



School Principal Leadership Management in Improving Emotional Intelligence of Islamic Secondary School Students

Rokimin

Darunnajah University, Jakarta, Indonesia

e-mail: rokimin@darunnajah.ac.id

Sofwan Manaf*

Darunnajah University, Jakarta, Indonesia

e-mail: sofwanmanaf@darunnajah.ac.id

M. Towil Akhirudin

Universitas Sains Islam Malaysia

e-mail: towil@raudah.usim.edu.my

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Abstract

This study analyzes the principal's leadership management in enhancing students' emotional intelligence (EQ) at MTs Darunnajah. Emotional intelligence is a crucial aspect of education, contributing to academic achievement, social skills, and character building. In Islamic education, EQ is a foundation for developing morally upright individuals capable of facing academic and social challenges. The researcher employed a qualitative descriptive approach and collected data through in-depth interviews with the principal, teachers, students, and parents, supported by observation and documentation of school activities. They analyzed the data using thematic coding, applied source triangulation, and validated the findings through member checking to ensure credibility. The study found that the principal developed students' EQ through four core managerial functions: planning, organizing, implementing, and supervising. The principal created systematic planning that provided clear direction for school programs and organized collaborative efforts among teachers to integrate character values into every lesson. The implementation aligned with the school's vision and mission by emphasizing character-based learning and empathy-building activities. The principal also supervised the process to evaluate program effectiveness and make necessary improvements. In addition to leadership management, internal factors such as emotional regulation and self-motivation contributed to students' EQ development. In contrast, external factors included parental support, teacher role modeling, and an inclusive school climate. In conclusion, the principal's effective and collaborative leadership fostered a supportive learning environment that enhanced students' EQ. Sustainable development of emotional intelligence requires continuous synergy among principals, teachers, and parents.

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Introduction

Education is the primary foundation for individual development, focusing not only on academic knowledge but also on the development of emotional intelligence (EQ), which contributes significantly to academic success and social interaction. Salovey and Mayer define emotional intelligence as an individual's ability to recognize, understand, and manage emotions within themselves and in interactions with others (Irmawati et al., 2016). Research shows that students with good emotional intelligence can better cope with stress in learning, establish healthy social relationships, and achieve optimal academic performance (Priscilla Josierra Liora et al., 2024; Rikayoni & Rahmi, 2022). Unfortunately, in educational practice, many parents and schools emphasize intellectual achievement more than students' emotional skills, even though both are equally important in shaping learning success (Lestari et al., 2023; Jannah et al., 2019).

Emotional intelligence is crucial in education as it directly relates to students' ability to cope with pressure, manage stress, interact socially, and adapt to change (Riza & Yoto, 2023). Goleman identifies five components of emotional intelligence: self-awareness, emotional regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills that significantly influence learning effectiveness (Poniman et al., 202). Students with pleasing EQ are more focused on learning because they can control frustration, while students with low EQ are at risk of experiencing academic difficulties (Suwardi et al., 2021). Therefore, EQ development must be an integral part of education, in line with the mandate of Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, which emphasizes the development of students' full potential, including spiritual, intellectual, and emotional aspects (Ammarul 'Adl, 2024).

This context emphasizes that the success of education cannot be measured solely by cognitive aspects. School leadership plays a central role in creating a learning environment that supports the development of emotional intelligence. Visionary and empathetic school principals can foster a conducive school climate where students feel safe to express their emotions, interact, and practice social skills (Sofwan Manaf, 2023; Purwanto, 2021). Previous research shows that good school management supports humane and empathetic learning facilities (Poniman et al., 2023; Ramadhini et al., 2023). For example, principals can initiate EQ training programs for teachers or develop extracurricular activities that foster student cooperation and empathy (Kadarsih et al., 2020).

However, most previous studies still emphasize the relationship between EQ and students' academic achievement (Lestari et al., 2023; Jannah et al., 2019) or the context of external factors such as social and cultural factors (Ngatini & Miyono, 2024). Studies on how school leadership strategically influences the development of students' emotional intelligence are still relatively limited. However, effective leadership has the potential to be the key to creating a balance between students' intellectual and emotional development. Thus, more comprehensive research is needed to fill this gap.

