# PRINCIPAL'S STRATEGY IN IMPROVING STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

**Affan*1, Usman2, Muhammad Rusmin3, Mardhiah4, Baharuddin5**

1,2,3,4,5 Universitas Islam Negeri Alauddin Makassar, Indonesia

*Corresponding Author: affanmansur7@gmail.com
http://dx.doi.org/10.18860/rosikhun.v5i1.35758

**Abstract:**
This study aims to describe the principal's strategy in improving student achievement at Al-Azhar Palu Junior High School, the implementation of the strategy, and the impact it causes. The main problem raised in this study is how the principal's strategy is to improve the achievement of students at Al-Azhar Palu Junior High School. This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with the perspective of Islamic Education Management. Data was collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation, and analyzed through the stages of checking, grouping, examination, and drawing conclusions. The validity of the data is tested through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability techniques. The results of the study show that the principal's strategy at Al-Azhar Palu Junior High School has succeeded in improving the achievement of students as a whole, both in the academic, non-academic, and character formation fields. The strategies implemented include an interest- and talent-based approach, student-centered learning, and collaborative management between teachers, parents, and students. Strengthening character values such as discipline, responsibility, and the spirit of learning is also an integral part of the strategy. The implementation of the strategy is supported by a clear school vision, excellent programs, continuous improvement of teacher competence, and periodic evaluations. The impact can be seen from the increase in motivation, confidence, learning quality, and student achievement in various fields. The implications of this study suggest that the principal's adaptive and collaborative strategic approach can be a model for the development of student achievement in other schools, emphasizing the importance of visionary leadership, teacher professional development, and synergy between schools and parents.

*Abstrak:*
*Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan strategi kepala sekolah dalam meningkatkan prestasi siswa di SMP Al-Azhar Palu, implementasi strategi, dan dampak yang ditimbulkannya. Permasalahan utama yang diangkat dalam penelitian ini adalah bagaimana strategi kepala sekolah untuk meningkatkan prestasi siswa di SMP Al-Azhar Palu. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif dengan perspektif Manajemen Pendidikan Islam. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi, wawancara mendalam, dan dokumentasi, serta dianalisis melalui tahapan pemeriksaan, pengelompokan, pemeriksaan, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Validitas data diuji melalui teknik kredibilitas, transferabilitas, keandalan, dan konfirmasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa strategi kepala sekolah di SMP Al-Azhar Palu telah berhasil meningkatkan prestasi siswa secara keseluruhan, baik di bidang akademik, non akademik, maupun pembentukan karakter. Strategi yang diterapkan meliputi pendekatan berbasis minat dan bakat, pembelajaran yang berpusat pada siswa, dan manajemen kolaboratif antara guru, orang tua, dan siswa. Memperkuat nilai-nilai karakter seperti disiplin, tanggung jawab, dan semangat belajar juga*

*merupakan bagian integral dari strategi. Implementasi strategi didukung oleh visi sekolah yang jelas, program unggulan, peningkatan kompetensi guru secara berkelanjutan, dan evaluasi berkala. Dampaknya dapat dilihat dari peningkatan motivasi, kepercayaan diri, kualitas belajar, dan prestasi mahasiswa di berbagai bidang. Implikasi dari penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa pendekatan strategis adaptif dan kolaboratif kepala sekolah dapat menjadi model pengembangan prestasi siswa di sekolah lain, menekankan pentingnya kepemimpinan visioner, pengembangan profesional guru, dan sinergi antara sekolah dan orang tua.*

## INTRODUCTION

Education is one of the factors that has an important role in the life of the nation and state. With education, it is hoped that the next generation of the nation will emerge who are qualified and able to make changes for the better (Hidayat, 2021). The definition of education according to the Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System is "a conscious and planned effort to create a learning atmosphere and learning process so that students actively increase their potential to have religious spiritual strength, self-control, personality, intelligence, noble morals, and skills needed by themselves, society, nation and state." Education has several functions, namely, improving abilities and shaping the character and civilization of a dignified nation in order to educate the life of the nation, aiming to develop the potential of students to become human beings who believe and fear God Almighty, have noble character, are healthy, knowledgeable, capable, creative, independent, and become democratic and responsible citizens (Rama et al., 2023; Wahyudin et al., 2023).

