Discipline and Leadership: Organizational Communication and Principal Conflict Management in MTsN 1 Luwu

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the role of organizational communication and conflict management strategies used by the principal to improve the discipline of educators and staff at MTsN 1 Luwu. Using a descriptive qualitative approach and case study design, data were gathered through in-depth interviews, field observations, and document analysis. The results show that the principal uses open and thorough communication via various formal and informal channels to foster harmonious working relationships. Conflict management strategies include participatory approaches, mediation, and dialogue-based resolution, which effectively reduce misunderstandings and promote compliance with institutional rules. The principal's motivation for managing communication and conflict stems from the desire to create a supportive and professional work environment focused on improving educational quality. These findings suggest that effective communication and conflict management directly and positively influence the discipline level among teachers and staff. The study recommends enhancing school leadership skills in interpersonal communication and conflict resolution as key strategies for educational management.

Keywords: Organizational Communication, Conflict Management, Discipline, Principal, Educational Staff.

INTRODUCTION

Discipline is a crucial factor in creating a positive work environment in educational institutions (Jhon & Eko Saputro, 2024). Educators and academic staff who demonstrate high levels of discipline are more likely to perform their duties effectively, enhance the efficiency of the learning process, and promote a harmonious workplace (Afandi &

Masrul, 2024). However, in practice, many educational institutions still face considerable challenges in maintaining discipline among their educators and staff (Vinet & Zhedanov, 2011a). Low discipline levels often manifest as habitual tardiness, lack of active participation in institutional activities, and a general absence of initiative in fulfilling professional responsibilities. If these issues are not addressed, they can adversely affect the quality of educational services and hinder the achievement of institutional goals (Padli, 2023).

In this context, the role of the madrasah principal becomes crucial as both a leader and manager of the educational institution (Inom Nasution, 2010). The principal is expected not only to perform administrative functions but also to develop effective organizational communication strategies and implement appropriate conflict management practices (Okta Divy & Khodijah, 2023). Open, transparent, and participatory organizational communication can foster trust and enhance the motivation of teachers and staff. Meanwhile, adaptive and solution-oriented conflict management enables constructive problem-solving, thereby preventing prolonged tensions in the workplace (Widiatmika, 2015).

Previous studies have shown that leadership that emphasizes interpersonal communication and a collaborative approach to conflict management can foster a disciplined and productive work environment (Putra & Syaifudin, 2023). However, research that specifically examines the relationship between the organizational communication and conflict management roles of madrasah principals and the improvement of discipline among educators and educational staff remains relatively limited, particularly in the context of Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia (Almaidah et al., 2022).

Therefore, this study is necessary to fill the gap in the literature and provide a meaningful contribution to leadership development in madrasahs (Naja et al., 2025). The objective of this research is to examine how the principal of MTsN 1 Luwu applies organizational communication and conflict management strategies to enhance the discipline of educators and educational personnel (Putra Mahesa & Hadijah, 2024). Specifically, this study will explore the forms of communication strategies employed by the principal, the conflict management models implemented, their impact on the disciplinary behavior of teachers and staff, and the underlying factors influencing the selection of these approaches (Nasution, 2024). Through this approach, the research aims to provide a theoretical contribution to the field of educational management and offer practical recommendations for stakeholders in improving institutional performance (Vinet & Zhedanov, 2011b).

METHOD

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach to thoroughly examine the organizational communication practices and conflict management strategies employed by the principal in shaping the discipline of educators and educational staff at MTsN 1. This approach was selected to understand the meanings, experiences, and social dynamics that naturally occur within the school setting, focusing on interpreting actions and interactions among educational stakeholders.

Data were gathered through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. Informants were deliberately selected, including the principal, teachers, and relevant educational staff. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore their perceptions and experiences, while observations focused on recording their communication behaviors and interaction patterns. Documentation included policy archives, meeting minutes, and other official school records, which served as supporting data.

The researcher served as the primary instrument in both data collection and interpretation, supported by interview guides and field notes. Data validity was upheld through methodological triangulation, extended observation, and member checking to confirm findings with informants. Data analysis followed the interactive model of Miles and Huberman, which involves conducting data reduction, display, and drawing conclusions simultaneously to gain a comprehensive understanding of the studied phenomenon.

RESULT

This study found that the organizational communication and conflict management strategies used by the principal of MTsN 1 Luwu significantly contribute to fostering a discipline culture within the school. Based on data from in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation, it was shown that the principal maintains open, detailed, and responsive communication with teachers and staff in both formal and informal settings. The principal utilizes various channels, including face-to-face meetings, official letters, and digital platforms like WhatsApp, to share information, address concerns, and solve problems in a direct and empathetic manner. This ongoing two-way communication is vital for clarifying policies, preventing misunderstandings, and increasing staff involvement in school processes.

