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Principal's Strategy in Optimizing Teacher Performance Through Discipline

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A B S T R A C T

Teacher discipline is widely recognized as a fundamental determinant of school effectiveness. However, existing literature often overlooks the limitations of purely technical-punitive measures in addressing complex adaptive challenges, particularly within the paternalistic culture of Islamic schools. Based on the case at SMAIT Al-Kautsar Pondok Cabe, this study analyzes the Principal's strategy in optimizing teacher performance through discipline. Employing a qualitative descriptive method, data were collected via observations, documentation, and interviews with nine informants. The findings reveal a phenomenon of conditional compliance, where administrative sanctions failed to overcome sociological and economic barriers. The study found that a hybrid strategy—integrating moral legitimacy, systemic supervision, and situational engineering—successfully transformed the culture from conditional compliance to professional order. Notably, the mandatory reading program effectively locked attendance through social conformity rather than fear. However, the study identifies a paternalistic trap, where success remains heavily correlated with the principal's personal power. The study concludes that while hybrid strategies are effective for immediate transformation, long-term sustainability requires shifting from external control to the internalization of professional values.

Keywords: *Teacher Discipline, Adaptive Leadership, Hybrid Strategy, Paternalistic Leadership, School Management*

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INTRODUCTION

Human empowerment is essential to enable individuals to face transformation across all aspects of life. The global shift toward knowledge societies demands the mastery of skills such as critical thinking, collaboration, and communication (van Laar et al., 2020; Kilci & Goktas, 2025; Ekizer & Yıldırım, 2023). In this context, teachers hold a central role as learning agents and primary facilitators interacting directly with learners (Shipton, 2022; Fredriksen, 2021; Madhakomala et al., 2025). The success of educational institutions relies heavily on teacher performance, which directly influences student academic achievement and overall school effectiveness (Dahiru & Gbolahan, 2022).

Performance is defined as the result of work in quality and quantity achieved by an employee in carrying out their duties in accordance with the responsibilities given (Mangkunegara, 2017). In the educational context, teacher performance is not solely determined by pedagogical competence but is heavily influenced by work discipline. Discipline functions as a management tool to communicate agreed standards and ensure that employee behavior aligns with organizational goals (Simamora, 2006). Theoretical models suggest that discipline acts as a catalyst; without discipline, high competence does not convert into high productivity. Various studies have confirmed that the correlation between discipline and performance is positive and significant, implying that fluctuations in discipline levels directly impact the quality of teaching and administrative compliance (Rivai, 2011; Sutrisno, 2016).

Fundamentally, teacher performance is not merely a technical exercise of planning, execution, and evaluation; rather, it is a holistic activity measured by a sense of responsibility, compliance, and loyalty to professional mandates (Supardi, 2013; Hafidulloh et al., 2021; Ruky, 2006; Muspawi, 2021; Ashlan & Akmaluddin, 2021). However, maintaining this performance is complex. Recent literature suggests that effective teacher performance management requires a system of monitoring and evaluation to identify areas for improvement and provide appropriate support (Agustina et al., 2023). Furthermore, human resource management strategies, such as providing constructive feedback and recognition, are essential to maintain teacher motivation and performance in the education sector (Nurjaman, 2023).

Research consistently points out that a crucial factor influencing optimal performance is work discipline, defined as the awareness and willingness to obey organizational rules and social norms (Hafidullah et al., 2021; Tu'u, 2004). This discipline is deeply rooted in the school culture. Liswantari et al. (2025) argue that a positive school culture—comprising shared beliefs, values, and practices—significantly influences teacher performance. Nevertheless, Afandi et al. (2023) warn that while discipline reflects obedience to regulations, high discipline does not always guarantee high teaching performance if teachers are solely oriented toward administrative targets.

Teacher discipline and performance are not formed in isolation but are significantly determined by the organizational climate and the principal's leadership. The principal's leadership strategies and style have proven to have a positive and significant influence on teacher performance (Beliani et al., 2025). Specifically, the role of instructional leadership is pivotal. Mukhtar and Abd Razak (2024) found that Principal Instructional Leadership (PIL) significantly influences teacher professional learning practices by actively noticing learning opportunities. Instructional leadership practices, such as modeling effective teaching and facilitating collaboration, are critical in promoting teacher development and improving student outcomes (Kilag & Sasan, 2023). More specifically, principal leadership contributes substantially to teacher discipline, which subsequently functions as a mediating variable to enhance performance (Irawan et al., 2022; Santi et al., 2023).

