



THE INFLUENCE OF SCHOOL PRINCIPAL LEADERSHIP, TEACHER WORK MOTIVATION, AND PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE ON THE QUALITY OF PUBLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS IN BANTARBOLANG DISTRICT

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Abstract. This study aims to analyze the influence of principal leadership, work motivation, and teachers' professional competence on the quality of public elementary schools in Bantarbolang District. A quantitative approach with a correlational design was employed. The study population comprised 345 teachers and principals from 46 public elementary schools, with a sample of 185 respondents selected through proportional random sampling. Data were collected using questionnaires that had been tested for validity and reliability. The results indicate that principal leadership has a significant influence on school quality, contributing 54.4%. Teachers' work motivation also shows a significant impact, contributing 53.9%. Furthermore, teachers' professional competence contributes 41.5% to school quality. Simultaneously, the three independent variables have a positive and significant effect on school quality, with a total contribution of 75.9%. These findings suggest that improving school quality can be achieved through strengthening principal leadership, enhancing teachers' work motivation, and developing their professional competence. This research is expected to contribute to efforts in improving the quality of education in elementary schools and serve as a reference for future studies in the field of educational management.

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INTRODUCTION

Education is one of the fundamental aspects of life that plays a crucial role in enhancing human quality of life (Isman, 2023). In the context of globalization and rapid technological development, the need for high-quality education has become increasingly urgent in preparing generations capable of competing both nationally and internationally (Sinaga et al., 2021). According to Law Number 20 of 2003 on the National Education System, every citizen has the right to access quality education. This underscores the obligation of both central and local governments to provide services, facilities, and guarantees for equitable access to quality education for all citizens without discrimination. In this context, the quality of education represents a shared aspiration across all elements of the nation and must be pursued through systematic and well-planned efforts.

School quality, defined as a benchmark of educational success, encompasses various interrelated dimensions that collectively determine the effectiveness of the education system (Arifin, 2022). Generally, school quality consists of three main components: educational inputs, processes, and outputs (Azwardi, 2021). Educational inputs include all resources that support the continuity of the learning process, such as the availability of professional educators, adequate infrastructure, relevant and adaptive curricula, and a conducive learning environment (Ismunandar, 2025). The quality of inputs significantly influences a school's readiness to carry out its functions effectively (Bahri, 2022).

The educational process involves all activities occurring within the school environment, such as classroom teaching, instructional methods, teacher-student interactions, and overall school management (Herman et al., 2022). These processes reflect the internal dynamics of educational institutions and serve as the bridge between input and output. An effective and

efficient educational process not only produces academically strong graduates but also nurtures students' social, emotional, and moral skills. Educational output refers to the tangible results of the learning process, including students' academic achievement, improvements in literacy and numeracy skills, and character development in alignment with national educational values (Fahlevi, 2022). School quality can be assessed by how effectively educational institutions foster students' literacy, numeracy, and character (Rohim, 2021). These three aspects serve not only as indicators of educational success but also as reflections of the overall educational quality provided by the school. Literacy reflects students' ability to comprehend and utilize written information (Hairit et al., 2024), numeracy indicates their proficiency in interpreting data and numbers in daily life (Munahefi et al., 2023), while character education is closely linked to values such as ethics, responsibility, discipline, and integrity (Mimin, 2023).

One of the key factors influencing school quality is principal leadership (Solihah & Iskandar, 2023). Principals are not only administrators but also strategic instructional leaders who hold significant responsibility in creating an effective and conducive learning environment. Principal leadership acts as the main driving force in managing, directing, and empowering educational personnel to collectively achieve the established educational goals (Bakhrudin, 2021). Strong leadership can foster positive changes in school culture, increase teacher morale, and promote a shared sense of responsibility in improving the quality of teaching and learning (Armiyanti et al., 2023).

Effective principal leadership directly influences teacher motivation, which in turn affects student learning outcomes (Lova & Iswantir, 2023). Principals who adopt democratic and participatory leadership styles tend to encourage active involvement of teachers and staff in school decision-making processes, thereby cultivating a strong sense of ownership toward the school's vision and mission. Principals with clear vision, open communication, and strong managerial skills are more likely to inspire and foster professional relationships among school members. In such environments, teachers feel valued, supported, and motivated to enhance their competencies and innovate in the classroom. High-quality leadership focuses not only on administrative duties but also on teacher professional development, learning environment improvement, and strengthening positive school culture (Arista et al., 2023). Principals who actively support teachers through academic supervision, training, and constructive feedback can significantly enhance teacher performance. In the long term, this has a direct impact on improving teaching quality and student learning outcomes.

