

LEADERSHIP CHALLENGES OF SCHOOL PRINCIPALS IN IMPROVING TEACHER DISCIPLINE AT SD NEGERI 2 WAKAN, WAKAN VILLAGE, JEROWARU DISTRICT, EAST LOMBOK REGENCY, WEST NUSA TENGGARA.

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the leadership challenges faced by school principals in improving teacher discipline at SD Negeri 2 Wakan, Jerowaru District, East Lombok Regency, West Nusa Tenggara, and to identify the strategies implemented and their impact on teacher discipline. This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive design. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and documentation involving the school principal, teachers, and relevant stakeholders as informants. The findings revealed that the principal faced internal challenges, including uneven discipline awareness and fluctuating teacher motivation, as well as external challenges such as the distance between teachers' residences and the school, environmental factors, and the need to strengthen the school discipline culture. To address these challenges, the principal implemented leadership strategies including exemplary leadership, participatory approaches, open communication, professional development, and direct supervision. Exemplary leadership was found to be the most effective strategy in improving teacher discipline. The implementation of these strategies resulted in improved teacher discipline and professionalism, the development of a positive school discipline culture, increased student discipline and learning motivation, and enhanced community trust in the school. This study highlights the critical role of school leadership in improving teacher discipline and educational quality.

Keywords: *school principal leadership; teacher discipline; educational leadership; discipline culture; elementary school*

INTRODUCTION

Education is a fundamental foundation in shaping high-quality and well-characterized human resources. Character development through education is not limited to strengthening moral and ethical values but also encompasses discipline, responsibility, and work ethic, which integrally shape students' personalities. These aspects serve as an essential foundation for enabling students to face the demands of societal development and future life dynamics. At the elementary school and madrasah ibtidaiyah levels, teachers play a strategic role as the frontline in shaping students' character and basic competencies (Hermawan et al., 2024; Istikomah, 2022). However, the success of the educational process does not solely depend on teachers' academic competence but is also highly determined by their level of discipline in carrying out professional duties (Ristianita, 2021). Teacher discipline reflects professional responsibility and serves as a key indicator in assessing the quality of educational implementation (Azainil et al., 2021). Therefore, the role of teachers extends beyond delivering instructional material; it also includes serving as role models in demonstrating work discipline, which reflects their professionalism. This indicates that efforts to improve educational quality cannot be separated from continuous development and reinforcement of teacher discipline. The issue of teacher discipline becomes more complex when associated with the role of the school principal as an educational leader. School principals are not only responsible for administrative duties but are also required to guide, direct, and supervise teacher discipline within the school environment (Sa'Diyah et al., 2021). Therefore, the effectiveness of school leadership is not only reflected in managerial success but also in the ability to establish a strong culture of discipline within the school. Teacher discipline has not only moral and professional dimensions but also legal implications. Legally, regulations such as Government Regulation Number 94 of 2021 concerning Civil Servant Discipline emphasize the importance of work discipline among civil servants, including teachers, as part of ensuring legal certainty and effective

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public service bureaucracy. This regulation also applies *mutatis mutandis* to government employees with work agreements, as stated in Article 52 paragraph (3) of Government Regulation Number 49 of 2018 concerning the Management of Government Employees with Work Agreements, which stipulates that disciplinary sanctions for such employees must follow the same provisions governing civil servant discipline (Harahap, 2022). Furthermore, Law Number 14 of 2005 concerning Teachers and Lecturers emphasizes that teachers are obligated to maintain educational quality through the implementation of work discipline and adherence to professional codes of ethics (Sapto Budoyo et al., 2024). This law provides a legal framework for teachers without distinction between public and private school teachers. In this context, school principals have a strong legal basis to conduct guidance and supervision to ensure teacher discipline (Dewi et al., 2021; Harahap, 2022). Based on the above explanation, the responsibility of school principals to foster teacher discipline is not merely a moral obligation of leadership but also a regulatory mandate with legal legitimacy.