Schools are places where formal education takes place which plays a role in realizing educational goals. The principal is responsible for managing all school activities so that they run effectively and of high quality. The main duties of school principals are explained in the Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia Number 6 of 2018, Chapter VI Article 15 paragraphs 1 and 2, which contain the main obligations in carrying out their leadership roles, namely:

The workload of the Principal fully carries out the main tasks of management, entrepreneurship development and supervision of teachers and education personnel, The workload of the Principal as intended in paragraph (1) aims to improve the school and improve the quality of the school based on the eight national standards of Education (Hakim et al., 2025; Sumaryanti & Purwanto, 2023).

Management in schools, the Principal as a good leader must be able to strive to improve student achievement. This is a manifestation in fulfilling the function of education to increase and optimize the potential of students and in order to improve the quality of schools based on eight national education standards. Student achievement is also important because the most frequent and common school products are in the spotlight, namely the achievements obtained by students both in the academic and non-academic fields which are a measure of the success of school management as seen by the public in general. The definition of student achievement according to Zaiful Rasyid is the results that have been achieved from what has been

done and done. Achievement can be interpreted as the results obtained or obtained because of the learning activities that have been carried out (Zhunusakunova, 2021).

The success of schools in achieving achievements in various fields and regional levels is the duty and responsibility of all parties, but the most important thing is how the Principal as a leader manages effectively and efficiently. In carrying out the leadership process, of course, there are strategies carried out by the Principal as a leader in the school in order to improve the achievements of students as one of the indicators of the success of school management.

According to Chandler, strategy is the establishment of long-term basic goals and organizational goals, as well as the implementation of a series of actions, and the allocation of resources that are essential to carry out the goals. The strategy produces and will be able to direct the organization about what, why, who is responsible, and the results that will be obtained. This brings the organization to be able to predict, prepare, run, evaluate about activities, or events that will occur (Ependi et al., 2025; Wang et al., 2022).

Although the role of the principal is very important, there are various challenges faced in an effort to improve student achievement. These challenges can come from internal factors such as limited resources, ineffective school management, and lack of motivation from the students themselves. On the other hand, external factors such as the socio-economic conditions of students, support from parents, and changing education policies also affect achievement achievement(Idowu Sulaimon Adeniyi et al., 2024).

The development of technology in this modern era makes it easy for students to get a transformation of knowledge. With technology such as television, gadgets, and the internet, students will be very young to know various disciplines. The openness of this knowledge should make it easier for students to get achievements and self-development (Dono, 2021).

Science is a common thing for various human beings in this era with various technological means to achieve it (Rohmah, 2022). Therefore, knowledge of various disciplines and information is also common for students (Mulyasa, 2022). Students in this era are not only required to know various disciplines to get information is also common for students (Munawir, 2023). Students in this era are not only required to know various disciplines to be able to be said to be intelligent students, but they must also have achievements so that they have more nilias in the eyes of others than other students (Dono, 2021).

According to Saiful Bahri Djamarah, achievements are the result of an activity that has been done, created, both individually and in groups. Achievements will never be produced if someone does not do an activity. Meanwhile, according to Bagus Eka Dono, achievement is a goal that an individual or educational institution wants to achieve. In this case, to get it, it definitely takes a struggle to get it, such as doing various efforts and activities. Because it is impossible if you want to get an achievement but minimal in carrying out activities and efforts (Djamarah, 2022).

Student achievement is one of the goals in educational institutions. Improving student achievement certainly has an impact on the educational institution to produce superior students. Furthermore, the existence of achievements will raise the quality and quality of the school. So that in this case, the institution of an education can be viewed positively by the community (Cahyono, 2023).

School principals are a component of education that plays the most role in improving the quality of education. For this reason, the Principal must know the duties that he must carry out. The duties of the Principal are as a communication channel, responsible and accountable, the ability to deal with analytical and conceptual thinking problems, as a moderator or mediator, as a politician, as a diplomat and as a difficult decision maker(Nipriansyah & Intamano, 2022).

