

Life Skills-Based Leadership Strategy in Improving Madrasah Quality: A Case Study

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ABSTRACT

This research is based on the urgency of strengthening life skills in madrasahs so that graduates excel academically and adapt to contemporary socio-techno-economic challenges. This study intends to analyze life skills-based leadership strategies to improve the quality of State Elementary Madrasah 01 Luwu and identify obstacles and their solutions. The design used is qualitative-descriptive with purposive selection of informants (madrasah principals, teachers, and students); data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation studies, and their credibility was tested through triangulation and member checks. The findings show leadership strategies that combine transformational, participatory, and situational characters—including teacher empowerment through training/collaboration, integration of life skills into the curriculum and contextual activities (e.g., “*Cheerful Friday Market*” and *morning talk*), and strengthening a character-oriented school culture. These strategies contribute to increased student self-confidence, discipline, responsibility, and participation, which impacts the quality of learning. The main obstacles include limited human resources and facilities, diverse parental support, a dense curriculum, and substandard life skills evaluations. Life skills-based leadership is effective in improving madrasah quality when implemented systematically, integrating curriculum, teacher development, school culture, and partnerships. Practical implications include the need for standardized life skills evaluations, teacher capacity building, and resource support. Further research is recommended to test this model comparatively across madrasahs and develop validated life skills assessment instruments.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Education shapes the next generation of academically and non-academically talented students. Non-academic life skills are getting more attention. Life skills enable people to adapt and behave positively and overcome daily problems (Prajapati et al., 2017; Nasheeda et al., 2019). Integrating life skills into school can improve student performance academically and personally. However, many schools still prioritize

academics over life skills (Fadlin et al., 2024; Hafina et al., 2024). Thus, many grads perform academically but struggle with stress management, communication, decision-making, and problem-solving. Education and training require needs analysis, target identification, program content determination, and program evaluation. Education and training improve teacher knowledge, abilities, and attitudes (Kurniawati et al., 2017; Smith & Sheridan, 2019; Hyseni Duraku et al., 2022).

Effective leaders manage and strengthen educational institutions and foster life skills development (Karagianni & Jude Montgomery, 2018). Leadership, especially in youth learning groups, is vital to life skills acquisition. Life skills-based leadership incorporates life skills into daily leadership. This method should build a holistic educational ecosystem that emphasizes academic accomplishment and student personal and social development (Fayyaz & Lee, 2025).

Madrasah principals' strategies include steps to achieve goals. Educational institutions are vital to education's success because they mediate it. They make schooling seem impossible without them. A strategy is the overarching plan for implementing an idea or concept over time. Leaders utilize strategy to attain their aims. A strategic principal is essential to a Madrasah's success (Murni & Saputra, 2023; Rofiki, 2025). No program succeeds without a strategy. Strategy is the first and most critical stage for a goal-oriented leader. The Madrasah Principal's plan for reaching educational goals is important, especially given contemporary education trends (Haddade et al., 2024; Arwandi et al., 2025). Schools regulate the educational process, with the principal as its leader and crucial to its success. Even with clear goals, planned educational programs will be impossible to achieve without the correct method. Effective principals plan and implement strategies that produce a quality and competitive generation (Kraft & Gilmour, 2016; Rostini et al., 2020).

Principals greatly impact schooling quality. The principal is closely involved in school discipline, climate, and delinquency reduction (Liebowitz & Porter, 2019; Huang et al., 2020). The principal also manages the school, which affects teaching and learning. The principal's plan covers long-term goals, problems, and short-term goal planning and implementation (Aaron et al., 2024). These elements interact to affect strategy efficacy. Successful principles set long-term goals, overcome obstacles, make realistic short-term initiatives, and manage expectations (Sucuoğlu & Erdem, 2021; Meyer et al., 2023; Aaron et al., 2024). Thus, the tactics will prolong school success.

Any organization, including educational institutions, needs a leader who can manage, foresee change, address shortcomings, and lead it to success (Chatzipanagiotou & Katsarou, 2023). Organizational success depends on leaders. Therefore, a madrasah principal should have a strong vision for the school's future (Abidin et al., 2024), encourage all staff to work toward that vision, set high expectations for student achievement and staff performance, observe teachers in the classroom while providing positive and constructive feedback to address problems and enhance learning, and promote effective use of time with students.

Effective madrasah leaders, such as the principal, help achieve educational goals (Salim et al., 2021; Shah et al., 2024). A madrasah administrator with a clear vision,

strong standards for accomplishment, the capacity to provide constructive feedback, and the determination to use time efficiently would foster student development and improve instruction. A madrasah principal with these abilities and attitudes will build a successful school where students learn knowledge, skills, and values that will make them exemplary people (Ashoumi et al., 2023). Life skills are the ability to live, have the bravery to face life's obstacles and problems naturally without stress, and proactively and creatively explore and find solutions to overcome them. Life skills education includes adaptability, knowledge, and positive behavior (Shek et al., 2021). Students, society, and the government will benefit from this education. It will inspire experimentation and creativity.

