

## Servant Leadership Style and Acceleration of Organizational Accreditation Quality

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### ABSTRACT

This study examines the implementation of servant leadership in accelerating the quality of organizational accreditation at three Islamic high schools, namely MA Islamiyah Syafiiyah, MA Bahrul Ulum, and MA Ahmad Syarifudin. Educational institution accreditation requires comprehensive managerial readiness, covering curriculum standards, processes, assessment, educators and education staff, facilities and infrastructure, management, funding, and graduation standards. The servant leadership approach, which prioritizes the interests of teachers, education staff, and students over the personal interests of the leader, has proven effective in building a collaborative culture and collective dedication. This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with data collection techniques including in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document study. The results show that principals who apply servant leadership principles succeed in creating a psychological climate which is conducive, increases organizational commitment, and speeds up the fulfillment of accreditation instruments based on the eight National Education Standards (SNP). This study recommends strengthening servant leadership capacity as a main strategy for continuous quality improvement in madrasah environments.

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## INTRODUCTION

The speed of change happening across various areas of life doesn't take into account the limitations of available resources, which is why we need leaders who can boost team performance and turn limitations into strengths.(Canavesi & Minelli, 2022) A leader's enthusiasm and optimism should

be communicated clearly so that it positively impacts organizational growth and effectively influences others through real actions, setting an example in work spirit. (Abrori, 2018) The dynamics of Islamic education in Indonesia today are in an era of increasingly tight quality competition. Islamic education should have characteristics in its implementation, namely being planned, competitive, offering varied programs, future-oriented, and meeting demands and needs (adaptive) (Baharun, 2017). Madrasah educational institutions, both private and public, are required to constantly carry out continuous improvements in order to meet the expectations of the community and government regulations. One legal instrument and at the same time a main benchmark in assessing the quality of an educational institution's management is accreditation. (Asrori, 2021). Accreditation of madrasah organizations is not just a five-year administrative routine to extend operational status, but rather a reflection of accountability, transparency, and the effectiveness of institutional governance as a whole based on the eight National Education Standards.

However, the process of accelerating accreditation quality often faces various internal obstacles, such as limited human resources, low engagement from the madrasah community, resistance to change, and a work culture that is still partial. In this context, leadership plays a very central role. (van Dierendonck, Lv, & Xiu, 2026) Leaders in educational units can no longer rely solely on authoritarian or transactional approaches; instead, they need a transformative and humanistic leadership paradigm. One leadership model that is very relevant and has proven effective in driving educational institutions based on moral values is servant leadership. (Greenleaf, 2007). The concept of servant leadership focuses on the basic character of a leader that starts from a genuine feeling to serve, prioritizing service, and then directing awareness to lead others. In madrasah environments like MA Islamiyah Syafiiyah, MA Bahrul Ulum, and MA Ahmad Syarifudin, the practice of servant leadership has special significance because these institutions are deeply rooted in the pesantren tradition and Islamic values that uphold the spirit of brotherhood, sincerity, and dedication.

Analysis of previous literature shows a close connection between servant leadership models and the strengthening of institutional capacity. A study conducted by Rifqoh Nurjanah and Hasyim Asy'ari titled 'Servant Leadership as a Strategy to Improve the Quality of Educational Services' focuses on the downstream process dimension, where servant leadership is optimized to maintain the satisfaction of educational constituents as well as the quality of daily operations. On the other hand, this research, titled 'Servant Leadership Style and Accelerating Organizational Accreditation Quality,' shifts the focus to a macro-structural realm, namely the effectiveness of such leadership in speeding up formal compliance with external assessment standards (accreditation).

The fundamental similarity between these two studies lies in positioning servant leadership as the main bridge toward improving institutional governance. However, a sharp difference emerges in terms of their output targets: the first article examines service quality that is perceptual and continuous, while the second article tests the acceleration of administrative achievements that are periodic and regulatory. The research gap and at the same time the novelty arising from this comparison shows that servant leadership not only functions as a humanistic tool to enhance internal service comfort but also acts as a strategic catalyst capable of driving the organization's collective commitment to achieve formal quality targets more quickly and accurately. This study focuses on how the principals at these three institutions implement the dimensions of servant leadership to drive the accreditation quality assurance teams. The main question this article addresses is how far the servant leadership style can coordinate resources, boost collaboration among teachers and staff, and accelerate achieving excellent accreditation scores at MA Islamiyah Syafiiyah, MA Bahrul Ulum, and MA Ahmad Syarifudin.

## METHODS

Tentu. Untuk judul "Servant Leadership Style and Acceleration of Organizational Accreditation Quality", saya menyarankan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain studi kasus apabila

tujuan artikel adalah menjelaskan bagaimana gaya kepemimpinan servant leadership mempercepat kesiapan dan peningkatan mutu akreditasi organisasi.

### **Research Approach and Design**

This study employed a qualitative approach with a case study design to examine the relationship between servant leadership style and the acceleration of organizational accreditation quality. The qualitative approach was selected because the study aimed to explore how servant leadership values and practices are manifested in organizational management and how these practices contribute to the acceleration of accreditation quality. The case study design enabled an in-depth investigation of leadership practices, organizational processes, quality assurance mechanisms, and accreditation preparation within their actual institutional context.

### **Research Setting and Participants**

The research was conducted in an educational organization that was undergoing or had recently undergone an accreditation improvement process. Participants were selected using purposive sampling based on their direct involvement in organizational leadership, quality assurance, and accreditation processes. The participants included organizational leaders, accreditation coordinators, quality assurance personnel, teachers or academic staff, administrative staff, and other relevant stakeholders. The selection of participants was intended to obtain multiple perspectives concerning how servant leadership influences organizational commitment, employee involvement, quality improvement, and accreditation readiness.

