

From Leadership to Learning: Examining the Managerial Influence of School Principals on Teacher Effectiveness

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Article Information

Received: March 17, 2025
Revised: April 14, 2025
Accepted: May 11, 2025
Online: June 16, 2025

Keywords

Managerial Competence
School Leadership
Teacher Effectiveness
Instructional Leadership
Transformational Leadership
Madrasah
Educational Management

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the influence of school principals' managerial competence on teacher instructional effectiveness in a religious-based secondary school (madrasah) in Indonesia. Managerial competence is conceptualized across three core dimensions: conceptual skills (strategic planning), human skills (interpersonal relations and motivation), and technical skills (administrative and instructional support). Employing a quantitative ex post facto design, data were collected from 16 teachers using structured questionnaires, non-intrusive observations, and document analysis. Linear regression analysis revealed a significant and positive relationship between principals' managerial competence and teacher effectiveness ($R^2 = 0.457$, $p = 0.002$), with both variables rated in the "very high" category. The findings support transformational and instructional leadership theories and emphasize the strategic role of managerial competence in enhancing teaching quality. This study contributes practical insights for educational policymakers and leadership development programs, particularly in resource-constrained school environments. However, limitations related to sample size and self-reporting suggest caution in generalizing the results. Future research should examine additional factors influencing teacher performance to build a more comprehensive model. This study provides a novel, component-based analysis of leadership influence in religious-based schools, an area rarely addressed in leadership literature.

INTRODUCTION

In the pursuit of improving educational outcomes, school leadership has emerged as a pivotal factor influencing the effectiveness of teaching and learning processes (Fullan et al., 2024; Radd et al., 2021). Among various dimensions of school leadership, the managerial competence of school principals plays a critical role in shaping teacher performance, fostering professional development, and ensuring the efficient operation of educational institutions (Asyari et al., 2024; Kamaruddin et al., 2023). Managerial competence encompasses strategic planning, organizational skills, human relations, and technical capabilities necessary for leading schools in complex and evolving educational environments (Asyari et al., 2024; Irvansyah et al., 2023).

Despite significant global efforts to improve teacher quality through training, curriculum reform, and resource allocation, disparities in teaching effectiveness persist. Research indicates that one underexplored yet influential variable is the quality of school management — particularly how

principals execute their managerial functions ([Mustajab et al., 2023](#); [Nindie, 2022](#)). Effective school management creates a supportive environment where teachers are empowered to innovate, collaborate, and improve instructional delivery ([Benoliel, 2021a, 2021b](#)). Conversely, weak managerial leadership can lead to disorganization, low morale, and diminished teaching outcomes ([Mincu, 2022](#); [Torlak et al., 2022](#)).

The relationship between principal leadership and teacher performance has been explored in various studies, highlighting that strong managerial competence contributes to increased teacher motivation, instructional quality, and job satisfaction ([Lumbanraja & Pangaribuan, 2022](#); [Rambe et al., 2024](#); [Rostini et al., 2022](#)). For instance, [Odo \(2023\)](#) found that managerial practices including strategic planning, delegation, and performance monitoring significantly influenced the instructional performance of teachers in vocational schools. Similarly, [Chen & Yuan \(2021\)](#) demonstrated that both managerial and supervisory competencies of principals positively correlated with teachers' creativity and engagement in the classroom. These findings underscore the strategic value of leadership competence in achieving teaching excellence.

In the Southeast Asian context, particularly Indonesia, recent scholarship has emphasized the critical role of principals in mediating educational reforms at the school level ([J. Li et al., 2023](#); [Tran & Li, 2025](#)). Madrasah institutions, which operate under dual mandates of religious and general education, present additional challenges for effective school leadership. Studies by [Anselmus Dami et al. \(2022\)](#) emphasize that motivational leadership, when combined with managerial skill, serves as a key determinant in improving teacher outcomes in such contexts. Despite this, empirical evidence remains scarce regarding how specific managerial skills — such as conceptual planning, human interaction, and technical proficiency — directly affect teacher effectiveness in under-resourced or rural school environments.

While prior studies have confirmed the general influence of leadership on teacher performance, most have focused on urban, public, or large-scale institutional settings, often neglecting the nuanced dynamics of smaller or religious-based schools such as madrasahs. Additionally, there is limited disaggregation of managerial competence into its core components when examining its effect on teacher effectiveness. These gaps restrict the ability to design targeted leadership development interventions and limit generalizability across diverse school types. This study seeks to address those limitations by providing a focused, component-based analysis of managerial competence and its measurable impact on instructional success.

