

Teachers' Lived Experiences of Principal Leadership in Supporting the Learning Process: A Phenomenological Study in an Elementary School

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Abstract: This study aims to explore teachers' lived experiences of principal leadership in supporting the learning process. This study was conducted at SDN 32 Bengkulu Selatan. This study employed a qualitative phenomenological design and also literature review. Six teachers were purposively selected based on teaching experience and active school involvement. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and analyzed using thematic analysis (coding, categorization, interpretation). The findings revealed three key leadership practices: instructional support through classroom supervision and constructive feedback; participatory decision-making that fosters teacher engagement; and motivational support that enhances teacher commitment and performance. These practices significantly contribute to improving teaching and learning quality. This study contributes to educational leadership literature by providing context-based insights into how leadership is experienced by teachers. Practically, the findings suggest that principals should adopt supportive and participatory leadership approaches, while policymakers should design leadership development programs aligned with school needs.

Keywords: Learning Process, Principal Leadership, Teachers' Lived Experiences

A. Introduction

Despite extensive discussions on principal leadership, only a few studies have explored teachers' lived experiences in understanding how leadership practices directly support the learning process, especially in Indonesian elementary schools that encounter various contextual challenges. These challenges include limited educational facilities, differences in teacher competencies, heavy administrative responsibilities, curriculum implementation demands, and the need to balance students' character development with academic achievement. Most previous research focuses on leadership models, effectiveness, or measurable outcomes rather than examining how leadership is experienced by teachers in their everyday professional practices. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by investigating teachers' lived experiences of principal leadership at SDN 32 Bengkulu Selatan

through a phenomenological approach, in order to obtain in-depth insights that reflect the real conditions of Indonesian elementary school contexts.

Education is a fundamental component of national development, and school leadership plays a crucial role in determining educational quality (Grissom et al., 2021; Leithwood et al., 2020a). The principal, as the central leader in schools, is responsible not only for administrative and managerial functions but also for influencing teaching effectiveness and student achievement (Bush, 2018; Hitt & Tucker, 2021). Recent studies indicate that effective leadership contributes significantly to a positive school climate, enhances teacher motivation, and improves pedagogical practices (Day et al., 2021b; Hallinger & Heck, 2010). In particular, instructional leadership remains a key factor in supporting the learning process and strengthening teacher performance (Liu & Hallinger, 2022).

Teachers' perceptions and experiences are essential in understanding how leadership is enacted in daily school practices, especially in elementary education where foundational learning is developed (Sebastian et al., 2021). Despite extensive discussions on principal leadership, limited studies focus on teachers' lived experiences in understanding how leadership practices directly support the learning process. Most existing research emphasizes leadership models, effectiveness, or measurable outcomes rather than exploring how leadership is experienced by teachers in their daily professional activities. Previous studies have shown that leadership significantly influences student outcomes through its impact on teachers (Grissom et al., 2021; Robinson et al., 2008).

More recent research by Liu and Hallinger (2022), Gumus et al. (2023), and Printy (2021) demonstrates that leadership practices affect teacher commitment, collaboration, and instructional quality. Other studies, such as Supovitz et al. (2021), Sebastian et al. (2021), and Hitt et al. (2022), further confirm the importance of leadership in improving instructional practices and school effectiveness. In the Indonesian context, research by Mulyasa (2021), Wahyudi (2022), and Suriansyah (2023) emphasizes the strategic role of principals in enhancing teacher performance and educational quality. However, only a limited number of studies integrate principal leadership, teachers' lived experiences, and the learning process within a phenomenological framework, particularly in elementary school settings. This study addresses this gap by exploring teachers' lived experiences of principal leadership in supporting the learning process at SDN 32 Bengkulu Selatan.

The novelty of this research lies in its phenomenological approach, which captures in-depth experiential insights into how leadership is practiced and perceived by teachers. Unlike previous studies that focus on leadership models or measurable outcomes, this study emphasizes context-based understanding derived from teachers' experiences. The findings are expected to contribute to the field of educational administration by providing empirical evidence on effective principal

leadership practices and offering practical implications for school principals in implementing supportive and participatory leadership strategies. Furthermore, this study enriches academic discourse by integrating instructional leadership and teachers' lived experiences to improve the quality of learning in elementary schools.