Independence is not relying on others, as dependence is typically associated with anticipating support. Madrasahs teach pupils to manage their time for study and recreation (Badrun, 2024). In addition to teaching, madrasahs shape students' souls and character. Humans need others to survive; thus, social life skills are essential (Eissa & Khalid, 2018). In addition to religious knowledge, madrasahs shape students' character, independence, life skills, and social skills (Nabilah et al., 2024). Madrasahs teach independence, which prepares pupils for life's problems. Students will learn social values and life skills that will make them smart, wise, polite, and ready to help others.

Like other institutions, State Elementary Madrasah 01 Luwu aims to develop competitive graduates, especially in today's technologically advanced world. The principal of State Elementary Madrasah 01 Luwu wants to use a life skills-based leadership style to establish an effective and efficient learning environment to improve education. This study examines life skills-based leadership initiatives to improve classroom instruction. Identifying and applying these tactics may help find ways to incorporate life skills into the curriculum and daily school activities, generating graduates with excellent life skills and academic intelligence. The research findings explain and demonstrate how madrasah principals use life skills-based leadership to increase quality. The above reality informs this research's goals: (1) To evaluate life skills-based leadership to improve State Elementary Madrasah 01 Luwu. (2) To examine State Elementary Madrasah 01 Luwu's life skills-based leadership challenges and solutions.

2. METHOD

This study employed qualitative research methods directly in the field to comprehensively study the case study and gather information on life skills-based leadership strategies to improve the quality of State Elementary Madrasah. This research was conducted at State Elementary Madrasah 01 Luwu, located in Bupon District, Luwu Regency, South Sulawesi Province. The reason for choosing this location, including interviews with the local community, was that the school's reputation for high quality has led many residents to encourage their children to enroll. This data is supported by State Elementary Madrasah 01 Luwu's school records, which show a diverse student population.

The data collected was qualitative, consisting of primary and secondary data. This data came from respondents directly encountered in the field (the research location) through interviews with the madrasah principal, vice-principal, teachers, and students. Secondary Data. This secondary data consisted of observations in the field (the research location) and written data, such as the school's vision, mission, and profile; the principal's profile; teacher data; organizational structure; and so on, obtained through observation and documentation studies.

The data collection techniques used in this study were observation, interviews, and documentation studies. These three techniques were used in layers and repeatedly throughout the field data collection process in the hope of obtaining more in-depth, objective, and reliable information. The validity of the data in this study was ensured through the comprehensive application of validity and reliability principles, combining various strategies tailored to the characteristics of qualitative research. Data validity was achieved using triangulation techniques, including triangulation of sources, methods, and time. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information obtained from the madrasah principal, vice principal, teachers, students, and official madrasah documents. Method triangulation was achieved by combining in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentary studies to capture reality more fully. Meanwhile, time triangulation was conducted by collecting data at different points in time to ensure consistency of the information obtained. Thus, research findings were not solely dependent on a single type of data or a single data collection point but were instead validated through comparisons across sources and techniques.

The reliability of this research was maintained through consistent data collection procedures using instruments that had been conceptually and practically tested. Instruments such as observation sheets and interview guides were developed based on indicators of transformative leadership and the application of life skills in the madrasah environment. The development of these indicators referenced theory and previous research findings, thus maintaining strong academic relevance. The researcher, as the primary instrument, conducted direct, in-depth, and iterative data collection, ensuring that the processes and techniques used were consistent from one informant to another. To minimize potential bias, member checking—seeking clarification and approval from informants regarding data interpretation—was implemented to ensure the researcher's interpretations remained aligned with the participants' perspectives. This step ensures that the data obtained truly reflects the social reality and experiences of the research subjects.

Furthermore, instrument testing and bias control procedures were implemented from the initial stages of the research. Research instruments, such as observation sheets, interview guides, and documentation study formats, were tested through a limited pilot study to assess language clarity, indicator relevance, and suitability for the research focus. The results of this pilot study were used to make improvements before the instruments were fully implemented in the field. Data analysis was conducted in three main stages: data reduction, data presentation, and verification of findings. The reduction process involved selecting important data and discarding irrelevant

information, while data presentation was systematically conducted through descriptive narratives and summary tables to facilitate drawing conclusions. Data verification was a key stage in ensuring the accuracy and consistency of the research results.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Life Skills-Based Leadership Strategy to Improve the Quality of State Elementary Madrasah 01 Luwu

Leadership at State Elementary Madrasah 01 Luwu stresses teamwork and life skills. Observations and in-depth interviews with the principal, educators, and students show that the principal actively drives the institution's objective to build student character and life skills beyond academics. The principal leads openly. He plans life skills programs with instructors and the madrasah committee. A weekly thematic program emphasizes teamwork, communication, and emotional control through class discussions, role-playing simulations, and group projects. In an interview, the madrasah principal said the school teaches academic and life skills. Instructors and the committee are actively involved to make our programs relevant to students' lives." One teacher agreed with program development:

"Before initiating activities, the madrasah principal always invites discussion. We are requested to suggest student-friendly techniques when creating weekly themes. We feel appreciated and involved in decisions."

