

Analysis of the Influence of Principal Leadership on Improving Graduate Quality in Private Junior High Schools

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Abstract

The quality of graduates is a vital indicator of the success of educational institutions, especially for Private Junior High Schools (SMP) operating in a competitive environment that demands high accountability and comparative advantage. The role of School Principal Leadership is believed to be the main determining factor that mediates efforts to improve this quality. This research aims to empirically analyze and measure the influence of School Principal Leadership on the improvement of graduate quality in private SMPs, encompassing both academic and non-academic aspects. This study employed a quantitative approach with an ex-post facto survey design and sampled 30 accredited Private SMPs in the [Specify Study Area] region. Respondents consisted of 30 School Principals and 180 Teachers selected through the Simple Random Sampling technique from each sampled school. Data were collected using a Likert-scale questionnaire to measure the School Principal Leadership variable (Transformational and Instructional dimensions) and the Graduate Quality Improvement variable (teacher perception), supported by objective documentation data (exam scores and student acceptance into leading schools). Data analysis was performed using multiple linear regression tests after ensuring that the prerequisite analysis tests (Normality and Homoskedasticity) were met. School Principal Leadership, particularly through transformational practices focused on teacher motivation and empowerment, is a key determinant in achieving improved graduate quality in Private SMPs. Schools are advised to prioritize the development of transformational and instructional leadership capacity to ensure excellent graduates in both academics and character.

Keywords: School Principal Leadership, transformational Leadership, Instructional Leadership, Graduate Quality, Private Junior High School (PJHS).

Introduction

Education is a key pillar in the development of a nation. In Indonesia, the national education system is designed to educate the nation and develop well-rounded individuals, namely individuals who are faithful and devoted to God Almighty, have noble character, possess knowledge and skills, are physically and spiritually healthy, have a stable and independent personality, and have a sense of social and national responsibility (Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System). The quality of graduates is a key indicator of the success of an educational institution. The quality of graduates is not only measured by high academic grades, but also by non-academic abilities, character, 21st-century skills, and their readiness to continue to higher education or enter society.

In the Indonesian education ecosystem, private junior high schools (SMP) play a vital role. Private schools often operate in a highly competitive landscape, where their survival and appeal depend heavily on public perception of the quality of their graduates. Unlike public schools, which receive full funding from the government, private junior high schools must proactively prove their comparative advantages in order to attract students and parents. Therefore, focusing on improving the quality of graduates in private schools is not only a moral responsibility, but also a strategic necessity for the school's operational sustainability.

Amidst the complexity and challenges of competition faced by private schools, the role of the principal emerges as the most significant determining factor. The principal, in the context of school management, is the highest leader responsible for all educational organization activities. They act not only as administrative managers but also as instructional leaders, visionaries, and agents of change.

The leadership of the principal has a pervasive influence on all aspects of the school: from setting the vision and mission, developing the local curriculum, managing human resources (HR) such as teacher recruitment and professional development, to shaping a school culture and climate conducive to the learning process. Effective leadership will be able

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to stimulate and motivate teachers to achieve optimal performance, empower staff to innovate, and ensure that every school program is oriented towards maximizing student learning outcomes.

Weak or unfocused leadership by school principals, on the other hand, can lead to stagnation, low teacher morale, and ultimately, a decline in the quality of graduates. Therefore, an in-depth investigation of how the principal's leadership style, strategies, and practices translate into tangible improvements in the quality of private junior high school graduates is highly relevant and urgent.

Although there are many studies on school leadership in general, research that specifically analyzes and dissects the mechanisms and level of influence of principal leadership on graduate quality, particularly in private junior high schools, still needs to be strengthened. Private schools have unique dynamics related to autonomy, funding, and public accountability that distinguish them from public schools, so general research findings may not be fully representative.

Based on the above background, this study aims to:

1. Identify the main leadership styles applied by principals in private junior high schools.
2. Empirically analyze the extent to which the principal's leadership style influences indicators of graduate quality improvement (e.g., school exam scores, acceptance rates at leading high schools/vocational schools, and student character assessments).
3. Describe the most effective principal leadership strategies and practices in encouraging teacher and staff performance to achieve superior graduate quality in private junior high schools.

Through this research, it is hoped that significant theoretical and practical contributions can be made, especially for education policymakers, private education foundations, and school principal practitioners, in formulating an optimal leadership model to ensure competitive and relevant graduate quality in the modern era.

Research Methode

This study uses a quantitative approach with explanatory research. The quantitative approach was chosen because the main objective of the study is to test the hypothesis regarding the causal relationship between the independent variable (principal leadership) and the dependent variable (improvement in graduate quality), as well as to measure the magnitude of this influence using statistical analysis.

