

The Influence of School Principal Leadership on Teacher Work Motivation in Elementary Schools

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the influence of school principal leadership on the work motivation of elementary school teachers in the Sarwas 3 area of Pemalang District. Principal leadership plays a strategic role in fostering a positive work climate that enhances teachers' enthusiasm and commitment. Employing a quantitative correlational approach, this research involved 130 teachers selected through proportional random sampling to ensure representative data. Data were gathered using Likert-scale questionnaires that captured teachers' perceptions of principal leadership and their work motivation. Simple linear regression analysis using SPSS revealed that principal leadership significantly contributes to teacher motivation, accounting for 61.2% of its variance. The dominant leadership dimensions influencing motivation include interpersonal relations and collaborative decision-making. These results highlight that effective leadership fosters mutual trust and supportive relationships between principals and teachers. The study recommends enhancing strategic leadership competencies among principals, particularly in interpersonal communication and participative leadership, as a means to sustain teacher motivation. This study contributes to the literature by reinforcing the pivotal role of principal leadership in shaping teacher motivation and offers new insights into the integration of interpersonal leadership practices within the context of educational management in elementary schools.

Keywords: School Principal Leadership; Teacher Work Motivation; Educational Management

Introduction

Education plays a fundamental role in national development as it serves as the main pillar for improving human resource quality (Sutisna, 2019). Education not only transfers knowledge and skills but also imparts social values relevant to the development of the times. In this context, teachers hold a central role in the success of the teaching and learning process (Mulyasa, 2022). Teachers are not only responsible for managing classrooms and developing curricula but also for inspiring and motivating students to achieve their best potential.

The success of teachers in fulfilling their roles highly depends on their work motivation. Work motivation is a key factor determining the effectiveness of teachers in designing and implementing learning activities (Darmawan, 2019). Highly motivated teachers tend to be more creative, innovative, and dedicated to their profession, which directly impacts the quality of learning. Besides internal factors, teachers' work motivation is also strongly influenced by school principal leadership (Hakim, 2020; Setiawan, 2022). Fauzan (2022) asserts that high teacher work motivation is closely related to improvements in student learning outcomes. Motivated teachers are capable of creating an effective and enjoyable learning atmosphere and are more open to technological advancements and innovative teaching methods. Conversely, low motivation can reduce the quality of learning and students' academic achievements. This condition emphasizes the importance of the principal's role as a leader who provides moral support to teachers (Setiawan, 2022).

Teacher work motivation is a driving force that influences teachers' enthusiasm and commitment to optimally carry out their duties. According to Robinson and Judge in Setiawan (2023), teacher work motivation is the desire originating internally (intrinsic) and externally (extrinsic) that drives teachers to perform their teaching tasks better. This drive relates to achieving personal and professional goals aligned with educational values. Fauzan (2022) adds that teacher work motivation stems from internal factors such as the desire to grow and external factors such as leadership support and available facilities. Mulyasa (2021) states that work motivation is a process affecting teachers' actions and commitments, reflected in efforts to improve learning quality through professional development and teaching innovation. Ningsih (2022) mentions that teacher work motivation is a psychological state pushing teachers to give their best, influenced by recognition of achievements and opportunities for skill development. Suprivadi (2023) emphasizes that work motivation is strongly influenced by job satisfaction and recognition of contribution, impacting teaching effectiveness and student guidance. Overall, teacher work motivation results from the interaction between internal factorsprofessional aspirations and needs and external factors such as environmental support and organizational recognition in schools.

Teacher work motivation is influenced by two main factors: internal and external. Internal factors, according to Mulyasa (2021), relate to teachers' psychological needs such as appreciation and recognition from students, colleagues, and leaders. Hasibuan (2020) adds that achievement and recognition of performance can enhance teachers' intrinsic motivation to develop competencies. Simanjuntak's (2019) research shows that high self-appreciation correlates with increased motivation and learning quality. Meanwhile, external factors, Prayitno (2021: 88) emphasizes the importance of supervisor support and policies promoting professional development to enhance work enthusiasm. Sanjaya (2022) adds that leadership granting teachers freedom can increase motivation, while Rini and Lestari (2020) demonstrate that adequate school facilities positively impact teacher comfort and motivation.