These topic exercises were well-structured and actively engaged the pupils. Themes like *"Working Together is Cool"* and *"Managing Emotions Well"* were taught using active and interactive approaches, which helped pupils grasp and implement the subject. The *"Cheerful Friday Market"* program, which teaches entrepreneurial skills, community service that fosters social empathy, and practical skills training like environmental cleanliness, reusing used goods, and independent study schedules, was observed and confirmed through interviews. All these efforts target pupils from lower-middle-income backgrounds.

The Pancasila Student Profile Project emphasizes critical and creative thinking, including the *"Cheerful Friday Market"* initiative. This project teaches very young kids entrepreneurial concepts like product planning, rudimentary money management, and promotional methods. This process teaches economics and encourages smart and creative sales problem-solving. Regular community service activities in schools foster global diversity and mutual cooperation.

The principal monitors program execution, motivates pupils, and evaluates teachers in addition to administrative duties. In an interview, he said his aim is *"empowering all the potential of the madrasah to bring about real change at the student level."* Teacher empowerment is key to the strategy. Six teachers said they attend internal training, weekly reflection meetings, and group discussions to improve life skills-based learning. Teachers feel they have adequate opportunities to engage, including in establishing contextual and student-centered teaching techniques.

A teacher emphasized the importance of practical and cognitive skills in science learning, stating that theory is not the only focus. Our science class experiments on water capillarity use tissue paper and dye. Because they may experiment and talk with friends, kids are excited. *"This approach encourages them to speak up and boosts their confidence."* According to another teacher, collaborative learning enhances emotional and intellectual engagement by encouraging pupils to listen and voice their perspectives in groups. It shapes their character. They develop empathy for peers and take more responsibility for assignments.

The researcher's observations in numerous classes showed active and dynamic student interactions, especially when given group challenges. Life skills were integrated into the classroom environment through spontaneous debates, idea sharing, and collaborative problem-solving.

Students were taught about socioeconomic situations, empathy, and assisting others regardless of background. Interacting with help beneficiaries improves daily humanitarian principles and unity. The Pancasila Student Profile Project includes practical skills like environmental cleanliness in the aspects of faith, devotion to God Almighty, and noble morals. Students learn to appreciate God's creation, maintain its beauty, and live clean and healthy by cleaning the school and surrounding environs. They promote discipline and personal and group accountability.

Students love participation. Interviews with various kids show that engaging, fun, and meaningful activities drive them to attend school. The fifth grader said "Friday Market" taught him to count money, sell, and work with others.

"I enjoy participating in the Friday Market because I can learn how to count money, sell, and collaborate with friends."

The principal's leadership strength is adapting the program to local culture. For instance, a modest entrepreneurial program employing local food items and Friday clean-ups teaches hard work. Principals work with community leaders to support student activities outside the classroom. Working with recycled materials encourages creativity and independence. Students practice their inventiveness and manual abilities by turning unused things into usable creations. These activities improve the environment and teach sustainable living and self-reliance. Finally, the Pancasila Student Profile Project stresses independence by creating an individual study plan. Students learn to organize, monitor, and assess their learning according to their needs and goals. Students learn independence, responsibility for their development, and time management skills that will benefit them throughout their lives.

The leadership strategy is consistent and emphasizes overall student development. The principal has achieved a flexible, inclusive, and locally relevant learning environment. Internal policies, instructor involvement, and student participation in life skills-based activities have improved madrasah educational processes and outcomes. The principal of State Elementary Madrasah 01 Luwu takes an integrative approach to learning that emphasizes life skills as well as academics. The principal uses transformative leadership tactics to motivate, inspire, and encourage cultural change and

a participatory approach to incorporate all madrasah components in decision-making and program implementation.

The concept improves classroom learning and develops student character through a holistic and humanistic approach. State Elementary Madrasah 01 Luwu teaches 21st-century life skills like teamwork, critical thinking, self-management, and decision-making. This technique emphasizes growing pupils as full people, not just academic learners. The principal said in an interview,

"We want them to be smart and have life skills to prosper in society. We emphasize cooperation, responsibility, and independence in every class. This technique emphasizes growing pupils as full people, not just academic learners."

Life skills are taught through thematic, extracurricular, and social projects. All of these programs teach youngsters values and social skills. By combining strategic plans with student needs and local social factors, the principal supports change. Active participation by teachers and other educational professionals improves educational quality under the leadership model. The madrasah principal conducts training, reflective talks, and cross-disciplinary collaboration to improve teachers' pedagogical and non-pedagogical skills. Teachers' participation in program planning fosters ownership and collaboration for the madrasah's educational goals.

