



Supervisory Leadership of Madrasah Principals in Improving Teacher Performance

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Abstract

Purpose – This study aims to examine the supervisory leadership of madrasah principals in improving teacher performance. It addresses how supervision can be implemented not merely as administrative control, but as a professional development process that supports teacher discipline, instructional quality, reflective practice, and accountable work culture.

Design/methods/approach – This study employed a qualitative case study design at MTs Ashlinatul Amin. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation involving the madrasah principal, vice principals, teachers, and administrative staff. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis through data organization, reduction, coding, theme development, and interpretation. Source and technique triangulation were applied to strengthen credibility.

Findings – The findings show that supervisory leadership was implemented through systematic supervision planning based on teacher needs, participatory and reflective supervision practices, constructive evaluation and feedback, continuous follow-up, and the development of a professional teacher work culture. These practices helped teachers improve lesson planning, classroom management, teaching methods, assessment practices, discipline, and instructional responsibility.

Research implications/limitations – This study implies that madrasah principals need supervision strategies that are systematic, participatory, reflective, and oriented toward teacher professional development. However, this study is limited to a single qualitative case and does not statistically measure the relationship between supervisory leadership and teacher performance.

Originality/value – This study contributes to educational leadership literature by linking supervisory leadership, academic supervision, teacher performance, professional work culture, and Islamic educational values in the madrasah context.

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INTRODUCTION

Teacher performance is one of the most important factors in determining the quality of education in schools and madrasahs. Teachers are directly involved in planning lessons, implementing instructional activities, assessing student learning, guiding students' character development, and translating institutional goals into classroom practices (Hartono, 2023; Zohriah et al., 2022). Therefore, efforts to improve educational quality cannot be separated from systematic efforts to strengthen teacher competence, professionalism, discipline, commitment, and instructional quality. In the context of madrasahs, teacher performance is also closely related to the ability of teachers to integrate academic learning with Islamic values, moral formation, and the religious mission of the institution (Angeline et al., 2026).

Madrasah principals have a strategic role in improving teacher performance through supervisory leadership. Supervisory leadership refers to the principal's ability to guide, assist, monitor, evaluate, and develop teachers in a professional and constructive manner. In this perspective, supervision is not merely an administrative activity or a formal mechanism for checking teacher compliance, but a process of professional assistance aimed at improving teaching quality and teacher growth. Imamah & Churrahman (2022) emphasize that academic supervision by school principals is intended to assist teachers in carrying out their professional responsibilities and improving their performance. Similarly, Zohriah et al. (2022) show that principal academic supervision contributes to teacher performance by providing guidance, direction, and professional support.

The paradigm of school supervision has shifted from inspection-based control to developmental, collaborative, and reflective assistance. Traditional supervision often focuses on identifying weaknesses, checking documents, and ensuring formal compliance. However, contemporary supervision emphasizes professional dialogue, teacher development, instructional improvement, feedback, and follow-up. Wardani et al. (2021) argue that academic supervision and communication play an important role in improving teacher performance because teachers need not only assessment but also constructive interaction with school leaders. This indicates that the effectiveness of supervision depends on how principals communicate expectations, provide support, and create a professional climate that encourages teachers to improve.

In madrasahs, supervisory leadership becomes more complex because principals are required to develop teacher performance while also maintaining the Islamic identity and moral culture of the institution. Madrasah teachers are expected not only to master pedagogical and professional competencies, but also to demonstrate Islamic values in teaching, interaction, and student guidance. Alazmi (2025) highlights the importance of Islamic-oriented educational leadership in shaping leadership practices within Muslim educational contexts. Hartono (2023) also emphasizes that Islamic leadership can influence teacher performance in Islamic educational institutions through values such as responsibility, trust, discipline, moral example, and commitment to educational quality. These perspectives show that supervisory leadership in madrasahs should combine professional supervision with value-based leadership.

