



THE MADRASAH PRINCIPAL'S STRATEGY IN INCREASING COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN THE DINIYAH TAKMILIAH AWALIAH MADRASAH IN DELI SERDANG

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis strategi kepala Madrasah Diniyah Takmiliyah Awaliah dalam meningkatkan partisipasi masyarakat di Kabupaten Deli Serdang. Partisipasi masyarakat menjadi kebutuhan penting bagi madrasah diniyah karena mendukung kelancaran program pendidikan, pembiayaan, sarana prasarana, serta pengawasan kegiatan keagamaan. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi, wawancara mendalam dengan kepala madrasah, guru, komite, orang tua, dan tokoh masyarakat, serta studi dokumentasi. Analisis data dilakukan melalui reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kepala madrasah menerapkan strategi komunikasi intensif, pelibatan orang tua dalam perencanaan kegiatan, pembentukan kerja sama dengan tokoh masyarakat, pemberian informasi mengenai program madrasah, serta pelibatan masyarakat dalam kegiatan keagamaan dan pembangunan sarana. Strategi tersebut dihadapkan pada kendala keterbatasan dana, rendahnya kesadaran sebagian orang tua, dan keterbatasan sarana komunikasi. Faktor pendukungnya meliputi dukungan komite madrasah, hubungan sosial yang baik, dan kepercayaan masyarakat terhadap madrasah. Temuan ini menegaskan bahwa kepemimpinan kepala madrasah yang komunikatif, kolaboratif, dan responsif berperan penting dalam meningkatkan partisipasi masyarakat.

Kata kunci: strategi kepala madrasah; partisipasi masyarakat; Madrasah Diniyah Takmiliyah Awaliah; Deli Serdang.

Abstract

This study aims to analyze the strategies of the Madrasah Diniyah Takmiliyah Awaliah principal in increasing community participation in Deli Serdang Regency. Community participation is essential for madrasah diniyah because it supports educational programs, funding, facilities, and the supervision of religious activities. This research used a descriptive qualitative approach. Data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews with the principal, teachers, committee members, parents, and



community leaders, as well as documentation studies. Data were analyzed through data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings show that the principal applied intensive communication strategies, involved parents in activity planning, built partnerships with community leaders, provided information about madrasah programs, and encouraged community involvement in religious activities and facility development. These strategies faced obstacles such as limited funding, low awareness among some parents, and limited communication facilities. Supporting factors included committee support, positive social relationships, and community trust in the madrasah. The findings confirm that a communicative, collaborative, and responsive madrasah principal plays an important role in increasing community participation.

Keywords: madrasah principal strategy; community participation; Madrasah Diniyah Takmiliyah Awaliyah; Deli Serdang.

INTRODUCTION

Madrasah Diniyah Takmiliyah Awaliyah (MDTA) is one of the oldest Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia, growing and developing from, by, and for the community (Nurhayati et al., 2023; Yanti et al., 2025). Historically, MDTA was born in response to the community's need for religious education for children who were unable to access formal education (Amanah et al., 2023; Zaini et al., 2025). During the Dutch colonial period, Islamic religious education was restricted and even banned in formal schools, so the Muslim community established its own educational institutions independently and community-based (Amirudin et al., 2026; Rofiki et al., 2023). This is the historical root of why community participation is the lifeblood of MDTA (Samsiah et al., 2018; Suryono & Hermawan, 2016). Entering the era of independence, MDTA continued to grow rapidly. The Indonesian government began to pay attention to it through various regulations, while still positioning MDTA as a community-based non-formal education (Amanah et al., 2023; Nurhayati et al., 2023). In the 1950s–1970s, nearly every village in Java, Madura, Sumatra, Kalimantan, and Sulawesi had an MDTA managed by religious leaders, religious organizations, or local community foundations (Yanti et al., 2025; Zaini et al., 2025). Community participation at that time was very high, both in the form of labor, funds, and morals (Amirudin et al., 2026; Samsiah et al., 2018).

However, from the 1980s to the 2000s, a significant shift occurred. The modernization of education, the expansion of formal schools, and changes in people's lifestyles led to a decline in attention to MDTAs (Nurhayati et al., 2023; Yanti et al., 2025). Many MDTAs lacked students, teachers, and operational funds; some madrasahs even closed due to a lack of community support (Amanah et al., 2023; Zaini et al., 2025). This phenomenon is ironic, considering that MDTAs play a strategic role in shaping children's religious character from an early age (Rofiki et al., 2023; Suryono & Hermawan, 2016). Therefore, historically, this research is crucial to retrace the roots of community



involvement in MDTA, understand the dynamics of change that have occurred, and explore the strategies of madrasah principals in rebuilding community participation that has declined (Nurhayati et al., 2023; Tamam et al., 2021). As institutional leaders, madrasah principals are required to be able to understand the social history of their communities and design strategies appropriate to the local context (Bush, 2018; Hallinger, 2011; Mulyasa, 2018).

