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THE LEADERSHIP STRATEGY OF MADRASAH PRINCIPALS IN ENHANCING TEACHER PROFESSIONALISM IN THE DIGITAL ERA (A CASE STUDY AT MTS ASY-SYARIFAH BRUMBUNG, MRANGGEN, DEMAK)

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the leadership strategies employed by the principal in enhancing teacher professionalism in the digital era, with a case study at MTs Asy-Syarifah Brumbung, Mranggen, Demak. Technological developments require madrasahs to be adaptive to educational transformation, particularly in strengthening teacher capacity. The focus of this research includes: (1) describing the forms of leadership strategies implemented by the principal to improve teacher professionalism, (2) analyzing the impact of these strategies on strengthening pedagogical and digital competencies, and (3) identifying supporting and inhibiting factors in their implementation. This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study design. Data collection techniques consist of in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation, with research subjects including the principal, teachers, and educational staff selected through purposive sampling. The results show that the principal applies transformational and participatory leadership strategies through motivation, internal training, instructional supervision, strengthening collaboration, and utilizing digital communication platforms such as WhatsApp and Telegram. These strategies positively impact teacher engagement in professional development, improvement of digital literacy, and the use of online learning media. The main challenges faced include limited ICT facilities and unstable internet connectivity, which are addressed through resource optimization and community-based mentoring. The study concludes that visionary, communicative, and adaptive leadership is essential for building sustainable teacher professionalism in the digital era, particularly in madrasah environments with limited infrastructure.
Keywords: Strategy, Madrasah Leadership, Teacher Professionalism, Digital Era.

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji strategi kepemimpinan kepala madrasah dalam meningkatkan profesionalisme guru di era digital, dengan studi kasus di MTs Asy-Syarifah Brumbung, Mranggen, Demak. Perkembangan teknologi menuntut madrasah untuk adaptif terhadap transformasi pendidikan, khususnya dalam penguatan kapasitas guru. Penelitian ini difokuskan untuk: (1) mendeskripsikan bentuk strategi kepemimpinan kepala madrasah dalam meningkatkan profesionalisme guru, (2) menganalisis dampak strategi tersebut terhadap penguatan kompetensi pedagogik dan digital guru, serta (3) mengidentifikasi faktor pendukung dan penghambat dalam pelaksanaannya. Metode yang digunakan adalah pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain studi kasus. Teknik pengumpulan data meliputi wawancara mendalam, observasi partisipatif, dan dokumentasi, dengan subjek penelitian terdiri dari kepala madrasah, guru, dan tenaga kependidikan yang dipilih secara purposif. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kepala madrasah menerapkan strategi kepemimpinan transformasional dan partisipatif, melalui motivasi, pelatihan internal, supervisi pembelajaran, penguatan kolaborasi, serta pemanfaatan media komunikasi digital seperti WhatsApp dan Telegram. Strategi ini berdampak positif terhadap keterlibatan guru dalam pengembangan profesional, peningkatan literasi digital, dan penggunaan media pembelajaran daring. Kendala utama yang dihadapi berupa keterbatasan fasilitas TIK dan koneksi internet, namun diatasi melalui optimalisasi sumber daya dan pembinaan berbasis komunitas. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa kepemimpinan yang visioner, komunikatif, dan adaptif sangat diperlukan dalam membangun profesionalisme guru secara berkelanjutan di era digital, terutama di lingkungan madrasah yang terbatas secara infrastruktur.
Kata kunci: Strategi, Kepemimpinan Madrasah, Profesionalisme Guru, Era Digital

A. INTRODUCTION

Islamic education plays a vital role in shaping students' character and moral values. Its system continues to evolve both in terms of geographical reach and methodology to

ensure accessibility across all layers of society[1]. This development presents both challenges and opportunities for madrasahs to enhance teacher quality and adopt leadership that is responsive to the dynamics of the times. Especially in the era of Society 5.0, Islamic education is expected to remain inclusive, relevant, and capable of instilling values of tolerance, independence, and responsibility according to each student's capacity, including those with special need. The role of the madrasah principal is therefore essential in creating a professional learning environment that responds to change. In the context of globalization and digitalization, principals are expected not only to function as administrators but also as transformative leaders capable of fostering teachers who are adaptive, creative, and professional[2]. Globalization also demands curriculum innovation, as implemented in several pesantren that integrate kitab kuning (classical Islamic texts) with national education standards [3].