School principals hold a strategic position in determining the quality of educational implementation, as teachers' success in performing their professional duties is strongly influenced by leadership practices at the school level. Principals serve as instructional leaders responsible for guiding, supporting, and directing teachers in carrying out their professional responsibilities (Wilson Heenan et al., 2024). In addition to their instructional leadership role, principals also function as transformational leaders. Bass and Avolio emphasized that effective leaders foster commitment and discipline through inspiration, role modeling, individualized consideration, and intellectual stimulation (Hyseni Duraku & Hoxha, 2021). Furthermore, Mintzberg (1973) highlighted that leaders must also act as decision-makers, problem-solvers, and performance supervisors (Dai et al., 2025). Overall, the effectiveness of school leadership depends on the principal's ability to integrate pedagogical, motivational, and managerial roles in a balanced manner to achieve educational objectives.

In practice, however, the strategic role of school principals often encounters structural challenges and human resource constraints that contribute to low levels of teacher discipline. Structural challenges include unsupportive organizational culture, excessive administrative workload, and limited institutional support (Dinler, 2024). From a human resource perspective, disparities in teachers' academic qualifications, insufficient access to continuous professional development, and weak supervision systems further complicate efforts to strengthen discipline (Chervony & Mahmudah, 2023). School principals also frequently face dilemmas in enforcing discipline due to personal relationships with teachers, social pressures within the school environment, and weak evaluation systems (Langga Budi Prasetya et al., 2023; Mincu et al., 2024). Moreover, uninspiring leadership can negatively affect teachers' motivation and professional commitment (Fudiyah et al., 2021). These conditions reveal a gap between the theoretical expectations of school leadership and its practical implementation in educational settings. Normatively, school principals are expected to serve as key drivers of teacher discipline. However, in reality, structural and personal barriers often limit their effectiveness. This situation highlights that improving teacher discipline requires not only theoretical leadership knowledge but also adaptive and context-sensitive leadership strategies capable of addressing real-world challenges.

Communication issues also represent a significant barrier. The absence of open and effective communication between principals and teachers often leads to unclear discipline standards and institutional goals (Agustyawati & Farisatma, 2024). Additionally, permissive school cultures and inconsistent enforcement of rules further weaken discipline (Alam et al., 2024; Jakaria, 2022). Teacher discipline is therefore influenced not only by leadership and regulatory factors but also by organizational communication quality and school culture. Ineffective communication results in unclear behavioral expectations, while permissive organizational cultures create tolerance toward disciplinary violations, reducing the effectiveness of disciplinary enforcement. The issue of low teacher discipline is also reflected in empirical data. According to the 2024 Education Integrity Assessment Survey conducted by the Indonesian Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK), 69% of students reported that teachers frequently arrived late to class, and 64% reported that teachers were absent without clear justification (Aisyah, 2025). These findings indicate that teacher discipline remains a serious concern, affecting not only professional standards but also the quality of instruction and the formation of student discipline. Similar findings have been reported in previous studies showing that many elementary school teachers fail to comply with official working hours, highlighting the importance of strengthening supervision systems and implementing reward and punishment mechanisms (Fatmawati et al., 2023; Feri Arumajaya, 2022). However, disciplinary sanctions are often ineffective due to structural constraints and organizational culture factors (Alam et al., 2024). This suggests that low teacher discipline is a systemic issue requiring stronger supervision and consistent enforcement of regulations to ensure educational quality.

This issue is not only evident at the national level but is also observed in elementary schools located in Wakan

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Village, including SD Negeri 2 Wakan, which were selected as research sites. These schools play an essential role in providing basic education at the community level but continue to face serious teacher discipline challenges. The selection of these research sites was based on their relevance in representing leadership challenges in rural educational settings, particularly those characterized by limited resources and high administrative demands. Additionally, accessibility considerations allowed for in-depth observation and comprehensive data collection, making these schools appropriate contexts for examining leadership challenges in improving teacher discipline. Preliminary observations at SD Negeri 2 Wakan revealed several issues reflecting leadership challenges in maintaining teacher discipline. At SD Negeri 2 Wakan, teacher tardiness, leaving classes early, and unexcused absences were frequently observed, negatively affecting instructional quality. These findings are consistent with previous research indicating that teacher absenteeism and disciplinary violations significantly undermine instructional effectiveness and student learning outcomes (Bjork & Susanti, 2023; Utami et al., 2021).