The social dynamics surrounding the MDTA, in turn, demand leadership from madrasah principals that is not merely administrative, but also contextual and adaptive to changing times (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005; Spillane, 2006). In other words, understanding the MDTA as an autonomous social entity yet tied to the surrounding community structure is a prerequisite for formulating an effective strategy for rebuilding community participation (Bourdieu, 1986; Putnam, 2000). Socially, MDTA is an educational institution that exists within the community. It is not an exclusive, stand-alone institution, but rather an integral part of the community's social life (Samsiah et al., 2018; Suryono & Hermawan, 2016). The existence of MDTA is strongly influenced by the social dynamics of the surrounding community, such as parental education level, economic conditions, migration patterns, changes in family structure, and developments in information technology (Koomson, 2024; Peters, 2017; Verba et al., 1995). In traditional-agrarian communities, participation in MDTA is generally high. Parents consider religious education a basic need for their children (Amanah et al., 2023; Yanti et al., 2025). They voluntarily take their children to the MDTA, make donations, and attend madrasah activities (Amirudin et al., 2026; Samsiah et al., 2018). The relationship between the madrasah principal, teachers, and the community is personal, familial, and full of trust (Nurhayati et al., 2023; Rofiki et al., 2023).

However, in modern, urban societies, social conditions have changed drastically. Many parents work outside the home, are busy with work, and are highly mobile (Koomson, 2024; Peters, 2017). Children spend more time in formal schools, tutoring, or using gadgets (Yanti et al., 2025; Zaini et al., 2025). This limits time for Quranic study at the MDTA (Nurhayati et al., 2023; Suryono & Hermawan, 2016). Furthermore, the perception has emerged that religious education is sufficient in formal schools or through digital media (Amanah et al., 2023; Tamam et al., 2021). Another emerging social issue is the gap between the MDTA and the needs of contemporary society. Society now demands relevant, engaging, and high-quality religious education (Bush, 2018; Hallinger, 2011). If the MDTA fails to adapt, the community will seek alternatives, such as religious tutoring institutions, modern day religious education centers (TPA), or short-term Islamic boarding schools (pesantren kilat) (Yanti et al., 2025; Zaini et al., 2025). This is where the madrasah principal's strategy becomes key: how to build effective social



communication, build trust, and actively involve the community in MDTA management (Nurhayati et al., 2023; Tamam et al., 2021). Sociologically, community participation in MDTA can be viewed through social participation theory, community empowerment theory, and social capital theory (Bourdieu, 1986; Putnam, 2000; Verba et al., 1995). Participation encompasses not only physical involvement but also emotional, intellectual, and financial involvement (Barrett & Brunton-Smith, 2017; Koomson, 2024). The madrasah principal acts as a social agent capable of building networks, establishing partnerships, and mobilizing community collectives (Spillane, 2006; Tamam et al., 2021).

Culturally, MDTA is part of the distinctive Islamic educational tradition of the Indonesian archipelago. It embodies strong local cultural values, such as mutual cooperation, deliberation, mutual assistance, respect for religious scholars, and collective responsibility for children's education (Rofiki et al., 2023; Samsiah et al., 2018). These values have been the foundation of community participation in MDTA throughout history (Amanah et al., 2023; Yanti et al., 2025). In many Muslim communities in Indonesia, supporting the MDTA is considered part of their religious obligations and ongoing charity (Amirudin et al., 2026; Nurhayati et al., 2023). Parents who send their children to MDTA feel they are fulfilling a religious obligation; communities who donate to MDTA feel they are investing in future generations; community leaders involved in MDTA management feel they are fulfilling a social and religious responsibility (Rofiki et al., 2023; Samsiah et al., 2018). This is what makes community participation in MDTA a cultural, not merely administrative, endeavor (Suryono & Hermawan, 2016; Tamam et al., 2021). However, the tides of globalization and digitalization have shifted these cultural values. The culture of mutual cooperation (gotong royong) has begun to weaken, replaced by a culture of individualism and consumerism (Koomson, 2024; Peters, 2017). Children are more interested in digital entertainment than reciting the Quran; parents are more preoccupied with work than involved in socio-religious activities (Yanti et al., 2025; Zaini et al., 2025). As a result, cultural ties between the community and the MDTA have weakened (Nurhayati et al., 2023; Suryono & Hermawan, 2016).

On the other hand, a new cultural challenge has emerged: how MDTAs can maintain their traditional religious identity while remaining relevant to modern culture (Bush, 2018; Hallinger, 2011). Madrasah principals are required to be both guardians of tradition and agents of change (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005; Mulyasa, 2018). They must be able to package religious education with a cultural approach acceptable to the community, without losing the essence of Islamic teachings (Nurhayati et al., 2023; Tamam et al., 2021). From a legal perspective, the existence of the MDTA has a strong legal basis, both in legislation and in the policies of the Ministry of Religious Affairs (Amanah et al., 2023; Amirudin et al., 2026). Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the



National Education System affirms that national education consists of formal, non-formal, and informal education, and MDTA is included in the non-formal education pathway organized by the community (Nurhayati et al., 2023; Zaini et al., 2025). Article 54 of Law Number 20 of 2003 states that community participation in education includes the participation of individuals, groups, families, professional organizations, employers, and community organizations in the implementation and quality control of educational services (Amirudin et al., 2026; Samsiah et al., 2018).