According to Andang, the Principal is responsible for regulating, managing, implementing and controlling educational activities developed in schools. Furthermore, the progress and retreat of a school institution depends on the Principal. Because the role of the Principal is very strategic and determines school development, especially in mobilizing and empowering school components (Ismail, 2023).

The achievement is now an achievement that continues to be developed by the educational institution at Al-Azhar Palu Junior High School. Since the last four years, Al-Azhar Junior High School has succeeded in achieving achievements in various fields or subjects, starting from the District, Regency, Provincial and National levels. The achievements obtained by Al-Azhar Palu Junior High School are inseparable from the role of the principal. In achieving the achievements that have been set by educational institutions, of course it will not be easily obtained. This achievement is obtained by efforts that maximize various aspects, both by recruiting education personnel who are competent in their fields.

Furthermore, the author assumes, in the achievement of achievements at Al-Azhar Palu Junior High School, not only competent educators, but also the curriculum that helps students to achieve the achievements that have been planned to achieve achievements is also needed. As well as evaluation from time to time with the aim of improving the direction of education and teaching in an even better direction.

According to Bagus Eko Dono, to move towards better change will not be achieved without effort. This is as stated in the Qur'an. That Allah will not change the fate of a people except those who want to change what is in them (Dono, 2021). As explained in the words of Allah swt. QS ar-Ra'd/13:1

وَّالٍ مِنْ دُوْنِهٖ مِّنْ لَّهُمْ ۚوَمَا لَهٗ مَرَدَّ فَلَا سُوْۤءًا بِقَوْمٍ اللّٰهُ اَرَادَ وَاِذَآ بِاَنْفُسِهِمْۗ مَا يُغَيِّرُوْا حَتّٰى بِقَوْمٍ مَا يُغَيِّرُ لَا اللّٰهَ اِنَّ

"Indeed, Allah does not change the condition of a people until they change what is in them. When Allah wills evil against a people, no one can resist it, and there is no protector for them except Him."

To overcome these challenges, school principals need to improve effective and adaptive strategies. This strategy covers various aspects, ranging from improving the quality of teaching, developing relevant curriculum, to applying technology in the learning process. In addition, the Principal must also be able to manage resources efficiently, build a positive school culture, and provide moral support and motivation to the entire school community (Elmanisar et al., 2024).

The writing about the Principal's strategy in improving student achievement is very relevant in the context of improving the quality of education in Indonesia. The results of this writing are expected to provide practical guidance for school principals in formulating more effective policies and strategies. In addition, this writing can also be a reference for education policymakers in developing programs that support improving student achievement as a whole.

Professional Principal leadership is expected to be able to display and improve themselves according to their potential which in turn can improve the

quality of education in their institution. Thus, public trust in formal educational institutions is increasing. However, based on the writing, there are still various obstacles in the field, especially with regard to the goal in the intended direction.

These obstacles can be encountered, among others: operationally, the principal does not have a standard criterion for school quality management, because the series of guidelines for improving the quality of the Ministry of Education and Culture has not been explicitly stated. One of the book series above, namely the school implementation guidelines, explains that the quality of the school is not only seen from the formal values achieved by students, but will also be seen from its performance in all components assessed, for example the school's ability to achieve quality formal achievements, participation in competitions, art performances at the regional and national levels, send representatives in various activities within the National Education and at the request of other agencies(Fabillar & Matillano, 2025; Smith & Storrs, 2023).

Broadly speaking, the scope of duties of the Principal can be classified into two main aspects, namely work in the field of school administration and work related to the development of educational professionals. To carry out these duties as well as possible, there are three main types of skills that must be possessed by the Principal as an education leader, namely technical skills, communication skills (human relations skills) and conceptual skills (conceptual skills). According to the perception of many teachers, the success of the Principal's leadership is mainly based on his ability to lead (Sutikno et al., 2022).