The advancement of information and communication technologies has significantly transformed the field of education. In the digital era, the demands on teacher quality have become more complex. Teachers are expected not only to master content and teaching methods but also to utilize digital technologies as part of their professional competencies. A professional teacher is one who continually develops their abilities, is creative and innovative, and is responsive to changes—particularly in adapting to digitally-based learning transformations. In this context, the principal plays a strategic role in encouraging, mentoring, and directing teachers to adapt and grow professionally.

Normatively, national regulations emphasize the importance of teacher professionalism. Law No. 14 of 2005 on Teachers and Lecturers mandates that teachers possess four core competencies: pedagogical, personal, social, and professional. However, the implementation of this regulation in many madrasahs still encounters challenges, especially in terms of leadership that is responsive to the digital era. Many principals have not yet optimized their leadership strategies to encourage teachers to integrate technology productively into their teaching practices[4]. Previous studies have discussed the relationship between school or madrasah leadership and improvements in teacher quality[5] . However, most of these studies focus on general contexts and have yet to specifically address leadership strategies in the digital era, particularly in rural private madrasahs. This gap reveals a lack of exploration into how madrasah principals respond to digitalization challenges in enhancing teacher professionalism in a contextual and applicable manner.

This study is significant because digital educational transformation is not limited to large urban schools but also affects small private madrasahs in peripheral areas such as MTs Asy-Syarifah Brumbung, Mranggen, Demak. Based on a preliminary observation conducted in May 2025, it was found that most teachers in the madrasah were not yet accustomed to optimally using digital media in the learning process. Teachers tended to rely on conventional lecture methods, made limited use of digital learning tools, and rarely participated in professional development training. Although the principal had provided

[1] Abdul Hakim Aliwan, 'Komunikasi Dakwah Di Era Digital', *Jurnal Komunikasi Islam*, 9.1 (2024), 221–32 <https://beta.usm.ac.id/index.php/janaloka>.
[2] Suyatno and others, *Menjadi Kepala Sekolah Transformatif: Kepemimpinan Pendidikan Yang Menginspirasi Dan Memberdayakan* (Jakarta: Prenadamedia Group, 2020).
[3] A Mustafidin and others, 'Integrative Curriculum Innovation in Responding to Globalization: A Case Study of Darul Amanah Islamic Boarding School', *At-Turots: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 6.1 (2024), 473–83 <https://doi.org/10.59944/jpi.v6i1.1001>.
[4] R D Kurniawan, 'Kepemimpinan Kepala Sekolah Dalam Mengembangkan Pembelajaran Berbasis Teknologi Informasi', *Jurnal Kependidikan*, 7.2 (2019), 115–28.
[5] A Wibowo and B B Wiyono, 'Kepemimpinan Kepala Sekolah Dan Pengaruhnya Terhadap Kinerja Guru Di Sekolah Menengah Pertama', *Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan*, 9.1 (2018), 45–56.

some facilities and encouraged the use of technology, teacher adaptation remained slow due to unstable internet connectivity, limited ongoing training, and the absence of an intensive monitoring system (Preliminary Observation, 2025).

These preliminary findings align with Sutarto (2021), who states that the main challenge in enhancing teacher professionalism in the digital age is not merely technological but also lies in the quality of school leadership capable of managing change transformatively[6]. Therefore, it is crucial to explore leadership strategies that go beyond administrative functions, emphasizing visionary, communicative, and supportive approaches to building teacher capacity in the digital era. The novelty of this research lies in its simultaneous focus on three core aspects: (1) a case study in a rural private madrasah, (2) emphasis on the digital era as a transformational context, and (3) leadership strategies viewed not only from administrative but also transformational and adaptive perspectives. This study aims not only to reveal the strategies employed but also to assess their effectiveness in developing teacher professionalism within a real and localized setting.

Based on the background described, this study has three main objectives. First, to describe the leadership strategies applied by the madrasah principal in enhancing teacher professionalism in the digital era. Second, to analyze the impact of these strategies on the improvement of teacher capacity and quality in terms of pedagogical, professional, and technological competence. Third, to identify supporting and inhibiting factors encountered in the implementation of these leadership strategies, particularly within the local context of MTs Asy-Syarifah Brumbung, Mranggen, Demak. Accordingly, the research problem focuses on the leadership strategies of the madrasah principal in improving teacher professionalism in the digital era at MTs Asy-Syarifah Brumbung, Mranggen, Demak. The structure of this article is organized as follows: the first part presents the introduction, the second explains the research methods, the third describes the findings and discussion, and the fourth provides conclusions.

B. METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach with a case study design, aiming to gain an in-depth understanding of the leadership strategies applied by the madrasah principal in enhancing teacher professionalism in the digital era. This approach was chosen because it allows the researcher to contextually and comprehensively describe social realities and to explore events, experiences, strategies, and dynamics occurring naturally in the field without direct intervention[78]. A case study is also considered suitable for uncovering leadership practices that are unique and context-specific, as observed at MTs Asy-Syarifah Brumbung, Mranggen, Demak.

The research design was structured flexibly yet systematically in accordance with the fundamental principles of qualitative research. The researcher acted as the main instrument (human instrument), engaging directly with research subjects and conducting

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[6] A Sutarto, 'Tantangan Kepemimpinan Pendidikan Dalam Mengelola Perubahan Di Era Digital', *Jurnal Administrasi Pendidikan*, 28.1 (2021), 34–46.

[7] J W Creswell, *Research Design: Pendekatan Kualitatif, Kuantitatif, Dan Mixed*, *Terjemahan Oleh Achmad Fawaid* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2016).

[8] R K Yin, *Studi Kasus: Desain Dan Metode*, *Case Study Research and Applications: Design and Methods* (Jakarta: PT RajaGrafindo Persada, 2018).

intensive data collection through direct interaction[9]. This study was conducted from May to July 2025 at MTs Asy-Syarifah Brumbung, a private madrasah located in a semi-rural area, which faces particular challenges in developing digital-based teacher competencies.

The subjects of this study consisted of the madrasah principal, several core subject teachers, and supporting informants such as the vice principal for curriculum and administrative staff. Participants were selected purposively based on their direct experience and relevance to the research focus [10]. Criteria for participant selection included active involvement in professional development activities, more than five years of teaching experience, and engagement in the use of educational technology at the madrasah.

Data collection techniques included in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. Interviews were conducted in a semi-structured format, allowing for narrative exploration and personal reflection by informants. Observations were carried out directly in the school environment, including during lessons, teacher training sessions, and coordination meetings. The documents reviewed included work programs, records of teacher training activities, lesson plans (Modul), and teacher evaluation reports[11]

Instruments used in this research included interview guides, observation sheets, and a checklist of documents for analysis. These instruments were developed by the researcher based on a review of theories on educational leadership and teacher professionalism. To ensure validity, the instruments underwent readability testing and content validation through limited discussions with academic supervisors and education practitioners. The data were analyzed using Miles and Huberman's interactive model, which consists of three main stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing [12]. The analysis process was conducted continuously and simultaneously with data collection to construct deep insights and meaningful findings. To ensure data validity, this study employed source triangulation and method triangulation, prolonged engagement in the field, and member checking with key informants. These techniques were applied to ensure the credibility and reliability of the findings[13]

Through this method, the research is expected to provide a comprehensive picture of the madrasah principal's leadership strategies in enhancing teacher professionalism in the digital era, while contributing both theoretical insights and practical implications for the development of digital-based educational leadership. Ethics in this research go beyond administrative requirements, encompassing moral values such as honesty and responsibility. The researcher is expected to uphold the dignity of participants and ensure fairness throughout the research process [14]

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[9] Sugiyono, *Metode Penelitian Kualitatif, Kuantitatif, Dan R&D* (Bandung: Alfabeta, 2019) <https://books.google.com/books/about/Metode_Penelitian_Bisnis_Pendekatan_Kuan.html?id=aFHZzwEACAA J>.

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[11] L J Moleong, *Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif (Edisi Revisi)* (Bandung: PT Remaja Rosdakarya, 2017).

[12] Miles and Huberman.

[13] M Q Patton, *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods*, 4th edn (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2015).

[14] M Misbah and others, *Metodologi Penelitian Pendidikan Agama Islam (Kualitatif Dan Kuantitatif)*, ed. by E T Murni (Sumatera Barat: CV Afasa Pustaka, 2025).

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Results

The findings of this study indicate that the principal of MTs Asy-Syarifah Brumbung has implemented various leadership strategies to enhance teacher professionalism in the digital era. These strategies include providing motivation, facilitating internal training, supervising instruction, and strengthening collaboration among teachers. Based on interviews, a teacher stated that the principal consistently encouraged teachers to improve their digital competencies in a non-coercive way that fosters awareness and personal responsibility (Interview, May 20, 2025). The researcher's observation during a teacher meeting also showed that the principal openly appreciated teachers who had participated in online training provided by the Ministry of Religious Affairs[15] (Observation, May 24, 2025).