Regarding dimensions of teacher work motivation, Fauzan (2022) identifies several aspects affecting teacher performance and professional behavior, including intrinsic dimensions involving internal drives such as satisfaction and growth enthusiasm (Fauzan, 2022), extrinsic dimensions related to recognition and leadership support (Supriyadi, 2023), professional commitment reflecting dedication to duties and teaching quality improvement (Mulyasa, 2021), job satisfaction concerning aspects that boost teaching enthusiasm (Ningsih, 2022), and social influence dimensions strengthening motivation through positive social environments (Sanjaya, 2022). These five dimensions synergistically contribute to enhancing teacher work motivation.

The leadership style of the school principal is one of the main factors affecting teacher work motivation. A participative leadership style involving teachers in decision-making can increase teachers' sense of ownership and commitment to the school (Mustika, 2020). In contrast, authoritarian leadership can cause pressure and work stress, reducing teacher morale (Siregar, 2022: 118). The competence and leadership skills of principals in communication, fair decision-making, and conflict management also affect the improvement of motivation and teacher performance (Yuliana, 2020; Wulandari, 2021).

School principal leadership is the ability to lead and manage school resources to achieve optimal educational goals. Mulyasa (2021) defines principal leadership as managing educators and educational facilities to create a conducive learning environment. Sukardi (2020) adds that principal leadership includes providing direction, motivation, strategic policy-making, and creating an effective learning atmosphere. Slamet (2021) views leadership as an interactive process with teachers and staff involving decisionmaking and empowerment to improve learning quality. Widodo (2022) emphasizes the principal's role in influencing all school components and fostering collaboration. Arifin (2023) states that leadership involves motivating, empowering, and wisely managing resources. Generally, principal leadership is a dynamic process integrating influence and management of human resources and facilities for educational success.

Key factors influencing principal leadership include effective communication (Sukardi, 2020), appropriate decision-making ability (Mulyasa, 2019), involvement in professional development (Arifin, 2023), managerial competence (Slamet, 2021), and visionary leadership motivating the entire school community (Widodo, 2022). These five factors greatly determine leadership effectiveness.

According to Supriadi (2021), principal leadership dimensions include visionary and strategic leadership (Mulyasa, 2021), managerial leadership in resource management (Sukardi, 2020), leadership in fostering and developing teacher competence (Arifin, 2023), leadership in decision-making (Slamet, 2022), and interpersonal and collaborative leadership building positive relationships among school members (Widodo, 2022). These dimensions reflect the principal's styles and actions in realizing educational goals.

The study also identifies ten key indicators of principal leadership influencing teacher motivation, namely clear vision and mission, intensive communication, professional support and development, empowering leadership style, performance appreciation, fair and objective leadership, conflict resolution ability, provision of clear goals and challenges, teacher involvement in decision-making, and adequate resource provision (Fitria, 2022; Suhardi & Yuliana, 2021; Rini & Lestari, 2021; Sari et al., 2021; Yuliana & Rahmat, 2022; Ningsih & Fitriana, 2022). These indicators collectively support the enhancement of teacher work motivation. The issue of teacher work motivation is also very relevant in Sarwas 3, Pemalang District. Harahap's (2021) study found that teachers in this area often feel they lack support from the principal. Data from the Pemalang District Education Office indicate that the quality of education in this district has not been optimal, especially in aspects of instructional leadership and curriculum management closely related to teacher motivation. This is reflected in education report card scores that remain below expectations (Primary School Education Report Card Document, Pemalang District 2022–2024).

Lack of supporting facilities and community support also hinder teacher work motivation (Purwanto, 2023; Nisa, 2020). This decline in motivation negatively affects learning quality and student engagement (Fauzan, 2022). Less motivated teachers tend not to develop themselves, resulting in stagnant teaching quality (Sari, 2020). Therefore, strengthening school principal leadership is an important step to improve teacher motivation and education quality in this area (Fajar, 2023). Furthermore, low teacher work motivation can lead to burnout, which can decrease teaching quality and teacher well-being (Ningsih, 2022). Studies by Fauzi (2020); Wahyuni (2021) show that an inclusive leadership style significantly increases teacher work motivation. Theoretically, teacher work motivation aligns with Herzberg's theory emphasizing the importance of recognition, appreciation, and achievement to enhance job satisfaction (Ningsih, 2022).