These methods cater to the majority of children from low-income families. The technique is tailored to local conditions and directed at students' daily lives. Community service, accessible business training, and the "*Cheerful Friday Market*" contextualize the ideals. This feature makes the madrasah social and active. State Elementary Madrasah 01 Luwu's leadership strategy is revolutionary, inclusive, student-centered, and quality-focused. A responsive and sustainable educational environment includes life skills, academics, and character building. This method indicates that madrasah leadership involves vision, ideals, and empathy for all students, not administrative management.

This study used purposive sampling to locate informants who were relevant and could provide in-depth information about the study's focus. The researchers separated informants into three groups: the principal as the key policymaker, teachers as technical implementers and student advisers, and students as subjects and direct beneficiaries to study life skills-based leadership initiatives to improve madrasah quality. These three elements describe the implementation of leadership and the State Elementary Madrasah 01 Luwu curriculum. The inquiry relied on the 48-year-old principal of the madrasah. The principal of the madrasah has over ten years of institutional leadership experience and holds a degree in Islamic education. A seasoned madrasah leader, this informant is a visionary and innovator in character and life skills programs. In addition to managing, she starts madrasah life skills programs.

The madrasah principal was chosen as an informant because of her role in education and ability to describe policy direction and leadership dynamics. The madrasah principal creates innovative academic and non-academic initiatives as the top decision-maker. The research benefits from these informants' perspectives regarding life skills-based leadership in an Islamic primary madrasah. Six teachers involved in student

development and learning were the next informants. Three men and three women aged 28–45 were informants. All teachers had bachelor's degrees in general or Islamic education, and others were continuing their education. Strong academic credentials and diverse teaching experience make these academics appropriate for uncovering madrasah leadership and life skills.

They strategically teach Indonesian, mathematics, science, and Islamic subjects such as the Quran, Hadith, and Fiqh. Extracurriculars strengthen students' character and life skills. Scouting, basic entrepreneurship, and social-based thematic initiatives teach life skills. Teachers are valuable informants for investigating madrasah leadership and educational achievement because they execute curriculum and develop character. We studied six 11–12-year-olds—three boys and three girls. All the State Elementary Madrasah 01 Luwu kids are in grades 5 and 6, the last primary grades. Participants in flagship madrasah life skills programs were selected. These activities improve students' practical understanding of life skills taught in school. Our study receives authentic and relevant data from mature students who express their thoughts and reflect on their madrasah experiences.

Students learn leadership qualities through Happy Friday Market (*Pasar Jumat Ceria*), plant cultivation, and school and community social projects. The Happy Friday Market exercise teaches students responsibility, creativity, and communication while teaching product planning, group teamwork, and customer service. Planting teaches patience, discipline, and environmental awareness. Outreach and community work foster empathy and social awareness. These exercises make students important actors who can show how madrasah leadership changes their character and life abilities. Life skills-based leadership at State Elementary Madrasah 01 Luwu affects madrasah quality in this study. The madrasah principal successfully transformed life skills into systematic and consistent strategic plans, according to the report. This collaborative, interactive learning environment fosters student character and teacher professionalism. The programs or strategies implemented by the madrasah principal include:

1. Integration of Life Skills through Project-Based Activities

One central finding is how project-based activities are used as a medium to instill life skills such as responsibility, independence, and environmental stewardship. Programs such as madrasah cleanliness, school cooperatives, and plant cultivation serve not only as routine activities but also as cross-disciplinary learning platforms that teach the values of ecology, entrepreneurship, and cooperation.

Table 1. Life Skills Integration Activities in Project Activities

| Activities | Life Skills Developed | Measurable Impact |
|----------------------|--------------------------------------|--|
| Madrasah Cleanliness | Responsibility, Discipline | Better-maintained environment |
| School Cooperative | Independence, Financial Management | Students understand the fundamentals of entrepreneurship |
| Plant Cultivation | Environmental Awareness, Cooperation | Increased garden yields and land use |

2. Soft Skills Development as a Key Pillar of Learning

Programs such as the Student Leadership Camp and entrepreneurship training strengthen students' non-academic competencies, including leadership, creativity, and adaptability. Furthermore, teacher training in public speaking and stress management demonstrates a focus on the well-being and professional capacity of educators. Observations indicate that after the Student Leadership Camp, students were more active in class discussions and took on leadership roles in workgroups. Teachers also reported increased self-confidence after the training, which impacted the quality of classroom learning.

3. Strengthening Collaboration Through Thematic and Interdisciplinary Activities

Research findings indicate that madrasas consistently integrate life skills development into thematic and interdisciplinary learning activities. This approach enables students not only to conceptually understand the subject matter but also to apply it in real-world contexts that require collaboration, effective communication, and problem-solving skills. One identified good practice is the association of science lessons with tree planting activities. In this activity, students not only learn the theoretical concepts of photosynthesis and plant growth but also practice them directly through a school-wide greening project. This activity is designed for groups, requiring students to discuss, share tasks, and evaluate the results of their collective work. Observations and interviews show improvements in students' ability to express opinions, respect differences, and resolve conflicts constructively.