However, in the context of Islamic education in Indonesia, leadership often adopts a paternalistic style. This style combines strong discipline and authority with fatherly benevolence (Cheng et al., 2004). Paternalistic leaders act as patriarchs who protect subordinates and care for their welfare in exchange for loyalty and deference. While this approach can be effective in building a cohesive culture based on "sungkan" (a distinct Javanese/Indonesian cultural concept of reluctance to offend superiors), it carries risks. It tends to create dependency on the leader's figure ("Personal Power") rather than building an autonomous system ("System Power"). This interaction between paternalistic styles and modern adaptive strategies constitutes a critical dynamic in school management.

Although theoretical frameworks outline an ideal correlation between leadership, discipline, and performance, on-the-ground reality demonstrates a significant gap. Various studies in Indonesia identify the persistence of indiscipline issues, such as teachers arriving late or being absent without leave (Septiani et al., 2023). This gap is also manifested in suboptimal performance during the learning planning and execution stages. It is common to find teachers who fail to prepare—or are late in preparing—essential learning tools such as Lesson Plans (RPP) and Syllabi (Sulistyo, 2015; Suhendar et al., 1996). RPP are often compiled solely for administrative compliance or copied from the internet without analysis (Haris et al., 2023; Kurnia et al., 2021). Consequently, the greatest difficulties reported by teachers often occur during the execution stage of classroom learning (Mahesty et al., 2025).

A similar phenomenon was observed during preliminary research at SMAIT Al-Kautsar Pondok Cabe. Faced with disciplinary issues, the school management implemented specific strategies focused on external control and punitive measures, namely the use of fingerprint attendance machines and the application of salary deduction sanctions. However, this punishment-focused strategy has proven not to be maximally effective. Fundamental problems persist, where teachers are still found arriving late, leaving before the scheduled time, and demonstrating suboptimal performance, such as weaknesses in RPP preparation

(Sulistyo & Wijayanto, 2015). This aligns with findings in other locations that implemented reward and punishment strategies (fine sanctions) yet continued to face similar disciplinary issues (Amelia, 2024).

This persistent failure necessitates a deeper theoretical examination, as school principals often face two types of problems: technical problems and adaptive challenges. Heifetz and Linsky (2002) distinguish between the two: technical problems can be solved with existing knowledge and authoritative commands (e.g., fixing a schedule, repairing facilities), whereas adaptive challenges require changes in people's values, beliefs, and habits. A common failure in educational management is applying technical solutions (such as strict sanctions or biometric attendance) to adaptive problems (such as low motivation or cultural resistance). Effective leadership in the modern era requires an adaptive approach that diagnoses the underlying social and psychological roots of indiscipline rather than merely treating the symptoms with punishment (Northouse, 2018).

The failure of strategies focused purely on punishment or sanctions at the research site indicates a misdiagnosis of the problem, which carries negative psychological consequences. Based on the adaptive leadership framework, chronic teacher indiscipline issues—such as lack of RPP preparation or recurring lateness—point more toward adaptive challenges related to motivation and culture, rather than merely technical challenges. Leadership failure often stems from a diagnostic error in treating adaptive challenges as if they were technical challenges solvable only by sanctions (Alene et al., 2025).

Strategies focused on punishment risk ignoring crucial psychological variables such as job satisfaction. Studies show that leadership practices influence teacher stress indirectly through job satisfaction; supportive leadership increases job satisfaction, which subsequently lowers stress (Alzouebi et al., 2025). Conversely, punishment-based strategies have the potential to decrease job satisfaction, increase stress, and even activate emotional biases such as anger, triggering exclusionary disciplinary practices (Legette et al., 2023). Furthermore, punitive disciplinary actions can act as a decapitalizer, eroding social capital, trust relationships, and teachers' sense of belonging to the institution (Trovato et al., 2025). Literature suggests a shift toward supportive leadership strategies to build commitment, subjective well-being (Qi et al., 2025), job satisfaction (Lie et al., 2021; Tandeas et al., 2021), and work engagement (Siddique et al., 2022).