In addition to leadership, teacher work motivation is also a crucial factor in determining the quality of education (Indriawati et al., 2022). High levels of teacher motivation encourage educators to give their best in the teaching and learning process, which ultimately has a positive impact on student achievement (Efendi & Sholeh, 2023). Teacher motivation may stem from internal factors, such as a sense of responsibility and clear personal goals, as well as external factors, such as recognition and rewards. In this regard, the principal plays an important role in fostering a supportive climate for teacher motivation by acknowledging achievements and providing opportunities for professional growth.

Equally important in improving the quality of education is the professional competence of teachers (Illahi, 2020). Professional competence involves deep and broad mastery of subject matter and the ability to effectively manage the teaching and learning process (Agus Prayitno, 2020). Teachers with high levels of professional competence are more capable of creating conducive and effective learning environments, thus enhancing student learning outcomes (Aisah et al., 2024). Consequently, training and ongoing professional development are essential to ensure that teachers can meet the demands of an evolving curriculum and address the diverse needs of their students. This study aims to investigate and analyze the influence of principal leadership, teacher motivation, and teacher professional competence on the quality of public elementary schools in Bantarbolang District. The findings are expected to provide deeper insights into the factors influencing educational quality and offer practical recommendations for policymakers and education practitioners in improving the quality of elementary education.

Recent studies have shown that principal leadership, work motivation, and teacher professional competence are key determinants in enhancing the quality of primary education. A study conducted by [Ulfah et al. \(2024\)](#), which focused on the influence of school leadership and work motivation on teacher professional competence in public elementary schools, revealed that principal leadership contributed 97.6% and work motivation contributed 96.8% to the improvement of teachers' professional competence. These figures indicate a very strong correlation between school leadership, teacher motivation, and the professional standards demonstrated by teachers in the classroom. This supports the notion that teachers with high motivation, supported by transformational leadership, are better able to meet the professional expectations required in their pedagogical roles ([Ulfah et al., 2023](#))

Furthermore, [Damayani et al. \(2024\)](#) emphasized that the combined influence of principal leadership, teacher professionalism, and work motivation contributes 52.4% to overall school quality. This study confirms that effective managerial approaches by school leaders, consistent demonstration of teacher professionalism, and sufficient motivational support are essential components in developing quality elementary education units. These findings also highlight that efforts to improve educational quality must be based on a holistic approach one that not only emphasizes administrative aspects but also addresses the personal and professional dimensions of all school stakeholders ([Damayani et al., 2020](#)).

A similar study conducted by Dimas Bagus Wicaksono in 2021 in East Jakarta Region II showed that principal leadership and teacher motivation positively influence teacher performance. Teacher performance is a direct representation of the instructional quality delivered to students; thus, higher quality leadership and motivation lead to more optimal teacher performance. This finding suggests that leadership and motivation are not only related to school management but also have a direct impact on the classroom learning process ([Wicaksono, 2021](#)). In line with this, a study by [Asmah et al. \(2024\)](#) adds that teacher discipline also plays a significant role in determining school quality. Their research found that school leadership and teacher discipline significantly influence the quality of educational units. This finding underscores that school quality depends not only on teachers' intellectual or professional competencies but also on their attitudes and work ethics in consistently and responsibly fulfilling their duties ([Asmah et al., 2023](#)).

Although previous studies have shown that principal leadership, teacher motivation, and professional competence play significant roles in improving the quality of education especially at the school level these studies generally present partial or simultaneous correlations between each variable and educational quality. However, most existing research has predominantly focused on areas with relatively advanced educational infrastructure, and has not specifically examined rural areas, which tend to have distinct geographic, social, and cultural characteristics. Rural regions such as Bantarbolang District in Pemalang Regency face challenges such as limited educational facilities, uneven distribution of teaching personnel, and low levels of local resource support. These realities reveal a research gap, particularly in the contextualization of studies in locations with different conditions than urban or semi-urban areas where most previous research has been concentrated.