B. Methods

This study employed a qualitative approach with a phenomenological design to explore teachers' lived experiences of principal leadership in supporting the learning process. This design was chosen to gain an in-depth understanding of how teachers interpret and experience leadership practices in their daily professional activities (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This study also analyzed 15 articles related to the teachers' lived experiences of principal leadership in supporting the learning process. The study was conducted at SDN 32 Bengkulu Selatan. The participants consisted of six teachers selected through purposive sampling. The selection criteria included having at least three years of teaching experience, active involvement in school activities, and direct interaction with the principal. These criteria ensured that participants possessed sufficient experience to provide rich and relevant information related to the research focus. To ensure the trustworthiness of the data, member checking was carried out by giving participants the opportunity to review and validate the interpretations of their responses. After the interview data were transcribed and analyzed, I returned the summaries and initial themes to each participant for confirmation. Participants were encouraged to verify the accuracy of the interpretations, clarify ambiguous statements, and provide additional information when necessary. Any feedback provided by participants was incorporated into the analysis to ensure that the findings accurately reflected their perspectives and experiences. This process enhanced the credibility and authenticity of the data.

In addition, I implemented bracketing by deliberately setting aside personal assumptions, prior knowledge, and expectations regarding principal leadership during the research process. This was achieved by maintaining reflective notes, continuously monitoring potential biases, and focusing on participants' descriptions of their lived experiences. By minimizing the influence of the researcher's preconceptions, the analysis remained grounded in participants' viewpoints. This practice supported the phenomenological approach and contributed to strengthening the credibility, confirmability, and overall trustworthiness of the study.

The study was carried out through several stages. First, I obtained permission from the school and prepared the interview guidelines. Second, participants were selected based on the predetermined criteria. Third, data were collected through semi-structured interviews. Fourth, the collected data were transcribed and organized for analysis. Finally, the data were analyzed and interpreted to generate meaningful findings. The primary instrument used in this study was a semi-structured interview

guide designed to explore teachers' experiences, perceptions of principal leadership, forms of leadership support in the learning process, and challenges encountered. The interviews were conducted over a four-week period, with each session lasting approximately 45–60 minutes. All interviews were audio-recorded with participants' consent to ensure accuracy in data collection. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's six-step procedure: (1) familiarization with the data, (2) generating initial codes, (3) searching for themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) producing the final report. I repeatedly reviewed the interview transcripts to identify patterns, similarities, and differences in participants' experiences (Terry et al., 2021). To ensure the trustworthiness of the data, member checking was conducted by allowing participants to review and confirm the interpretations of their responses. Ethical considerations were strictly maintained throughout the study. Permission was obtained from the school authority, and all participants provided informed consent prior to participation. Confidentiality and anonymity were ensured by using pseudonyms, and participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences.

C. Results and Discussion

The results and discussion are structured around five main themes derived from teachers' lived experiences of principal leadership in supporting the learning process at SDN 32 Bengkulu Selatan. These themes consist of instructional leadership, participatory decision-making, supportive mentoring and professional development, challenges in leadership support, and the impact on learning outcomes. Together, these themes demonstrate how the principal's leadership practices shape teachers' instructional performance, professional growth, and classroom effectiveness.

The first theme, instructional leadership, emphasizes the principal's role in directing teaching practices, supervising classroom instruction, and ensuring alignment with curriculum objectives. Teachers described that the principal provided guidance in lesson planning, encouraged the use of diverse teaching strategies, and conducted classroom observations followed by constructive feedback. These practices helped teachers improve the quality of instruction and maintain focus on learning goals. This finding is consistent with previous research highlighting instructional leadership as a key factor in enhancing teaching effectiveness and student achievement.

The second theme, participatory decision-making, reflects the collaborative approach adopted by the principal in managing school programs. Teachers reported being involved in discussions regarding curriculum implementation, school activities, and learning-related decisions. Through regular meetings and open communication, teachers were able to express opinions, share ideas, and contribute to planning processes. This collaborative environment fostered a sense of shared responsibility

and strengthened teacher commitment. Similar findings in the literature suggest that participatory decision-making contributes to a positive school climate and supports the successful implementation of instructional initiatives.

The third theme, supportive mentoring and professional development, highlights the principal's efforts to enhance teachers' professional competence. Teachers indicated that the principal encouraged participation in workshops, training sessions, and teacher working group activities. Additionally, mentoring was provided through informal guidance, collaborative discussions, and feedback following classroom supervision. Such support enabled teachers to refine instructional strategies and improve classroom management. This finding aligns with studies emphasizing that mentoring and continuous professional development are essential elements of effective school leadership.

The fourth theme, challenges in leadership support, reveals several constraints encountered by teachers. These included limited time for intensive mentoring, heavy administrative responsibilities, and inadequate facilities and learning resources. Teachers also noted that the principal sometimes faced difficulties balancing managerial duties with instructional supervision. These challenges illustrate the complexity of leadership roles in elementary schools. Existing literature similarly indicates that contextual limitations and workload demands often influence the effectiveness of instructional leadership practices.