The principal also facilitated internal training on the use of digital learning tools such as Canva and Google Classroom. These sessions were conducted informally and led by technologically literate teachers. One teacher noted that such training made them feel more comfortable and confident in trying new tools (Interview, May 28, 2025). Documentation obtained by the researcher included training attendance lists, instructional materials, and photographs from a training event titled "Designing Interactive Media with Canva" held at the end of April 2025 (Documentation, April 30, 2025).

In terms of supervision, the principal implemented classroom observations and a weekly reflective journal system. Teachers were asked to record their teaching activities and include reflections on their use of digital media. One teacher stated that the principal provided direct feedback through these journals, particularly regarding methodological variation and the use of digital learning applications (Interview, May 22, 2025). The researcher also observed a classroom supervision session in which the principal suggested using tools like Live Worksheets and Google Forms (Observation, June 6, 2025).

Despite the effectiveness of these strategies, the study also found several obstacles in implementation. The main challenges were related to limited ICT infrastructure and internet access. Teachers reported a shortage of projectors, the need to bring personal laptops, and unstable internet connections (Interview, May 25, 2025). This was confirmed by teacher journals that mentioned internet disruptions during online lessons, leading some teachers to resort to using WhatsApp voice notes as an alternative (Teacher Journal Documentation, June 3, 2025).

A key supporting factor in the success of the principal's strategy was the strong culture of collaboration among teachers. In an internal MGMP forum observed by the researcher, teachers actively shared teaching materials, digital quiz templates, and application experiences. One teacher stated that they often exchanged files and training links via WhatsApp groups (Interview, June 7, 2025). The principal supported this initiative by allocating dedicated time and facilities for teacher discussions. This participative leadership strategy created a professional environment that supported sustainable teacher development.

In addition to training and supervision, the principal formed small support teams to assist teachers in developing digital-based lesson plans. During observation of this activity, the researcher noted that several teachers were actively discussing how to integrate interactive media into lesson plans (Modul). One teacher remarked, "With this

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[15] Observasi peneliti, 'Supervisi Kelas Oleh Kepala Madrasah', 2025.

support team, we don't feel alone learning technology. There's someone to help, remind, and review our work" (Interview, June 8, 2025). This initiative shows that the principal's leadership was not only top-down but also built horizontal support structures.

The principal also strengthened the role of senior teachers in mentoring their peers who were less familiar with technology. In informal settings, senior teachers served as peer tutors. Documentation from the teacher development program included a schedule of internal training led by senior teachers on topics such as "Using Google Forms for Assessment." A participant commented, "It's easier for us to learn from colleagues. The atmosphere is more relaxed and less formal" (Interview, June 9, 2025). This approach demonstrated that leveraging internal resources could create effective, low-cost training programs.

The leadership strategy also involved optimizing internal communication platforms. The principal created specific groups on WhatsApp and Telegram to share information, training materials, and activity schedules. Teachers noted that these groups helped them access updates and share best practices. "Sometimes we share YouTube training links or ready-made digital quizzes. The principal also provides feedback in the group," one teacher explained (Interview, June 10, 2025). This two-way communication reflects the principal's effective use of technology to foster professional relationships with staff.

In terms of professional development, the principal encouraged teachers to attend external seminars or workshops. Task letters reviewed by the researcher indicated that several teachers were assigned to attend digital literacy training organized by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and partner institutions. Teachers were required to disseminate what they had learned in school forums. One teacher said, "We are expected to share what we learned with others, so the training doesn't stop with just one person" (Interview, June 12, 2025). This practice reflects the principle of competence multiplication in community-based human resource development.

The researcher also found that the principal applied a simple reward system to boost teacher motivation. The rewards were not only material but also symbolic, such as public recognition in official school forums. During a morning assembly observed by the researcher, the principal presented a certificate of appreciation to a teacher who actively produced digital learning materials. One teacher remarked, "It feels meaningful when our efforts are acknowledged in front of others. It motivates us to keep trying new things" (Interview, June 14, 2025). This shows that symbolic and emotional gestures can have a significant impact on professionalism.

For long-term monitoring, the principal developed a teacher self-development evaluation format based on competency targets. The evaluation included indicators such as ICT skills, instructional innovation, and training participation. In the evaluation documents from the second semester of the 2024/2025 academic year, most teachers showed improvement in their use of digital media. Teachers admitted that having clear benchmarks helped them focus on planning their own development programs. "Now we have direction. The targets help guide our learning and teaching," said one teacher (Interview, June 15, 2025).