Based on this description, this study analyzes how principal leadership management contributes to students' emotional intelligence development. The study aims to provide practical contributions by guiding schools in designing leadership strategies that foster a healthy academic learning climate and support students' emotional growth.

Method

This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach to investigate the practices of principal leadership management in enhancing students' emotional intelligence at MTs Darunnajah Jakarta. Researchers selected this approach to capture complex phenomena related to students' emotional interactions, which quantitative instruments cannot adequately

measure. The study occurred at MTs Darunnajah Jakarta, an A-accredited institution recognized for its value-based education management system. The research spanned approximately five months, with intensive data collection over three months.

Researchers collected data from the principal, teachers, students in grades VII–IX, and school documents related to emotional intelligence development policies. Data collection techniques included observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. They observed student interactions, policy implementation, and leadership practices. Semi-structured interviews with the principal, teachers, and students provided deeper insights into their experiences. Documentation, such as the school’s vision and mission statements, character development programs, and activity reports, served as supporting evidence to strengthen the findings.

Researchers analyzed the data using a content and descriptive model that involved organizing, coding, categorizing, and interpreting the information. They enhanced data credibility through methodological triangulation by comparing interviews, observations, and documentation findings. Member checking and audit trails, which documented the research process transparently, further strengthened validity. Using this approach, the study sought to provide a comprehensive description of how school leadership shapes the development of students’ emotional intelligence, offering theoretical and practical contributions to advancing Islamic education.

Results and Discussion

Emotional Intelligence of Darunnajah MTs Students

The emotional intelligence of Darunnajah MTs students has shown positive development, as reflected in their interactions with their peers. The students' ability to empathize and understand differences indicates progress in their social and emotional aspects.

Table 1. Findings on the Emotional Intelligence of Students at MTs Darunnajah

Findings	Key Statements	Relevance to Literature
The Role of Teachers in Shaping Emotional Intelligence	The development of students' emotional intelligence is greatly influenced by the ability of teachers to understand and respond to students' emotions.	This is in line with Poniman et al. (2023), who emphasize that the role of teachers is crucial in fostering students' EQ.
Challenges in Managing Students' Emotion	Some students still have difficulty managing their emotions, especially when facing problems outside of school.	Riza & Yoto (2023) state that emotion management is the most challenging aspect for adolescent students.
Influence of the Family Environment	Problems at home, such as family disharmony or lack of parental support, disrupt students' focus and emotions at school.	This is supported by Lubis et al. (2023) and Suwardi et al. (2021), who emphasize the family's role in children's emotional stability.
Collaboration between Teachers and Parents	The importance of cooperation between teachers and parents in supporting students' emotional	This aligns with Jannah et al. (2019) and Bella et al. (2023) on

Students' emotional intelligence highly depends on teachers' ability to understand and respond to children's emotional conditions. This emphasizes the importance of teacher emotional responsiveness in creating a conducive classroom climate. Poniman et al. (2023) also emphasize that teachers who can manage emotional interactions with students can increase empathy, learning motivation, and the quality of social relationships at school. Thus, these findings reinforce previous literature that the role of teachers is not merely to deliver academic material but also to be facilitators in emotional intelligence development.

Challenges in managing students' emotions include some students struggling to control their emotions, especially when facing problems outside school. This is relevant to the view of Riza & Yoto (2023), who state that adolescents are in a phase of emotional development that is unstable, making them vulnerable to psychological disturbances when faced with external pressures. Students' limitations in managing emotions can disrupt their focus on learning and academic achievement. These findings indicate the need for systematic interventions, such as emotion management training or school-based counseling, to strengthen students' emotional resilience.

The important role of families in supporting students' emotional stability. Disharmony in the household, such as parental conflict or lack of attention, directly impacts students' emotional behavior at school. This is consistent with the research by Lubis et al. (2023), which found that inconsistent parenting increases the risk of emotional disorders in children.