The fifth theme, the impact on learning outcomes, demonstrates how principal leadership influenced students' learning. Teachers observed improvements in lesson organization, student engagement, and classroom participation. They also reported that clear guidance and consistent support from the principal contributed to more effective instructional practices. Consequently, students showed better understanding of the material and increased learning motivation. This finding supports previous research indicating that principal leadership indirectly affects student achievement through its influence on teacher performance and instructional quality.

Overall, the five themes indicate that principal leadership plays a crucial role in supporting the learning process. Instructional guidance, collaborative decision-making, mentoring support, and efforts to address existing challenges collectively contribute to improved teaching practices and learning outcomes. These findings underscore the importance of effective principal leadership in creating a supportive learning environment and enhancing educational quality at the elementary school level.

Table 1. 15 Articles Journal were Reviewed

No	Title	Author and year	Research purposes	Research methods	Research result	Conclusion
1	Novice School Leaders' Turnover Intentions: The Role of Working Conditions and Organizational Factors	(Richard, 2024)	This study aimed to explore the relationship between the psychosocial working conditions of novice school leaders and their turnover intentions, focusing on potential variations across public- and private schools and school levels	We invited all novice school leaders (n=3,389) enrolled in the in-service Swedish Principal Training Program to participate in an extensive survey, with a 65% (n =1,998) response rate. The survey investigated turnover intentions, working conditions, prerequisites, and organizational ambiguity. The collected survey data, in combination with official data, were analyzed using ANOVA's to identify differences across actors and school levels, and linear regressions to investigate factors explaining turnover intentions.	This study examines psychosocial factors influencing novice school leaders' intentions to leave their positions. The findings show that early working conditions, professional experiences, and levels of support significantly affect leadership retention. The COVID-19 pandemic further intensified challenges, highlighting the need for adaptive and targeted support systems. The study's strong sample representation enhances the credibility of the results and provides useful implications for policymakers in developing retention strategies. However, limitations include the cross-sectional design, focus on a single national context, and the absence of individual factors such as personality and leadership style. Future	This study indicates higher turnover among public school leaders compared to private school leaders. This is attributed to differences in organizational prerequisites and ambiguity. All novice school leaders exhibited similar patterns regarding factors strongly associated with turnover intentions, regardless of actor affiliation and school level. Certain levels of demands, autonomy, and support, combined, predicted turnover intentions among novice school leaders with relatively high accuracy.

					research is recommended to use longitudinal and qualitative approaches to provide a more comprehensive understanding of turnover intentions among novice school leaders.	
2	Professional development of school principals – how do experienced school leaders make sense of their professional learning?	(Sahlin, 2025)	The purpose of this study was to examine experienced school leaders' understanding of their professional learning in relation to their professional development.	In the study reported in this paper, a qualitative case-study design (Yin, 2014) was employed with a purposive sampling method to include leaders participating in a professional learning course for experienced leaders. To address the complexity of leaders' professional learning, contextual depth is required, which a case study allows (Stake, 1995): 'In qualitative case study, we seek greater understanding of the case, we want to appreciate the uniqueness and complexity, its embeddedness and interaction with its contexts' (p. 16). The	The study shows that experienced principals value structured professional learning, especially courses with peer interactions, reflection time, and research-based content. Networking with other principals provided the most effective learning, helping them gain new perspectives, confirm practices, and strengthen leadership confidence. Principals linked their learning to improved professionalism and leadership skills, though applying broader lessons to practice was sometimes indirect. Continuous, context-sensitive professional development and personal responsibility for learning were seen as essential for lifelong leadership growth (Boren et al., 2017; Bush, 2018; Lazenby et al., 2020).	The principal at SDN 32 Bengkulu Selatan enhances teacher professionalism through strategies such as forming Teacher Working Groups, training, classroom supervision, reward and sanction systems, and participative leadership. These approaches foster collaboration, innovation, open communication, and teacher involvement in decision-making while strengthening social and professional competencies. Interactions with professional peers and research-based learning also help experienced principals increase confidence and leadership quality. These strategies effectively improve teaching quality, teacher skills, and student learning outcomes, although