This study investigates the influence of principals' managerial competence on teachers' instructional effectiveness. Drawing on theories of educational leadership and management, it conceptualizes managerial competence across three core dimensions: conceptual skills (strategic vision and planning), human skills (interpersonal relations and motivation), and technical skills (administrative and instructional support). Teacher effectiveness is assessed in terms of instructional planning, content delivery, classroom management, and professional commitment.

The significance of this study lies in its contribution to the growing body of literature on school effectiveness, particularly in contexts where leadership development and teacher performance remain pressing issues. By empirically examining the relationship between school leadership and teaching outcomes, this research provides actionable insights for educational policymakers, school administrators, and professional development programs. Furthermore, it reinforces the view that strengthening school leadership is a key lever for improving instructional quality and, ultimately, student achievement.

METHODS

Research Design

This study adopted a quantitative, ex post facto design to explore the influence of school principals' managerial competence on teachers' instructional effectiveness ([Lee, 1985](#)). This design was selected to assess existing conditions without manipulating variables, allowing a factual analysis of the relationship between managerial leadership and teaching performance within a real-world school environment.

Population and Sample

The research was conducted at a religious-based secondary school (madrasah) in Indonesia. The entire population consisted of sixteen teachers, all of whom were selected as respondents using a saturated sampling technique (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Given the limited number of teachers available at the research site, the use of total sampling ensured that all relevant perspectives were captured comprehensively.

Variables and Operational Definitions

The independent variable in this study was the managerial competence of the school principal, which encompassed three main dimensions. The first was conceptual skills, referring to the principal's capacity to establish a strategic vision and effectively plan educational goals. The second dimension involved human skills, representing the ability to foster interpersonal relationships, motivate staff, and communicate effectively within the school community. The third dimension addressed technical skills, which involved practical proficiencies in managing administrative tasks, supporting instructional processes, and ensuring organizational efficiency.

The dependent variable was teachers' instructional effectiveness. This construct included various observable indicators, such as the ability to develop lesson plans aligned with curriculum standards, manage classrooms effectively, deliver content clearly, engage students actively, and demonstrate ongoing professional commitment. These definitions were derived from established educational management theories and adapted to the context of the study.

Data Collection Techniques

Data were obtained using structured questionnaires, which were developed based on theoretical indicators of both managerial competence and teacher effectiveness. Each item was rated using a four-point Likert scale, ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." The questionnaires were distributed directly to the teachers and completed under the supervision of the researcher to ensure clarity and completeness. To complement the quantitative data, supporting information was also gathered through non-intrusive observation and document review, including the school's organizational profile and academic records.

Instrument Validity and Reliability

To ensure the validity of the instrument, the Pearson Product-Moment correlation was applied to test each item. Items were retained if the correlation coefficient exceeded the critical value of 0.3, indicating a meaningful relationship with the total score. The reliability of the instrument was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha, with results exceeding the threshold of 0.6, thus demonstrating acceptable internal consistency and confirming that the instrument could be used reliably for data collection.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics were used to provide a general overview of the responses, including the calculation of mean scores for each variable. To examine the relationship between the principal's managerial competence and teacher instructional effectiveness, a simple linear regression analysis was conducted. Prior to performing the regression test, the data were subjected to classical assumption testing, including normality checks using both the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests. All statistical analyses were conducted using SPSS software, with a significance level set at 0.05. The interpretation of the results focused on understanding both the strength and direction of the association between the variables studied.

RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive analysis showed that the average score for the principal's managerial competence, as perceived by the teachers, was 83.88 out of a possible 100, placing it in the "very high" category. Likewise, the average score for teacher instructional effectiveness was 86.31, also in the "very high" category.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Variables

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Category
Managerial Competence	16	76.00	92.00	83.88	5.13	Very High
Instructional Effectiveness	16	78.00	93.00	86.31	4.25	Very High

Table 1 presents the descriptive summary of the two primary research variables. The high average scores and low standard deviations indicate that teachers generally perceived the school principal as highly competent in managerial functions and reported high levels of instructional effectiveness. This suggests a consistent perception among teachers regarding leadership quality and their own teaching performance.