Additionally, the principal uses communication strategies that focus on empathy, role modeling, recognizing achievements, and developing personal skills through leadership and communication training. These findings are summarized in Table 1 below:

Table 1
Forms and Strategies of Communication Used by the Principal of MTsN 1 Luwu

Communication Aspect	Practices Implemented
Communication Pattern	Open, two-way, both formal and informal
Communication Media	Face-to-face meetings, official letters, WhatsApp, regular staff meetings
Approach Strategies	Friendly, empathetic, and responsive
Support for Educators	Apresiasi, motivasi
Competency Development	Leadership and communication training

In managing conflict, the principal acts as a neutral mediator, focusing on resolution through open dialogue, mediation, and fair decision-making. Conflicts

usually occur due to differences in opinion, unequal task distribution, and unclear policies. In this context, the principal's approach is both preventive and corrective. Table 2 shows the conflict management strategies used.

Table 2
Conflict Management Strategies Used by the Principal of MTsN 1 Luwu

Source of Conflict	Resolution Strategy
Differences of opinion, workload imbalance	Mediation, collective discussion
Lack of recognition, work-related stress	Emotional support, open communication
Unclear policies	Clarification, enforcement of rules with a fair approach
Ketimpangan wewenang	Neutral stance, win–win approach

Table 3
Strategies to Improve Discipline Among Educators and Educational Staff

Principal's Strategy	Purpose and Impact
Modeling disciplined behavior	Providing concrete examples and reinforcing rule consistency
Balanced system of rewards and punishments	Enhancing motivation and performance
Supportive work environment	Promoting comfort and loyalty
Professional training	Raising awareness and improving discipline-related competencies

Along with structural strategies, the principal also introduced various innovative methods for communication and conflict resolution. These include using digital technologies like an attendance dashboard and an online suggestion box, as well as implementing peer mentoring as a different way to resolve interpersonal conflicts among staff. These initiatives are detailed in Table 4.

Table 4
Innovations in Communication and Conflict Management

Innovation Implemented	Function and Benefit
WhatsApp group and digital dashboard	Rapid coordination, transparent performance evaluation
Digital suggestion box	Open expression of concerns without pressure
Peer mentoring	Peer-based approach to problem-solving
Regular evaluations and recognition	Reinforcement of positive behavior and staff engagement

The principal's motivation for implementing communication and conflict management strategies is to create a professional environment that promotes integrity, discipline, and a strong work ethic. This approach is put into action through role modeling, support for personal development, and inspiring communication. Meanwhile, interviews with teachers reveal that key factors in fostering discipline include exemplary leadership, consistency in enforcing rules, and recognition of hard work. Conversely, a lack of firmness, poor communication, and an unsupportive work environment are seen as major obstacles.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study show that the principal's motivation for promoting organizational communication and managing conflicts is not just technical but rooted in a leadership vision aimed at developing a professional work culture. The principal of MTsN 1 Luwu intentionally emphasizes integrity, discipline, and work ethic as core values in managing staff relationships within the school. This aligns with transformational leadership theory (Bass & Riggio, 2006), which emphasizes the importance of idealized influence and inspirational motivation as vital in shaping positive behavior among organizational members.

The principal's use of inspiring and supportive communication is clear in strategies like modeling discipline, showing appreciation for performance, and establishing open communication channels. Interviews with teachers confirmed that the leader's exemplary behavior is the main reinforcement in encouraging disciplined conduct among educators and staff. These findings further support Robbins and Judge (2017), who assert that employees' perceptions of their leader's consistency and integrity significantly contribute to shaping the organizational culture.

Conversely, factors like a lack of firmness in enforcing rules, limited communication, and an unsupportive work environment hinder discipline. These factors show that discipline cannot develop in a passive setting. In conflict management, unclear communication structures and weak responses to staff aspirations may escalate interpersonal tensions and reduce team cohesion (Rahim, 2011). Therefore, the principal's efforts to reduce conflict through dialogical approaches, mediation, and a reward system represent adaptive strategies. These reflect a participatory and humanistic leadership style.

Thus, the principal's motivation to promote communication and resolve conflict affects the school's operational success and helps create a healthy work culture. These strategies emphasize the importance of blending structural methods such as rules, sanctions, and evaluations with emotional approaches like role modeling, empathy, and interpersonal skills. Together, they enhance discipline as a shared organizational value.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the principal of MTsN 1 Luwu plays a vital role in shaping the discipline of teachers and staff through the implementation of open organizational communication and solution-oriented conflict management. Effective,

empathetic, and two-way communication fosters a harmonious work environment, while conflict resolution is carried out through a collaborative approach that emphasizes shared responsibility. The overall level of teacher discipline at the school is generally good, although some individual challenges remain. The principal also conducts regular evaluations and provides wise guidance to improve performance. However, work discipline is not solely influenced by communication and leadership but also by other internal factors such as motivation, well-being, and workplace support.

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