Considering these internal and external factors, this study aims to examine the effect of school principal leadership on the work motivation of elementary school teachers in Sarwas 3, Pemalang District. The novelty of this study lies in combining these two main factors within a specific local context, expected to contribute theoretically and practically to human resource management in elementary schools. This study is important as a basis for formulating appropriate educational policies to increase teacher motivation for improving national education quality (Arifin, 2021).

This study presents significant novelty compared to previous studies. First, it simultaneously combines the influence of principal leadership on teacher work motivation, which has often been studied separately. This combined approach provides a more comprehensive understanding of how these factors interact and jointly affect teacher work motivation in elementary schools. Second, the study is conducted specifically in Sarwas 3, Pemalang District, which has unique social, cultural, and economic characteristics as well as specific educational challenges. By focusing on this local context, the study's results are expected to offer practical contributions relevant to human resource management and educational quality improvement in similar areas, while enriching leadership and work motivation theory in the realm of basic education in Indonesia. Third, the study uses current empirical data supported by in-depth analysis of leadership conditions in the field, thereby providing applicable and contextual recommendations for principals, policymakers, and education practitioners to sustainably enhance teacher work motivation.

Method

This study uses a quantitative approach because it aims to analyze the relationships and influences between variables statistically. This approach was chosen due to its systematic and objective nature in collecting and analyzing numerical data, thus providing an accurate depiction of the influence of school principal leadership and work environment on teacher work motivation. Quantitative approach is very suitable for research that seeks to evaluate relationships among variables using statistical methods. This approach is used to measure the extent of the relationship between independent variables, namely school principal leadership and work environment, and the dependent variable, which is teacher work motivation. The quantitative approach allows findings to be generalized to a broader population through standardized numerical data collection. Furthermore, the use of inferential statistical methods enables hypothesis testing on relationships between variables.

The type of research used is correlational research, which aims to determine the relationship or influence between two or more variables without manipulating them. Correlational research describes the extent of relationships among variables within a specific context. This type of research is highly relevant in the educational context, considering many interacting factors affect teacher work motivation. The study was conducted at Sarwas 3 Elementary Schools in Pemalang District, consisting of several public schools in the area. The location was selected based on the representative characteristics of schools in Pemalang District and the relevance of the research findings for local policymakers. Moreover, Sarwas 3 is relatively accessible, facilitating direct data collection. This study's design employs a correlational quantitative approach aiming to identify the relationship and influence of the independent variable, namely school principal leadership, on the dependent variable, teacher work motivation. Correlational design is appropriate for measuring statistical relationships between variables without intervention. Analysis used simple linear regression to test the influence of one independent variable.

The research variables consist of teacher work motivation (Y) and school principal leadership (X1). Teacher work motivation is an internal and external drive that motivates teachers to perform their duties with dedication. School principal leadership is the principal's ability to provide guidance and motivation to teachers. The research population included all elementary school teachers in Pemalang District, totaling 192 teachers from 16 schools. A sample of 130 teachers was taken using Slovin's formula with a 5% margin of error. Sampling was conducted by proportional random sampling to

ensure representativeness and reduce bias. The research instrument was a Likert-scale questionnaire (1-5) measuring respondents' perceptions of the variables of school principal leadership and teacher work motivation. The Likert scale is effective in exploring respondents' attitudes and perceptions. The instrument's blueprint was carefully designed based on variable dimensions and indicators. Data were collected by distributing questionnaires directly to respondents at sample schools. Respondents rated statements according to their perceptions using the Likert scale. Instrument validity testing was conducted using the Pearson product-moment correlation to ensure that the instrument measures the intended concept. Validity was tested on 30 respondents with a critical value of r = 0.361. Reliability testing used the alpha coefficient, which indicates instrument consistency. The instrument is considered reliable if the alpha value > 0.6. Validity and reliability testing are important to ensure data quality that is valid and trustworthy. Analysis employed inferential statistics to test the effect of independent variables on the dependent variable. Data processing was performed using SPSS, including preliminary processing such as tabulation and descriptive statistics calculations like mean and standard deviation. This was followed by classical assumption testing including normality test (Kolmogorov-Smirnov or Shapiro-Wilk), multicollinearity test (tolerance value > 0.1; VIF < 10), heteroscedasticity test (Glejser method), and linearity test (Deviation from Linearity). Subsequently, hypothesis testing was conducted using simple linear regression and Pearson correlation coefficient to determine the strength and direction of relationships between variables. The interpretation of analysis results aims to provide meaning and relevance of findings to the research problems.