A review of prior research indicates that while the themes of teacher discipline and performance have been widely studied, specific gaps remain. Previous research has discussed the general role of principals in improving discipline (Adrianti et al., 2023) or the quantitative impact of discipline and performance on student learning outcomes (Samsia, 2021). Other research highlights factors of professionalism and motivation (Nayni et al., 2023), as well as descriptions of discipline improvement itself (Girsang, 2021). Several qualitative studies in different locations found identical phenomena of indiscipline—lateness and RPP unpreparedness—and responded with reward and punishment strategies alongside persuasive approaches (Aslam et al., 2023; Kautsar et al., 2020; Mahyu et al., 2024). Although these studies confirm the relationship between leadership, discipline, and performance (Juniarti et al., 2020; Habibi et al., 2025), there are fundamental differences in effective strategic approaches. Critical literature warns that strategies overly focused on technical compliance and strict regulation risk being counterproductive and do not necessarily improve substantive performance (Bird & Charteris, 2020; Chung & Zou, 2025). Conversely, strategies that provide achievement recognition have been shown to predict adaptability and task performance more effectively (Meng & Briscioli, 2024).

Based on this mapping, this study fills the gap by not merely stopping at the description of discipline, but critically analyzing the principal's strategy—whether punitive or supportive—and how such strategies influence teacher performance by positioning discipline as the key mediating variable. The phenomenon at SMAIT Al-Kautsar Pondok Cabe represents a complex managerial challenge, where the application of general strategies such as attendance sanctions and salary deductions potentially constitutes a misdiagnosis of adaptive problems. This strategy risks being counterproductive as it may lower job satisfaction, increase

stress, and deplete organizational social capital, especially if not balanced with supportive and constructive leadership strategies. Modern scientific literature suggests that effective strategies should focus on building psychological capital, such as self-efficacy, positive emotions, and systematic professional development (Werang & Agung, 2017; Picardal & Rapada Jr., 2024; Yuniarti et al., 2023; Auliana et al., 2021).

Therefore, the issue is no longer just whether discipline is important, but what kind of leadership strategy proves effective in building teacher discipline internally and sustainably amidst these challenges. Driven by the urgency to analyze the effectiveness of existing strategies and explore the dynamics of human resource management at the research site, this article aims to analyze the Principal's strategies in optimizing teacher performance through discipline at SMAIT Al-Kautsar Pondok Cabe. Specifically, this study will examine three main aspects: (1) The current level of teacher discipline and performance; (2) The inhibiting factors behind low discipline that impact performance; and (3) The Principal's applied strategies—whether tending toward punitive or supportive—in overcoming these obstacles to enhance teacher performance. This analysis is expected to provide empirical contributions regarding the transformation of leadership strategies from an external control approach toward an approach that builds teachers' internal capacity.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive method to interpret phenomena within a natural setting (Sugiyono, 2016). The research was conducted at SMAIT Al-Kautsar, Pondok Cabe Ilir, South Tangerang. The participants served as data sources in this study, consisting of nine informants selected through purposive sampling (Sugiyono, 2016). These informants were selected based on their specific roles and knowledge regarding the research topic, comprising one School Principal as the key informant and primary policymaker, five teachers as main informants representing the teaching staff directly affected by the disciplinary strategies, and three students as triangulation informants selected to provide objective cross-check data regarding the implementation of discipline in the classroom.

Instruments

In this qualitative research, the researcher serves as the key instrument directly engaging in the field. To support data collection, the researcher utilized several specific instruments. First, an observation guide based on Arikunto (2006) was employed to systematically record physical conditions, facilities, and learning activities at SMAIT Al-Kautsar. Second, an interview guide consisting of both structured and unstructured guidelines (Hermawan, 2019; Mulyana, 2006) was used to explore the principal's strategies and teachers' responses. Third, a documentation checklist adapted from Anggito and Setiawan (2018) was utilized to gather written data such as the vision and mission, staff data, and school archives.