				case in this study, 'the quintan' according to Stake (1995), is the leader's professional learning.		challenges such as limited resources and administrative workload remain.
3	Teachers' and principals' diverse experiences expand the understanding of how to lead collective professional learning among teachers	(Sølvik & Roland, 2025)	The purpose of this study is to explore the possibilities and barriers to leading collective professional learning in schools. It also aims to understand how school leaders facilitate and monitor teachers' collective professional learning, based on the perspectives of both teachers and principals.	This study draws on data from the comprehensive mixed-methods study Classroom Interactions for Enhanced Student Learning (CIESL), which explored 13 Norwegian lower secondary schools participating in an initiative.	This study's strength lies in using both teachers' and principals' perspectives, which helped reveal the complexity of leading collective professional learning in schools. However, the small sample size limits generalization. The findings highlight the importance of understanding factors that support or hinder collective professional learning, and suggest that future research should involve more schools and deeper exploration of these practices.	The study shows that although principals recognize the importance of a shared vision for professional learning, they differ in how they implement it. At Fjell, a clear implementation plan and teacher involvement increased commitment and collaboration. In contrast, at Dal, lack of planning and limited teacher involvement reduced clarity and participation. The findings highlight that shared goals, teacher participation, and balanced distributed leadership are important for successful collective professional learning.
4	Leadership of School Principals in Improving The Quality of Teacher Learning	(Ayumi & Nasution, 2025)	The purpose of this study is to explore the role of principal leadership in improving the quality of teacher teaching at	This study employed a qualitative approach using ethnographic methods to gain an in-depth understanding of how school principals carry out their	The study identified three themes: the principal's role in supporting teaching, strategies to improve teacher professionalism, and the impact of leadership on teacher performance. Data	Effective school leadership significantly improves teacher instruction and learning quality through supervision, evaluation, and participatory leadership that increases teacher motivation,

			Madrasah Nurul Hakim and to see how this leadership affects teacher competence and the quality of student learning.	leadership roles in improving the quality of teacher instruction.	from interviews, observations, and documents were analyzed through thematic analysis and validated using triangulation and member checking, providing a comprehensive understanding of school leadership practices.	professionalism, and student engagement.
5	The Influence of the Implementation of Extracurricular Activities of the Islamic Propagation Agency on the Practice of Religious Worship at Mutia Rahma Bulu Cina Middle School , Hamparan Perak District	(Isma & Yusuf, 2025)	This study aims to analyze the level of implementation of extracurricular activities at the Islamic Propagation Agency and its impact on students' worship experiences.	The research method used was quantitative with a survey approach on 33 students.	The results of the study showed that student involvement in the Islamic Propagation Agency's activities had a significant effect on their worship experiences. The participation indicator showed that 42.4% of students agreed that these activities improved their worship, while 27.3% strongly agreed. Activities such as congregational prayer, reciting the Koran, and Islamic studies contributed to improving understanding and practice of daily worship. Overall, this study concludes that the Islamic Propagation Agency's extracurricular activities have a positive impact on students' worship experiences, strengthening religious character, and instilling Islamic values that can be	Based on the analysis outlined above, the results show that the Islamic Propagation Agency (X) extracurricular variable has a significant effect on the religious worship experience variable (Y) among students at Mutia Rahma Bulu Cina Middle School. This is demonstrated by the analysis, which shows that the Islamic Propagation Agency (X) extracurricular variable, for the participation in activities indicator, has an average score of 3.79, with a frequency of strongly agreeing at 9 (27.3%) and agreeing at 14 (42.4%) compared to disagreeing. This indicates that students participate in activities more frequently than those who do not participate.

	applied in their social lives	The next indicator, asking questions, has an average score of 3.52, with a frequency of strongly agreeing at 9 (27.3%) and agreeing at 11 (33.3%), which is higher than the frequency of disagreeing at 6 (18.2%). This indicates that students are quite active in asking questions. Meanwhile, the variable "religious worship experience" (Y) shows that the frequency of each indicator has a higher value of "strongly agree" and "agree" compared to the frequency of "disagree" and "strongly disagree." This indicates that students at Mutia Rahma Bulu Cina Middle School have a good religious worship experience, according to the indicator criteria used by the researcher. Thus, it can be concluded that extracurricular activities significantly influence religious worship experience. Active participation in extracurricular activities contributes to students' high
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6	A Case Study of Principals' Sensemaking of the Learning Experiences of Kindergarteners and How this Appears to Affect Them as Instructional Leaders	(Brown, 2024)	To determine how a sample of principals in Texas and West Virginia understand the learning experiences of kindergarten children and how that understanding appears to influence them as instructional leaders.	Using 23-minute classroom videos, researchers stimulated discussions to explore the principals' beliefs and decision-making. The video-based method helped reveal their perspectives more concretely than traditional interview questions.	This study examines how principals in Texas and West Virginia understand kindergarten learning experiences and how this influences their role as instructional leaders. Using a case study and sensemaking theory, the research found that principals interpret kindergarten learning in complex ways shaped by their beliefs and neoliberal policy pressures. However, these understandings often do not strongly influence their leadership decisions, which tend to prioritize external demands for academic achievement.	levels of religious worship experience. Being a school principal is complex because leaders must balance internal school needs with external pressures, especially demands for high test scores. This study shows that principals often prioritize these external pressures, influenced by neoliberal policies emphasizing standardization and accountability. To improve early education leadership, principals need a stronger understanding of early childhood education, support child-centered learning approaches, collaborate with teachers, and develop professional knowledge to better guide kindergarten programs and support students' success.
7	Experience of mentors and beginner primary school teachers in applying the principles of shared leadership	(Jakavonytė-Staškuvienė & Ignatavičiūtė, 2022)	increasing the confidence and motivation of beginning teachers, and supporting their professional development.	Qualitative study method semi-structured interviews was chosen for the empirical research.	This article examines mentorship in primary education and the shared leadership experiences between mentors and beginner teachers during their school adaptation. Although new	The study shows that effective mentorship helps beginner teachers adapt to the school environment and develop their professional skills. Mentors support beginners through