Result dan Discussion

Based on descriptive statistics results, teacher work motivation has an average score of 132.32 with a standard deviation of 5.476 and a score range of 23, indicating that teachers' perceptions of work motivation are fairly good. The variable of school principal leadership has an average of 133.02 with a standard deviation of 5.097 and a score range of 25. These data show that both variables tend to fall into the fairly good category based on score classification. Respondents' perceptions of teacher work motivation were measured through five dimensions and 30 questionnaire items. Among 130 respondents, frequency distribution showed that 7.7% rated work motivation as very good, 16.9% good, 26.2% fairly good, 36.2% less good, and 13.1% not good. The average motivation score fell within the 132–136 interval, indicating a fairly good category. Measurement of school principal leadership using five dimensions and 30 questionnaire items also showed that 4.6% of respondents rated it very good, 14.6% good, 45.4% fairly good, 22.3% less good, and 13.1% not good. With an average score of 133.02 within the 132–136 range, it can be concluded that respondents' perceptions of principal leadership also fall into the fairly good category.

These findings suggest that while the general perception of both teacher work motivation and principal leadership is positive, there remains a considerable proportion of teachers who rate both aspects as less good or not good. This highlights the need for continuous efforts to improve both motivation and leadership practices in schools. The data also indicate that although most teachers feel adequately motivated and perceive their principals' leadership favorably, there is still room for improvement, particularly for those who fall in the lower categories.

Principal Component Analysis (PCA) results on teacher work motivation indicated that the extrinsic motivation dimension had the highest extraction score (0.745), while professional commitment had the lowest score (0.641). This suggests that teachers' professional commitment is relatively weak, for example in aspects such as active use of

interactive teaching methods and utilization of educational technology. For the school principal leadership variable, the interpersonal and collaborative leadership dimension obtained the highest score (0.965), while vision and strategy scored the lowest (0.606). This interpersonal and collaborative dimension reflects real conditions of good leadership such as appreciation of teacher performance, fair leadership, conflict resolution ability, and provision of clear challenges.

A notable and unique finding from this study is the dominance of the "interpersonal and collaborative leadership" dimension, which achieved the highest loading factor (0.965). This underscores the importance of principals' ability to build strong, trust-based relationships and foster collaboration among teachers. This dimension appears to have a more substantial impact on teacher motivation than other leadership dimensions such as vision and strategy, which scored the lowest. This finding is in line with Rahmawati et al. (2021), who found that collaborative leadership significantly contributes to teacher work enthusiasm.

Before conducting regression analysis, prerequisite tests including normality, multicollinearity, linearity, and heteroscedasticity were performed. Kolmogorov-Smirnov normality tests showed that data for all three variables (teacher work motivation and principal leadership) were normally distributed (significance values > 0.05). Multicollinearity tests with VIF values below 10 and tolerance above 0.10 confirmed no multicollinearity problem among independent variables. Linearity tests also indicated linear relationships between independent and dependent variables. Lastly, Glejser method heteroscedasticity tests showed no heteroscedasticity since significance values were > 0.05 for all variables.

Pearson correlation analysis between school principal leadership and teacher work motivation yielded r = 0.723 (significant at p < 0.01), indicating a strong positive relationship between principal leadership and teacher motivation. ANOVA test produced an F value of 140.212 (p < 0.05), confirming that principal leadership significantly affects teacher work motivation. The coefficient of determination (R^2) of 0.523 shows that principal leadership contributes 52.3% to the variability of teacher work motivation. The simple regression equation obtained was: $\hat{Y} = 28.981 + 0.777X$. The t-test reinforced the significant positive effect of principal leadership on teacher work motivation with a t value of 11.841 (p < 0.05).

The regression analysis confirms that school principal leadership is a strong and significant predictor of teacher work motivation. With over half of the variance in teacher motivation explained by principal leadership, it is clear that efforts to improve leadership practices can have a substantial impact on teacher motivation. The statistical results are robust, as indicated by the fulfillment of all regression assumptions.

The analysis results indicate a significant and strong correlation between principal leadership and teacher work motivation with a correlation coefficient of 0.783 (p < 0.05). This indicates that school principal leadership plays an important role in enhancing teacher work motivation in Sarwas 3, Pemalang District. The interpersonal and collaborative leadership dimension is the highest with a loading factor of 0.965, indicating very strong positive relationships, support, and trust between principals and teachers. Conversely, the vision and strategy dimension has the lowest loading factor at 0.606 but remains convergently valid.