Similarly, Suwardi et al. (2021) showed a positive correlation between family support and students' academic achievement through emotional intelligence. Thus, the results of this study reinforce that schools cannot stand alone without support from home. There is a need for synergy between teachers and parents in fostering children's emotional intelligence.

This collaboration is important to ensure that parenting patterns at home align with education at school. This perspective aligns with the findings of Jannah et al. (2019) that active parental involvement in children's emotional education enhances the effectiveness of learning at school. Bella et al. (2023) added that sustained family-school collaboration can create a more supportive and inclusive learning environment.

Thus, these field findings support the literature and provide empirical evidence of the importance of parental involvement in emotional intelligence-based education programs. Overall, the discussion shows that the emotional intelligence development of MTs Darunnajah students is progressing positively. However, they still face challenges from internal (personal emotional control) and external (family support) factors.

Previous literature emphasizes that EQ development requires a systemic approach involving teachers, parents, and school leadership (Goleman, 1995; Sofwan Manaf, 2023; Purwanto, 2021). Therefore, school emotional intelligence development strategies must be collaborative through teacher training programs, student counseling, and parental involvement in supporting children's emotional development.

Factors Affecting Students' Emotional Intelligence

Various internal and external factors greatly influence students' emotional intelligence (EQ). Understanding these factors is very important for teachers and parents to design a holistic and consistent approach in supporting children's emotional intelligence development. Integrating emotional intelligence education into the school curriculum and providing continuous support from families will positively impact students' emotional development.

Table 2. Findings on Factors Affecting Students' Emotional Intelligence

Findings	Key Statements	Relevance to Literature
Emotion regulation & empathy as the core of EQ development	Students begin to be able to manage their emotions, are more empathetic, less selfish, consider their friends' feelings, and think before acting/speaking.	Emotion regulation and empathy are the foundation of emotional intelligence development related to students' social success (Brackett & Rivers, 2019). Recent studies also show that these skills reduce aggressive behavior and improve relationships between students (Qualter et al., 2020).
The role of families and teachers in shaping EQ	The main factors that influence children's emotional intelligence are family support, teachers, and the children's internal factors. Loving parents build children's mental resilience, while teachers are role models in managing emotions.	Emotional involvement of parents has been proven to enhance children's social-emotional skills (Denham et al., 2014). Meanwhile, teachers function as models of emotional regulation that influence the formation of students' emotional attitudes (García-Sancho et al., 2017; Sánchez-Álvarez et al., 2016).

Interview data indicate improvements in students' emotional regulation, empathy, and caution in action, as well as stronger evidence that family support and teacher modeling are the primary drivers of EQ development. This pattern is consistent with contemporary research that positions EQ as the result of the interaction between internal factors (emotional regulation, self-motivation) and external factors (family climate, teacher pedagogical practices, school culture) (Denham et al., 2016; Sánchez-Álvarez et al., 2020).

Improvements in the ability to “think before acting,” maintain peers' feelings, and demonstrate empathy reflect progress on the two EQ dimensions of emotional regulation and empathy. Research indicates that emotional regulation skills predict the quality of peer relationships, contribute to a prosocial classroom climate (Brackett & Rivers, 2019), and reduce aggressive/bullying behavior (Qualter et al., 2020). EQ influences academic achievement at the mechanism level through classroom learning emotions, stress management, and social facilitation (MacCann et al., 2020).

Parental affection and attention shape mental resilience, consistent with findings that parental emotional involvement and consistent parenting strengthen children's social-emotional competencies (Denham et al., 2014). A recent meta-analysis also links EQ with better subjective well-being and emotional adaptation (Sánchez-Álvarez et al., 2020). On the other hand, exposure to household stressors and digital distractions can disrupt adolescents'

emotional regulation; this underscores the need for digital hygiene and family psychosocial support in the digital age (Odgers & Jensen, 2020).