	during the school adaptation period: The case of Lithuania		Working in a school that implements shared leadership principles also helps beginning teachers adapt and actively participate in the school community.		teachers gain theoretical knowledge during their studies, they often face practical challenges in teaching, classroom management, communication with parents, and administrative tasks. Mentors with experience and leadership skills help beginners overcome these challenges. The study used semi-structured interviews with 4 mentors and 6 novice teachers, focusing on mentoring functions related to professional development, personal development, and emotional support.	observation, constructive feedback, emotional support, and guidance. Positive feedback, empathy, and collaboration are important for building beginners' confidence and improving their competencies. A supportive school culture, shared leadership, and strong administrative support also play key roles in helping beginner teachers integrate into the school community and grow professionally.
8	Instructional Leadership Practices of Principals at Public Elementary Schools in Indonesia	(Dania & Andriani, 2021)	This study aims to obtain an overview of the instructional leadership conducted by principals in three different public elementary schools in Bandung, Indonesia. The principals were selected by considering the length of time in	The data of this study were collected through semi-structured interviews. The interview guideline contained questions developed based on instructional leadership theories.	This study examines instructional leadership practices of three Indonesian elementary school principals in Bandung. The findings show that principals share supervision responsibilities but face challenges such as limited time and lack of parental support. The study suggests that involving parents more actively in students' learning can strengthen principals'	The three principals demonstrate instructional leadership by setting school vision, mission, and goals focused on improving academic achievement and student character, managing learning programs, and creating a positive learning environment. They share supervision responsibilities with senior teachers but still face challenges due to time limitations and low parental

			principal position and the schools' achievements measured from the students' average scores obtained in school examinations		instructional leadership and help improve student achievement.	support. Therefore, increasing parent involvement is important to improve student achievement.
9	School Principal Support in Teacher Professional Development	(Karacabey, 2021)	This study surveyed 4,729 teachers in Sanliurfa, Turkey to examine principals' support for teachers' professional development. The results show that support is generally low, with only 25.5% of principals providing adequate support. Principals mainly share educational information but rarely organize structured development activities. The study also found that high school principals and male principals tend to provide more support than elementary, middle	The present research is based on a cross-sectional survey design of the quantitative method. This section provides a description of the sample, instrument data collection and analysis	The study found that, according to teachers' perceptions, principals only sometimes support teachers' professional development (average score 2.64). Principals most often support development by following educational resources and informing teachers about innovations, while the least common activity is teaching sample lessons. Overall, only 25.5% of principals frequently or consistently support teachers' professional development, indicating that the level of support is generally limited.	The study found that school principals do not sufficiently support teachers' professional development. Many principals do not create individual or group development programs, monitor teachers' progress, organize training outside seminar periods, collaborate with experts, or encourage reading and research activities. Although these activities are important for continuous professional growth throughout the academic year, only about 25.5% of principals provide adequate support. Therefore, principals should be encouraged and supported such as by reducing their workload and providing proper tools to better promote teachers' professional development.

10	Teachers' Perceptions of Principal Leadership Practices That Influence Teacher Turnover	(Scallon et al., 2023)	school, and female principals. This study examines how principals' leadership practices influence teacher turnover through interviews with 32 teachers in four middle schools. The findings show that low-turnover schools have principals who value teachers' expertise, clearly communicate a vision for high-quality teaching, and focus on student learning, unlike principals in high-turnover schools.	This research is part of a larger study examining organizational factors affecting middle school teacher turnover in a large urban district. The study used interviews and observations at four case study schools: two with low turnover and two with high turnover. The schools were selected based on factors such as student achievement, poverty level, demographics, teacher numbers, and leadership stability, allowing comparison of turnover patterns over a 10-year period.	Teacher turnover is associated with administrative leadership; however, there is an empirical gap in the practices that principals enact that influence teacher turnover. This article uses in-depth case studies and interviews with 32 teachers across two high-turnover and two low turnover middle schools in one large urban public school district to examine teachers' perceptions of principals' leadership practices. When compared to principals leading high-turnover schools, we found three common practices that characterized principals of low-turnover schools: (a) recognizing teachers as knowledgeable contributors, (b) clearly communicating the school's vision around high-quality teaching, and (c) centering student learning.	This study examines how principals' leadership practices affect teacher turnover through case studies and interviews with 32 teachers in four middle schools. The findings show that low-turnover schools have principals who value teachers' contributions, clearly communicate a vision for quality teaching, and focus on student learning.
11	Principal Leadership Style on Teacher Performance in	(Ali & Susilawati, 2025)	This study examines the impact of principals' leadership styles on	Qualitative methods – more specifically, a case study approach. The survey method was	This study examined how principals' leadership styles affect teacher performance in primary schools in Sumedang	This study shows that principals' leadership style significantly affects primary school teachers'