Based on empirical observations at Al-Azhar Palu Junior High School which is the subject of the study, the main obstacles to students' learning progress are due to the learning process that does not prioritize value-oriented thinking skills, low enthusiasm for learning, the attitude of parents who do not care about their children's achievements, and inadequate learning facilities. This requires extra attention from the Principal to find a way out in motivating students and parents, as well as providing and utilizing learning facilities according to needs.

## RESEARCH METHODS

The research approach employed in this study is descriptive qualitative research using a case study design. Case study research is particularly useful for exploring complex phenomena within their real-life contexts (Tecpoyotl Torres et al., 2025).The type of case study applied in this research provides a comprehensive explanation related to the organization/institution, focusing specifically on the Principal's programs for improving student achievement at Al-Azhar Palu Junior High School and the Principal's strategies for enhancing student achievement as the leader of the school institution. This approach aligns with qualitative methodology that emphasizes depth of understanding and contextual analysis(Lim, 2025; Syahrizal & Jailani, 2023).

The sources of research data consist of primary and secondary sources. Primary data were obtained through observation and in-depth interviews with selected informants, while secondary data were drawn from relevant documents, reports, and institutional records. Data collection methods included observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation, which are established techniques in qualitative research for capturing rich, contextual information(Chand, 2025). The data analysis technique applied in this research involved triangulation, operationalized through data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing, to

ensure credibility, dependability, and trustworthiness of the findings(Bingham, 2023).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**The Principal's Strategy in Improving Student Achievement at Al-Azhar Junior High School Palu**

The principal's strategy in improving student achievement at Al-Azhar Palu Junior High School shows a directed and gradual managerial approach. The principal not only orders, but also develops a systematic planning-based strategy, taking into account the needs of students, teacher readiness, and support for the school environment.

The strategy involves the implementation of an intensive coaching pattern, consistent supervision, and the instilling of discipline and responsibility values from the beginning. This approach encourages students to be more aware of the importance of time management, regularity in learning, and commitment to tasks. The principal plays a central role as a policy direction director that not only touches on academic aspects, but also character.

When viewed from management theory according to George R. Terry, the principal's strategy includes the four main functions of management, namely planning, organizing, actuating, and controlling. At the planning stage, the principal sets the goal of improving achievement through structured guidance activities, curriculum strengthening, and teacher training (Terry, 2021). This step is the basis for creating policy directions that are consistent with the school's long-term goals.

The principal not only acts as a policy maker, but also as a key driver in ensuring that each strategic step can be implemented consistently and has a real impact on the development of students. The approach used combines modern management principles and Islamic educational values, so that it not only targets academic achievement, but also the formation of character and independence of students (Nur Hakim & Fitrayansyah, 2024). The following is the concept of the strategy carried out by the Principal of Al-Azhar Junior High School in improving student achievement:

1. Mapping Interests and Talents

The strategy of the Principal of Al-Azhar Palu Junior High School begins with mapping the interests and talents of students, which is the basis for compiling guidance and self-development programs. This shows that the strategies used are individualistic and participatory, not uniform, but adjusted to the potential of each student.

Based on the results of an interview with the Principal of Al-Azhar Palu Junior High School, Mrs. Yuniarti H. Tunekon, it can be analyzed that the strategy to improve student achievement is very focused on an interest- and talent-based approach. The emphasis on achievement aspects is not only limited to the academic realm, but also includes social, religious, and character values. This shows that schools adopt a holistic view of achievement, namely achievement as a result of the integration between academic intelligence and morals. In this context, the strategies applied provide space for students to develop according to their individual potential.

The vision and mission carried out emphasize the importance of a balance between intellectual intelligence and morality of students. The motto "smart with morals" is a clear direction for the development of students so that they not only

excel in competitions, but also are able to behave politely and wisely. Excellent programs such as OSN, FLS2N, and O2SN are concrete means of exploring students' interests and talents. By providing space for students who are interested in the fields of art, sports, and academics, schools actively create a learning environment that is in accordance with the personal potential of students and does not standardize achievement only on test scores.