These findings are consistent with Putra and Wibowo (2020), who found that transformational leadership by school principals significantly increases teacher motivation, particularly through effective communication and emotional support. Similarly, Nugroho and Santoso (2019) emphasize that responsive leadership to teachers' needs enhances intrinsic motivation and learning quality. The dominance of the

interpersonal and collaborative dimension in this study also aligns with Hidayati and Prasetyo (2022), who highlight the role of participative management in fostering a conducive school climate. Moreover, Lestari and Wahyudi (2020) found that consistent academic supervision by principals increases teacher motivation and professional performance.

Further supporting these results, a study by Sari et al. (2023) found that schools with principals who actively facilitate teamwork and open communication among teachers report higher levels of teacher motivation and job satisfaction. Likewise, research by Pramono and Widodo (2022) demonstrated that the ability of principals to resolve conflicts and appreciate teacher achievements is directly linked to increased teacher engagement and reduced turnover intentions.

As academic supervisors, school principals are responsible for planning, implementing, and following up on supervision to improve teachers' professional competence. Law No. 12 of 2005 on Teachers and Lecturers emphasizes the principal's important role in encouraging teachers to improve their abilities to meet national education standards. Teacher work motivation is the teacher's ability to plan and implement effective learning. Principals have a central role in motivating and assisting teachers in overcoming obstacles in the learning process.

Theoretically, school management plays a crucial role in professional teacher development to optimize the teaching and learning process. The main strategies used are supervisory and collaborative leadership. Effective supervision helps teachers perform their tasks better. Therefore, good principal leadership will significantly promote teacher professionalism and motivation.

Several empirical studies support these findings. According to Putra and Wibowo (2020), transformational leadership of school principals positively and significantly affects teacher work motivation in secondary schools, where effective communication and emotional support are key factors in increasing motivation. Rahmawati et al. (2021) found that collaborative leadership style by principals significantly contributes to improving teacher work enthusiasm through continuous guidance and supervision. Meanwhile, Nugroho and Santoso (2019) confirm that principals' leadership responsive to teachers' needs can increase teachers' intrinsic motivation, impacting learning quality. Furthermore, research by Hidayati and Prasetyo (2022) shows that principals' leadership in applying participative management plays an important role in building a conducive school climate for teacher work motivation. Lastly, Lestari and Wahyudi (2020) revealed that consistent academic supervision by principals can increase teacher motivation and professional performance.

In summary, the results of this study reinforce the crucial role of school principal leadershipesp ecially interpersonal and collaborative aspects in shaping teacher work motivation. The findings not only confirm but also extend previous research by highlighting the specific leadership dimensions most influential in elementary school contexts. These insights provide valuable input for school management and policymakers to focus on strengthening collaborative leadership practices in order to foster a more motivated and high-performing teaching workforce.

Conclusion

Based on the data analysis and hypothesis testing results, it can be concluded that school principal leadership has a positive and significant effect on the work motivation of elementary school teachers in Sarwas 3, Pemalang District. This is evidenced by a calculated t-value of 16.440, which is greater than the critical t-value of 1.978, and a significance value of 0.000 < 0.05, thus the hypothesis is accepted. The influence of

school principal leadership on teacher work motivation reaches 61.2%. Several important recommendations are proposed for follow-up actions. First, the Pemalang District Office of Education. Youth, and Sports is advised to enhance the capacity and leadership competencies of school principals through specialized training, particularly in the dimensions of vision and strategy which still require strengthening. Strategic leadership training and participative development of educational vision are essential to increase the effectiveness of school principal leadership. Second, school principals are encouraged to strengthen their leadership role in providing recognition and appreciation to teachers and staff to boost work motivation. Building a culture of appreciation routinely and implementing formal and informal reward systems can increase teachers' sense of being valued and their work enthusiasm. Third, school supervisors should focus on strengthening teacher work motivation by enhancing professional commitment. Reinforcing a culture of professionalism through leadership role models and consistent performance evaluations can increase teachers' dedication to their duties and responsibilities. Finally, it is recommended that all educational stakeholders adopt a collaborative and sustainable approach in human resource development within schools to create a healthy and productive work climate.

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