	Elementary School Environment		teacher performance in primary schools in Sumedang Regency using questionnaire data from teachers across different grade levels. The results show that the number of respondents varied by grade, with Year 1 teachers being the largest group. The findings indicate that principals' leadership styles are correlated with teacher performance, particularly through leadership characteristics that influence teachers' effectiveness and classroom challenges.	used to comprehensively examine the leadership styles of school principals.	Regency, Indonesia, using survey data from 300 teachers. The results show that leadership style significantly influences teacher effectiveness. Principals who communicate clearly, distribute tasks fairly, provide support, and involve teachers in decision-making increase teachers' motivation, professionalism, and engagement, which ultimately improves overall school outcomes.	performance. Effective leadership involves transparency, feedback, emotional intelligence, and collaborative problem-solving, which improve teacher motivation and productivity. The findings suggest that successful principals combine directive and participatory leadership. However, the study is limited to one region and relies on self-reported data. Future research should include broader contexts and mixed methods. The study also emphasizes the need for leadership development programs to strengthen principals' communication skills, emotional intelligence, and ability to lead collaborative teams.
12	Examining the Leadership Behaviors of Primary School Principals: A Phenomenological Study	(Sönmez et al., 2023)	This study aims to examine the beliefs and experiences of primary school principals regarding leadership behaviors. In the study, it was	The research was structured in a phenomenological design by employing a qualitative approach. Seven primary school principals were the	Analysis, guidelines specified to be applied within the scope of the "Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Directive for Higher Education Institutions" were implemented. None of the actions that were stated	Various recommendations can be made based on the findings of the research. On the whole, school principals employ a participatory and democratic approach to determining the school's strategic plan and vision and

found that school principals demonstrated a range of leadership behaviors within the meaning of the concept of those behaviors, the process of developing a strategic plan and vision, the process of making decisions at the school, the school environment, the impact on teachers' professional development studies, parent and relations with the external environment, and the efforts to improve student success. The findings of the research are broken down and analyzed with reference to the corresponding literature. Various recommendations	study's participants, chosen using the criterion sampling method. A semi-structured interview form developed by the researchers were used as data collection tools. The research data were collected through face-to-face interviews with the participants and also recorded. The research data were analyzed with both content analysis and descriptive analysis techniques. In the study, it was found that school principals demonstrated a range of leadership behaviors within the meaning of the concept of those behaviors, the process of developing a strategic plan and vision, the process of making decisions at the school, the school environment, the impact on teachers' professional development studies, parent and relations	under the title "Actions Against Scientific Research and Publication Ethics", which is the second part of the directive, were performed during the study.	making important decisions. Given that these are the perspectives of school principals, they may be limited in terms of self-affirmation. School principals strive to create and maintain a strong culture of collaboration. However, it might be recommended that school principals encourage teachers in their teaching processes and construct numerous school-specific rituals and values in order to establish and maintain a positive, supportive, and learning-friendly school atmosphere. It is possible to recommend that principals of schools take on additional responsibilities, such as promoting and supporting the professional development of teachers, being role models for their teachers, and cultivating collaborative relationships with other schools and universities. Overall, school principals generally have a positive approach to parent relations and the external
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			were presented in accordance with the research findings.	with the external environment, and the efforts to improve student success. The findings of the research are broken down and analyzed with reference to the corresponding literature.		environment. Appropriate settings and activities may be planned to foster positive relationships between teachers and parents, especially as they are primarily in charge of the development of students at the primary school level.
13	The Role Of Principal Leadership In Improving The Quality Of Education In Elementary Schools	(Sulistiyarini et al., 2024)	The principal of SDN 5 Akar-akar improves educational quality through effective leadership, including school management, digital administration, teacher supervision, and strong communication with the school community. However, challenges remain, such as limited funding for teacher development, low student discipline, and some teachers' lack of confidence in using learning technology.	Qualitative approach with descriptive method.	The results of the study indicate that the principal of SDN 5 Akar-akar plays a crucial role in improving the quality of education through various leadership strategies. Based on data collected from interviews, observations, and documentation studies, it was found that the principal plays several key roles in school management and development: as a manager, as an administrator, as a supervisor, as an educator, and as a leader.	This research shows that the principal of SDN 5 Akar-akar plays a crucial role in improving educational quality through effective leadership. The principal fulfills the roles of manager, administrator, supervisor, educator, and leader, impacting the quality of learning and school management. Efficient budget management helps improve facilities and infrastructure, the implementation of digital systems increases administrative efficiency, and teacher supervision and training support improved teaching quality. Furthermore, the principal is able to build motivation among the school