Finally, the principal's efforts to distribute workloads fairly also contributed to improved teacher professionalism. The principal ensured that administrative tasks were divided evenly, allowing teachers to focus on competency development. Teachers mentioned that additional duties were no longer concentrated on just a few individuals. "Now the workload is more balanced. We have more time to attend training and explore new apps," stated one teacher (Interview, June 17, 2025). This strategy demonstrates

leadership that is mindful of teacher well-being while promoting sustainable professional growth.

2. Discussion

The findings of this study show that the principal of MTs Asy-Syarifah Brumbung implements transformational and participatory leadership strategies to enhance teacher professionalism in the digital era. These strategies include motivation, internal training facilitation, instructional supervision, reinforcement of collaborative culture, and the utilization of internal communication technologies. This aligns with Bass and Riggio's (2006) assertion that transformational leaders are able to inspire and motivate their subordinates to develop professionally through a humanistic and adaptive approach to change[16].

The principal consistently encouraged teachers to adapt to technology. One teacher remarked that the principal "encourages us to learn technology in a way that isn't coercive, but invites us to learn together" (Interview, May 20, 2025). This reinforces Robbins and Judge's (2017) theory that intrinsic motivation fostered by supportive leadership enhances teacher commitment and productivity. Public recognition during meetings, as observed by the researcher, also reflected the emotional dimension of leadership (Observation, May 24, 2025).

The principal also facilitated internal training aligned with teachers' needs, such as creating digital instructional media using Canva and utilizing Google Classroom. These sessions were held informally, making teachers more comfortable learning from peers (Interview, May 28, 2025). This approach is in line with collegial leadership, where leaders create a collaborative learning environment (Bush & Glover, 2014). Documentation included attendance sheets, materials, and training photos, indicating that the sessions were systematically conducted (Documentation, April 30, 2025).

In supervision and evaluation, the principal adopted a mentoring approach rather than merely assessing. Teachers mentioned that the weekly reflection journals they submitted always received constructive feedback (Interview, May 22, 2025). Observations showed the principal suggesting tools such as Live Worksheets and Google Forms for assessments (Observation, June 6, 2025). This supports Sergiovanni's (2001) view that clinical and reflective supervision enables teachers to independently develop their teaching quality[17]. However, the principal still faced structural challenges such as limited ICT facilities and unstable internet connections. Teachers reported a lack of projectors and school-owned laptops, as well as signal instability during online classes (Interview, May 25, 2025). Journals also indicated that online lessons were often substituted with WhatsApp voice notes due to technical issues (Teacher Journal Documentation, June 3, 2025). This supports Wahyudi's (2022) findings that digital infrastructure remains a major barrier to teacher professionalism in madrasahs[18].

Nonetheless, a strong culture of teacher collaboration significantly supported the implementation of the principal's strategy. In an internal MGMP forum observed by the researcher, teachers shared lesson materials, quiz templates, and training links through WhatsApp groups (Observation, June 7, 2025). Teachers noted that they benefited from these practices by learning directly from one another (Interview, June 7, 2025).

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[16] B M Bass and R E Riggio, *Transformational Leadership*, 2nd edn (Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2006).

[17] T J Sergiovanni, *The Principalship: A Reflective Practice Perspective*, 4th edn (Allyn and Bacon, 2001).

[18] D Wahyudi, 'Tantangan Transformasi Digital Dalam Pengembangan Profesionalisme Guru Madrasah', *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam Dan Teknologi*, 5.1 (2022), 45–59.

Hargreaves (2000) described such peer collaboration as a form of *professional capital* that accelerates professional learning and reduces resistance to technological change[19].

The principal also utilized digital media for organizational communication and teacher development. WhatsApp and Telegram groups were not only used for administrative announcements but also for sharing training resources and best teaching practices (Interview, June 10, 2025). This supports Marzano et al. (2011), who argue that educational leaders responsive to technology foster adaptive, communicative, and cross-functional collaboration environments[20].