Procedures

The research procedures were executed in three systematic stages. The first stage was preparation, which encompassed the initial observation of the research object, proposal drafting, and obtaining official research permits, taking place from February to April 2023. The second stage was implementation, where the researcher conducted field data collection through non-participatory observation, in-depth interviews with key informants, and documentation studies (Sukmadinata, 2005; Tanzeh & Suyitno, 2011). Finally, the third stage was reporting, where the researcher compiled the research report simultaneously with the final data analysis process.

Data Analysis

The data analysis technique was conducted using a qualitative descriptive approach. This process commenced with data classification based on informant responses, followed by data categorization based on problem dimensions, and concluded with data interpretation to draw conclusions (Moleong, 2002). To ensure the validity and reliability of the findings, this study employed source and technique triangulation, specifically by comparing interview results with observation data and related documents (Sugiyono, 2016). To ensure the

trustworthiness of the findings, which encompasses credibility, dependability, and confirmability, this study employed source and technique triangulation methods as recommended by Sugiyono (2016). In this context, credibility was achieved through source triangulation by comparing the interview results obtained from the Principal with those from teachers and students. Furthermore, to verify consistency and ensure dependability, the researcher employed technique triangulation by cross-checking the interview data against observation notes and related institutional documents.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Dynamics of Discipline and Performance: The Phenomenon of Conditional Compliance

The study found that the level of teacher discipline and performance at SMAIT Al-Kautsar Pondok Cabe is in a transitional phase that can be categorized as conditional compliance. Normatively, the school sets the attendance standard at 07:15 WIB with a tolerance until 07:30 WIB. However, field data reveals a disparity between the rule (*das sollen*) and reality (*das sein*), where lateness until 07:45 or 08:00 WIB still frequently occurs. The existence of this tolerance period, ironically, is often misinterpreted as a valid delay, creating a psychological buffer that normalizes arriving late. The School Principal assessed discipline as quite good but acknowledged that such compliance is inconsistent and heavily relies on warnings or reprimands.

This dependence suggests that the locus of control among teachers is still external; they comply with rules not due to intrinsic professional integrity, but largely due to the presence of authority figures or the threat of sanctions. This condition indicates that discipline has not reached the level of *preventive discipline*—an effort to obey rules based on self-awareness (Handoko, 2019)—but is instead dominated by *corrective discipline*. Recurring lateness demonstrates weak teacher self-control in meeting organizational standards (Davis in Sastropoetro, 1988). The implication of this lateness extends beyond mere timekeeping; it affects psychological readiness. Teachers who arrive late tend to enter the classroom in a rushed state, lacking the emotional stability required to manage classroom dynamics effectively.

Furthermore, this pattern of conditional compliance creates a ripple effect on the school's ecosystem. When teachers display a lack of punctuality, it inadvertently constructs a negative 'hidden curriculum' that undermines character education. Students, who naturally observe their teachers as role models, may perceive time management as a trivial matter, thereby eroding student discipline as well (Samsia, 2021). Consequently, the teacher's moral authority to enforce rules in the classroom is diminished, as their actions contradict the very standards they are expected to uphold.
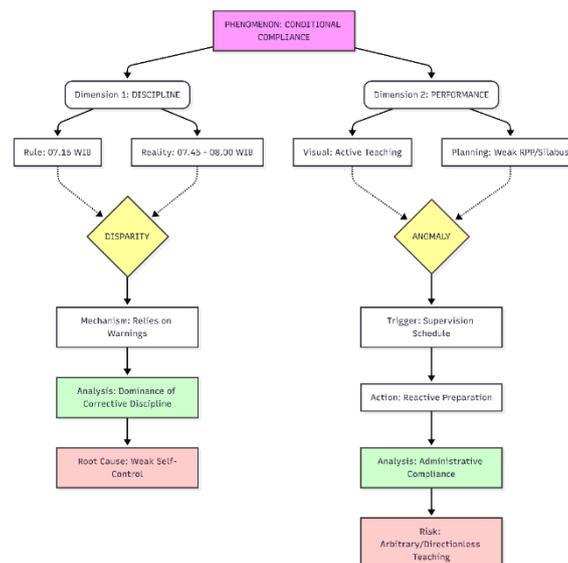

Figure 1. The Conceptual Framework of Conditional Compliance Phenomenon

As illustrated in the framework above, the inconsistency in discipline is paralleled by an anomaly in the performance dimension, specifically between implementation and planning. Visually, teachers are active in teaching, yet administrative performance—specifically the preparation of learning tools (*RPP/Silabus*)—is very weak and reactive. Teachers admitted that the preparation of learning tools is often only seriously attended to approaching the supervision schedule. This phenomenon demonstrates that teacher administrative performance is still oriented towards administrative compliance rather than professional accountability.