Academic supervision has been widely recognized as an important strategy for improving teacher performance. Through supervision, principals can identify teachers' needs, observe classroom practices, provide feedback, encourage reflection, and design professional development programs. Haryanto (2024) explains that teacher professional development can

be strengthened through academic supervision when supervision is conducted as a process of guidance and instructional improvement. Suryani et al. (2024) further show that collaborative-based principal academic supervision can contribute to teacher competence because it allows teachers to be involved in the improvement process rather than positioned merely as objects of evaluation. This collaborative orientation is important because teachers are more likely to improve when they feel supported, respected, and involved in professional dialogue.

Feedback and follow-up are also essential elements of effective supervisory leadership. Classroom observation without feedback may not lead to meaningful improvement, while evaluation without follow-up can become only an administrative routine. Wiczorek et al. (2019) show that principals' instructional feedback practices are important in shaping teachers' professional learning and instructional improvement. Kim et al. (2024) also identify that effective feedback in teacher evaluation should be clear, constructive, evidence-based, and oriented toward professional growth. In addition, Mireles-Rios & Becchio (2018) suggest that administrator feedback can influence teacher self-efficacy, indicating that the way principals provide feedback may affect teachers' confidence and willingness to improve their teaching practices.

Teacher performance is also influenced by organizational culture, work discipline, commitment, and the leadership environment created by the principal. Supervision that is implemented consistently can help build professional accountability, improve discipline, and strengthen teachers' commitment to school goals. Amala & Prasojo (2025) show that work discipline, school culture, and principal leadership influence teacher performance in madrasah contexts. Maharani et al. (2025) also demonstrate that principal leadership, organizational culture, and teacher commitment are related to teacher performance. These findings indicate that supervisory leadership is not limited to classroom observation, but also involves shaping a professional work culture that supports continuous improvement.

Although many studies have discussed academic supervision and teacher performance, several gaps remain. First, many studies focus on the statistical relationship between supervision and teacher performance, while fewer studies explain how supervisory leadership is practiced in daily madrasah life. Second, supervision is often discussed as a technical administrative process, whereas in madrasahs it also contains moral, cultural, and religious dimensions. Third, limited attention has been given to how madrasah principals integrate systematic planning, participatory supervision, reflective feedback, and continuous follow-up as a unified strategy for improving teacher performance. Therefore, further qualitative inquiry is needed to understand supervisory leadership as a contextual, relational, and value-based process in madrasahs.

This study examines the supervisory leadership of madrasah principals in improving teacher performance by focusing on supervision planning based on teacher needs, participatory and reflective implementation, evaluation and feedback, follow-up activities, and the development of a professional and accountable teacher work culture. It views teacher performance improvement not merely as an individual effort, but as a process shaped by leadership support, institutional culture, professional development, and Islamic educational values. The study contributes theoretically to the discourse on supervisory leadership by explaining academic supervision as a developmental and reflective process in Islamic educational institutions, while practically offering insights for madrasah principals, teachers,

supervisors, and policymakers in designing systematic, participatory, constructive, and performance-oriented supervision systems.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach with a case study design to examine the supervisory leadership of madrasah principals in improving teacher performance. This design was selected because the study aimed to understand supervision practices, teacher development processes, leadership interactions, and contextual factors in a natural madrasah setting. The research was conducted at MTs Ashlinatul Amin, which was purposively selected because the madrasah implemented supervision activities to improve teacher discipline, instructional quality, professional responsibility, and work culture. The participants consisted of the madrasah principal, vice principals, teachers, and administrative staff who were directly involved in academic supervision, teaching activities, teacher evaluation, and school improvement programs.

Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation. Interviews were conducted to explore the principal's supervision planning, participatory supervision practices, feedback mechanisms, follow-up actions, teacher professional development, and challenges in improving teacher performance (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Observations were used to examine supervision activities, teacher meetings, classroom practices, coordination forums, and teacher work culture. Documentation was used to review supervision schedules, teacher performance records, lesson plans, evaluation instruments, meeting notes, follow-up reports, and school program documents. These techniques were used to obtain a comprehensive understanding of how supervisory leadership was planned, implemented, evaluated, and followed up in relation to teacher performance improvement.