The strategy to improve the quality of teachers is carried out through regular evaluation and reflection on the programs that are already running. This evaluation not only targets student achievements, but also assesses teachers' pedagogical approaches to be more adaptive to students' interests and learning styles. The principal also mentioned the existence of teacher training to improve learning methods. This indicates that schools not only demand results from students, but also develop educator resources to align with the diverse needs of students (Fitriah et al., 2024).

The involvement of parents and external parties is part of a collaborative strategy that strengthens the education ecosystem. Communication groups with parents and the use of social media show information disclosure that supports public trust in schools. The involvement of external institutions such as health centers, Gramedia, and trainers in certain fields emphasizes that the development of students' interests and talents does not only depend on the internal school. This collaboration provides wider access for students to develop their potential outside the formal curriculum (Nasir et al., 2023).

The learning motivation strategy carried out is continuous and involves aspects of appreciation and social recognition, such as loading content on student achievements on school social media. Students are motivated through peer tutors and tailored rewards, both physically and psychologically. This approach supports the growth of a healthy competitive environment, while building inspiration between students based on their individual achievements. Flexible strategies both short- and long-term allow principals to adjust policy direction based on needs, without neglecting sustainability aspects(Soedjono et al., 2025).

In conclusion, the principal's strategy in improving student achievement at Al-Azhar Palu Junior High School is very oriented towards an interest- and talent-based approach, which is integrated into all managerial and cultural aspects of the school. The focus on character development, strengthening teacher competence, external collaboration, and the use of communication technology makes this strategy not only structured, but also adaptive to the dynamics of the needs of students and society.

According to Fenny, Angraini emphasized the importance of mapping interests and talents from the beginning as a foundation in developing student achievements. According to him, the success of this strategy is inseparable from the active involvement of all parties, both teachers, students, and parents. He also showed that commitment and consistency in evaluating and adjusting programs are key to keeping strategies relevant and effective in the midst of changing times.

Fenny also pays serious attention to strengthening teacher capacity, because the success of the strategy cannot be achieved without competent and adaptive teachers. His comments reflect the belief that improving student achievement is not only the result of the academic process, but also from strengthening character and mental formation through a comprehensive guidance and mentoring process.

Based on an interview with Fenny Angraini, it can be seen that the strategy

to improve student achievement at Al-Azhar Palu Junior High School is carried out in a structured and sustainable manner. The strategy begins with mapping students' interests and talents, which is the basis for designing guidance and self-development programs. This suggests an approach that is oriented to the individual needs of learners, rather than a one-size-fits-all approach.

The concrete programs carried out include extracurriculars, guidance outside of class hours, and character strengthening through activities on Fridays. Teachers not only become teachers, but also act as mentors and facilitators, creating more personal relationships with students in an effort to improve their achievements. The role of teachers is strengthened by training and mentoring, both from fellow teachers and through online training.

This strategy also includes a holistic approach, taking into account parental discipline, motivation, and involvement. Parents are actively involved through discussions of child development and support for school programs. Program evaluations are carried out routinely at the end of each month, and the results are shared with parents, showing transparency and cooperation between the school and the family.

Regarding the obstacles, Fenny admitted that equalizing the vision of students with school goals is not easy. However, this obstacle is overcome through a motivational approach, namely by showing that achievement is a form of personal responsibility of students. The strategies used have also been adapted to the times, including the use of the latest technology and curriculum. If there are results that are not as expected, adjustments are made based on learning needs and the priority scale of students.

From the results of the interviews, it can be understood that students show a high appreciation for school programs designed to improve their achievements. Students assessed that the programs were structured and clear, especially in terms of mapping superior seeds, guidance, and direction. This reflects that the principal's strategy has indeed been implemented in real terms and felt directly by students in the field.

Students also highlighted that guidance activities such as Olympic and extracurricular guidance are the most impactful activities to improve their achievements. This shows that strategies based on students' interests and strengths have proven effective in maximizing academic potential. In addition, students feel concrete support from teachers and principals in the form of learning facilities, media, and policies such as assignment dispensation that supports guidance activities.

Interestingly, students stated that they did not have difficulties in participating in the program to improve achievement. This shows that the program has been well structured, as well as adaptive to the needs of the students. Parental support also plays an important role, not only in the form of physical facilities, but also in the form of motivation and enthusiasm, which is highly appreciated by students.