Teachers as emotional role models strengthen evidence that teachers' social-emotional competencies resonate with classroom climate, increasing classroom engagement and reducing problematic behavior (Jennings et al., 2013). Empathetic pedagogical responses, restorative classroom management, and explicit “emotion talk” support daily emotional learning, not just occasional programs. International research confirms the effectiveness of school-based SEL programs (structured, sustained, and skill-focused) in improving social-emotional competencies, attitudes, and academic achievement (Taylor et al., 2017). Field findings of increased empathy and emotional control reflect the benefits of SEL integrated into daily practice

Internally, emotional regulation and self-motivation are cross-contextual predictors of academic and social adjustment (MacCann et al., 2020; Petrides et al., 2018). Externally, family support and emotional models from teachers enrich daily emotional practice, encourage prosociality (Silke et al., 2018), and stabilize classroom emotional dynamics (Jennings et al., 2013).

Principal Leadership Management in Improving Students' Emotional Intelligence at Mts Darunnajah

Research findings indicate that the principal at MTs Darunnajah's leadership in enhancing students' emotional intelligence operates through four management functions: planning, organizing, implementing, and supervising. This aligns with George R. Terry's classical theory, which emphasizes the importance of planning as the starting point of effective management. In education, thorough planning by the principal has proven to provide clear direction for both students and teachers, thereby making the learning process more structured. Recent research supports this finding, indicating that good planning in educational management significantly impacts the development of students' character and emotional intelligence (Baba et al., 2021; Mansur & Sholeh, 2024). Thus, leadership oriented towards the school's vision and mission forms a learning environment conducive to students' emotional development.

The organization carried out by the principal is also an important factor in supporting the implementation of emotional education. The interview findings show that teachers are responsible for instilling character values in every lesson. This indicates effective task distribution and teacher collaboration, which aligns with the transformational leadership model. Recent studies reveal that collaboration-based organizations can improve the favorable school climate, enabling students to learn to manage their emotions in daily social interactions (Leithwood et al., 2020; Paschal et al., 2024).

Thus, the principal's role as an organizer is administrative and strategic in building a school culture that supports emotional intelligence. Furthermore, consistent program implementation is an indicator of successful principal leadership. The findings that programs are tailored to the school's vision and mission, and regular meetings to align teachers' understanding, demonstrate the implementation of participatory leadership.

This model has proven effective in increasing teacher involvement and student motivation, ultimately strengthening their ability to manage emotions (Day et al., 2016). Furthermore, supervision by the principal is a key factor in maintaining the quality of program implementation. The results of the study indicate that supervision is not only

evaluative but also corrective. This is in line with the results of studies (Jannah, 2022; Mawaddah, 2021), which emphasize that principal supervision plays a role in controlling the quality of learning while improving students' emotional competence through teacher training.

Thus, it can be concluded that the principal's leadership at MTs Darunnajah reflects comprehensive educational management practices. Systematic planning, collaborative organization, consistent implementation, and adaptive supervision have proven to improve students' emotional intelligence. These results support the finding that emotional intelligence is not only influenced by internal factors of students but also by the school climate and the effective leadership style of the principal (Ciarrochi et al., 2002).

The leadership management of the Mts Darunnajah's principal has successfully improved students' emotional intelligence. The principal has successfully mobilized all educators to implement the plans that have been made, organize effectively, and supervise the implementation of activities well. With good supervision, the principal can identify challenges and make improvements, which ultimately improve the quality of education at the school, particularly in terms of students' emotional intelligence.

Conclusion

This study reveals that leadership management at MTs Darunnajah has positively improved students' emotional intelligence. The integrated aspects of planning, organizing, implementing, and supervising create an environment supporting emotional intelligence development. The principal and the educators successfully designed and implemented programs that integrate values such as empathy, discipline, and cooperation, which are crucial in developing students' emotional intelligence. This study emphasizes the importance of close collaboration between the principal, teachers, and parents in supporting the development of students' emotional intelligence. A structured approach in organization and continuous evaluation is essential for improving students' emotional intelligence. This study contributes to understanding the role of leadership management in developing emotional intelligence, particularly in the context of Islamic education. Further research could explore external factors influencing emotional intelligence, such as social media, peer pressure, or broader educational policies. Additionally, further studies could examine the long-term impact of emotional intelligence on the academic achievement and social development of students at higher levels of education.

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