						community and maintain good communication with parents and the community. However, several obstacles remain, such as limited budget for teacher development, low student discipline, and a lack of confidence among some teachers in utilizing learning technology.
14	Teacher Retention in Rural Indonesian Schools: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of Career Disorientation and Commitment	(Raspatiningrum et al., 2025)	In Indonesia, the chronic imbalance in teacher distribution particularly the scarcity and attrition of educators in rural regions has emerged as a national crisis that threatens educational equity and long-term system sustainability. This study aims to explore the lived experiences of teacher career development and retention in rural Indonesian schools using an interpretative	Data were collected through in-depth, semi-structured interviews with 18 participants, including elementary and secondary school teachers with 5–25 years of teaching experience, drawn from diverse rural provinces such as West Java, Central Sulawesi, and East Nusa Tenggara. The analysis was conducted through iterative coding and meaning-making cycles following the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) framework proposed by Smith et al. (2009),	The study shows that rural teachers' perseverance is driven by moral commitment, cultural values, and religious beliefs, where teaching is viewed as service to the community. However, this dedication exists alongside structural challenges such as limited career opportunities, lack of recognition, and heavy administrative demands. The findings emphasize that teacher loyalty should not replace systemic support. The study recommends contextual promotion systems, flexible professional development, formal recognition, and well-being programs to strengthen teacher retention and reduce reliance on personal sacrifice.	This study highlights the lived experiences of Indonesian educators who continue teaching despite structural challenges due to strong moral commitment and sociocultural values. Using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, the research reveals emotional labor, personal sacrifice, and deep connections to community identity that influence teacher retention. The findings emphasize that retention is shaped not only by policy but also by cultural values and social responsibility. The study recommends mentorship programs, community-based

			phenomenological approach.	which facilitated the extraction of emergent themes and contextual insights. Six interrelated themes were identified: career path disorientation, lack of developmental support, professional alienation, delayed milestones, moral commitment, and systemic imbalance. Despite persistent structural adversities, many educators remain committed due to ethical loyalty and a sense of community responsibility. The study concludes that retention strategies must incorporate culturally grounded, participatory, and context-sensitive frameworks.		promotion pathways, and flexible professional development. Ultimately, teacher retention is framed as an issue of educational justice, dignity, and recognition.
15	The Role of Principal Leadership in Improving School Quality in Elementary Schools.	(Dania & Andriani, 2021)	The principal of Bumijawa 01 Tegal Public Elementary School improves school quality by acting as a leader, educator, motivator, and supervisor. The	The research approach used in this research is a qualitative approach.	A similar study was conducted by Taryanto Waton at SDIT Muhammadiyah Jumapolo Karanganyar on the role of the principal in improving educational quality. The results showed that improving educational quality is achieved	The principal of Bumijawa 01 Tegal Public Elementary School has fulfilled his role in improving the school's quality as a leader, educator, motivator, and supervisor. As a leader, the principal is able to develop the school's

principal develops the school's vision and programs, supports teacher development through training, creates a positive learning environment, motivates teachers and students, and conducts classroom supervision to improve teaching. Overall, effective leadership, good communication, and continuous self-development are key to improving the quality of education in the school.	through enhancing teacher professionalism, teaching quality, facilities and infrastructure, and student motivation. In this study, the researcher emphasized the principal's leadership role, as leadership is a significant determinant of school quality. Leadership is defined as the principal's ability to influence and motivate all members of the school community, including teachers, students, and staff, to work together to achieve the school's vision, mission, and goals. At the time of the study at SDN Bumijawa 01, the school was still using two curricula: the 2013 Curriculum and the Independent Curriculum. This study examined the role of the principal's LEMOS (Leader, Educator, Motivator, and Supervisor) in improving school quality using data obtained from interviews with the principal and teachers, as well as support from supervisors and supervisors from the Bumijawa District	vision and mission, implement school programs, serve as a role model, understand the conditions of teachers and staff, and establish good communication with students, teachers, and parents. As an educator, the principal creates a conducive learning environment, provides facilities and infrastructure, and improves teacher competency through training activities such as the Teacher Working Group (KKG) and training. The principal also encourages teachers to develop effective learning programs and guides students in both learning and extracurricular activities. As a motivator, the principal creates a harmonious work environment, instills discipline, and provides motivation and rewards to teachers and students to improve their performance. Meanwhile, as a supervisor, the principal implements a learning supervision
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	Education and Culture Office (KWK).	program through classroom visits, evaluates teacher performance, and uses the results of supervision to improve the learning process. Overall, effective principal leadership, supported by communication skills, wisdom, and continuous self-development, is crucial for improving the quality of education in schools.
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Instructional Leadership