Outside the classroom, extracurricular activities such as Scouting, arts and culture, and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) also provide interdisciplinary learning platforms rich in collaborative values. In Scouting activities, for example, students are trained to work in teams to solve real-life simulation-based challenges, such as developing logistical plans and rescue strategies. Arts and culture activities encourage creative expression and cross-individual collaboration, while ICT training hones digital collaboration and systematic thinking skills. A Scout leader explained in an interview, "We try to instill cooperation, leadership, and responsibility through activities that mimic real-world conditions, so students learn directly from experience." Arts and culture activities encourage creative expression and cross-individual collaboration, while ICT training hones digital collaboration and systematic thinking skills.

Table 2. Thematic and Extracurricular Activities and Life Skills Developed

| Activities | Interdisciplinary Approach | Life Skills Developed |
|-------------------------------------|---|--|
| Tree Planting (Science + Project) | Science, Ecology, Social Sciences | Cooperation, communication, responsibility |
| Scouting Extracurricular Activities | Leadership, Survival, Civic Education | Collaboration, problem-solving, empathy |
| Arts and Culture Activities | Language, Fine Arts, Music | Creativity, teamwork, self-expression |
| ICT Training | Technology, Logic, Information, and Media | Digital communication, systematic thinking, adaptation |

Based on the data obtained, strengthening life skills through a thematic and interdisciplinary approach has a significant contribution to student character development. Teachers also stated that this method makes students more active, think critically, and demonstrate initiative in learning. Therefore, strengthening collaboration through thematic and interdisciplinary activities is not only an alternative teaching strategy but also a crucial instrument in creating a character-driven madrasah that is adaptive to future challenges.

1. Flagship Programs as a Platform for Expression and Independence

Flagship initiatives like Happy Friday Market, Social Projects, and Brother Reading are imaginative educational innovations that grow kids beyond academics. Students can sell their food, handicrafts, or crops at the *Happy Friday Market*, which encourages entrepreneurship, responsibility, and self-confidence. These activities teach students planning, customer communication, and financial management in a simple yet relevant way. Community involvement, cooperation, and environmental action are good ways to teach social ideals and empathy. Students are encouraged to immediately participate in learning their communities' social conditions and to become caring, responsible citizens. The "*Brothers Read*" program develops leadership, role models, and self-confidence by having senior students mentor junior kids in reading activities. Interactions between older and younger students foster a supportive learning environment, socialization, and cross-level collaboration.

These three initiatives have greatly impacted student character development, particularly in empathy, independence, and leadership. They are part of an educational approach that positions students as engaged learners and social change agents with holistic competencies to address future issues.

2. Evaluation and Reflection System Emphasizes Life Skills

The evaluation and reflection system implemented in madrasahs focuses not only on academic achievement but also emphasizes assessment of student behavior and portfolios. This approach allows teachers and principals to conduct a more holistic monitoring of student development, encompassing cognitive, affective, and psychomotor dimensions. In this evaluation process, indicators such as responsibility, teamwork skills, and self-confidence are periodically assessed through classroom observations, homeroom teacher reports, and student portfolio documentation. Thus, the evaluation not only reflects academic success but also reveals the extent to which students have internalized life skills values essential for character development and readiness for real life.

3. Emotional and Appreciative Leadership Model

Madrasah principals promote emotional and grateful leadership through warm personal connection, symbolic rewards, and developing emotional bonds with the community. This method boosts instructor and student motivation, producing a welcoming, engaging learning atmosphere. This method increases teacher loyalty and student excitement for learning by making them feel appreciated, heard, and emotionally involved in the learning process and madrasah life.

All organizations depend on leadership. Leaders demonstrate that a captain will run an organization well. A life skills-based leadership model stresses life skills for personal growth, team leadership, and institutional success. Its main objective is to teach individuals and teams practical solutions to personal and professional issues. The State Elementary Madrasah 01 Luwu principal explained the life skills-based leadership strategic policy: State Elementary Madrasah 01 Luwu's strategic policies provide life skills. Every student must help with environmental cleanup, school cooperatives, and plant cultivation. Student leadership camps and small-scale entrepreneurship training are available. Students should learn life skills. Life skills are also taught thematically. Science classes examine the environment and plant trees. Extracurriculars like scouting, arts, and ICT enhance character and success. Current activities teach collaboration, communication, and problem-solving. Monthly teacher forums debate academics and self-improvement. Outside training is also given to teachers. Teachers are role models. Life skills are taught and practiced.