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis through data organization, data reduction, coding, theme development, and interpretation. The analysis focused on identifying patterns related to supervision planning based on teacher needs, participatory and reflective supervision, evaluation and feedback, follow-up for teacher improvement, and the development of professional teacher work culture. To strengthen the credibility of the findings, the study applied source triangulation by comparing information from the principal, vice principals, teachers, and administrative staff, and technique triangulation by comparing interview, observation, and documentation data (Miles et al., 2014). Ethical considerations were maintained by informing participants about the purpose of the study, ensuring voluntary participation, preserving confidentiality, and presenting the findings responsibly for academic purposes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Systematic Supervision Planning Based on Teacher Needs

The findings show that the supervisory leadership of the madrasah principal began with systematic planning based on teacher needs. Supervision was not conducted incidentally, but was arranged through a planned schedule, supervision instruments, and identification of teacher performance problems. The principal considered planning an important stage because supervision would be ineffective if it was carried out only as an administrative routine. In this context, supervision planning was directed toward improving lesson planning,

classroom management, teaching methods, assessment practices, teacher discipline, and professional responsibility.

The principal explained that supervision planning was developed by considering the actual conditions of teachers. As stated in the interview:

“Before conducting supervision, we first look at the teachers’ needs. Some teachers need support in preparing lesson plans, some need guidance in classroom management, and others need assistance in using learning media. Therefore, the supervision program must be adjusted to the real needs of teachers.”

This statement indicates that the principal did not apply the same supervision strategy to all teachers. Instead, supervision was designed according to the level of teacher competence and the problems they faced in teaching practice. This finding is consistent with Imamah & Churrahman (2022), who emphasize that academic supervision is intended to assist teachers in improving their professional responsibilities. It also supports Zohriah et al. (2022), who show that principal academic supervision contributes to teacher performance through guidance, monitoring, and professional support.

Systematic supervision planning was also reflected in the preparation of supervision schedules and instruments. The principal used supervision documents to observe teacher performance in lesson planning, teaching implementation, classroom interaction, and assessment. This helped the supervision process become more focused and measurable. Siagian et al. (2025) argue that principal supervision can strengthen teacher professionalism when it is supported by clear planning and appropriate supervision instruments. In the present study, planning helped ensure that supervision was connected to specific aspects of teacher performance rather than general impressions.

The findings also show that supervision planning was linked to the madrasah’s annual program and school improvement agenda. This means that supervision was not separated from institutional goals. The principal used supervision as a tool to ensure that teachers’ classroom practices supported the broader vision of improving educational quality. Haryanto (2024) emphasizes that academic supervision should become part of teacher professional development rather than a separate administrative obligation. In this study, supervision planning functioned as the foundation for continuous teacher development.

Teacher involvement in supervision planning was also important. Teachers were informed about the schedule, focus, and objectives of supervision so that they did not perceive supervision as a sudden inspection. One teacher stated:

“When the supervision schedule and focus are explained from the beginning, we feel more prepared. We understand that the purpose is not to find mistakes, but to help us improve our teaching.”

This finding indicates that transparency in supervision planning can reduce teacher anxiety and increase teacher readiness. Burhan & Sauri (2025) highlight the importance of principal leadership in creating a supportive professional environment for teachers. When teachers understand the purpose of supervision, they are more likely to accept supervision as part of professional learning.

Overall, systematic planning based on teacher needs became the first pillar of supervisory leadership in improving teacher performance. The principal's planning practices helped identify teacher problems, clarify supervision objectives, organize supervision schedules, and align supervision with school improvement. This shows that effective supervision begins not from control, but from a careful understanding of teachers' professional needs.