In addition, integrative studies that simultaneously analyze the three main variables principal leadership, teacher motivation, and teacher professional competence within a single comprehensive structural model are still rarely found, particularly at public elementary schools in peripheral regions. Previous research has tended to focus on only two variables or examined the influence of a single factor on educational quality, thereby failing to provide a holistic view of the interaction among these three critical elements. Therefore, this study offers novelty by adopting an integrative approach to the three primary variables within the context of a rural setting a domain that has been largely unexplored in earlier research. This study not only contributes to enriching the academic literature on educational quality management but also serves as a practical reference for regional policymakers in formulating contextually grounded and data-driven strategies to improve school quality. Thus, this research holds both urgency and

high relevance in the pursuit of equitable and just educational quality distribution across diverse regions of Indonesia.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study used a quantitative correlational research design. The research was conducted to examine the relationships between principal leadership, teacher work motivation, teacher professional competence, and the quality of public elementary schools in Bantarbolang District. The population consisted of all teachers and principals of public elementary schools in Bantarbolang District, Pemalang Regency, totaling 345 individuals across 46 schools. A proportional random sampling technique was applied, resulting in a sample of 185 respondents determined using Slovin's formula. The instrument was a questionnaire covering four main areas: school quality (36 items), principal leadership (36 items), teacher work motivation (35 items), and teacher professional competence (36 items). Each item used a Likert scale with five response options.

Validity testing was conducted using Pearson correlation, while reliability testing applied Cronbach's Alpha. Data collection took place via an online questionnaire distributed through Google Forms to the selected respondents. Data analysis was performed with SPSS version 25, including descriptive statistics, normality, multicollinearity, and heteroscedasticity tests. Simple linear regression and multiple linear regression analyses were then used to assess the partial and simultaneous effects of the independent variables on the dependent variable. Results are presented in tables and graphs to support interpretation and formulation of recommendations for improving elementary school quality in the district.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study are presented in two main sections: data description and analysis of the influence of the research variables on the quality of public elementary schools in Bantarbolang District. This study aims to examine the effect of principal leadership, teacher work motivation, and teacher professional competence on school quality. Data obtained from the questionnaires were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics to answer the research questions.

A. Data Description

1. Respondent Description

This study involved 185 respondents consisting of teachers and principals in Bantarbolang District. The respondents varied in demographic characteristics, including age, educational background, and teaching experience. The average age of the respondents was 35 years, with the majority holding a bachelor's degree (S1). Teaching experience ranged from 5 to 20 years, indicating that the respondents had a considerable level of professional experience in the field of education.

2. Description of Research Variables

a. School Quality (Y)

Descriptive analysis shows that the average score for school quality was 109.11, with a standard deviation of 8.019. The maximum score recorded was 129, and the minimum was 88. These results suggest that the overall school quality in Bantarbolang District falls into the moderate category, with notable variation among schools.

b. Principal Leadership (X1)

The average score for principal leadership was 107.53, with a standard deviation of 8.987. The maximum score reached 131, and the minimum was 84. These figures indicate that the quality of school leadership in Bantarbolang is moderate, though there remains room for improvement in certain areas.

c. Teacher Work Motivation (X2)

The average score for teacher work motivation was 111.64, with a standard deviation of 11.475. The highest score obtained was 140, while the lowest was 79. This implies that



teacher motivation levels are relatively high, but further efforts are still needed to optimize their motivation fully.

d. Teacher Professional Competence (X3)

The average score for professional competence was 109.29, with a standard deviation of 8.713. The maximum score recorded was 132, and the minimum was 87. These results suggest that the level of professional competence among teachers in Bantarbolang is moderate, with a number of teachers demonstrating a high level of expertise.

B. Analysis of Variable Influence

1. The Effect of School Principal's Leadership on School Quality

Based on the results of linear regression analysis, the variable of school principal's leadership has a significant effect on school quality, as evidenced by the regression coefficient value of 0.658 and a significance level of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$). This finding indicates that every one-unit increase in the school principal's leadership variable will result in a 0.658-unit increase in school quality. The partial test (t-test) further supports this result, with a calculated t-value of 14.781, which significantly exceeds the critical t-value of 1.97301. Therefore, the hypothesis stating that the school principal's leadership has a significant influence on school quality is accepted. This finding is consistent with previous studies emphasizing the strategic role of school principals in managing and directing all school elements to achieve the desired educational quality standards. Effective leadership is known to create a conducive work climate, enhance teacher motivation, and positively contribute to student learning outcomes.

2. The Effect of Teacher Work Motivation on School Quality

The results of linear regression analysis indicate that teacher work motivation significantly contributes to the improvement of school quality, with a regression coefficient value of 0.513 and a significance level of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$). This means that every one-unit increase in teacher work motivation is estimated to raise school quality by 0.513 units. The validity of this influence is further confirmed by the t-test results, which show a calculated t-value of 14.618, well above the critical t-value of 1.97301. Therefore, the hypothesis stating that teacher work motivation significantly affects school quality is empirically accepted. This finding underscores the importance of motivational factors in the context of educator professionalism. Teachers with high work motivation tend to demonstrate greater dedication and responsibility in carrying out their duties, improving the quality of teaching, and actively engaging in school development activities. This condition indirectly creates a more productive and conducive learning environment for students, which ultimately positively impacts learning outcomes and overall school quality indicators.