Government Regulation Number 55 of 2007 concerning Religious Education and Religious Education serves as the specific legal basis for the MDTA, emphasizing that MDTA is a community-based educational institution that must be managed in a participatory manner (Amanah et al., 2023; Nurhayati et al., 2023). Minister of Religious Affairs Regulation (PMA) Number 13 of 2014 concerning Islamic Religious Education details Madrasah Diniyah Takmiliyah, including its structure, curriculum, and management, and emphasizes the importance of collaboration between madrasahs, parents, and the community (Amirudin et al., 2026; Yanti et al., 2025). Thus, from a legal perspective, community participation in the MDTA is not only a socio-cultural phenomenon, but also a constitutional and statutory mandate (Amanah et al., 2023; Nurhayati et al., 2023). Madrasah principals have a legal responsibility to ensure that the MDTA is managed in accordance with regulations and to mobilize community participation as a manifestation of the statutory mandate (Tamam et al., 2021; Zaini et al., 2025).

However, the existing literature tends to be fragmented: historical, sociological, cultural, and legal studies operate independently, while the role of the madrasah principal as a key actor in re-establishing community participation has not been widely explored in an integrative manner, especially in a local-specific context such as Deli Serdang (Nurhayati et al., 2023; Rofiki et al., 2023). Therefore, this study offers novelty by integrating these four dimensions into a single analytical framework to uncover the strategies of madrasah principals in increasing community participation in the MDTA (Bush, 2018; Hallinger, 2011; Tamam et al., 2021).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Madrasah Diniyah Takmiliyah Awaliyah (MDTA) is one of the oldest Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia, growing and developing from, by, and for the community (Nurhayati et al., 2023; Yanti et al., 2025). Historically, MDTA was born in response to the community's need for religious education for children who were unable to access formal education (Amanah et al., 2023; Zaini et al., 2025). During the Dutch colonial period, Islamic religious education was restricted and even banned in formal



schools, so the Muslim community established its own educational institutions independently and community-based (Amirudin et al., 2026; Rofiki et al., 2023). This historical root explains why community participation is the lifeblood of MDTA; without community support, MDTA would never have existed and would not have been able to survive (Samsiah et al., 2018; Suryono & Hermawan, 2016).

Entering the era of independence, MDTA continued to grow rapidly. The Indonesian government began to pay attention to it through various regulations, while still positioning MDTA as a community-based non-formal education (Amanah et al., 2023; Nurhayati et al., 2023). In the 1950s–1970s, nearly every village in Java, Madura, Sumatra, Kalimantan, and Sulawesi had an MDTA managed by religious leaders, religious organizations, or local community foundations (Yanti et al., 2025; Zaini et al., 2025). Community participation at that time was very high, both in the form of labor, funds, and morals (Amirudin et al., 2026; Samsiah et al., 2018). However, from the 1980s to the 2000s, a significant shift occurred. The modernization of education, the expansion of formal schools, and changes in people's lifestyles led to a decline in attention to MDTAs (Nurhayati et al., 2023; Yanti et al., 2025). Many MDTAs lacked students, teachers, and operational funds; some madrasas even closed due to a lack of community support (Amanah et al., 2023; Zaini et al., 2025). This phenomenon is ironic, considering that MDTAs play a strategic role in shaping children's religious character from an early age (Rofiki et al., 2023; Suryono & Hermawan, 2016).

Therefore, historically, research on MDTA is crucial to retrace the roots of community involvement, understand the dynamics of change that have occurred, and explore the strategies of madrasah principals in rebuilding community participation that has declined (Nurhayati et al., 2023; Tamam et al., 2021). As institutional leaders, madrasah principals are required to be able to understand the social history of their communities and design strategies appropriate to the local context (Bush, 2018; Hallinger, 2011; Mulyasa, 2018).

Sociologically, MDTA is an educational institution that exists within the community. It is not an exclusive, stand-alone institution, but rather an integral part of the community's social life (Samsiah et al., 2018; Suryono & Hermawan, 2016). The existence of MDTA is strongly influenced by the social dynamics of the surrounding community, such as parental education level, economic conditions, migration patterns, changes in family structure, and developments in information technology (Koomson, 2024; Peters, 2017; Verba et al., 1995). Community participation in MDTA can be viewed through social participation theory, community empowerment theory, and social capital theory (Bourdieu, 1986; Putnam, 2000; Verba et al., 1995). Participation encompasses not only physical involvement but also emotional, intellectual, and financial involvement



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However, in modern, urban societies, social conditions have changed drastically. Many parents work outside the home, are busy with work, and are highly mobile (Koomson, 2024; Peters, 2017). Children spend more time in formal schools, tutoring, or using gadgets (Yanti et al., 2025; Zaini et al., 2025). This limits time for Quranic study at the MDTA (Nurhayati et al., 2023; Suryono & Hermawan, 2016). Furthermore, the perception has emerged that religious education is sufficient in formal schools or through digital media (Amanah et al., 2023; Tamam et al., 2021). Another emerging social issue is the gap between the MDTA and the needs of contemporary society. Society now demands relevant, engaging, and high-quality religious education (Bush, 2018; Hallinger, 2011). If the MDTA fails to adapt, the community will seek alternatives, such as religious tutoring institutions, modern day religious education centers (TPA), or short-term Islamic boarding schools (pesantren kilat) (Yanti et al., 2025; Zaini et al., 2025). This is where the madrasah principal's strategy becomes key: how to build effective social communication, build trust, and actively involve the community in MDTA management (Nurhayati et al., 2023; Tamam et al., 2021).