### **Data Collection**

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, non-participant observations, and document analysis. Semi-structured interviews explored leadership practices related to service, empowerment, listening, empathy, ethical decision-making, team development, and commitment to organizational members. Interviews also examined how these leadership practices influenced accreditation preparation, quality improvement, and organizational responsiveness. Observations were conducted to examine leadership interactions, organizational meetings, coordination mechanisms, quality assurance activities, and employee participation in accreditation-related programs. Documentary analysis included strategic plans, accreditation instruments, quality assurance documents, evaluation reports, meeting minutes, institutional policies, performance reports, and other relevant accreditation documents.

### **Data Analysis**

Data were analyzed using the **interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña**, consisting of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. First, interview transcripts, observation notes, and documents were coded and condensed according to themes related to servant leadership, organizational participation, quality assurance, accreditation preparation, and continuous improvement. Second, the coded data were displayed through thematic matrices to identify relationships between leadership practices and accreditation quality processes. Third, conclusions were formulated and continuously verified by comparing information from different participants and sources.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

In reviewing previous research, the concept of servant leadership has been examined from various quality management perspectives. The similarity between the articles "Servant Leadership as a Strategy to Improve the Quality of Educational Services" and "Servant Leadership Style and the Acceleration of Organizational Accreditation Quality" lies in the way they conceptualize their independent variables, both of which are based on the pillars of empathy, service, and the growth of organizational members. Even so, these two articles have a fundamental difference in terms of their operational focus. The first article emphasizes the impact of servant leadership on improving the real quality of educational services as experienced directly by users, while the second article leans more on the aspect of accelerating or speeding up the fulfillment of organizational accreditation instruments. The novelty that can be drawn from comparing these two articles is the shift in the role of servant

leadership from being seen as a micro-strategy for improving interpersonal climate and daily service satisfaction, it has now proven capable of transforming into a macro-accelerative strategy to overcome bureaucratic hurdles in meeting formal organizational quality standards.

### **Conceptualization of Servant Leadership in Islamic Education Management**

Servant leadership is a leadership philosophy where leaders treat their followers as the main focus whose development should be facilitated. There are ten main characteristics of servant leadership, namely: listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to the growth of people, and building community. (Spears, 2010) In the context of madrasah leadership, the concepts of stewardship and commitment to the growth of people align very well with the philosophy of Islamic education, where the position of the head of the madrasah is seen as a trust (moral responsibility to Allah SWT and the community). A madrasah head who practices servant leadership doesn't position themselves as a boss dictating instructions from an ivory tower, but rather as a professional servant who provides resources, motivation, and technical guidance to teachers in completing accreditation documents. (Asrori, 2021)

### **Brief Profile of the Research Locus and Accreditation Challenges**

The three madrasahs that are the focus of this study MA Islamiyah Syafiiyah, MA Bahrul Ulum, and MA Ahmad Syarifudin are Islamic secondary education institutions with unique demographic characteristics and managerial challenges. First, MA Islamiyah Syafiiyah has a strong tradition of Islamic scholarship, but it needs to accelerate its administration of curriculum management and Merdeka Belajar-based assessment standards. The head of the madrasah uses persuasive and conceptual skills to align the teachers' understanding so that they don't feel burdened by accreditation documents but instead see them as tools for self-evaluation to improve the quality of learning. (Mulyasa H. E., 2019) Secondly, MA Bahrul Ulum faces challenges in meeting infrastructure standards and digital-based management. With a school principal who applies empathy and openness, these obstacles are addressed through a participatory approach, where all teachers are actively involved in coming up with alternative solutions for facility procurement through partnerships with the community. Third, MA Ahmad Syarifudin faces the dynamics of managing funding resources and public relations. Through a spirit of stewardship, the principal managed to build financial transparency and strengthen support networks with alumni and parents, so the accreditation visitation process could run with optimal results.

### **Mechanism for Accelerating the Quality of Organizational Accreditation**

Accelerating the quality of organizational accreditation requires solid coordination and systematic division of tasks. Based on the analysis of the three madrasahs, implementing servant leadership encourages the formation of a quality acceleration cycle through four strategic stages: Strengthening Team Capacity (Empowerment): The school principal gives full trust to the madrasah accreditation team, along with full support in terms of facilities and time. This fosters a strong sense of belonging among the teachers. (Northouse, 2018) Empathetic Communication and Removing Psychological Barriers: Teachers often feel anxious about the accreditation process because of administrative burdens. Leaders with a servant leadership style are there to listen to complaints, provide personal guidance (healing and mentoring), and create a supportive work environment. Cross-Standard Collaboration (Building Community): Accreditation covers eight standards. The school principal breaks down sectoral silos by forming a collaborative task force across fields, making sure the team works together synergistically. Continuous Evaluation and Quality Reflection: The accreditation process doesn't stop at getting a certificate score, but is used as a database for ongoing improvements in the next learning cycle at the madrasah. (Satori, n.d.)

## CONCLUSION

Based on the explanations and analysis above, it can be concluded that servant leadership plays a very strategic role in accelerating the accreditation quality of organizations at MA Islamiyah Syafiiyah, MA Bahrul Ulum, and MA Ahmad Syarifudin. Key characteristics of servant leadership, such as active listening, empathy, commitment to staff development, and stewardship, can transform the madrasah work culture from being administratively bureaucratic to a collaborative culture focused on quality. The implementation of servant leadership has proven effective in reducing teachers' resistance to accreditation requirements, strengthening team solidarity through the formation of cross-standard task forces, and ensuring comprehensive fulfillment of the eight National Education Standards. Therefore, enhancing servant leadership capacity is highly recommended for school principals as a key tool to achieve excellent, competitive, and sustainable governance in Islamic education organizations.

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