The principal of State Elementary Madrasah 01 Luwu Madrasah described a strategy to educate life skills through cleanliness programs, cooperatives, and plant cultivation in an interview. Leadership camps and business classes prepare students for life. Extracurricular activities, teacher discussion forums, and thematic learning help students develop character and self-esteem. Teachers model life skills. Stefan Lindstan and Jon Olson state that a life skills-based leadership strategy is significantly influenced by leaders who present a clear vision, coordinate it enthusiastically, and implement it through symbols, stories, and lofty aspirations that inspire others. State Elementary Madrasah 01 Luwu Madrasah's life skills program considers children's future and social needs. Many low-income students learn life skills. Ministry of Religious Affairs references and other madrasah best practices are reviewed and modified to local conditions. Students sell crafts and nutritious food at the madrasah's Cheerful Friday Market to build life skills. Other social activities include community volunteering and "sibling reading," where upper-grade students help lower-grade students read. To stay relevant, teachers, students, and parents evaluate the life skills curriculum each semester. To see if activities are changing youngsters' behavior and skills. Irrelevant ones are changed. The principal invites teacher and madrasah supervisor input. Teachers and staff learn leadership, stress management, and public speaking. We use outside facilitators. Soft skills are taught at the Ministry of Religious Affairs Training Center. Informal training includes instructor sharing."

State Elementary Madrasah 01 Luwu Madrasah bases life skills curricula on student needs and socioeconomic conditions, according to interviewees. The "*Cheerful Friday Market*," humanitarian programs, and "*Sibling Reading*" program teach life skills. To keep the curriculum relevant and effective, teachers, students, and parents evaluate it each semester. The principal welcomes better ideas. The Ministry of Religion Training Center and teacher sharing sessions teach teachers and staff public speaking and stress management to improve their lives. The interview shows that the principal follows the 2012 Education and Culture standards by using activity-based learning. A happy Friday

market where kids sell their nutritious cuisine, crafts, and social programs, including social services and the "reading brothers" program to build life skills.

"Observation and non-academic assessments in student portfolios can measure life skills growth for teachers and students. Homeroom teachers report students' character and social skills improvement. They also evaluate pupils' daily conduct for confidence, responsibility, and cooperation. In addition, the principal models are teachers and students who participate in student activities. The principal and instructors reflect together, appreciate teachers' innovations, and empower teachers and staff to facilitate students' life skills development by giving space, facilities, and trust. Teachers and parents are always reminded at the start of the school year that the school's mission is to produce academically brilliant kids who are also life-ready. The principal frequently utilizes "smart and resilient," the school's internal tagline.

Interviews showed that the madrasah assesses instructors' and students' life skills through observations, non-academic portfolio assessments, and homeroom teachers' character and social skills reports. Daily student behavior—self-confidence, accountability, and teamwork—is crucial. Through student activities, collaborative reflection, and life skills assistance for teachers and staff, the principal sets an example. At the beginning of the school year, teachers and parents are reminded of the importance of life skills, emphasizing the school's goal of generating "smart and resilient" students. The principal always allocates a fund for teacher development to improve life skills. Every year, teachers undertake external training. Teachers discuss excellent practices at meetings. Principals use a personal and emotional approach to teach life skills to teachers and students. The principal listens to teachers' concerns and stimulates them with simple incentives like "Initiative Teacher of the Month" or "Inspirational Student." In addition to a budget and principal motivation, teachers, staff, and students learn life skills. To help youngsters develop character and life skills, this team supports and collaborates, sharing tasks by expertise. Teamwork, communication, and conflict resolution are taught in this life skills curriculum. Students interact, respect diversity, and achieve goals. All this improves student collaboration. Maintain members' health. "A madrasah principal always offers group outings, leisure, and weekend relaxation. The principal helps teachers and staff emotionally and professionally."

Interviews demonstrated that State Elementary Madrasah 01 Luwu's life skills development program has enhanced students' self-confidence, as shown by their participation in district-level speech competitions and social and leadership extracurriculars. This strategy boosts classroom accountability and discipline. Communication, teamwork, and self-management prepared kids for academic and social issues, making them more focused and confident in studying, improving educational outcomes. The principal held a talk program on Monday mornings at State Elementary Madrasah 01 Luwu to develop life skills, illustrating the situational leadership model developed by Paul Hersey and Ken Blanchard, which states that effective leaders must follow the leadership model based on maturity, commitment, and competence in the environment to increase productivity. State Elementary Madrasah 01 Luwu's principal taught students intellectual and social problem-solving abilities.

Barriers and Constraints in the Implementation of Life Skills-Based Leadership at State Elementary Madrasah 01 Luwu

This study indicated that State Elementary Madrasah 01 Luwu's life skills-based leadership strategy was hindered by several challenges and limits, despite many good practices and creative initiatives. A primary hurdle was limited human resources, both in quantity and capacity. Some teachers didn't comprehend life skills concepts and practices well enough to integrate them into the learning process. Some teachers needed more training in theme, multidisciplinary, and project-based approaches. Due to limited time outside of class, life skills building activities frequently clashed with the dense and intellectual national curriculum.

Facilities and infrastructure created further hurdles. Lack of area for plant cultivation, open spaces for collaborative activities, and technology for enhancing life skills prevented optimal implementation of several activities. Most parents and communities supported the program; however, others concentrated primarily on academic accomplishment and didn't appreciate the importance of soft skills and character values. Madrasah communication must be convincing and instructional to overcome this cultural barrier.