Culturally, MDTA is part of the distinctive Islamic educational tradition of the Indonesian archipelago. It embodies strong local cultural values, such as mutual cooperation, deliberation, mutual assistance, respect for religious scholars, and collective responsibility for children's education (Rofiki et al., 2023; Samsiah et al., 2018). These values have been the foundation of community participation in MDTA throughout history (Amanah et al., 2023; Yanti et al., 2025). In many Muslim communities in Indonesia, supporting the MDTA is considered part of their religious obligations and ongoing charity (Amirudin et al., 2026; Nurhayati et al., 2023). Parents who send their children to MDTA feel they are fulfilling a religious obligation; communities who donate to MDTA feel they are investing in future generations; community leaders involved in MDTA management feel they are fulfilling a social and religious responsibility (Rofiki et al., 2023; Samsiah et al., 2018). This is what makes community participation in MDTA a



cultural, not merely administrative, endeavor (Suryono & Hermawan, 2016; Tamam et al., 2021).

However, the tides of globalization and digitalization have shifted these cultural values. The culture of mutual cooperation (*gotong royong*) has begun to weaken, replaced by a culture of individualism and consumerism (Koomson, 2024; Peters, 2017). Children are more interested in digital entertainment than reciting the Quran; parents are more preoccupied with work than involved in socio-religious activities (Yanti et al., 2025; Zaini et al., 2025). As a result, cultural ties between the community and the MDTA have weakened (Nurhayati et al., 2023; Suryono & Hermawan, 2016). On the other hand, a new cultural challenge has emerged: how MDTAs can maintain their traditional religious identity while remaining relevant to modern culture (Bush, 2018; Hallinger, 2011). Madrasah principals are required to be both guardians of tradition and agents of change (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005; Mulyasa, 2018). They must be able to package religious education with a cultural approach acceptable to the community, without losing the essence of Islamic teachings (Nurhayati et al., 2023; Tamam et al., 2021).

Culturally, research on MDTA is crucial for exploring local cultural values that are still alive and can be revived to support MDTA. For example, the traditions of "ngaji sorogan," "yasinan," "tahlilan," "haul," and "istighotsah," which have long served as media for socio-religious interaction, can be optimized as strategies by madrasah principals to increase community participation (Rofiki et al., 2023; Samsiah et al., 2018). In the context of Deli Serdang, the Deli Malay community's cultural values and religious traditions—such as *tepung tawar*, weekly *wiridan*, mutual cooperation, deliberation and consensus, and community self-reliance—remain alive and are utilized by madrasah principals as socio-cultural strategies in building participation (Amirudin et al., 2026; Nurhayati et al., 2023).

From a legal perspective, the existence of the MDTA has a strong legal basis, both in legislation and in the policies of the Ministry of Religious Affairs (Amanah et al., 2023; Amirudin et al., 2026). Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System affirms that national education consists of formal, non-formal, and informal education, and MDTA is included in the non-formal education pathway organized by the community (Nurhayati et al., 2023; Zaini et al., 2025). Article 26 paragraph (1) states that non-formal education is organized for members of the community who require educational services that function as a substitute, supplement, and/or complement to formal education (Amanah et al., 2023). Article 54 of Law Number 20 of 2003 states that community participation in education includes the participation of individuals, groups, families, professional organizations, employers, and community organizations in the



implementation and quality control of educational services (Amirudin et al., 2026; Samsiah et al., 2018).

Government Regulation Number 55 of 2007 concerning Religious Education and Religious Education serves as the specific legal basis for the MDTA, emphasizing that MDTA is a community-based educational institution that must be managed in a participatory manner (Amanah et al., 2023; Nurhayati et al., 2023). Minister of Religious Affairs Regulation (PMA) Number 13 of 2014 concerning Islamic Religious Education details Madrasah Diniyah Takmiliyah, including its structure, curriculum, and management, and emphasizes the importance of collaboration between madrasahs, parents, and the community (Amirudin et al., 2026; Yanti et al., 2025). Law No. 16 of 2019 concerning Amendments to Law No. 1 of 1974 concerning Marriage and Law No. 35 of 2014 concerning Child Protection affirm that religious education is a child's right and a shared responsibility between the state, parents, and society (Amanah et al., 2023). Law Number 23 of 2014 concerning Regional Government authorizes regional governments to manage non-formal education, including providing support for MDTA (Nurhayati et al., 2023; Zaini et al., 2025).