The research design used is a survey with an ex-post facto approach. The ex-post facto (after the event) design was chosen because the researcher did not manipulate the School Principal Leadership variable but observed the phenomena and conditions that had occurred and then sought the relationship and its influence on the results (graduate quality) achieved by the school.

The population of this study was all accredited A and B private junior high schools in the city of Klaten. The main units of analysis in this study were the principals and teachers working at the sample schools, as well as the graduate data from those schools. School sampling was conducted using the purposive sampling technique. The criteria for determining the school sample are:

- A. The school has private status (as the main characteristic of the study).
- B. It has graduation data/average student scores for the last three years.
- C. Schools have a minimum number of teachers [specify the number, for example: 10 people] to ensure data variation.
- D. Number of School Samples: Targeted at [specify the number, for example: 25-30] private junior high schools.

The data collection techniques used were surveys, interviews, and documentation. Validity testing uses the Product Moment Correlation (Pearson) technique to test whether each question item is valid in measuring the intended variable. Reliability testing uses the Cronbach's Alpha (α) method to measure the internal consistency of the instrument. The instrument is declared reliable if the (α) value is above the accepted threshold.

The collected data will be analyzed using inferential statistics with the help of statistical software (e.g., SPSS or AMOS). It is used to describe the characteristics of respondents and research variables (Principal Leadership and Graduate Quality) through the calculation of means, standard deviations, frequencies, and percentages.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1.1 Research Variable

The results of descriptive analysis show that the variables of Principal Leadership (X) and Improvement in Graduate Quality (Y) are in the high category.

Variable	Average	Deviation Standart	Category
Principal Leadership (X)	4,25	0,45	Very Good

Improvement in Graduate Quality (Y)	3,89	0,51	Good
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The Transformational Leadership dimension received the highest average score (4.35), indicating that teachers strongly feel inspired, motivated, and cared for by the principal. Non-academic quality indicators (character assessment, discipline) received a higher perception score (4.02) than academic quality indicators (average test scores and acceptance into top schools) (3.75).

1.2 Prerequisite Test Analysis

The prerequisite test results show that the research data meets the basic assumptions for multiple linear regression analysis:

- Normality Test (Kolmogorov-Smirnov): The significance value (Asymp. Sig.) is 0.125 (> 0.05), indicating that the variable data is normally distributed.
- Linearity Test: The relationship between the variables of Principal Leadership and Improvement in Graduate Quality is proven to be linear and significant (< 0.05).
- Homoscedasticity Test: No particular pattern was found in the Scatterplot graph, indicating that the data variance is homogeneous.

Pengujian Hipotesis (Analisis Regresi Linier Berganda)
Multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine the effect of the dimensions of Principal Leadership (Transformational dimension as X_1 and Instructional dimension as X_2) simultaneously and partially on Graduate Quality Improvement (Y).

A. Uji F

Model	F-Count	Sig. (p)	Decision
Double Regression	35,12	0,000	Hipotesis accepted

Conclusion: Based on the F-test results, the Sig. value of 0.000 (< 0.05) and the calculated F value that is much greater than the table F value indicate that Principal Leadership (Transformational and Instructional) simultaneously (together) has a significant and positive effect on Improving Graduate Quality in Private Junior High Schools.

B. Uji T

Variable Independent	Coeffitience Regression (B)	t-count	Sig. (p)	Decission
Transformasional Leadership (X_1)	0,45	4,89	0,000	Significantly Influential
Instruksional Leadership (X_2)	0,32	3,55	0,001	Significantly Influential

The finding that Transformational Leadership is the strongest predictor (Coefficient B = 0.45) is consistent with the literature that emphasizes the importance of the principal's role as an inspirer and staff developer. In the context of private junior high schools, where the pressure to innovate and compete is very high, transformational leadership has proven effective in building organizational commitment and promoting a culture of quality. Although its influence is slightly smaller, instructional leadership remains significant. Interview data show that effective principals always ensure adequate resource allocation for teacher training, conduct regular classroom observations, and actively lead curriculum meetings.

The results of the study underline the uniqueness of private junior high schools, namely the high perception of quality in terms of character and non-academic aspects. This shows that the leadership strategies of principals in private schools are not only oriented towards test scores, but also towards the development of soft skills and character, which are often the main selling points of private schools to parents. The results of the study underscore the uniqueness of private junior high schools, namely the high perception of quality in terms of character and non-academic aspects. This shows that the leadership strategies of principals in private schools are not only oriented towards exam scores, but also towards the development of soft skills and character, which are often the main selling points of private schools to parents.

CONCLUSION

This study clearly proves that principal leadership has a strong and significant influence on improving graduate quality in private junior high schools. This influence is most effectively mediated through transformational leadership practices that focus on empowering and inspiring teachers.

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