Furthermore, students feel motivated by the support from the school because they feel appreciated and facilitated. Awareness to utilize available facilities is a separate encouragement for students to be more active in achievement. The expectations expressed by students in the future are also very positive, namely to become more disciplined and help their friends discover and develop their respective talents.

The results of the interviews with the students reinforced this finding that the principal's strategy in improving student achievement was directly felt by the students. This strategy not only builds a neat system, but also creates an environment that motivates, collaborates, and encourages student independence. The involvement of teachers, the support of the principal, the role of parents, and the commitment of the students themselves are a complete unit that supports the success of the strategy to improve achievement.

2.    Student-Centered Approach

The implementation of the student-centered strategy at Al-Azhar Mandiri Junior High School Palu shows concrete efforts in designing an educational process that focuses on the needs, potentials, interests, and learning styles of students. This approach is not only conceptual, but has been implemented systematically and comprehensively by the Principal together with all elements of educators in the school.

One of the most prominent forms of implementation is the mapping of students' interests and talents from the beginning of the learning period. The results of this mapping are the basis for developing a personalized and adaptive guidance and learning program. The Principal, Mrs. Yuniarti H. Tunekon, designed strategic policies that are not uniform, but in accordance with the uniqueness of each individual. This is realized through special tutoring programs outside of class hours and additional programs on Fridays, which provide space for the maximum development of academic and non-academic potential.

The support of principals and teachers can be seen not only from the pedagogical approach, but also from the provision of learning facilities, academic relaxation, and intensive mentoring to students who participate in competitive programs such as the Olympics. As stated by Fawwaz Khairi Albar, a student of Al-Azhar Mandiri Palu Junior High School, the school provides support in the form of book facilities, learning media, and assignment dispensation as a concrete form of flexibility in supporting the development of individual achievements. This confirms that the strategies implemented are really felt and have a direct positive impact on students.

From the perspective of educational strategy theory, this approach is in accordance with the principles of adaptive and participatory strategies, where policy formulation is carried out by adjusting the context and characteristics of the parties served, in this case students. Mintzberg in strategy theory calls this type of strategy "emergent", which is a strategy that develops based on real needs arising from the field, not just based on administrative planning. The principal here plays the role of a strategic leader who is able to identify patterns of learners' needs and design solutions based on individual contexts, rather than a uniform approach.

Regarding the theory of education management according to George R. Terry, this strategy reflects the four main functions of management that are carried out systematically: a) Planning: the principal starts with mapping the interests and talents of students, as the basis for the preparation of student-oriented learning policies. b) Organizing: involving all components of the school, teachers, homeroom teachers, and coaching teams to carry out guidance that adapts to the learning style and individual needs of students. c) Actuating: additional activities, Olympic guidance, and the provision of facilities are carried out in an active and participatory manner, including the provision of academic leniency such as assignment dispensation. d) Controlling: school principals and teachers continue to monitor the

development of individual students, both in terms of academic achievement and consistency in coaching.

In terms of Islamic education management, the student-centered approach is very relevant to the basic principles of Islamic education that humanize humans. Islamic education emphasizes that each individual is a unique creation of Allah and has potential (fitrah) that must be developed to the maximum. In Athiyah al-Abrasyi's view, one of the goals of Islamic education is to "develop all aspects of human potential in a balanced manner: physical, intellect, and spiritual". Therefore, a student-centered approach is a manifestation of tarbawi management that respects the diversity of potential, by paying attention to the spiritual, intellectual, emotional, and social aspects of students (Juhra, 2023).

Furthermore, this strategy reflects the concept of "rahmatan lil 'alamin" in education management, where every education policy should be compassionate, fair, and developing. The principal in this context carries out his functions as murabbi (educator) and mudabbir (manager) who not only manage educational institutions, but also guide and assist the growth of the soul and character of students.