Teachers reported that the principal's active involvement in curriculum planning, classroom observation, and professional development significantly improved teaching quality. One teacher stated, *"The principal often observes our classes and provides constructive feedback. This helps me improve my teaching strategies and classroom management."* This finding indicates that the principal demonstrates strong instructional leadership practices, such as supervising instruction, providing feedback, and encouraging professional growth. This result is consistent with previous and recent studies emphasizing that instructional leadership plays a critical role in improving teaching practices and student achievement (Hitt & Tucker, 2021; Liu & Hallinger, 2022). Furthermore, effective instructional leadership has been shown to enhance teacher efficacy and instructional quality, which ultimately contributes to better learning outcomes (Grissom et al., 2021).

Participatory Decision-Making

Another important finding is the principal's encouragement of teacher involvement in decision-making processes. Teachers expressed appreciation for being consulted in curriculum planning, school programs, and resource allocation. One participant noted, *"I feel valued when the principal asks for our opinions during planning meetings. It makes us more committed to implementing school programs."* This participatory approach reflects the principles of distributed leadership, which emphasize collaboration and shared responsibility among school members. Recent studies also confirm that participatory leadership enhances teacher commitment, collaboration, and school effectiveness (Gumus et al., 2023; Printy, 2021). When teachers are actively involved in decision-making, they develop a sense of ownership and accountability, which positively influences the implementation of educational programs.

Supportive Mentoring and Professional Development

Teachers highlighted that the principal provides mentoring, coaching, and access to professional development opportunities. Activities such as workshops, peer observations, and reflective discussions were particularly beneficial, especially for less experienced teachers. One teacher stated, *"I feel supported by the principal, especially when I face challenges with classroom management. Guidance from the principal and senior teachers helps me grow professionally."* This finding aligns with recent research indicating that supportive leadership practices enhance teacher self-efficacy, job satisfaction, and professional growth (Day et al., 2021b) (Day et al., 2021a; Sebastian et al., 2021). Instructional support through mentoring and professional development is also associated with improved teaching quality and student learning outcomes (Hitt, 2022). The results suggest that the principal plays a vital role in fostering a supportive and growth-oriented professional environment.

Challenges in Leadership Support

Despite the positive experiences, teachers also reported several challenges that limit optimal leadership support. These include limited teaching resources, heavy administrative workloads, and occasional communication delays related to school policies or schedules. One teacher remarked, *"Sometimes we face difficulties because resources are limited, and there is not enough time for individual guidance."* These findings are consistent with recent studies showing that even effective school leaders face structural and organizational constraints that may hinder their leadership practices (Day et al., 2021a; Leithwood et al., 2020b). Addressing these challenges requires not only effective school-level management but also support from policymakers in terms of resource allocation and administrative simplification.

Impact on Learning Outcomes

Teachers perceived that the principal's leadership has a positive impact on students' learning outcomes. Effective supervision, curriculum support, and teacher motivation were associated with improved student engagement, discipline, and academic performance. This finding supports the argument that principals play both direct and indirect roles in influencing student achievement through their impact on teaching quality (Bush, 2018; Grissom et al., 2021). Recent research further confirms that strong instructional leadership contributes to improved classroom practices and student learning outcomes (Liu & Hallinger, 2022). Thus, the principal's leadership in this study demonstrates its significance in enhancing the overall quality of education. The results and discussion of this study are summarized visually in Figure 1 to illustrate the key themes of principal leadership in supporting the learning process.



Figure 1. The Key Themes of Principal Leadership in Supporting the Learning Process

D. Conclusions

This study highlights that principal leadership plays an essential role in supporting the learning process, as reflected in teachers' lived experiences at SDN 32 Bengkulu Selatan. The findings show that instructional leadership, participatory decision-making, and supportive mentoring contribute positively to teacher performance, motivation, and classroom practices, although challenges such as limited resources and administrative demands persist. In practice, principals are encouraged to implement collaborative, supportive, and instruction-oriented leadership strategies to improve teaching quality and student outcomes. For future research, it is suggested to include a broader range of participants from various school settings and to apply mixed-method approaches to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the influence of principal leadership on educational quality.

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