With the strategies implemented, the principal of MTs Asy-Syarifah Brumbung can be considered a visionary leader who addresses the challenges of the digital era through collective and contextual approaches. These strategies successfully mobilized teachers to grow professionally through training, reflection, and collaboration. This suggests that the success of teacher professionalism development is not solely determined by the teacher's capability, but also by leadership style and the support system built by the school principal.Furthermore, the principal's approach in forming teacher mentoring teams to assist in developing digital lesson plans reflects the principles of collaborative leadership. In this activity, teachers acted not only as individual learners but also as peer facilitators. This aligns with DuFour and Eaker's (1998) emphasis on *professional learning communities* as a means to improve instructional quality[21]. A teacher explained, "With this small team, we can learn directly from those already experienced. If confused, we just discuss it" (Interview, June 8, 2025). The researcher also observed active interaction between senior and junior teachers during mentoring sessions (Observation, June 9, 2025). The involvement of senior teachers as peer tutors supports *distributed leadership* practices, where leadership responsibilities are shared horizontally across educational personnel[22]. A teacher stated that it was easier to understand training content when explained by colleagues, as the context was more relevant and comprehensible (Interview, June 9, 2025). Documentation from the internal training activity confirmed that senior teachers facilitated a session on "Creating Online Assessments with Google Forms," which was attended by all subject teachers (Documentation, June 10, 2025). This approach built collective trust and accelerated digital competency transfer within the madrasah.

The principal's use of internal communication media such as WhatsApp and Telegram groups exemplified *open communication leadership*. These platforms allowed for policy announcements, training material sharing, and quick, interactive feedback from the principal. As one teacher explained, "Through the group, we can discuss things immediately. The principal often responds there. No need to wait for meetings" (Interview, June 10, 2025). The researcher's observation of the WhatsApp group showed a dynamic flow of information, including learning videos and online training links (Observation, June 11, 2025). This practice supports Yukl's (2010) view on the importance of open communication in building adaptive learning organizations[23].

The principal's policy to assign teachers to attend external training and require them to disseminate knowledge among colleagues reflected a *capacity-building strategy*. This approach was effective in strengthening individual competence and scaling its impact to

[19] A Hargreaves, 'Four Ages of Professionalism and Professional Learning', *Teachers and Teaching*, 6.2 (2000), 151–82 <https://doi.org/10.1080/713698714>.

[20] R J Marzano, T Waters, and B A McNulty, *School Leadership That Works: From Research to Results* (ASCD, 2011).

[21] R DuFour and R Eaker, *Professional Learning Communities at Work: Best Practices for Enhancing Student Achievement* (National Education Service, 1998).

[22] J P Spillane, *Distributed Leadership* (Jossey-Bass, 2006).

[23] G Yukl, *Leadership in Organizations*, 7th edn (Pearson Education, 2010).

the organizational level[24]. A teacher remarked, "After attending training, we're immediately asked to present and share it with our peers at the madrasah" (Interview, June 12, 2025). The researcher documented a digital literacy training presentation delivered by two teachers who had participated in a Ministry of Religious Affairs MGMP activity (Documentation, June 13, 2025).The principal's strategy of giving recognition to active and innovative teachers also aligned with the principle of *recognition-based leadership*. The awarding of certificates and public acknowledgments in school forums significantly boosted teacher confidence and motivation to continue innovating. During a morning assembly observed by the researcher, the principal expressed appreciation for a teacher who had produced self-recorded video lessons and uploaded them to the madrasah's YouTube channel (Observation, June 14, 2025). The teacher said, "It felt appreciated, which motivated me to create more content. Apparently, it's useful for students and other teachers too" (Interview, June 14, 2025). Consistent with Herzberg (2003), non-material rewards such as social recognition are highly effective in increasing job satisfaction and teacher professionalism

D. CONCLUSION

The leadership strategy of the principal at MTs Asy-Syarifah Brumbung in enhancing teacher professionalism in the digital era was implemented in a planned and contextual manner. The strategy encompassed providing motivation, facilitating internal training, instructional supervision, utilizing digital communication media, engaging senior teachers as peer tutors, and reinforcing a collaborative work culture. This approach reflects the characteristics of transformational and participatory leadership, which effectively encourages teachers to grow professionally amidst the demands of educational digitalization.

The implementation of leadership strategies had a positive impact on improving teachers' competencies and participation in professional development activities. Teachers became more active in attending both online and offline training, developing digital teaching tools, and using interactive learning media in the classroom. Reflective supervision and open communication through digital platforms also fostered the development of a dynamic learning community within the madrasah.

Supporting factors for the leadership strategy included strong teacher collaboration, structural support from the madrasah, and recognition of teacher innovation. Meanwhile, the main obstacles encountered were limited ICT facilities and internet infrastructure. Nevertheless, the principal was able to overcome these challenges through the optimization of internal resources and an adaptive leadership approach, enabling the strategies to be sustained and significantly impactful in improving teacher professionalism in the digital era.

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