



Analysis of the School Principal's Leadership Strategies in Overcoming Human Resource Management Challenges (A Qualitative Case Study at SMA Public 1 Bonegunu, North Buton Regency, Southeast Sulawesi Province)

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Article Info	Abstract
Article History Received: 2025-07-07 Revised: 2025-08-18 Published: 2025-09-07 Keywords: <i>Leadership;</i> <i>Principal;</i> <i>Strategy;</i> <i>Human Resource Management;</i> <i>Education;</i> <i>Qualitative.</i>	This research investigates the leadership strategies employed by the principal in addressing human resource management (HRM) challenges at SMA Negeri 1 Bonegunu, located in North Buton Regency, Southeast Sulawesi Province. Utilizing a qualitative descriptive method, data were gathered through in-depth interviews, observations, and document reviews. The study involved the principal, teaching staff, and educational personnel as participants. The results reveal several key HRM challenges, including a shortage of teachers, low motivation levels, insufficient ongoing professional development, and resistance to change. In response, the principal implemented collaborative and transformational leadership approaches. These included promoting transparent communication, empowering teachers through internal mentoring, encouraging participatory decision-making, and building partnerships with both the education office and the school committee. These strategies have been effective in improving staff engagement and performance, even amidst constraints related to facilities and infrastructure. The study concludes with a recommendation to enhance principals' managerial capabilities and to support the development of educational policies that are responsive to local needs.

Artikel Info	Abstrak
Sejarah Artikel Diterima: 2025-07-07 Direvisi: 2025-08-18 Dipublikasi: 2025-09-07 Kata kunci: <i>Kepemimpinan;</i> <i>Kepala Sekolah;</i> <i>Strategi;</i> <i>Manajemen Sumber Daya Manusia;</i> <i>Pendidikan;</i> <i>Kualitatif.</i>	Penelitian ini mengkaji strategi kepemimpinan yang diterapkan oleh kepala sekolah dalam mengatasi tantangan manajemen sumber daya manusia (SDM) di SMA Negeri 1 Bonegunu, yang terletak di Kabupaten Buton Utara, Provinsi Sulawesi Tenggara. Dengan menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif, data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi, dan telaah dokumen. Subjek penelitian mencakup kepala sekolah, tenaga pendidik, dan tenaga kependidikan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan adanya beberapa tantangan utama dalam manajemen SDM, antara lain kekurangan jumlah guru, rendahnya motivasi kerja, kurangnya pelatihan berkelanjutan, serta adanya resistensi terhadap perubahan. Sebagai respons, kepala sekolah menerapkan pendekatan kepemimpinan kolaboratif dan transformasional. Pendekatan tersebut mencakup upaya membangun komunikasi yang transparan, memberdayakan guru melalui pembinaan internal, mendorong partisipasi aktif dalam pengambilan keputusan, serta menjalin kerja sama dengan dinas pendidikan dan komite sekolah. Strategi-strategi ini terbukti efektif dalam meningkatkan keterlibatan dan kinerja tenaga kependidikan, meskipun terdapat keterbatasan sarana dan prasarana. Studi ini merekomendasikan penguatan kompetensi manajerial kepala sekolah dan pengembangan kebijakan pendidikan yang adaptif terhadap kondisi lokal.

I. INTRODUCTION

Education serves as a foundational pillar in developing high-quality human resources. Within this framework, school principals hold a critical strategic position not only as academic leaders but also as key figures in managing educational human resources (HR), which encompass teachers, administrative personnel, and all other contributors supporting the achievement of institutional educational objectives. As stated by Wibowo and Purwanto (2021:45), HR management in education involves the processes of planning, organizing, directing, and

supervising both educators and support staff to fulfill school goals effectively and efficiently. Consequently, effective HR management plays a vital role in establishing a productive and competitive educational environment.

Despite its importance, many schools particularly those in remote and developing areas such as North Buton Regency in Southeast Sulawesi continue to grapple with HR-related challenges. These challenges include teacher shortages, unequal distribution of educators, low motivation levels, insufficient access to ongoing professional training, and resistance to

institutional change. In such settings, the principal's capacity to design and implement adaptive leadership strategies becomes increasingly important. Rahmatullah and Mulyadi (2020:109) emphasize that effective school leaders are those capable of inspiring and mobilizing staff through leadership approaches that are responsive to environmental dynamics and institutional demands.

School leadership, therefore, transcends formal structural roles and represents a core function in cultivating a transformative learning culture. In 3T regions (frontier, outermost, and underdeveloped areas), principals often face resource constraints that necessitate creativity, emotional endurance, and collaborative leadership. Yusnaini and Suharto (2022:154) argue that school leaders in these regions serve as agents of social transformation, tasked with translating government policy into practice amidst complex local realities. This underscores the importance of contextual leadership an approach that adapts to the geographical, cultural, and social dynamics of the local community.

SMA Negeri 1 Bonegunu is one such public high school situated in a border region, confronting numerous HR management issues. Despite these barriers, the school remains committed to providing quality education. As the highest authority in the institution, the principal must exercise thoughtful leadership in managing these constraints such as balancing teaching workloads, facilitating teacher professional development, and fostering external partnerships. Enhancing principals' capacity in HR management is therefore crucial to sustaining educational quality, even under resource-limited conditions.