This behavior reflects what Merton describes as *administrative ritualism*, where the completion of documents becomes a ceremonial goal in itself, detached from its actual function. This risks creating a learning process that is directionless or based solely on intuition (arbitrary teaching), which contradicts professional performance standards (Widianti, 2020; Usman, 2015). Consequently, a decoupling occurs between planning and practice, documents exist to satisfy bureaucratic requirements, while actual teaching in the classroom relies on improvisation rather than structured design.

Inhibiting Determinants: Role Conflict and Structural Vulnerability

The low level of time discipline and administrative performance is not a single variable but the resultant of a complex interaction of three main inhibiting factors. These factors do not operate in isolation but reinforce one another, creating a systemic barrier that technical sanctions alone cannot penetrate. This interconnection forms a vicious cycle where one deficiency triggers another; for instance, economic pressure forces teachers to seek side income, which exacerbates time constraints and role conflicts, subsequently draining the energy required for administrative duties. Consequently, the disciplinary problem at SMAIT Al-Kautsar is not merely an issue of individual negligence, but a symptom of broader structural and environmental deficiencies. This explains why previous technical interventions—such as biometric attendance logs or financial penalties—proved ineffective, as they only addressed the surface symptoms without resolving the underlying root causes.
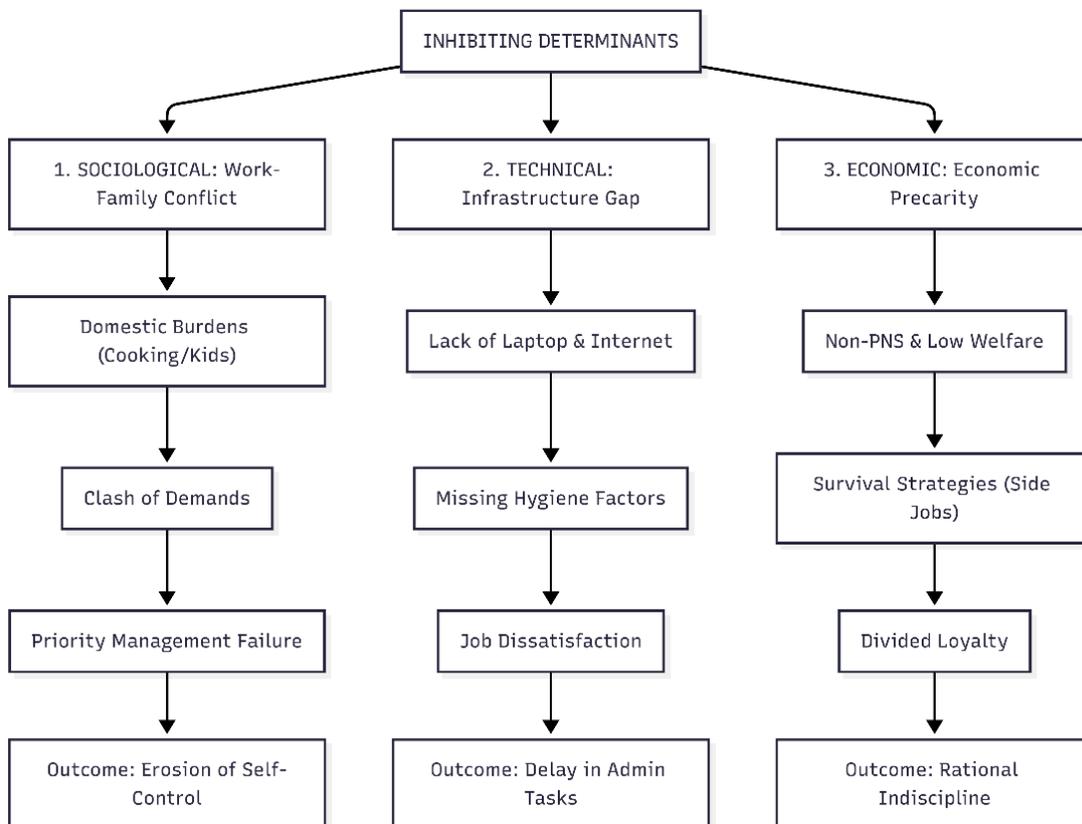

Figure 2. Mapping of Inhibiting Determinants for Teacher Discipline and Performance

The specific dynamics of each factor illustrated above are detailed in the following sections.