In addition, the supervisory function of the school principal has not yet been fully optimized. The excessive administrative workload limits the principal's capacity to consistently conduct guidance and supervision of teacher discipline. A study by (Rasmitadila et al., 2025) found that principals who are heavily burdened with administrative responsibilities tend to experience reduced effectiveness in performing their instructional leadership roles. This finding is further supported by (Marinac et al., 2024) who reported that excessive administrative demands can lead to burnout among school principals, thereby weakening their ability to enforce discipline and improve instructional quality. Low teacher motivation to enhance professionalism also remains a serious concern. Previous research has indicated that teacher motivation is strongly influenced by managerial support and school culture; without adequate support, motivation tends to decline, resulting in lower instructional quality (Sariakin et al., 2025). Furthermore, some teachers demonstrate limited initiative in participating in continuous professional development programs. This phenomenon is consistent with a systematic review of teacher professional development (TPD) in Indonesia, which identified limited access, weak program design, and lack of sustainability as key barriers to teacher participation in professional development (Amemasor et al., 2025). In addition, disparities in academic qualifications contribute to inconsistencies in teacher discipline. This is supported by contextual research showing that differences in teachers' academic backgrounds and qualifications in Indonesia lead to variations in professional competence and adherence to professional standards, including discipline-related practices (Tatik et al., 2025).

Overall, schools continue to face challenges in implementing effective leadership strategies to improve teacher discipline. Communication approaches, the implementation of reward and punishment systems, and leadership adaptation to local characteristics have not yet been fully effective. As a result, efforts to strengthen teacher discipline have not produced significant behavioral changes, and instructional quality in both schools remains constrained. Although numerous studies have examined school leadership and teacher discipline separately, research specifically addressing the leadership challenges faced by school principals in improving teacher discipline at the elementary school level remains limited. Therefore, there is a need for a more contextual leadership approach that considers the unique conditions of the school, local culture, and community characteristics. Such an approach enables school principals to develop adaptive, relevant, and effective leadership strategies to enhance teacher discipline and improve the quality of the teaching and learning process (Pratama et al., 2025). Considering the structural, cultural, and personal challenges faced by school principals in improving teacher discipline at the elementary school level, an in-depth and context-sensitive investigation is necessary. This study is expected to contribute both theoretically and practically to strengthening the role of educational leadership in Indonesian elementary schools. Accordingly, this study is entitled: *"Leadership Challenges of School Principals in Improving Teacher Discipline at SD Negeri 2 Wakan, Jerowaru District, East Lombok Regency, West Nusa Tenggara."*

IDENTIFICATION OF PROBLEMS

Based on the background described above, several key issues can be identified at SD Negeri 2 Wakan, Jerowaru District, East Lombok Regency, as follows:

1. Low levels of teacher discipline, as reflected in late arrivals to class, leaving lessons before the scheduled time, and absences without clear justification.
2. The supervisory role of the school principal has not been fully optimized, as excessive administrative responsibilities limit the principal's ability to consistently guide and enforce teacher discipline.
3. Human resource challenges, including low motivation among some teachers, limited opportunities for continuous professional development, and disparities in academic qualifications.
4. A permissive school culture, where disciplinary violations are not consistently addressed, resulting in weak

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enforcement of institutional rules..

5. Ineffective leadership strategies, particularly in terms of communication, implementation of reward and punishment systems, and contextual leadership approaches that consider school characteristics and local cultural conditions.
6. Limited impact of disciplinary development efforts, as indicated by the lack of significant improvement in teacher discipline, which ultimately affects the quality of the teaching and learning process.
7. The lack of a clear understanding of the specific leadership challenges faced by school principals in improving teacher discipline at the elementary school and madrasah ibtidaiyah levels.

RESEARCH FOCUS

In the context of this study, the focus is to analyze the challenges faced by school principals in improving teacher discipline at elementary schools (SD). This study emphasizes structural, personal, and cultural barriers that influence the effectiveness of school leadership, as well as the leadership strategies implemented by principals and their impact on changes in teacher disciplinary behavior within the school environment.

RESEARCH QUESTION

Based on the research focus described above, the research questions are formulated as follows:

1. What challenges do school principals face in improving teacher discipline at SD Negeri 2 Wakan, Wakan Village, Jerowaru District, East Lombok Regency, West Nusa Tenggara?
2. What strategies are implemented by the school principal to address the challenges of improving teacher discipline at SD Negeri 2 Wakan, Wakan Village, Jerowaru District, East Lombok Regency, West Nusa Tenggara?
3. What is the impact of the school principal's leadership strategies on teacher discipline at SD Negeri 2 Wakan, Wakan Village, Jerowaru District, East Lombok Regency, West Nusa Tenggara?