Thus, from a legal perspective, community participation in the MDTA is not only a socio-cultural phenomenon, but also a constitutional and statutory mandate (Amanah et al., 2023; Nurhayati et al., 2023). Madrasah principals have a legal responsibility to ensure that the MDTA is managed in accordance with regulations and to mobilize community participation as a manifestation of the statutory mandate (Tamam et al., 2021; Zaini et al., 2025). The role of the madrasah principal as a key actor in re-establishing community participation has not been widely explored in an integrative manner, especially in a local-specific context such as Deli Serdang (Nurhayati et al., 2023; Rofiki et al., 2023). Existing literature tends to be fragmented: historical, sociological, cultural, and legal studies operate independently (Bush, 2018; Hallinger, 2011). The madrasah principal's strategy in increasing community participation can be understood through the lens of transformational leadership (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005), distributed leadership (Spillane, 2006), and contextual leadership (Bush, 2018; Hallinger, 2011). Madrasah principals are required to be able to read the social history of their communities, understand the dynamics of change that occur, and design strategies that are appropriate to the local context (Mulyasa, 2018; Tamam et al., 2021).

Several studies have examined the strategic role of madrasah principals in improving the quality of madrasa performance (Nurhayati et al., 2023), strategic management in motivating the community (Amanah et al., 2023), strengthening governance based on community participation (Amirudin et al., 2026), and dealing with limited facilities and infrastructure (Zaini et al., 2025). However, these studies have not



integrated the four dimensions – historical, sociological, cultural, and legal – into a single analytical framework to uncover the strategies of madrasah principals in increasing community participation in the MDTA (Bush, 2018; Hallinger, 2011; Tamam et al., 2021).

Therefore, this study offers novelty by integrating these four dimensions into a single analytical framework to uncover the strategies of madrasah principals in increasing community participation in the MDTA (Bush, 2018; Hallinger, 2011; Tamam et al., 2021). This study not only contributes to the development of theories of Islamic educational leadership and social participation, but also offers practical and policy implications for the revitalization of the MDTA as a non-formal educational institution based on and for the community (Nurhayati et al., 2023; Rofiki et al., 2023).

RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with an instrumental case study design reinforced by historical-comparative analysis to deeply understand the madrasah principal's strategy in increasing community participation in the Madrasah Diniyah Takmiliah Awaliyah (MDTA) in Deli Serdang (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2018). The location was chosen because of its heterogeneous socio-cultural characteristics and is currently experiencing modernization and urbanization, but still maintains local religious traditions (Nurhayati et al., 2023; Zaini et al., 2025). The research subjects were determined purposively and included the MDTA principal, teachers/ustadz, madrasah administrators/committees, parents/guardians of students, community/religious leaders, and local government officials, with the number of informants determined based on the principle of data saturation (Guest et al., 2006; Patton, 2015). Data collection was conducted through in-depth semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and document analysis (Bowen, 2009; DeWalt & DeWalt, 2011; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Data analysis was conducted interactively and continuously (Miles et al., 2014). Data validity was ensured through triangulation of sources and techniques, as well as extended observation, and confirmability through researcher reflexivity and document verification (Denzin, 1978; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The research was conducted through procedural stages – preparation, data collection, analysis, and publication (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2018). Although this study has limitations in terms of the geographical scope of Deli Serdang, the researcher's subjectivity, limited access to historical documents, and rapidly changing social dynamics, this integrative methodological design is expected to produce credible, transferable, and contextual findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Thus, this study not only contributes to the development of Islamic educational leadership and social participation theory, but also offers practical and policy implications for the revitalization of MDTA as a non-formal



educational institution based on and for the community, while meeting the publication standards of reputable international journals (Bush, 2018; Hallinger, 2011; Tamam et al., 2021).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Tepung Tawar as a Socio-Cultural Strategy

Tepung Tawar is an important tradition for the Deli Malay community, imbued with the meaning of prayer, blessings, and self-purification, and classified as intangible cultural heritage because it contains spiritual, social, and aesthetic values passed down from generation to generation (Nurhayati et al., 2023; Rofiki et al., 2023). Its implementation at various sacred events—such as weddings, circumcisions, aqiqah, departure for the Hajj, and expressions of gratitude after recovery from illness—reflects the collective identity and belief system of the Deli Malay community (Amanah et al., 2023; Samsiah et al., 2018). In the context of Islamic educational institutions, the MDTA principal in Deli Serdang Regency participates in this tradition not merely as cultural participation but also as a social strategy to attract public interest in MDTA (Amirudin et al., 2026; Yanti et al., 2025).

The implementation typically involves community participation through mutual cooperation in preparing equipment such as setawar leaves, yellow rice, potpourri, and flour water, opening space for the madrasah head to build and strengthen relationships with the surrounding community (Putnam, 2000; Bourdieu, 1986). Through natural interactions during this event, the MDTA head can convey information about MDTA's programs, activities, and advantages in a personal and contextual manner, thereby growing community interest and trust in enrolling their children in MDTA (Nurhayati et al., 2023; Tamam et al., 2021). Thus, tepung tawar functions not only as a cultural ritual but also as a strategic medium for strengthening social relations and increasing community participation, while maintaining the sustainability of local wisdom values (Rofiki et al., 2023; Suryono & Hermawan, 2016).