Participatory and Reflective Supervision Practices

The second finding concerns the implementation of participatory and reflective supervision. The principal did not conduct supervision through a rigid, one-way, or inspection-oriented approach. Instead, supervision was carried out through dialogue, classroom observation, discussion, and reflection. The principal positioned teachers as professional partners who needed guidance, feedback, and opportunities to reflect on their own teaching practices. The principal explained:

"I try not to make teachers feel afraid of supervision. After observing the class, we discuss together. I ask what difficulties they experienced, what they think went well, and what support they need. From there, we look for solutions together."

This statement shows that supervision was implemented as a collaborative process. The principal did not simply judge teacher performance, but encouraged teachers to analyze their own teaching experiences. This finding is in line with Suryani et al. (2024), who state that collaborative academic supervision can improve teacher competence because teachers are involved in the process of identifying problems and developing solutions. Farhan and Maunah, as discussed in the literature, also support the view that collaborative supervision strengthens teacher professional growth when supervision is based on dialogue and mutual trust.

Reflective supervision was particularly visible in post-observation discussions. After classroom observation, the principal provided feedback and invited teachers to reflect on their teaching strategies, classroom management, student participation, and learning outcomes. One teacher stated:

"The most helpful part is the discussion after supervision. The principal does not only tell us what is lacking, but also asks us to reflect. Sometimes we realize our own weaknesses after discussing what happened in class."

This finding indicates that reflection helped teachers become more aware of their instructional strengths and weaknesses. Maryati et al. (2025) explain that reflective supervision can encourage teacher improvement when feedback is delivered constructively and linked to classroom realities. In this study, reflection became an important mechanism for transforming supervision into professional learning.

Participatory supervision also created a more humanistic supervision climate. Teachers did not feel that supervision was a threatening activity. Instead, they perceived supervision as an opportunity to receive support and improve their teaching. Astuti et al. (2025) show that coaching-based academic supervision can strengthen teacher performance because it emphasizes assistance, professional dialogue, and continuous guidance. This is relevant to the

present study because the principal acted not only as an evaluator but also as a mentor and facilitator.

In addition, participatory supervision encouraged teachers to share their difficulties openly. Some teachers reported challenges related to classroom discipline, student motivation, learning media, lesson plan preparation, and assessment techniques. Through reflective discussion, the principal helped teachers identify practical solutions. Wibowo & Helmawati (2025) emphasize that supervisory leadership can improve teacher performance when it is accompanied by professional support and a positive school culture. In this study, the principal's participatory approach helped create trust and openness between the principal and teachers.

Participatory and reflective supervision also supported the Islamic values of consultation, mutual respect, and responsibility. In the madrasah context, supervision was not only a technical process but also a moral process that encouraged teachers to improve themselves as educators. Sulistiana et al. (2025) argue that supervision in Islamic educational settings needs to be connected with ethical and professional responsibility. The findings of this study show that the principal's supervision practices were not merely administrative, but also relational, reflective, and value-oriented.

Overall, the implementation of participatory and reflective supervision contributed to teacher performance improvement by creating a supervision climate that was supportive, dialogical, and improvement-oriented. Teachers became more willing to receive feedback, discuss teaching problems, and improve classroom practices. This suggests that supervisory leadership is effective when it combines observation, reflection, dialogue, and professional assistance.

Evaluation, Feedback, and Follow-Up for Teacher Performance Improvement

The third finding shows that evaluation, feedback, and follow-up were essential components of the principal's supervisory leadership. Classroom observation and teacher evaluation were not treated as the final stage of supervision. Instead, they became the basis for giving feedback and designing follow-up actions. The principal emphasized that supervision would have limited impact if it ended only with observation forms or written reports. One principal stated:

“The most important part of supervision is the follow-up. If we only observe teachers and fill in the instrument, there will be no change. After evaluation, we must provide feedback and decide what improvement steps need to be taken.”

This statement indicates that follow-up was viewed as the core of teacher performance improvement. Wieczorek et al. (2019) emphasize that principals' instructional feedback practices are important for supporting teacher learning. Similarly, Kim et al. (2024) explain that effective feedback should be specific, evidence-based, constructive, and oriented toward professional growth. In this study, feedback was used to help teachers understand their performance and identify areas for improvement.