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive design. The qualitative approach was selected because the study aims to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon of school principal leadership in improving teacher discipline, rather than testing hypotheses or measuring variables quantitatively. According to Sugiyono (2023), qualitative research is grounded in the philosophy of post-positivism and is used to examine natural phenomena and the conditions of the research subject in depth, with the researcher serving as the primary research instrument. Qualitative research focuses on interpreting the meaning of data rather than producing generalizations. A descriptive research design was used because this study seeks to provide a factual and comprehensive description of the challenges, strategies, and impacts of school principal leadership on teacher discipline at SD Negeri 2 Wakan, Wakan Village, Jerowaru District, East Lombok Regency, West Nusa Tenggara. Therefore, this study emphasizes an in-depth, contextual, and naturalistic description of empirical realities related to leadership practices and teacher discipline within the school environment.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Leadership Challenges in Improving Teacher Discipline at SD Wakan

The findings indicate that the principal of SD Negeri 4 Wakan faces various challenges in improving teacher discipline, which originate from both internal and external factors. Internal challenges include uneven levels of discipline awareness among teachers, fluctuating work motivation, and personal responsibilities that affect consistency in attendance and the implementation of professional duties. These findings suggest that teacher discipline has not yet been fully internalized as part of the professional culture within the school environment. This is consistent with previous research indicating that teacher discipline is influenced by internal factors such as professional awareness and work motivation, which play a critical role in determining teacher performance quality (Istikomah, 2022). In addition, teacher motivation is a crucial factor influencing the level of discipline. Teachers with high work motivation tend to demonstrate greater responsibility in carrying out instructional tasks, whereas low motivation can lead to decreased discipline and professionalism. This finding is consistent with Ristiana, who emphasized that work motivation is a key determinant of teacher performance and professional responsibility (Ristiana, 2021). Furthermore, the familial leadership approach adopted by the school principal presents challenges in enforcing discipline. Although this approach fosters harmonious working relationships, the lack of firmness in implementing formal sanctions may reduce the effectiveness of disciplinary development efforts. This finding is supported by previous studies indicating that school principals must balance a

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humanistic leadership approach with firmness in enforcing rules to maintain organizational effectiveness (Khairunnisa et al., 2024; Nuzulina et al., 2022) In addition to internal challenges, external factors also influence teacher discipline, including the considerable distance between teachers' residences and the school, environmental conditions, and the need for continuous reinforcement of a strong disciplinary culture. The work environment and external conditions play a significant role in shaping teachers' disciplinary behavior. This finding is consistent with previous research indicating that individual work behavior is influenced not only by internal factors but also by organizational and environmental conditions in which individuals operate (Pratama et al., 2025).

2. Leadership Strategies in Improving Teacher Discipline at SD Negeri 4 Wakan

The findings indicate that the school principal implemented various leadership strategies to improve teacher discipline. These strategies include exemplary leadership, participatory approaches, open communication, professional development, and direct supervision.

2.1. Exemplary Leadership Strategy

Exemplary leadership emerged as the primary strategy in improving teacher discipline. The principal consistently demonstrated disciplined behavior through punctual attendance, active involvement in school activities, and direct supervision of instructional practices. This exemplary conduct had a positive influence on teachers' behavior and encouraged the development of greater professional discipline awareness. This finding is consistent with transformational leadership theory, which emphasizes that leaders who demonstrate exemplary behavior can positively influence the attitudes and commitment of their subordinates (Park et al., 2016). Moreover, the principal's role modeling contributed significantly to the development of a disciplinary culture within the school. Teachers tend to emulate the behavior of their leaders, making exemplary leadership a key factor in strengthening teacher discipline. This finding aligns with previous research indicating that the principal's exemplary behavior plays an essential role in improving teacher performance and discipline (Sari & Djuwita, 2017).