3. The Effect of Teacher Professional Competence on School Quality

Linear regression analysis reveals that teacher professional competence has a significant influence on school quality, with a regression coefficient of 0.593 and a significance level of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$). This indicates that each one-unit increase in teacher professional competence contributes to a 0.593-unit improvement in school quality. Moreover, the t-test results show a calculated t-value of 14.401, significantly exceeding the critical t-value of 1.97301, thus accepting the hypothesis that teacher professional competence significantly affects school quality. This finding confirms that the development of teacher professional competence is a crucial factor in efforts to enhance education quality. Adequate competence enables teachers to design and implement effective instruction, manage classrooms efficiently, and conduct accurate evaluations, all of which positively impact overall school quality.

4. Simultaneous Effect of School Principal Leadership, Teacher Work Motivation, and Teacher Professional Competence on School Quality

The results of multiple regression analysis reveal that the variables of school principal leadership, teacher work motivation, and professional competence simultaneously have a significant effect on school quality. This is indicated by the coefficient of determination (R^2) value of 0.759, which means that 75.9% of the variance in school quality can be explained jointly by these three independent variables. Furthermore, the ANOVA test results show a



calculated F-value of 190.315, which is significantly greater than the critical F-value of 3.05, with a significance level of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$). Therefore, the hypothesis stating the simultaneous effect of these three variables on school quality is empirically accepted. This finding underscores the importance of synergy between effective leadership, high work motivation, and adequate professional competence in driving improvements in educational quality within the school environment.

The results of this study indicate that school principal leadership, teacher work motivation, and professional competence significantly influence the quality of public elementary schools in Bantarbolang District. These findings align with theories stating that effective leadership creates a supportive environment for both teachers and students and enhances the quality of learning. Good school principal leadership not only affects teacher motivation but also fosters a positive school climate, which in turn impacts student learning outcomes. High teacher work motivation has been proven to be an essential factor in improving school quality. Motivated teachers tend to demonstrate greater commitment and dedication in performing their duties, thereby delivering quality instruction. Moreover, strong professional competence among teachers also significantly contributes to school quality. Teachers with adequate knowledge and skills are capable of managing the learning process more effectively, thus improving student achievement. This study emphasizes the importance of synergy among school principal leadership, teacher motivation, and professional competence in efforts to enhance education quality in elementary schools. Therefore, policymakers and educational practitioners need to consider these three aspects when designing programs aimed at sustainable and optimal educational quality improvement.

The influence of school principal leadership on the quality of public elementary schools in Bantarbolang District is evident from the study results, which demonstrate a significant relationship between the two variables. Data collected from 185 respondents yielded a mean score of 107.53 with a standard deviation of 8.987. The maximum score was 131 and the minimum was 84. Correlation analysis revealed a positive relationship between school principal leadership and school quality, with a correlation coefficient (r) of 0.738 and a significance value of 0.000, indicating a significant positive correlation as the p -value is less than 0.05 ($0.000 < 0.05$). Simple regression analysis produced the equation $\hat{Y} = 38.330 + 0.658X_1$, indicating that every one-unit increase in school principal leadership increases school quality by 0.658 units. The partial t -test showed a significance level of 0.000 and a t -value of 14.781, which exceeds the critical t -value of 1.97301. Thus, it can be concluded that school principal leadership has a significant partial effect on school quality. The ANOVA test further supports this conclusion, with an F-value of 218.474 exceeding the critical value of 3.89 and a significance of 0.000 (< 0.05), confirming the hypothesis that school principal leadership influences school quality. The coefficient of determination (R^2) of 54.4% indicates that the leadership variable explains 54.4% of the variance in school quality, while the remaining 45.6% is influenced by other factors outside the study variables.