Feedback was delivered through post-supervision meetings, personal discussions, and teacher coordination forums. The principal provided feedback on lesson planning, teaching methods, classroom interaction, use of learning media, student engagement, and assessment

practices. Teachers stated that feedback was more useful when it was concrete and accompanied by examples. One teacher explained:

“Feedback becomes meaningful when it is specific. For example, the principal gives suggestions about how to open the lesson, how to ask questions, or how to involve passive students. That kind of feedback helps us improve.”

This finding supports Mireles-Rios & Becchio’s (2018) argument that administrator feedback can influence teacher self-efficacy. When feedback is delivered constructively, teachers may feel more confident and motivated to improve. In the madrasah studied, feedback helped teachers understand that supervision was not intended to punish them, but to support their professional growth.

Follow-up actions were conducted in several forms, including individual coaching, peer discussion, teaching improvement plans, additional training, and monitoring of progress. Teachers who faced difficulties in lesson planning received guidance in preparing learning documents, while teachers who needed improvement in classroom practice were encouraged to observe colleagues or discuss teaching strategies. Muttaqin et al. (2023) emphasize that academic supervision can improve teacher performance when evaluation is followed by professional development activities. This finding is consistent with the present study, where follow-up became a bridge between evaluation and improvement.

Evaluation was also used to identify broader teacher development needs. If several teachers faced similar problems, the principal organized group mentoring or internal training. Abdullah et al. (2025) show that supervision is more effective when it is linked to teacher training and institutional development programs. In this study, supervision results were used not only to evaluate individuals but also to design collective professional development.

The principal also monitored whether teachers implemented the feedback given during supervision. This monitoring was important to ensure that recommendations were not left as written notes. Lestari et al. (2023) argue that supervision follow-up contributes to teacher performance when it is implemented consistently and monitored over time. In the present study, follow-up monitoring helped strengthen teacher accountability and encouraged teachers to make real changes in teaching practice.

Overall, the findings show that evaluation, feedback, and follow-up formed a continuous supervision cycle. Evaluation identified teacher performance conditions, feedback clarified strengths and weaknesses, and follow-up supported improvement. This cycle helped transform supervision from a formal activity into a professional development process. Thus, supervisory leadership improved teacher performance not simply by observing teachers, but by ensuring that evaluation results led to concrete improvement actions.

Building Professional and Accountable Teacher Work Culture

The fourth finding concerns the development of a professional and accountable teacher work culture. The principal’s supervisory leadership contributed not only to individual teacher improvement, but also to the formation of a school culture that emphasized discipline, responsibility, collaboration, transparency, and continuous learning. The findings show that supervision, when implemented consistently, helped teachers become more disciplined in preparing lesson plans, reporting learning activities, attending meetings, completing administrative tasks, and improving classroom practices. One teacher stated:

“After supervision became more regular, we became more disciplined in preparing lesson plans and completing teaching administration. We also became more aware that our work is part of our responsibility to students and the madrasah.”

This finding indicates that supervision shaped teacher accountability. Amala & Prasajo (2025) show that work discipline, school culture, and principal leadership influence teacher performance. Maharani et al. (2025) also emphasize that teacher commitment and organizational culture are related to teacher performance. In the present study, supervision strengthened teachers’ awareness that professional responsibility was not only a personal obligation but also part of the madrasah’s collective culture.

Professional work culture was also strengthened through regular coordination and communication among teachers. Supervision results were discussed in teacher meetings, allowing teachers to share experiences and learn from one another. Tambrin et al. (2021) highlight that principal leadership strategies can build teacher professionalism culture when leaders encourage collaboration, discipline, and shared commitment. In this study, supervision helped create a culture in which teachers were encouraged to improve together.