Normality Testing

Before conducting regression analysis, a normality test was applied. Both Kolmogorov–Smirnov and Shapiro–Wilk tests produced significance values greater than 0.05, indicating that the data were normally distributed.

Table 2. Normality Test Results

Test	Statistic	df	Sig.
Kolmogorov-Smirnov	0.151	16	0.158
Shapiro-Wilk	0.940	16	0.127

Table 2 confirms the normal distribution of the data, as both test results exceed the significance threshold of 0.05. This justifies the use of parametric statistical techniques, including linear regression, for further analysis.

Regression Analysis

The linear regression model revealed a positive and statistically significant relationship between the principal's managerial competence and teacher instructional effectiveness. The model produced an R^2 value of 0.457, meaning 45.7% of the variation in teacher effectiveness was explained by the principal's managerial competence.

Table 3. Model Summary

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error
1	0.676	0.457	0.422	3.252

As shown in Table 3, the coefficient of determination (R^2) of 0.457 indicates that nearly half of the variation in teacher instructional effectiveness can be attributed to the principal's managerial competence. This substantial proportion highlights the importance of effective leadership in shaping instructional outcomes.

Table 4. Regression Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized B	Std. Error	t	Sig.
Constant	57.563	6.618	8.699	0.000
Managerial Comp	0.342	0.092	3.706	0.002

Table 4 shows that the regression coefficient for managerial competence is statistically significant ($p = 0.002$), with a positive coefficient value of 0.342. This suggests that improvements in managerial competence are likely to be followed by measurable gains in teacher effectiveness. The regression equation — $Y = 57.563 + 0.342X$ — illustrates this direct relationship.

Visual Representation

To further illustrate this relationship, a scatter plot was used to show the linear association between managerial competence and instructional effectiveness.

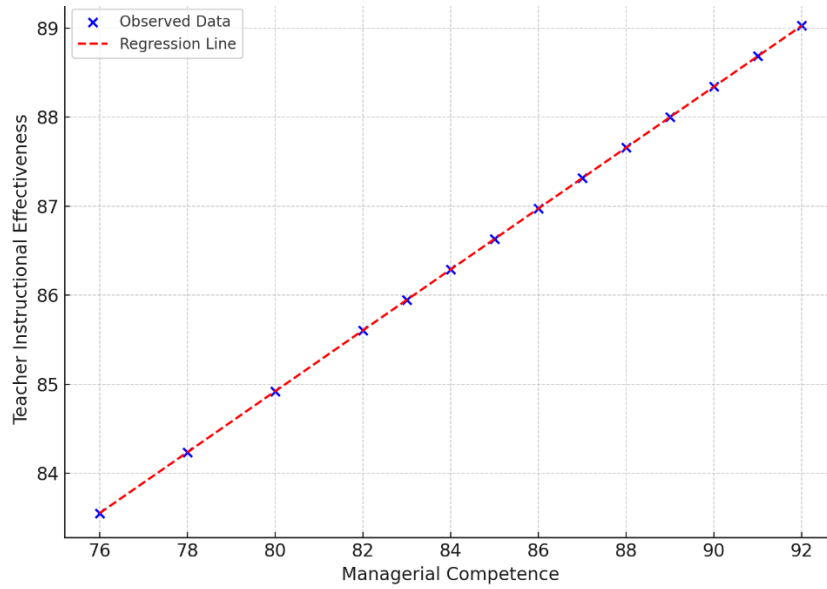


Figure 1. Scatter Plot of Managerial Competence and Teacher Effectiveness

Figure 1 visually confirms the statistical findings by displaying a clear positive linear trend. The scatter plot illustrates that as managerial competence scores increase, so do the scores of teacher instructional effectiveness, reinforcing the correlation and predictive value of leadership on instructional outcomes.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study highlight a significant and positive relationship between the principal's managerial competence and teacher instructional effectiveness. This finding aligns with the theoretical framework that positions school leadership as a critical determinant of teaching quality and educational outcomes (Bellibas, Gümüş, et al., 2021; Holzberger & Schiepe-Tiska, 2021). Specifically, the regression analysis demonstrated that 45.7% of the variance in teacher instructional effectiveness can be explained by variations in the principal's managerial competence, underscoring the influence that school leadership exerts on instructional dynamics.

