership (TL), which is a derivative concept of transformational leadership (K. Leithwood, 2006). The literature on school improvement and effectiveness has provided substantial evidence that the presence of leadership is important for educational processes and outcomes. On the other hand, much of the literature on school leadership relating to principal leadership practices largely ignores the leadership capacity of teachers. The conventional view has identified school leadership with formal roles and responsibilities of the principal for a long time. There are several definitions and dimensions to explain the concept of TL, but the concept most commonly used to describe teacher leadership is as a process of influence, not a defined role or status (Harris, 2005a; Nguyen et al., 2020; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Teachers as leaders are expected to be able to influence students and colleagues to achieve organizational goals (Connolly et al., 2019).

This study sought to observe the influence of teacher leadership on teaching practice directly where in previous journals there was no direct relationship between the two (Kılınc et al., 2021). One of the reasons for observing this direct influence is the difference of education system in the country where the previous research was conducted, namely Turkey, and the country where this research was conducted, namely Indonesia. The second, it will also be observed how the influence of teacher leadership on teaching practice through mediation of teacher-student relationships. This study attempts to observe objects that were observed in previous studies separately, namely the influence of teacher leadership on class instruction and student learning (Sebastian et al., 2016) and the influence of the teacher-student relationship on teaching (Li et al., 2022).

METHOD

Type of Research

This research is a type of quantitative research conducted at the elementary school level. The object of this study were 120 teachers in 8 private Islamic elementary schools located in the City and District of Mojokerto. Using an electronic questionnaire in the form of a Google form, this research was conducted in March - April 2023. Of the entire sample, 85% were female, with 80% in the range of 25 - 35 years. The educational background is dominated by undergraduates as much as 97,5%. While 90% have learning experience more than 5 years.

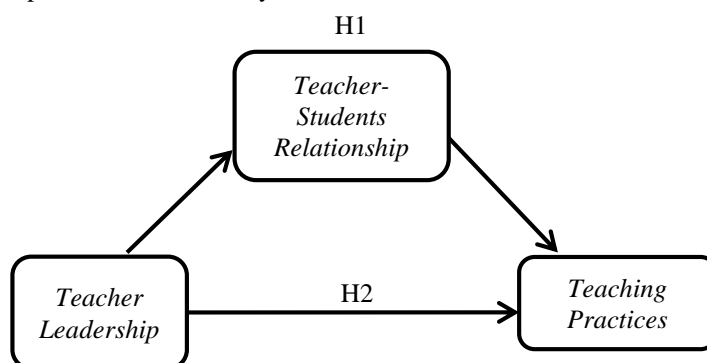


Figure 3. Research Model

Instruments

The questionnaire contains four groups of questions from the independent, dependent and mediating variables. As independent variable is teacher leadership, teaching practice acts as the dependent variable and the teacher-student relationship act as mediating variable. Each variable has its own dimension which totals 12 dimensions. Based on Hair et al. (2014) regarding the number of samples required is ten times the number of structural paths or dimensions, so in this study a sample of 120 teachers was required. Each variable is measured using a Likert scale with a range of 1 (never) to 5 (always).

Table 1. Research variables and dimensions

^a (Beycioglu & Aslan, 2010)	^b (Li et al., 2022)	^c (Spilt, J. L. et al., 2011)
Variabel	Dimensi	Items
<i>Teacher Leadership^a</i>	<i>Institutional Development</i>	9
	<i>Professional Development</i>	11
	<i>Collaboration with Colleagues</i>	5
<i>Teaching Practices^b</i>	<i>Cognitive Engagement</i>	3
	<i>Problem Solving and Critical Thinking</i>	3
	<i>Affective Engagement in the Content</i>	5

	<i>Instructional Monitoring</i>	4
<i>Teacher-student Relationship^c</i>	<i>Conflict</i>	12
	<i>Closeness</i>	13

Data Analysis

The data that has been collected requires processing and analysis to test the hypotheses. This study uses structural equation modeling (SEM) with partial least squares (PLS) approach as data analysis technique. The choice of PLS in this study is based on its characteristics which are capable of solving multiple regression when specific problems occur in the data, for example the small study sample size, missing data or multicollinearity. The PLS technique is carried out through the SMART PLS 4.0 application which generates data for validity testing, reliability testing, the role of mediation and hypothesis testing.

RESULTS

Validity Test

The results of measurement model are shown in table 2 which consists of outer loading, Cronbach's α , composite reliability and Average Variance Extracted (AVE). Outer loading shows the correlation between the indicators and their respective variables. The value limit is > 0.5 so that variable indicators that do not meet or are worth less than 0.5 are deleted and not included in other analyses.

Tabel 2. Result of Measurement Model

Variable and Indicator	Cronbach's α	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
<i>Teacher Leadership</i>	0.923	0.93	0.505
<i>Teacher-Students Relationships</i>	0.858	0.868	0.503
<i>Teaching Practices</i>	0.939	0.943	0.542

There are 22 indicators of TL variable left from 25 indicators originally. TSR variable indicators are left with 12 indicators from 23 indicators formerly while the TP variable indicators are still 15 indicators. Based on the data above, it can be explained that these indicators are indicators that have a valid correlation with their respective variables. The second part of the measurement model which is also a validity test is AVE. The validity of each variable is indicated by the AVE value which must meet a value of > 0.5 . In table 2 all AVE values are at a value of > 0.5 . This shows that there are no invalid indicators of the variables used.