The principal also attempted to build a culture of transparency. Teachers were informed about supervision indicators and evaluation results. This reduced suspicion and helped teachers understand the basis of assessment. One vice principal explained:

“Teachers need clarity. If the indicators are clear, they know what is expected. Evaluation becomes fairer because everyone understands the standards.”

This finding shows that transparent supervision can strengthen trust and professional accountability. Prasetyo et al. (2025) argue that clear supervision standards and leadership communication contribute to teacher professionalism. In this study, transparency helped supervision become more acceptable and meaningful for teachers.

A professional teacher work culture was also linked to Islamic values. The principal emphasized responsibility, sincerity, discipline, honesty, and service as part of teachers’ moral commitment. Robita & Dakir (2025) explain that Islamic educational leadership can strengthen teacher professionalism when leadership practices are grounded in moral and religious values. Similarly, Lailatusolihah et al. (2025) highlight that value-based supervision can support the development of professional and ethical teacher behavior in Islamic education. In this study, supervision was not only intended to improve technical teaching performance but also to strengthen teachers’ ethical responsibility as educators.

However, building a professional and accountable work culture required consistency. The findings show that some teachers initially perceived supervision as an administrative burden. This perception gradually changed when the principal conducted supervision in a supportive and reflective manner. One teacher explained:

“At first, supervision felt like additional pressure. But after we experienced the discussion and follow-up, we understood that it was actually useful for improving our teaching.”

This finding indicates that changing teacher culture requires time, consistency, and trust-building. If supervision is conducted only once or without meaningful follow-up, teachers

may continue to see it as a formality. However, when supervision is sustained and connected to teacher needs, it can become part of professional culture.

Overall, the findings indicate that supervisory leadership contributed to the development of professional and accountable teacher work culture in the madrasah. The principal built this culture through systematic supervision, transparent evaluation, constructive feedback, continuous follow-up, and Islamic value-based guidance. This suggests that improving teacher performance requires more than individual evaluation; it requires the formation of a professional culture in which teachers are supported, guided, trusted, and held accountable for continuous improvement.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that the supervisory leadership of madrasah principals plays an important role in improving teacher performance. The findings indicate that effective supervisory leadership is carried out through systematic supervision planning based on teacher needs, participatory and reflective supervision practices, constructive evaluation and feedback, continuous follow-up, and the development of a professional teacher work culture. Supervision was not implemented merely as an administrative control mechanism, but as a professional development process that helped teachers improve lesson planning, classroom management, teaching methods, assessment practices, discipline, and instructional responsibility.

The study also reveals that teacher performance improvement is strongly shaped by the quality of supervision interactions between the principal and teachers. Participatory and reflective supervision encouraged teachers to discuss instructional problems openly, receive feedback constructively, and develop improvement strategies collaboratively. Evaluation and follow-up became essential because they ensured that supervision results were translated into concrete actions such as coaching, mentoring, peer discussion, and teacher training. In the madrasah context, supervisory leadership also contributed to the formation of a professional and accountable teacher work culture grounded in discipline, responsibility, transparency, collaboration, and Islamic educational values.

This study has several limitations. First, it was conducted in a single madrasah context, so the findings cannot be generalized to all madrasahs or Islamic schools. Second, the study used a qualitative case study design, which provides an in-depth understanding but does not statistically measure the relationship between supervisory leadership and teacher performance. Third, the data were limited to interviews, observations, and documents within a specific fieldwork context. Future research is recommended to involve multiple madrasahs, use comparative or mixed-method designs, and examine more specifically how supervision planning, feedback quality, follow-up consistency, school culture, and Islamic value-based leadership influence teacher performance and instructional quality over time.

DECLARATION OF AI AND AI ASSISTED TECHNOLOGIES IN THE WRITING PROCESS

In developing this manuscript, the author(s) employed ChatGPT to support language refinement, sentence restructuring, and the enhancement of clarity and coherence. All outputs generated with the assistance of AI were critically reviewed and revised by the author(s), who remain fully responsible for the final published content.

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