These findings support earlier research, who emphasized the pivotal role of leadership in shaping teacher behavior and student achievement. Effective school leaders do not merely manage resources but create enabling environments, provide instructional guidance, and foster professional development—all of which contribute to better teaching practices (Dutta & Sahney, 2022; Goddard et al., 2021). In the context of this study, the principal's managerial competence may involve planning, decision-making, supervision, and motivational strategies that empower teachers to perform more effectively in the classroom (Anselmus Dami et al., 2022; Odo, 2023).

One theoretical lens that helps interpret the findings is Transformational Leadership Theory, which emphasizes how leaders inspire, motivate, and support their staff toward achieving collective goals (Ladkin & Patrick, 2022; Ytterstad & Olaisen, 2023). In the school setting, transformational leaders act as change agents by encouraging innovation, fostering commitment, and promoting professional

growth among teachers ([Bellibas, Kilinc, et al., 2021](#); [Kilinc et al., 2022](#)). The high correlation observed in this study suggests that when principals exhibit strong managerial competence—such as strategic planning, instructional supervision, and problem-solving—they likely engage in transformational behaviors that empower teachers and elevate their instructional practices ([Chen & Yuan, 2021](#)). This aligns with the previous study, who found that transformational leadership significantly enhances teacher morale and performance, especially when managerial structures are clear and consistent ([Alzoraiki et al., 2024](#); [L. Li & Liu, 2022](#)).

In addition, Instructional Leadership Theory provides further explanatory power. Previous study emphasized that effective principals shape the school's instructional climate by articulating clear educational goals, coordinating curriculum, and monitoring teaching quality ([Okilwa et al., 2022](#); [Tirri et al., 2021](#)). The results of this study support this framework, indicating that a principal's ability to execute managerial tasks effectively—such as classroom observation, mentoring, and instructional planning—has a tangible impact on teacher behavior and student learning processes. This reinforces the idea that managerial competence is not separate from pedagogical leadership but is an integral part of it. The implication here is that leadership development should incorporate both managerial and instructional capacities to drive school improvement holistically.

This study makes several important contributions to educational leadership research and practice. First, it offers empirical evidence from an underrepresented context—Indonesian public secondary schools—where research on the link between managerial competence and teacher effectiveness remains limited. This addresses a notable gap in the literature, which is often dominated by Western-centric perspectives. Second, by applying a quantitative approach using validated regression analysis, the study provides statistically grounded insight into how much of teacher instructional performance can be predicted by school leadership quality—specifically managerial competence. Finally, the study advances practical discourse by identifying school leadership not merely as an administrative function, but as a strategic lever for improving teaching outcomes. These insights are especially valuable for education policymakers and training institutions aiming to design more targeted leadership development programs that translate into measurable gains in classroom practice.

Despite these encouraging results, it is important to consider the study's limitations. First, the relatively small sample size ($N=16$) may affect the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, the use of self-report questionnaires introduces the possibility of social desirability bias, where respondents may rate themselves or their leaders more favorably. Future research should consider triangulating data with classroom observations or interviews to enrich the understanding of how managerial competence is enacted and perceived in practice.

Another key insight from this study relates to the partial nature of the influence observed. While managerial competence accounted for a substantial 45.7% of the variance, more than half of the variation in teacher effectiveness remains unexplained. This suggests the presence of other influencing factors such as teacher motivation, school infrastructure, professional development opportunities, or student socio-economic backgrounds. Future studies should explore these additional variables to build a more holistic model of teacher performance.

CONCLUSION

This study reaffirms the vital role of school leadership—particularly managerial competence—in shaping the quality of instruction. Rather than viewing managerial tasks as bureaucratic obligations, this research positions them as levers of professional influence that affect how teachers plan, teach, and engage students. When principals lead with clarity, strategic foresight, and instructional awareness, the effects are visible in classroom performance.

For education systems aiming to raise learning standards, this insight carries significant weight. Investing in leadership development must go beyond theoretical training and focus on practical, context-responsive managerial skills. This is especially urgent in developing education systems where leadership capacity often lags behind reform ambitions.

At the same time, the study reminds us that no single factor alone guarantees instructional success. While leadership matters, future research must explore the interplay between leadership, teacher agency, and organizational culture. By deepening our understanding of these dynamics, we can build more holistic, resilient strategies for sustainable school improvement. To advance instructional

quality in Indonesian madrasahs, targeted professional development programs should emphasize strategic, interpersonal, and technical leadership skills.

Funding and Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no funding and conflicts of interest for this research.

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