The effect of teacher work motivation on the quality of public elementary schools in Bantarbolang District also shows significant results based on this study's data analysis. From 185 respondents, the mean score was 111.64 with a standard deviation of 11.475. The maximum score was 140 and the minimum 79. Correlation analysis between teacher work motivation and school quality yielded an r -value of 0.734 and a two-tailed significance of 0.000. This confirms a significant positive relationship, as the significance value is below 0.05. The simple regression analysis resulted in the equation $\hat{Y} = 51.848 + 0.513X_2$, implying that each one-unit increase in teacher work motivation raises school quality by 0.513 units. The partial t -test showed a significance probability of $0.000 < 0.10$ and a t -value of $14.618 > 1.97301$, meaning teacher motivation has a significant partial effect on school quality. Furthermore, the ANOVA test showed an F-value of 213.683, greater than the critical value of 3.89, with a significance of 0.000 (< 0.05), thus accepting the second hypothesis. An R^2 of 53.9% indicates that teacher work motivation accounts for 53.9% of the variance in school quality, while 46.1% is attributed to other factors beyond this study.



The influence of teacher professional competence on the quality of public elementary schools in Bantarbolang District also yielded significant results. The study data from 185 respondents showed a mean score of 109.29 with a standard deviation of 8.713. Maximum and minimum scores were 132 and 87, respectively. Correlation analysis between professional competence and school quality found an r -value of 0.644 and a two-tailed significance of 0.000, indicating a positive and significant relationship ($p < 0.05$). Simple regression analysis formulated the equation $\hat{Y} = 44.290 + 0.593X_3$, meaning every one-unit increase in professional competence enhances school quality by 0.593 units. The partial t -test resulted in a significance probability of $0.000 < 0.10$ and a t -value of $11.401 > 1.97301$, confirming a significant partial effect of professional competence on school quality. The ANOVA test revealed an F -value of 129.974, which is higher than the critical value of 3.89, with a significance of 0.000 (< 0.05), thereby accepting the third hypothesis. The R^2 value of 41.5% indicates that professional competence contributes 41.5% to school quality improvement, while 58.5% is influenced by other unexamined factors.

The simultaneous effect of school principal leadership, teacher work motivation, and professional competence on the quality of public elementary schools in Bantarbolang District is also significant, based on this study's analysis. The multiple regression analysis produced the equation $\hat{Y} = 12.999 + 0.353X_1 + 0.283X_2 + 0.243X_3$. The regression coefficient for school principal leadership (X_1) is 0.353, indicating that a one-unit increase in leadership increases school quality by 0.353 units, assuming other variables remain constant. Similarly, the coefficient for work motivation (X_2) is 0.283, meaning that a one-unit increase in motivation raises school quality by 0.283 units. Meanwhile, the coefficient for professional competence (X_3) is 0.243, indicating that every one-unit increase in competence improves school quality by 0.243 units.

To test the fourth hypothesis, an ANOVA test showed an F -value of 283.120, greater than the critical F -value of 3.05 at a 5% significance level ($\alpha = 0.05$). Since the significance value of 0.000 is less than 0.05, H_0 is rejected, and H_a is accepted. This means the three variables simultaneously have a significant effect on school quality. The R^2 value of 84.7% indicates that these three variables explain 84.7% of the variance in school quality, while the remaining 15.3% is influenced by other factors not studied here. School quality represents the overall educational institution's total quality, reflecting how well a school achieves educational goals and meets community expectations. In this context, school principal leadership plays a strategic role in creating a conducive school climate and empowering teachers. Effective leadership promotes improved teacher performance in terms of both motivation and competence. Highly motivated teachers tend to exert maximum effort during the teaching process, inspiring students to reach their full potential. Likewise, teachers with strong professional competence can design and deliver more effective and engaging learning experiences. Therefore, the combination of strong school principal leadership, high teacher work motivation, and adequate professional competence can significantly enhance the quality of education in public elementary schools, especially in Bantarbolang District.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Based on the collected data and the results of the analysis, it can be concluded that there is a significant influence of school principal leadership, teacher work motivation, and teacher professional competence on the quality of public elementary schools in Bantarbolang District. First, school principal leadership affects school quality by 54.4%. Among the leadership dimensions, the highest contribution comes from the orientation toward improving learning quality at 65.4%, while the lowest contribution is from the dimension of developing a positive school climate at 33.2%. Meanwhile, the highest school quality dimension is output at 97.9%, and the lowest is the process dimension at 76.9%. Second, work motivation also influences school quality by 53.9%, with the highest contribution from the internal motivation dimension at 70.4% and the lowest from the external motivation dimension at 70.1%. Third, teacher professional competence contributes 41.5% to school quality, where the highest dimension is



the ability to understand student characteristics at 82.8%, and the lowest is the ability to manage learning at 20.7%. Simultaneously, these three variables school principal leadership, teacher work motivation, and teacher professional competence jointly affect school quality by 75.9% in public elementary schools in Bantarbolang District. Among these variables, school principal leadership provides the highest contribution, while teacher professional competence provides the lowest contribution.

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