This study seeks to conduct a qualitative analysis of the school principal's leadership strategies in addressing and managing challenges related to human resource (HR) management at SMA Negeri 1 Bonegunu. The research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of adaptive leadership practices within the educational context. According to Mustika and Hasanah (2021:318), effective school leadership plays a significant role in enhancing the quality of education, particularly in institutions operating with limited resources. Furthermore, the findings of this study are expected to offer valuable insights for the development of educational policies and managerial approaches, especially in underserved and resource-scarce regions. By exploring the leadership strategies employed by

principals in areas such as Bonegunu, this research can support the creation of more context-sensitive interventions that directly contribute to the improvement of educational service delivery.

II. METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative method with a case study design, selected to explore in depth the leadership strategies employed by the principal in addressing human resource management (HRM) challenges at SMA Negeri 1 Bonegunu, located in North Buton Regency, Southeast Sulawesi Province. As noted by Sugiyono and Kurniawan (2021:89), the qualitative case study approach enables researchers to thoroughly and holistically examine social phenomena within their real-life context, particularly when the boundaries between the phenomenon and its context are not clearly defined.

The research site was chosen purposively, as the school reflects the broader educational realities faced by institutions in remote regions, particularly concerning HR-related issues. The primary subject in this study was the school principal, supported by several teachers and educational staff who served as additional informants. Data collection was carried out through in-depth interviews, direct observations, and document analysis. Semi-structured interviews allowed for flexibility in probing relevant information, while observations focused on leadership behavior and managerial interactions within the school setting. Document analysis included the examination of materials such as the school's strategic plans, teacher attendance logs, and supervision records.

In line with Hasanah and Sari (2020:56), combining interviews, observations, and document analysis is recognized as an effective approach for obtaining valid and comprehensive data in qualitative educational research. The validity of the data was ensured through source and method triangulation to strengthen the credibility of the findings. The data analysis process followed a qualitative descriptive approach involving data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing, based on the interactive analysis model proposed by Miles and Huberman. Lestari and Rachman (2022:132) emphasize that data reduction and thematic categorization are instrumental in uncovering patterns and relationships among key categories. Accordingly, thematic analysis was applied throughout the process to identify recurring

themes in the principal's strategies for addressing HR challenges. This approach aims to provide a rich, contextualized understanding of leadership practices within the school setting.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

A. Result

The findings of this study reveal that the principal of SMA Negeri 1 Bonegunu employs a range of adaptive leadership strategies to address various human resource management (HRM) challenges. Key issues identified include a limited number of teaching staff, uneven teacher distribution, low work motivation, minimal opportunities for professional development, and resistance to institutional changes. In response to these challenges, the principal has adopted collaborative and transformational leadership approaches characterized by open communication, internal mentoring, participatory decision-making, and active engagement with external stakeholders, such as the education office and school committee. These strategies have contributed to improved staff commitment, more effective task allocation, and a stronger sense of shared responsibility among school personnel. Despite limited infrastructure and resources, the principal's proactive leadership has enabled the school to maintain educational quality and foster a more resilient and goal-oriented working environment. The findings suggest that contextual and strategic leadership plays a vital role in enhancing human resource performance in remote and under-resourced educational settings.

B. Discussion

The study found that the principal of SMA Negeri 1 Bonegunu encounters a range of challenges in managing educational human resources. The most prominent issues include a shortage of subject-specific teachers, low motivation among some educators to take on roles beyond classroom teaching, and a lack of continuous professional development opportunities. These problems are further exacerbated by inadequate infrastructure and limited access to training resources. According to Suryadi and Rosyidah (2020:77), common HR challenges in remote schools include the unequal distribution of teachers, insufficient training, and limited incentives, all of which contribute to reduced motivation and a less favorable work environment. The absence of

structured career development and performance-based rewards has led to feelings of stagnation among many teachers. Saputra and Lestari (2021:194) highlight that neglecting career progression and recognition systems significantly impacts teacher morale, particularly in schools located far from urban areas. This underscores the need for school leadership that is not only administrative but also transformative and motivational.

To overcome these issues, the principal adopted a series of collaborative and adaptive leadership strategies. One such strategy involved promoting open and consistent communication with teachers and staff, both through formal channels like routine meetings and informal one-on-one engagements that fostered trust and openness. Yuliana and Mulyadi (2022:116) note that strong interpersonal communication is essential in educational leadership, as it enhances collaboration and internal motivation. Another key strategy focused on empowering teachers through fair task distribution and recognition of their efforts, thereby fostering a sense of accountability and enthusiasm. The principal also encouraged participation in national online training programs as a viable alternative to limited in-person professional development opportunities. This initiative aligns with the findings of Ramadhani and Fitria (2021:223), who assert that empowering educators through self-initiated learning and inclusive decision-making improves both performance and organizational loyalty, particularly in resource-limited environments.