Thus, the student-centered strategy implemented at Al-Azhar Mandiri Palu Junior High School not only reflects innovations in modern educational practices, but also serves as an example of integration between educational management based on strategic theory and Islamic values. The principal not only carries out an administrative role, but also becomes a transformative leader who is able to design an education system that is responsive, humane, and profound in shaping the achievements and character of students (Rizal et al., 2025).

3. Collaborative Management

The achievement improvement strategy at Al-Azhar Palu Junior High School is implemented through a collaborative management approach, which involves the principal, teachers, students, parents, and external partners. This collaboration is reflected in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of programs that are carried out openly and participatoryly. Teachers play the role of facilitators and guides, while parents become active partners in supporting the learning process at home and in school decision-making.

The implementation of this strategy has an impact on the creation of a culture of discipline, a conducive learning environment, and an increase in students' enthusiasm for learning and competitive attitudes. Regular evaluation and cooperation between parties allow the program to be dynamically adjusted to the needs of students. In addition to academic focus, this strategy also emphasizes character strengthening, such as discipline, responsibility, and enthusiasm for learning. The vision of "smart with morals" is the integrative foundation of all educational activities. This approach creates a synergy between improved academic achievement and personality formation, with the support of teacher training and the active participation of parents (Ma et al., 2024).

Student participation in non-academic activities has also increased, including in various local and national level competitions. Teachers guide students intensively, encouraging the exploration of potential through various media, both online and offline. Thus, the collaborative strategy implemented at Al-Azhar Palu Junior High School succeeded in creating an educational ecosystem that supports comprehensive achievement improvement. This success is driven by participatory principal leadership, synergy between stakeholders, and the unification of

educational visions oriented towards academic development and student character.

**Implementation of the Principal's Strategy in Improving Student Achievement at Al-Azhar Junior High School Palu**

The implementation of the principal's strategy in improving student achievement refers to the concrete steps taken by the principal to carry out education planning and policies. This aims to improve student learning outcomes, both from academic and non-academic aspects. This strategy is not only theoretical, but is applied in the day-to-day managerial and leadership practices of the school environment. The principal as the leader of the educational institution has a central role in creating a conducive learning atmosphere, designing programs to improve quality, and building a school culture that supports the development of student achievement (Aprilianto et al., 2022).

In practice, the implementation of this strategy includes various aspects, ranging from curriculum management, improving teacher competence, to providing facilities and self-development programs for students. One real example is mapping students' interests and talents so that each child can be directed according to their potential. Thus, the strategies applied are not uniform, but more individual and personal, adjusting to the needs and character of each student (Nafindra & Rifqi, 2022).

The principal also coordinates the implementation of continuous guidance through planned programs, such as additional lessons, extracurricular activities, and student mentoring. This program is an important part of the achievement improvement strategy because it provides space for students to develop their academic abilities as well as their social and emotional skills. The principal facilitates all these processes by ensuring synergy between teachers, students, and parents.

In addition, evaluation is an important part of the principal's strategy. Every program or policy that is implemented needs to be reviewed periodically to see its effectiveness and impact on improving student achievement. Through the evaluation and reflection process, the principal can find out which aspects need to be improved, changed, or stopped, so that the strategies implemented are truly data-based and real needs in the field (Lutfi et al., 2023).

The role of the principal in the implementation of this strategy also involves the ability to build effective communication, inspirational leadership, and wise decision-making. School principals must be able to motivate teachers and students, create a culture of cooperation, and build a shared vision that leads to improving the quality of education. All of this cannot run alone, but must be carried out by involving all school residents as a unit that supports each other.

Overall, the implementation of the principal's strategy in improving student achievement is not only limited to policies made on paper, but is a concrete and sustainable action directed at achieving better quality education. The success of this strategy relies heavily on responsive leadership, careful planning, and consistent and evaluative execution.

The following are five important points regarding the implementation of the principal's strategy in improving student achievement at Al-Azhar Palu Junior High School, based on information obtained in the field: first, strengthening the School's Vision-Mission, second, the implementation of Academic and Non-Academic Excellence Programs, third, improving Teacher Competence, fourth, monitoring and periodic evaluation.