Sociological-Cultural Role Conflict (Work-Family Conflict)

The The study found a severe clash between professional demands and domestic burdens, particularly among female teachers. The majority of reasons for lateness are rooted in morning domestic activities, such as childcare and cooking. Teachers admitted that in the cultural context of the study, they often face a double burden, where societal expectations place domestic responsibilities entirely on them before they even start their professional day. This phenomenon is known as work-family conflict, where demands from one domain interfere with the fulfillment of responsibilities in another (Wazirman et al., 2022). Consequently, teachers struggle to separate domestic and professional roles (Nurmayanti et al., 2014), resulting in priority management failure and the erosion of self-control to arrive on time (Nicklin et al., 2022). Crucially, this conflict creates a permissive culture; when family reasons are constantly accepted as valid excuses by the school environment, the standard of discipline gradually degrades, and lateness becomes socially normalized.

Technical Infrastructure Gap

Low administrative performance is rationally justified by the absence of adequate technical support, such as limited laptop units and internet access at school. This extrinsic barrier hinders teachers' readiness to execute digital-based administrative tasks, creating a bottleneck in the workflow (Izhar et al., 2022; Draxler-Weber et al., 2022). Theoretically, the absence of these facilities is categorized as hygiene factors in Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory. While the presence of facilities might not inherently motivate teachers, their absence causes significant job dissatisfaction and provides a psychological justification for non-compliance. Teachers feel that the demand to complete administration (RPP) is unfair because the institution fails to provide the necessary tools, leading them to delay the preparation of learning tools (Tohardi, 2002; Vigo-Arrazola & Moreno-Pinillos, 2025).

Structural-Economic Vulnerability (Economic Precarity)

The third factor is the linear correlation between employment status, welfare, and time commitment. Indications of divided loyalty were found, where teachers have other preoccupations or jobs outside the school due to their status as non-civil servant (*non-PNS*) teachers and economic demands. This condition places teachers as precarious workers who must adopt survival strategies, often prioritizing external income sources over school hours (Hidayati et al., 2024). Consequently, full dedication to the parent school erodes. This suboptimal welfare influences attendance commitment (Santosa, 2023) and serves as a rational root for undisciplined behaviors such as taking leave or leaving early (Hasibuan, 2006; Siregar et al., 2023). In this context, indiscipline is not merely a behavioral issue but a rational economic decision made by teachers to sustain their livelihood.

Principal's Strategy: From Humanist Approach to Situational Engineering

Responding to the complexity of sociological and economic barriers previously identified, the School Principal did not apply a single approach but rather a hybrid strategy integrating moral legitimacy, systemic control, and behavioral engineering.
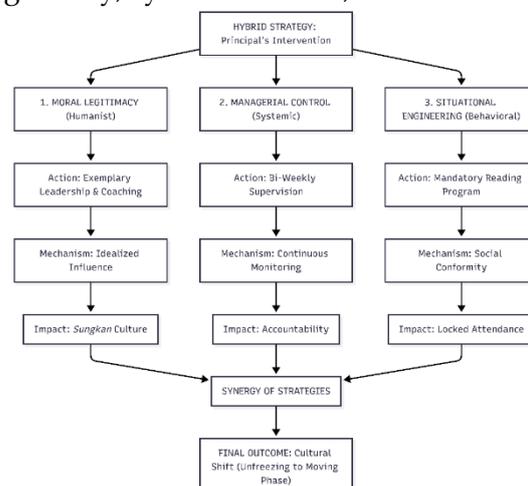

Figure 3. The Hybrid Strategy Model: Integrating Moral, Systemic, and Situational Approaches

Moral Legitimacy through Exemplary and Humanist Leadership

Recognizing that rigid instructional approaches are ineffective against a paternalistic culture, the principal implemented exemplary leadership as a foundation for moral legitimacy. The principal arrives early and personally welcomes the school community at the gate. This is not merely a routine, but a symbolic act to establish *idealized influence*. Furthermore, to handle teachers with disciplinary issues due to family reasons, the principal applies a persuasive and motivational approach (coaching) rather than direct confrontation.