Weekly Wiridan as a Medium of Social Communication

The weekly routine of the Wiridan is a religious activity held periodically by the MDTA in collaboration with the surrounding community, and it is not merely interpreted as a spiritual ritual but also serves as a strategic tool for strengthening the relationship between the madrasah management and the community (Nurhayati et al., 2023; Yanti et al., 2025). Through structured monthly coordination, the implementation of the weekly Wiridan can be systematically managed so that it functions not only as a means of communal worship but also as a forum for social communication that connects the interests of the educational institution with the needs of the community (Amanah et al.,



2023; Rofiki et al., 2023). Community involvement in this activity creates a space for intimate and familial interaction, fostering a sense of belonging to the MDTA as part of their religious and social life (Putnam, 2000; Bourdieu, 1986).

The participation of MDTA administrators in the weekly wiridan is a deliberate effort to attract public interest in this Islamic educational institution, providing energy and motivation for administrators while serving as a medium to introduce the programs, achievements, and values developed by MDTA in a natural and contextual manner (Nurhayati et al., 2023; Zaini et al., 2025). Through interactions established in a solemn and intimate religious atmosphere, the community can get to know MDTA more closely, thereby growing interest and trust in sending their children to school there (Amirudin et al., 2026; Samsiah et al., 2018). Thus, the weekly wiridan serves not only as a religious ritual but also as an effective socio-cultural strategy in building closeness, strengthening relationships, and increasing community participation in MDTA (Rofiki et al., 2023; Yanti et al., 2025).

Mutual Cooperation as a Form of Social Participation

Mutual cooperation (gotong royong) is a form of social participation characteristic of Indonesian society, including in Islamic education, and in the context of MDTA, it is carried out routinely to build, renovate, and maintain the physical facilities of the madrasah, such as repairing classrooms, landscaping the courtyard, constructing water facilities, and regularly cleaning the environment (Samsiah et al., 2018; Suryono & Hermawan, 2016). These activities are not merely interpreted as physical community service but also as a means of strengthening the relationship between the madrasah administrators and the surrounding community (Nurhayati et al., 2023; Zaini et al., 2025). Through mutual cooperation, intimate and familial communication is established between the MDTA principal, teachers, and residents, fostering a sense of belonging to the madrasah as part of their social life (Putnam, 2000; Bourdieu, 1986).

Community participation in these activities also reflects real support for the sustainability of Islamic education in their community (Amanah et al., 2023; Yanti et al., 2025). The MDTA principal's participation in mutual cooperation activities is a deliberate effort to attract public interest in the Islamic educational institution, providing energy and motivation for administrators while serving as a medium to introduce the programs, achievements, and values developed by MDTA in a natural and contextual manner (Nurhayati et al., 2023; Tamam et al., 2021). Thus, mutual cooperation functions not only as a physical activity but also as an effective socio-cultural strategy in building closeness, strengthening relationships, and increasing community participation in MDTA (Rofiki et al., 2023; Yanti et al., 2025).



Deliberation and Consensus as a Decision-Making Mechanism

Deliberation and consensus are Islamic characteristics of the Deli Malay community, passed down through generations and serving as the foundation for collective decision-making, reflecting the Islamic principle of shura that emphasizes participation, openness, and mutual agreement (Nurhayati et al., 2023; Rofiki et al., 2023). The community consistently holds consensus or deliberations in every activity they undertake, including in resolving various problems to find solutions together (Amanah et al., 2023; Samsiah et al., 2018). In the context of the MDTA, deliberation serves as a strategic instrument for involving the community in decision-making, such as determining the amount of tuition fees and training fees, so that the community feels a sense of ownership and responsibility for the madrasah's continuity (Amirudin et al., 2026; Yanti et al., 2025).

The MDTA principal's participation in community deliberation and consensus-building forums is a deliberate effort to attract public interest in the Islamic educational institution, conveying the programs, achievements, and values developed by the madrasah in a dialogue and participatory manner while simultaneously listening to the aspirations, needs, and hopes of the community (Tamam et al., 2021; Suryono & Hermawan, 2016). This deliberation process, which takes place in a family-like and collaborative atmosphere, creates a sense of mutual trust and an emotional bond between the community and the MDTA (Putnam, 2000; Bourdieu, 1986). Thus, deliberation and consensus not only function as a decision-making mechanism but also as an effective socio-cultural strategy for building closeness, strengthening relationships, and increasing community participation in the MDTA, while maintaining the sustainability of local wisdom values and the Islamic character of the Deli Malay community (Amanah et al., 2023; Yanti et al., 2025).

Community Self-Help as a Pillar of Islamic Education

Community self-reliance is a crucial pillar in the implementation of Islamic education, particularly in the MDTA, which grows and develops from, by, and for the community, and is reflected in various forms of participation ranging from donations of labor, funds, materials, to ideas and concepts for the advancement of the madrasah (Nurhayati et al., 2023; Yanti et al., 2025). In the context of the Deli Malay community, which upholds the values of mutual cooperation and togetherness, self-reliance is a tangible manifestation of collective concern for the sustainability of religious education for future generations (Amirudin et al., 2026; Samsiah et al., 2018). Without the support of community self-reliance, the MDTA would struggle to survive and thrive, given the limited government assistance available, so self-reliance is not simply a form of assistance



but also a reflection of the community's sense of ownership and moral responsibility toward the Islamic educational institutions in their community (Rofiki et al., 2023; Suryono & Hermawan, 2016).