**The Impact of the Implementation of the Principal's Strategy in Improving Student Achievement at Al-Azhar Junior High School Palu**

The strategy implemented by the principal is considered to have run optimally and has a significant impact on improving student learning outcomes. Not only in academic form such as grades, but also includes attitudes, character, and other achievements. Teachers feel that this strategy succeeds in creating a more productive learning atmosphere, where learners become more motivated and show positive changes in their enthusiasm and competitive spirit. Children start trying harder, showing determination to be the best, and this condition makes the school environment livelier and more inspiring.

In the non-academic field, the impact is also strong. Students showed increased enthusiasm in participating in extracurricular activities and competitions, both at the local and national levels. They are actively looking for opportunities for offline and online competitions, and all of that cannot be separated from the role of teachers who guide consistently. Structured training and mentoring make students more directed and confident in displaying their abilities in various fields.

Teachers also feel changes in the learning process. They become more enthusiastic, actively improve their professional and emotional capacity, and be more careful in preparing teaching materials that are in accordance with the needs of the times. The principal's strategy also makes teachers more personally involved in fostering students, proving that change does not only occur in students, but also touches on aspects of improving the quality of teachers.

Initially, students did feel burdened with dense training and guidance programs. However, thanks to habituation and a communicative approach from teachers, students begin to understand the benefits of the training. They can adjust between personal interests and needs, until finally being able to make school programs a means to develop according to their respective potential.

The success of this strategy is assessed through very concrete indicators. One of them is to increase the enthusiasm of students in participating in guidance, the provision of adequate learning facilities, and the active involvement of students in various competition activities. In fact, the achievements achieved have not only increased in quality, but also the scope has been wider, covering the city, provincial, to national and international levels.

The principal's strategy has also been proven to have a great impact on students' learning motivation and confidence. The moral support that the principal continues to provide makes students feel cared for and appreciated. This gives them additional encouragement to perform better, continue to excel, and not give up easily in the learning process.

Parents also show high participation in supporting this strategy. They were invited to the school to equalize, and were asked to accompany the children when they were at home. This involvement makes the educational process collaborative, not just the responsibility of the school. Parents also ensure that their children have a rewarding routine outside of school hours.

The changes are also evident in the school culture. Discipline increases, students better understand the importance of punctuality and preparation in every activity. The learning atmosphere becomes more conducive and rewards collaboration. Discussion and cooperation are the main ways to solve problems, both between students, between teachers and students, and between teachers and parents.

Based on the results of the author's observations and observations in the field, the principal's strategy has succeeded in achieving its initial goal. Not only did the students' academic achievement increase, but also their personalities and enthusiasm for learning grew positively. The school becomes an active, disciplined, and synergistic environment, and has succeeded in raising the good name of the institution to the national and even international levels. This strategy proves that a holistic approach involving students, teachers, parents, and the learning environment can bring meaningful transformation in the world of education.

The following are some of the impacts of the implementation of the Principal's strategy at Al-Azhar Palu Junior High School in improving student achievement, both in the academic and non-academic fields, namely, increasing the Enthusiasm and Motivation of Students, the growth of Discipline and Responsibility Attitudes, improving the Quality of the Teacher Learning Process, the building of Close Cooperation between Schools and Parents, and increasing Academic and Non-Academic Achievements.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the study, it can be concluded that the principal's strategy in improving student achievement at Al-Azhar Palu Junior High School shows that the leadership approach applied is holistic and participatory. Key strategies include an interest- and talent-based approach, student-centered learning strategies, collaborative management, and character strengthening through the internalization of discipline and responsibility values. The implementation of this strategy is carried out systematically through strengthening the school's vision and mission, implementing superior programs, improving teacher competence, and a continuous monitoring and evaluation process. The impact of the implementation of the strategy is significant, including increasing student motivation and learning participation, establishing strong synergy between schools and parents, and improving the quality of learning supported by teachers' creativity. In addition, this strategy also encourages the formation of positive attitudes in students and overall improvement of achievements, both in the academic and non-academic fields. These findings affirm the importance of visionary and collaborative leadership of school principals in creating an educational ecosystem that supports the achievement of optimal achievement of students.

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