2.2. Participatory Leadership Strategy

The school principal implemented a participatory leadership approach by involving teachers in decision-making processes related to school policies. Teacher involvement in decision-making enhances their sense of responsibility and commitment to the rules that have been mutually agreed upon. This approach also strengthens teacher compliance with school regulations, as teachers feel a sense of ownership and active contribution to policy development. This finding is consistent with participatory leadership theory, which suggests that involving organizational members in decision-making processes can enhance their commitment and sense of responsibility toward organizational goals (Hyseni Duraku & Hoxha, 2021).

2.3. Open Communication and Humanistic Development Strategy

The principal also applied open communication and humanistic guidance through personal and persuasive approaches. Open communication fosters harmonious working relationships and strengthens teachers' trust in school leadership. Positive professional relationships contribute to increased teacher motivation and discipline. This finding aligns with humanistic leadership theory, which emphasizes the importance of effective interpersonal communication in improving individual performance (Kurniawati et al., 2025). In addition, the principal provided continuous guidance through supervision activities and professional forums. These efforts play an important role in enhancing teacher professionalism and discipline. This finding is supported by Sergiovanni's perspective, which highlights that effective educational supervision contributes significantly to improving teacher professionalism and performance quality (Rachmawati et al., 2024).

2.4. Direct Supervision Strategy

The school principal also conducted direct supervision of teacher attendance and instructional activities. Consistent supervision helps improve teacher discipline and strengthens their sense of responsibility in carrying out professional duties. Supervision is considered a critical leadership function in enhancing discipline and organizational effectiveness among staff members (Kusmiati et al., 2022).

3. Impact of Leadership Strategies on Teacher Discipline at SD Negeri 4 Wakan

The leadership strategies implemented by the school principal had a positive impact on improving teacher discipline, professionalism, and overall school culture.

3.1. Peningkatan Kedisiplinan dan Profesionalisme Guru

The findings indicate a significant improvement in teacher discipline, particularly in terms of attendance and the implementation of instructional responsibilities. Teachers demonstrated greater responsibility in preparing instructional materials and carrying out their professional duties. These results suggest that school principal leadership plays a crucial role in strengthening teacher discipline and professionalism. This finding is consistent with previous research highlighting that effective school leadership contributes significantly to improving school effectiveness and teacher performance (Sari & Djuwita, 2017).

3.2. Development of a School Discipline Culture

The principal's leadership strategies also contributed to the development of a strong discipline culture within the school environment. Discipline gradually became a shared norm supported by the principal's role modeling and consistent supervision. This finding aligns with organizational culture theory, which emphasizes that leaders play a central role in shaping and reinforcing organizational culture (Syahmalini et al., 2022).

3.3. Improvement in Student Discipline and Learning Motivation

Improved teacher discipline also had a positive impact on student discipline and learning motivation. Disciplined teachers serve as role models for students, encouraging more orderly and responsible behavior in the learning process. This finding is consistent with social learning theory, which states that individuals learn by observing and imitating the behavior of role models (Hendra, & Sutapa, 2024).

3.4. Increased Community Trust in the School

Improved teacher discipline also contributed to increased community trust in the school. Teacher discipline enhances the school's image as a professional and high-quality educational institution. This finding supports previous research indicating that effective school leadership strengthens institutional credibility and public trust in educational organizations (Darma, 2024).

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the school principal at SD Negeri 2 Wakan faces significant internal and external challenges in improving teacher discipline. Internal challenges include uneven discipline awareness, fluctuating work motivation, and personal responsibilities that affect teachers' professional commitment. External challenges include the distance between teachers' residences and the school, environmental factors, and the need for continuous reinforcement of a disciplinary school culture. To address these challenges, the principal implemented several leadership strategies, including exemplary leadership, participatory decision-making, open communication, professional development, and direct supervision. Among these, exemplary leadership emerged as the most influential strategy in fostering teacher discipline, as teachers tend to follow the behavior demonstrated by the principal. The implementation of these leadership strategies has had a positive impact on improving teacher discipline and professionalism, strengthening the culture of discipline within the school, enhancing student discipline and learning motivation, and increasing community trust in the school. These findings highlight the critical role of school leadership in shaping teacher discipline and improving the overall quality of educational practice. Therefore, adaptive, consistent, and context-sensitive leadership strategies are essential for strengthening teacher discipline and ensuring sustainable educational improvement.

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2 WAKAN, WAKAN VILLAGE, JEROWARU DISTRICT, EAST LOMBOK REGENCY,
WEST NUSA TENGGARA.**

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