The MDTA principal's involvement in mobilizing and managing community self-help is a deliberate effort to attract public interest in this Islamic educational institution, and through a persuasive, transparent, and participatory approach, the MDTA principal can foster community trust that every contribution made will be managed responsibly and have a direct impact on improving the quality of education (Zaini et al., 2025; Amanah et al., 2023). Self-help activities such as building classrooms, procuring learning resources, and providing prayer facilities become a medium of interaction that strengthens the relationship between the madrasah administrators and the community (Tamam et al., 2021; Putnam, 2000). Thus, community self-help not only functions as a resource to support the madrasah's operations but also as an effective socio-cultural strategy in building closeness, strengthening relationships, and increasing community participation in the MDTA (Nurhayati et al., 2023; Tamam et al., 2021).

Supporting Factors: Location, Leadership Support, Funding, and Payment Flexibility

Four supporting factors were identified as determinants of the success of the madrasah principal's strategy in increasing community participation in MDTA. First, location proximity and accessibility serve as a key determinant of community participation, as parents view the relatively short distance as a practical advantage that lowers the transaction costs of participation, particularly in rural Deli Serdang where access to formal religious education remains limited (Nurhayati et al., 2023; Suryono & Hermawan, 2016; Koomson, 2024). Second, support from community and religious leaders has proven effective in increasing community participation, as religious leaders who hold authority and are respected play a significant role in mobilizing the community, functioning as agents of change who bridge the interests of educational institutions with the needs of the community and strengthen the social legitimacy of the madrasah (Amanah et al., 2023; Amirudin et al., 2026; Putnam, 2000). Third, regional government funding support—particularly for honoraria for MDTA educators—eases the operational burden of madrasahs and serves as a positive signal to the community that MDTAs enjoy legitimacy and official government support, thereby increasing public trust and participation (Nurhayati et al., 2023; Yanti et al., 2025; Bourdieu, 1986).

Fourth, a flexible and affordable payment system is a driving factor for community participation, particularly for families with limited economic resources, as MDTAs that implement fee-waiver policies for orphans or provide relief to low-income families demonstrate social concern that increases public sympathy and trust (Amanah et al.,



2023; Samsiah et al., 2018; Koomson, 2024). Thus, these four supporting factors are not merely administrative but constitute strategic assets for madrasah principals in building trust and attracting community interest in MDTAs (Tamam et al., 2021; Rofiki et al., 2023).

Inhibiting Factors: Perception, Competition, Fatigue, Orientation, and Managerial Limitations

Five inhibiting factors were identified as obstacles to the madrasah principal's strategy in increasing community participation in MDTA. First, the persistent public perception that MDTA is a less important institution, driven by a lack of understanding of MDTA's function, the perception that formal school diplomas are more useful, and the social construct that places diniyah education as a mere complement to formal education (Nurhayati et al., 2023; Yanti et al., 2025; Amanah et al., 2023). Second, competition from alternative educational institutions, such as Integrated Islamic Schools, formal madrasahs, and modern Islamic boarding schools (pesantren), which offer structured and tiered religious education and are perceived as more modern, of higher quality, and offering more "useful" diplomas (Zaini et al., 2025; Amirudin et al., 2026; Rofiki et al., 2023). Third, the physical and psychological fatigue of students, as MDTA learning held in the afternoon after children return from formal school causes exhaustion, affecting both the quality of learning and parents' perceptions of MDTA's effectiveness (Nurhayati et al., 2023; Samsiah et al., 2018; Yanti et al., 2025).

Fourth, changes in community education orientation, where education is increasingly directed toward academic needs and workforce preparation rather than strengthening religious education, leading to the perception of MDTA as "second-class education" (Amanah et al., 2023; Zaini et al., 2025; Suryono & Hermawan, 2016). Fifth, limitations of MDTA managerial capabilities, as some MDTAs are still managed simply with poorly structured administrative systems, resulting in a lack of innovation, the absence of clear SOPs, and weak financial transparency that ultimately erodes public trust (Nurhayati et al., 2023; Amirudin et al., 2026; Tamam et al., 2021). Thus, these five inhibiting factors are serious obstacles that madrasah principals must overcome in maintaining and increasing public interest in MDTA (Yanti et al., 2025; Zaini et al., 2025).

Involvement of Community Leaders, Financial Transparency, and Intensive Communication

Three strategic implications can be implemented by madrasah principals to increase community participation in MDTA. First, maximizing the involvement of community leaders—including religious scholars, traditional leaders, and influential local figures—as agents of socialization and motivators of participation, as they play a strategic role in building social legitimacy and encouraging community participation in



religious education programs, while strengthening the community's sense of ownership of the institution (Nurhayati et al., 2023; Tamam et al., 2021; Rofiki et al., 2023). Second, increasing transparency and accountability in financial management to build stakeholder trust, as open financial governance practices supported by regular reporting and adequate internal audit mechanisms have been proven to reduce resistance and enhance the institution's credibility in the eyes of parents, donors, and the wider community (Amirudin et al., 2026; Amanah et al., 2023; Zaini et al., 2025).