The program's evaluation and reflection methods present another challenge. Portfolios and observations have been used to examine student conduct, but they are neither standardized nor documented. Teachers struggle to objectively assess non-academic skills like self-confidence, responsibility, and collaboration. Therefore, evaluation data are not always optimally used to plan program enhancements. Despite his passion and revolutionary leadership, the madrasah principal struggles to create a consistent work culture for teachers and staff. Madrasah members vary in their passion and knowledge of internalizing the life skills vision, especially as role models in daily attitudes and behaviors. Emotional issues like exhaustion and change aversion can threaten program viability. The challenges of adopting life skills-based leadership at State Elementary Madrasah 01 Luwu include human resources, infrastructure, school culture, and the evaluation method. Despite these challenges, the madrasah continues to develop its students. Instead, by continual, thoughtful, and collaborative efforts, the madrasah overcomes barriers to provide a holistic, future-focused education.

Life skills-based leadership stresses critical thinking, problem-solving, communication, and adaptation to overcome life's problems. There are numerous possible benefits. The principle said inadequate people and material resources are the largest difficulty in adopting life skills-based leadership at State Elementary Madrasah 01 Luwu. In integrating life skills development, the madrasah often struggles to get instructors and parents to recognize their relevance. The madrasah must also tailor the program to local needs, which takes time to organize. Budget and time are other issues. This program development budget is small at State Elementary Madrasah 01 Luwu madrasah. The school uses extracurricular activities to teach life skills and maximizes available facilities, such as convertible classrooms. The school encourages community members to offer resources and experiences. Teacher skills and expertise can also be a hindrance, especially if they don't grasp life skills. Teachers receive monthly training

and workshops from the principal to improve their skills. He also hosts frequent discussions for teachers to explore life skills teaching ideas. Training is time- and resource-limited. Teachers at Madrasah State Elementary Madrasah 01 Luwu have busy schedules, making training difficult to schedule. To enable flexibility, webinars and online training sessions are used to organize successful training. To keep pupils engaged, the program is made relevant to their daily lives. Student involvement in program planning and evaluation gives them ownership. Group discussions and student-led problem-solving can accomplish this.

The interviews showed that life skills-based leadership at Madrasah State Elementary Madrasah 01 Luwu has many hurdles, mostly due to insufficient people and material resources. Teachers and parents' lack of life skills awareness and the necessity to tailor the program to local settings are important challenges. Budget and timing restrictions are additional issues since the madrasah has a small program development budget. However, the school maximizes facilities and shares resources with the community. Despite time and budget restrictions, the principle provides frequent training and workshops for teachers with limited skills and knowledge. The curriculum involves students in planning and evaluation through group discussions and problem-solving to keep them engaged. The State Elementary Madrasah 01 Luwu principal's problem-solving and barriers demonstrate a servant leadership model, emphasizing that a competent leader pay attention to conditions and situations to serve, not be served. The principal maximized facilities and engaged the local community to contribute expertise and experience to establish life skills-based leadership at State Elementary Madrasah 01 Luwu.

"Problem-solving in life skills is matched to the curriculum. This involves incorporating life skills into relevant subjects and debating teaching approaches. Math or Indonesian lessons can teach communication and problem-solving. Life skills development is natural in learning. Teachers solve problems through observation and reflection. In group activities or projects, teachers see students work together, accomplish assignments, or overcome problems. Teachers assess students' life skills comprehension through group conversations. Teachers help pupils evaluate their improvement through self-evaluation and feedback."

Integrating life skills into the curriculum solves madrasa life skills issues, according to interviews. Communication and problem-solving are taught in appropriate topics, making life skills development natural. Teachers observe and reflect on student interactions in group projects to solve problems. Students' life skills are assessed through group conversations. Teachers also encourage self-evaluation and criticism, which helps pupils improve life skills. The principal of State Elementary Madrasah 01 Luwu also delegated teachers to integrate communication and problem-solving skills into the curriculum to overcome obstacles and constraints in the implementation of life skills-based leadership. The principal used a delegation leadership model (Delegating) to delegate activities.

Discussion

Life Skills-Based Leadership Strategy to Improve the Quality of Madrasah State Elementary Madrasah 01 Luwu

The principal of State Elementary Madrasah 01 Luwu adopts life skills development strategies. These policies include student-led sanitation projects, school cooperatives, and plant growing. Student leadership camps and entrepreneurship training equip students for real-world challenges. A themed approach integrates science courses with tree-planting activities to teach students conceptually and practically. Students' needs and socioeconomic conditions guide this madrasah's life skills program. With many low-income students, the program teaches life skills. Community work, the "Sibling Reading" program, and the "Cheerful Friday Market" (Pasar Jumat ceria) help build these abilities. To keep the curriculum relevant and effective, teachers, students, and parents participate in semester-long evaluations.