Reliability Test

The next part of this data analysis is reliability test which consists of composite reliability and Cronbachs' α . Both of them must have value more than 0.7 so that the indicators used can be relied upon to measure variables in the field. In this study, the composite reliability and Cronbachs' α values were both more than 0.7 so that the variable indicators were feasible to use.

Mediation Role

Path coefficient is used to determine the level of influence between the variables used in this study and also the mediating role of the mediating variables used. The level of influence is contained in table 3 which shows the path coefficient from TL to TP is 0.305 while from TL to TP via TSR is 0.701. Because the path coefficient value of the indirect effect (through the mediating variable) is greater than without going through the mediation variable (direct effect) so the mediating variable in this study is partial mediation. In addition, the partial nature of this mediation is also indicated by the p value from TL to TP which is < 0.05 , which means that the existence of mediation in this study does not completely negate the direct effect of the relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable.

Table 3. Path Coefficient

	Teacher Students Relationship	Teacher Leadership	Teaching Practice
<i>Teacher-Students Relationship</i>			0.263
<i>Teacher Leadership</i>	0.701		0.305
<i>Teaching Practice</i>			

DISCUSSION

The focus of this research is the influence of teacher leadership (TL) on teaching practices (TP) mediated by teacher-student relationship (TSR). The results of data processing showed that there was a positive and significant relationship (table 3) on the direct relationship between teacher leadership and teaching practice. This shows that the presence of teacher leadership has a good influence on the implementation of teaching in Sekolah Dasar Islam (SDI) swasta in the city and district of Mojokerto as the objects of this research.

Teacher leadership begins with the concept of transformational leadership which is applied in educational management (K. Leithwood, 2006). Teacher leadership is defined as an effort that includes the ways in which the individual and collective actions of each school member contribute to the quality of education in the school (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009). It is observed in 3 dimensions, namely institutional development, professional development and collaboration with colleagues (Beycioglu & Aslan, 2010). These three dimensions explain teacher leadership as a teacher's role in the development of the institution where he serves, the efforts made to develop himself professionally, and how he builds collaboration with his professional colleagues. The role of teachers in institutional development was also explained by James Sebastian (Sebastian et al., 2016) that the main way to influence student achievement is through school climate or generally called organizational climate. This is also complemented by Zhang's findings (Zhang, 2019) in his doctoral dissertation that a good organizational climate or school climate will create an atmosphere where a teacher and students can communicate with each other openly.

By prioritizing these dimensions, teacher leadership can be applied both inside and outside the classroom, carrying out leadership functions at the instructional and organizational levels and aiming to improve student learning outcomes (Harris, 2005b; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). These three dimensions of teacher leadership will improve student learning outcomes through their direct effect on teaching practices. Teaching practices themselves use four dimensions, namely cognitive engagement, problem solving and critical thinking, affective engagement in the content and instructional monitoring in the process of improving student learning outcomes (Li et al., 2022). Students are directed to concentrate, ask questions and think about how their learning content can be used in everyday life through the cognitive engagement dimension. A teacher who trains his students in problem solving and critical thinking will give his students more time to think before answering questions. In addition, students are invited not only to get used to one idea but to compare several ideas. Ultimately students are directed to use what they learn to find ways to solve problems.

Cognitive engagement is followed by affective engagement in the content. In this case, students are given right to choose assignments form, they are motivated through interesting learning content and make sure that everything can be understood and completed. These three dimensions are monitored through instructional monitoring which includes teachers ensuring that all students can understand and engage in learning using several different methods.

From observations of the two variables above, namely teacher leadership and teaching practices, it can be seen that the teachers at the Mojokerto private SDI have good leadership capacity in the classroom so as to produce optimal teaching practices for their students. This condition is enhanced by mediating variable, namely teacher-students relationship (TSR) which focuses on the low level of conflict and closeness between teachers and students (Spilt, J. L. et al., 2011). A teacher who has a good relationship with his students can be seen from the lack of conflict, which is demonstrated, among other things, by mutual openness in expressing opinions or problems, comfort situation during learning and fairness in the treatment of students. TSR is also demonstrated by the closeness of teachers and students in terms of interaction, which all starts from a sense of mutual trust, affection, mutual respect and pride.

The TSR variable in this research act as partial mediation as evidenced by the path coefficient value, which is greater on indirect effect (through the mediation variable) than without the mediation variable (direct effect). Other evidence is through the *P* value of the variable teacher leadership to teaching practices which is less than 0.05. The nature of partial mediation shows that the existence of a mediating variable in this research does not completely eliminate the direct effect from the independent variable (teacher leadership) to the dependent variable (teaching practices). This means that a teacher's leadership is first addressed to students in the form of learning services through teaching practices. In this process, it is highly recommended to pay attention to the teacher-student relationship in order to build a good psychological atmosphere in learning.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Education is a means for opening human insight, returning humans to the concept of creation, being wise in the environment and in utilization science and technology. Therefore, the main party involved in it, namely teachers, should develop their quality through various research. In general, research related to education, which began in England, Netherlands, Turkey, America and several other European countries in the last two decades, has begun to be implemented in the education system in Indonesia through the Teacher Competency Model which includes Pedagogical, Personality, Social and Professional Competencies. This is enhanced by the implementation of Kurikulum Merdeka over the last 2 years. However, there are several things from this research that can be included in the Teacher Competency Model. First, teacher assessment is emphasized on leadership aspects, so that the post-Covid learning adaptation process can be monitored more closely and evaluated more intensely.

Second, increase the content of teacher training, especially on the topic of student psychology, so that teachers can recognize students more easily and precisely. Finally, post-Covid learning adaptation can take place efficiently and effectively.

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