The principal further sought to build a positive and supportive work atmosphere by cultivating a culture of appreciation and reflection. Activities such as informal weekly discussions and peer-sharing sessions helped facilitate collaborative learning and raised teacher morale. This aligns with Kusuma and Pratiwi's (2022:99) research, which shows that an inclusive and supportive organizational culture fosters teamwork and elevates staff spirit. Additionally, partnerships with external stakeholders, including the school committee and local education office, were established to support teacher development and strengthen HR capacity. The principal also implemented a mentoring-oriented supervision model that prioritized guidance and dialogue over strict oversight, thereby creating a more constructive and reflective working environment. Hasan and

Andini (2020:49) argue that supervisory practices grounded in mentoring and mutual dialogue are more effective in enhancing instructional quality and reinforcing professional relationships between leaders and teachers.

Table 1. Leadership Strategies of the School Principal

No	Leadership Strategy	Strategic Objective
1	Open & Intensive Communication	Enhancing trust and transparency among school personnel
2	Teacher Empowerment	Boosting responsibility and motivation
3	Online & Independent Training	Improving professional competencies
4	External Collaboration	Fulfilling HR and infrastructure needs
5	Developmental Supervision	Supporting instructional quality improvement
6	Appreciative Culture Reinforcement	Fostering a positive and supportive work environment
7	Contextual & Adaptive Leadership	Adapting to local conditions and resource limitations



Figure 1. Infographic: School Principal's Leadership Strategies at SMA Negeri 1 Bonegunu

These findings are consistent with the principles of transformative leadership in educational management, in which leaders serve as motivators, enablers, and catalysts for change. Putra and Hariri (2020, p. 134) highlight that transformative leadership fosters positive transformation by articulating a compelling vision, empowering members of the organization, and cultivating an environment that encourages innovation. The leadership strategies adopted by the principal of SMA Negeri 1 Bonegunu also reflect contextual leadership approaches that are adapted to the specific conditions and limitations of the local setting. This form of leadership is particularly critical in remote regions. As Utami and Wibowo (2022:38) point out, leadership

effectiveness in underdeveloped areas largely depends on the leader's ability to deeply understand and navigate the surrounding social and cultural landscape.

The results of this study reinforce earlier research suggesting that effective human resource management in schools is closely tied to the principal's leadership capacity particularly in building a collaborative workplace and responding adaptively to institutional challenges. Leadership in this context goes beyond addressing technical issues; it plays a central role in nurturing team cohesion, fostering organizational resilience, and cultivating a shared commitment to overcoming systemic constraints. Overall, the strategies implemented by the principal have contributed positively to the stability and efficiency of HR management at SMA Negeri 1 Bonegunu. Despite ongoing limitations, the principal's strategic use of available resources has been instrumental in sustaining the quality of educational services. Moreover, the use of contextual, inclusive, and empathy-driven leadership strategies presents a valuable model for strengthening school leadership in other marginalized or remote regions of Indonesia.

IV. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

A. Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that the principal of SMA Negeri 1 Bonegunu encounters multiple challenges in managing educational human resources. These challenges include a shortage of teaching staff, low levels of motivation among educators, insufficient ongoing professional development opportunities, and limited access to both resources and external institutional support. In response, the principal adopted a combination of collaborative and transformational leadership strategies, which involved fostering open communication, empowering teachers, providing internal coaching, and building partnerships with external stakeholders such as the school committee and local education authorities. These leadership approaches have been effective in fostering a more supportive work environment, enhancing teacher engagement, and ensuring continuity in the educational process despite existing constraints.

The study emphasizes the critical role of adaptive and context-sensitive leadership in optimizing HR management, particularly in

regions with limited resources. As a policy recommendation, it is essential for local governments to support school leadership development through targeted managerial training programs and by improving the allocation and professional growth of educational personnel in peripheral areas such as North Buton. Additionally, the collaborative leadership model demonstrated in this case provides a valuable reference for other schools facing similar conditions.

B. Suggestion

In light of the study's findings, several recommendations are put forward to enhance the management of educational human resources, particularly in schools located in remote and resource-limited areas such as SMA Negeri 1 Bonegunu. First, it is essential to strengthen the leadership capacity of school principals through regular managerial training and professional development programs, with a focus on adaptive and context-responsive leadership. Second, policies on teacher distribution and staffing need to be improved to ensure a more balanced allocation, especially in subjects with critical shortages, thereby reducing workload and maintaining teaching quality. Third, educational institutions and relevant authorities should increase access to ongoing professional development by leveraging both online and blended learning modalities, which are particularly valuable in geographically isolated settings. Fourth, schools should actively build collaborative networks with stakeholders such as the education office, school committees, and local communities to secure broader support for human resource and facility needs. Fifth, the development of performance-based incentive systems and clear career progression pathways is crucial for improving teacher motivation and retention, especially in underdeveloped regions. Finally, the leadership strategies demonstrated by the principal of SMA Negeri 1 Bonegunu marked by collaboration and transformation can be adopted as a model for other schools facing similar challenges, providing a valuable reference for advancing HR management practices in the education sector.

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