By physically positioning himself as the first person at the school, the principal validates the theory that a leader's behavior is a living law, where leaders who consistently demonstrate high ethical standards are respected and emulated (Bass & Bass, 2008; Hutabarat et al., 2022). The psychological impact of this strategy is the creation of a *sungkan* culture (reluctance to offend a respected figure). This approach meets teachers' psychological needs to be valued and understood, effectively reducing resistance and building a transformational working relationship (Topping, 2002; Mulyasa, 2007).

Managerial Control and Continuous Academic Supervision

While the humanist approach builds relationships, it lacks the rigidity to ensure administrative compliance. To address weaknesses in administrative performance (RPP), the principal shifted the supervision pattern from incidental to systemic control. The primary strategy is the implementation of a high-frequency academic supervision cycle, specifically checking learning tools every two weeks.

This continuous monitoring approach is effective for early detection of negligence, narrowing the window for procrastination, and preventing intuition-based teaching practices without proper planning (Arikunto, 2004; Winata et al., 2022). To balance the subjectivity of the humanist approach, the validity of performance appraisal is maintained using standardized government instruments (SKP and PKG). The use of these standard instruments establishes *legal-rational authority*, providing legal certainty and objectivity. This minimizes subjective bias (favoritism) often associated with paternalistic leadership and ensures that the administration prepared is the teacher's original work (Wahyuni et al., 2022; Noor & Nuryati, 2022).

Behavioral Reinforcement and Situational Engineering

As a discipline lock, the principal applies a reward and punishment scheme. Rewards are given in the form of verbal appreciation, assistance with promotion, and financial incentives (extra holiday allowances) for disciplined teachers (VandenBos, 2015; Syahmalini & Firdaus, 2022). Meanwhile, sanctions are applied progressively (verbal warnings, written warnings, reports to the foundation) to provide a clear and educational structure of consequences (Sullivan, 2016). The most innovative finding in this study is the implementation of the Mandatory Reading Program 15 minutes before lessons begin.

Managerially, this is a form of situational engineering that leverages social conformity mechanisms. By mandating teachers to accompany students in reading, the Principal effectively "locks" teacher attendance in the classroom earlier. This strategy is ingenious as it shifts the motive for attendance: teachers arrive on time not merely out of fear of administrative sanctions, but due to role obligation as literacy companions in front of their students. The presence of students acts as a social control mechanism; teachers would feel embarrassed to be absent or late when their students are already waiting to read (Forgas et al., 2007). The synergy of these three strategies has proven successful, shifting the work culture at SMAIT Al-Kautsar from the unfreezing phase towards the moving phase (Adelman, 1993; Lewin, 1935).

Theoretical Reflection: Overcoming Adaptive Challenges and the Paternalistic Trap

The success of the strategies at SMAIT Al-Kautsar validates the theoretical framework of *Adaptive Leadership*. Initially, the school faced a risk of leadership failure due to a fundamental diagnostic error, where chronic indiscipline was treated as a mere technical problem. By shifting to a humanist and situational approach, the Principal correctly identified these as *adaptive challenges* requiring changes in values, beliefs, and habits rather than just technical adjustments (Alene et al., 2025). The Principal managed the productive zone of