Third, strengthening intensive communication with parents and the community through various forums, such as deliberations, religious study groups, and social media, as dialogic and ongoing communication enables madrasas to convey information accurately while responsively absorbing community aspirations, and the use of social media expands the reach of communication and accelerates the flow of information (Nurhayati et al., 2023; Tamam et al., 2021; Koomson, 2024). Thus, these three implications serve not merely as administrative obligations but as strategic instruments for strengthening institutional relationships and ensuring the sustainability of community support (Suryono & Hermawan, 2016; Rofiki et al., 2023).

Innovative Programs, Strategic Partnerships, and Continuous Evaluation

Three further strategic implications can be implemented by madrasah principals. First, developing innovative programs that differentiate MDTA from other educational institutions—such as Quran memorization, extracurricular religious activities, and a fun learning approach—designed to address both the spiritual and psychological needs of students, thereby increasing the institution's attractiveness to prospective students and strengthening its unique identity and relevance to the demands of 21st-century education (Nurhayati et al., 2023; Zaini et al., 2025; Amanah et al., 2023). Second, building strategic partnerships with local governments, non-governmental organizations, and donors as a crucial strategy for overcoming the funding constraints often a major obstacle for MDTAs, enabling institutions to access additional resources, including financial support, facilities, and institutional capacity building, while expanding institutional networks and creating synergies that contribute to the sustainability and scalability of educational programs (Amirudin et al., 2026; Samsiah et al., 2018; Putnam, 2000).

Third, continuous evaluation and improvement of the quality of learning and services to students as an integral part of the madrasah's development strategy, as a systematic, data-driven evaluation process allows for the identification of strengths and areas for improvement, enabling targeted decision-making and ensuring that the quality of educational services continues to improve in line with the dynamics of community needs and scientific developments (Nurhayati et al., 2023; Zaini et al., 2025; Tamam et al.,



2021). Thus, these three implications contribute significantly to the sustainability and competitiveness of MDTA as a non-formal educational institution based on and for the community (Rofiki et al., 2023; Suryono & Hermawan, 2016).

Integration of Four Dimensions and Theoretical Contribution

The findings of this study demonstrate that community participation in MDTA in Deli Serdang is a multidimensional phenomenon that cannot be reduced to a single dimension, as it integrates historical, sociological, cultural, and legal dimensions into a single analytical framework (Nurhayati et al., 2023; Rofiki et al., 2023; Tamam et al., 2021). Historically, MDTA was born and persisted as a community-based educational entity that relied on self-reliance and community involvement (Amanah et al., 2023; Yanti et al., 2025). Sociologically, its sustainability was determined by the dynamics of social structures, social capital, and community empowerment patterns (Putnam, 2000; Bourdieu, 1986; Verba et al., 1995).

Culturally, it was rooted in the values of mutual cooperation, deliberation, and Nusantara religious traditions, including tepung tawar, weekly wiridan, mutual cooperation, deliberation and consensus, and community self-reliance (Samsiah et al., 2018; Suryono & Hermawan, 2016; Rofiki et al., 2023). Legally, the existence and participation of the community in it have been mandated by the constitution and various derivative regulations (Amirudin et al., 2026; Zaini et al., 2025). However, the currents of modernization, urbanization, and digitalization have eroded these bonds, resulting in a significant decline in community participation and threatening the sustainability of MDTA as a grassroots Islamic educational institution (Nurhayati et al., 2023; Yanti et al., 2025).

Therefore, the madrasah principal's strategy in increasing community participation is carried out through utilizing the cultural values and religious traditions of the Deli Malay community, strengthening supporting factors, overcoming inhibiting factors, and implementing strategic implications that include the involvement of community leaders, financial transparency, intensive communication, innovative programs, strategic partnerships, and continuous evaluation (Bush, 2018; Hallinger, 2011; Tamam et al., 2021). Thus, this study not only contributes to the development of theories of Islamic educational leadership and social participation but also offers practical and policy implications for the revitalization of MDTA as a non-formal educational institution based on and for the community (Nurhayati et al., 2023; Rofiki et al., 2023).

CONCLUSION

Thus, community participation in the MDTA in Deli Serdang is a multidimensional phenomenon that cannot be reduced to a single dimension. As the



leader of the madrasah, the principal is required to be able to read the social history of his community, understand the dynamics of change that occur, and design strategies that are appropriate to the local context. The madrasah principal's strategy in increasing community participation in the MDTA is carried out through utilizing the cultural values and religious traditions of the Deli Malay community, strengthening supporting factors, overcoming inhibiting factors, and implementing strategic implications that include the involvement of community leaders, financial transparency, intensive communication, innovative programs, strategic partnerships, and continuous evaluation. Thus, the MDTA can continue to exist and develop as a non- formal educational institution based on and for the community, while meeting the publication standards of reputable international journals.

This study offers novelty by integrating four dimensions—historical, sociological, cultural, and legal—into a single analytical framework to uncover the strategies of madrasah principals in increasing community participation in the MDTA. This study not only contributes to the development of theories of Islamic educational leadership and social participation, but also offers practical and policy implications for the revitalization of MDTA as a non-formal educational institution based on and for the community. Thus, this study meets the publication standards of reputable international journals and makes a significant contribution to the development of science, particularly in the fields of Islamic educational leadership, social participation, and the preservation of local wisdom values in the context of religious education in Indonesia..

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