Principals are vital in helping teacher professional development to build students' life skills (Karacabey, 2021; Mthanti & Msiza, 2023). The principal gives instructors a budget and external training to improve their skills. A personal and emotional approach motivates teachers and students, including a reward system for initiative. To build students' character and life skills, teachers, staff, and students work together. Students who have won district-level speech competitions have more self-confidence thanks to this life skills development program. Increased participation in social and leadership extracurriculars has affected student discipline and responsibility in the classroom. Strong life skills like communication and teamwork prepare students for academic and social problems, helping them focus and succeed in school (Hilton, 2015).

Life skills at State Elementary Madrasah 01 Luwu Madrasahs depend on school quality. Strong life skills prepare students for challenges and improve academic performance. Character development and life skills help this madrasah produce resilient, life-ready kids as well as academically intelligent ones. This produces a generation that performs intellectually and contributes to society. The principle of State Elementary Madrasah 01 Luwu leads with emotional intelligence. This life skills leadership style helps the principal enhance the madrasah by designing a life skills curriculum based on the students' needs and social conditions (Suyono et al., 2025), many of whom are poor.

Obstacles and Constraints in Implementing Life Skills-Based Leadership at State Elementary Madrasah 01 Luwu

State Elementary Madrasah 01 Luwu integrates life skills into the curriculum, making them a natural part of learning. We can learn and apply communication and problem-solving abilities in real life by teaching them within the framework of math and Indonesian. This technique makes learning more engaging and relevant to students' daily lives, making it simpler to internalize skills. Teachers at this madrasah strengthen students' life skills through observation and reflection. Teachers monitor how students work together, complete tasks, and overcome problems during group activities or projects. These observations help teachers identify student needs and tailor instruction. This method lets teachers provide constructive criticism and help pupils learn life skills.

Group talks help teachers measure students' life skills (Wurding et al., 2020). Students can enrich learning by sharing their thoughts and experiences in a discussion. Teachers can assess student collaboration and life skills. Participating in debates makes students feel more committed to learning, which boosts their motivation and interest in life skills (Mumtaz & Latif, 2017). Student self-evaluation is essential to life skills development in this madrasah. Teachers encourage students to evaluate themselves and give criticism. This helps students assess their progress and find areas for improvement. Thus, students gain life skills, including self-evaluation and goal setting, which are essential for success.

State Elementary Madrasah 01 Luwu remains committed to life skills development despite inadequate resources and teacher and parent awareness. This madrasah fosters learning by teaching life skills and engaging pupils. Regular training and conversations help teachers teach life skills, giving pupils the tools they need to handle daily life. Life skills development at State Elementary Madrasah 01 Luwu Madrasah is linked to Minarni's study on life skills-based education. Research shows that teaching life skills improves pupils' ability to handle daily obstacles (Pierce et al., 2017; Defitrika & Mahmudah, 2021; Antony & Tripathi, 2023). The observation, reflection, and group discussion approach also support research that emphasizes social contact in developing these skills (Rönnlund et al., 2019). The activities at this madrasah reflect and complement research findings, making learning more effective and meaningful for pupils. The principal employs delegation leadership to overcome barriers in life skills leadership at State Elementary Madrasah 01 Luwu, which improves madrasah quality. The principal instructs teachers to use observation and reflection to improve students' life skills, which improves the quality of State Elementary Madrasah 01 Luwu madrasah through group activities or projects. Teachers observe student interactions and how they face challenges together.

4. CONCLUSION

Research indicated that State Elementary Madrasah 01 Luwu Life skills-based leadership by the principal has improved the school. Create a madrasah leadership paradigm that promotes character-based education and life skills using this method. To develop students' life skills, the madrasah principal established strategic policies such as environmental project activities, school cooperatives, student leadership camps, and practical skills and entrepreneurship training. Teachers organized and executed these activities as role models who taught life skills. Students' socioeconomic backgrounds, the Ministry of Religious Affairs' policies, and the madrasah's best practices informed the life skills training. We adjusted programs like the "Cheerful Friday Market" to meet local needs. Improved Teacher Professionalism with Madrasah Principal Support Madrasah principals funded training, provided professional discussion places for professors, and encouraged collaboration and reflection. Externally and internally, teachers learn public speaking, stress management, and leadership. Life Skills Development for Madrasah Quality boosts student self-esteem, discipline, extracurricular involvement, and social ties. Life skills prepare

students for academic and social challenges, boosting education. Insufficient resources, budget, and teachers' and parents' life skills awareness are the major issues. Solutions include internal resources, community interaction, curriculum integration, and training and evaluation.

Thus, a life skills-based leadership strategy that emphasizes academic achievement, character development, and real-world preparedness improves madrasah quality. A life skills-based leadership plan should be maintained and adapted to student needs. To evaluate and target life skills programs, better monitoring and assessment is essential. Life skills learning involves comprehension and application. Teachers need training and contextual learning methods to improve students' character and life skills.

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