disequilibrium effectively. Furthermore, the Principal repositioned sanctions within a framework of *Procedural Justice* (Hot Stove Rule), where disciplinary action is immediate, consistent, and impersonal (Dessler, 2013; Hasibuan, 2006).
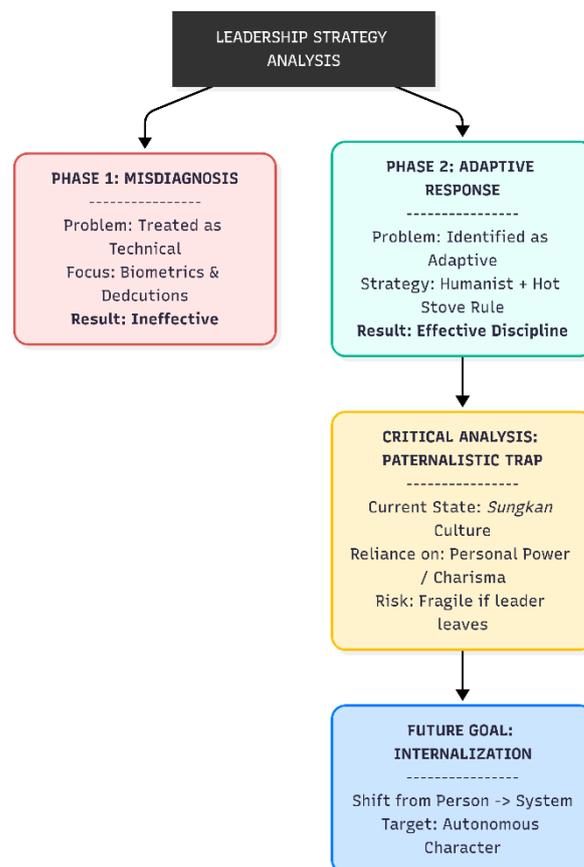
Figure 4. Theoretical Analysis: from Adaptive Leadership to Sustainability Challenges

Despite the effective transition depicted above, a critical analysis of the findings reveals a latent vulnerability in the sustainability of this model. The improved discipline is strongly correlated with the physical presence and personal charisma of the Principal, indicating a strong paternalistic leadership style. In this model, the leader acts as a father figure who provides guidance and protection in exchange for loyalty and compliance (Shah, 2015; Yukl, 2013). While effective in the short term, this reliance on Charismatic Authority rather than Legal-Rational Authority poses a significant risk.

Using Kelman's theory of social influence, the current compliance level is at the stage of Identification (compliance to maintain a relationship with the leader) rather than Internalization (compliance because it aligns with intrinsic values). This creates a fragile order. If the central figure is removed, the culture of discipline may erode because the external locus of control (the leader) is gone. Therefore, the next crucial phase for SMAIT Al-Kautsar is to transition from person-dependent to system-dependent discipline. The ultimate goal is to internalize these professional values so that discipline becomes an autonomous character trait of the teachers, independent of the leader's presence (Hurlock, 1972; Bruno, 2003).

CONCLUSIONS

This study concludes that the dynamics of teacher discipline and performance at SMAIT Al-Kautsar Pondok Cabe represent a complex adaptive challenge rather than a mere technical administrative issue. The phenomenon of conditional compliance and the persistent disparity between normative standards (*das sollen*) and field reality (*das sein*) are driven by a multi-dimensional interplay of inhibiting factors, namely sociological role conflicts (work-family conflict), technical infrastructure gaps, and structural-economic vulnerability. Consequently, the initial management approach relying solely on technical solutions—such as biometric

attendance systems and punitive salary deductions—proved ineffective as it constituted a misdiagnosis of the underlying motivational and cultural roots of the problem. To overcome these barriers, the principal successfully implemented a hybrid strategy that integrates moral legitimacy, systemic control, and situational engineering. This approach combines exemplary leadership and humanist coaching to build psychological safety, with continuous academic supervision to ensure administrative accountability. Furthermore, the innovative implementation of the Mandatory Reading Program serves as a form of situational engineering that leverages social conformity, effectively locking teacher attendance through role obligation rather than fear of sanctions. The synergy of these strategies has effectively transitioned the organizational culture from a frozen state of indiscipline toward a moving phase of professional order. This strategic combination provides an empirical model for school managers facing similar issues, demonstrating the effectiveness of behavioral engineering over conventional punitive measures in optimizing teacher performance in the Indonesian context. However, a critical theoretical implication of this study is the identification of a latent paternalistic trap. The current improvement in discipline remains heavily correlated with the personal charisma and physical presence of the principal, reflecting a reliance on personal power rather than being fully anchored in an autonomous system power. For long-term sustainability, school management must transition from external control toward the internalization of professional values. Future strategies should focus on strengthening the institutional system and professional autonomy, so that discipline evolves from a feeling of reluctance toward the leader (*sungkan*) into a genuine, autonomous professional character trait that remains resilient even in the event of leadership succession.

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