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School Principal Leadership, Teachers' Commitment and Morale in Remote Elementary Schools of Indonesia

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Abstract

This study envisioned to determine how the leadership of remote elementary school principals impacts the organizational commitment and morale of teachers in Southern Papua, Indonesia. We probed the following two research questions: (a) Does the leadership of the remote elementary school principals have a significant positive impact on the teachers' organizational commitment? And (b) Does the leadership of the remote elementary school principals have a significant positive impact on the teachers' morale? Three survey questionnaires using a four-point Likert scale were delivered to 376 teachers in the remote elementary schools of Southern Papua, Indonesia. The SPSS software was used to perform statistical analyzed on the data. The study discovered that the leadership of remote elementary school principals has a significant positive impact on the organizational commitment and morale of the teachers in Southern Papua, Indonesia. The result of this study recommended a need for the local government of Southern Papua, Indonesia, to set up different programs to help principals get the suitable knowledge and skills to help teachers to be more committed to their work and boost their morale. School principals who are well-educated and trained will be able to encourage all the school components to constantly develop the learning of all.

Keywords

Commitment, elementary school, leadership, morale, principal, teacher

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Liderazgo del Director, Compromiso y Moral de los Profesores en Escuelas Primarias Remotas de Indonesia

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Resumen

El objetivo de este estudio es determinar cómo influye el liderazgo de los directores de escuelas primarias remotas en el compromiso organizativo y la moral de los profesores de Papúa del Sur (Indonesia). Nos planteamos las dos preguntas de investigación siguientes: (a) ¿Tiene el liderazgo de los directores de escuelas primarias remotas un impacto positivo significativo en el compromiso organizativo de los profesores? (b) ¿Tiene el liderazgo de los directores de escuelas primarias remotas un impacto positivo significativo en la moral de los profesores? Se entregaron tres cuestionarios utilizando una escala de Likert de cuatro puntos a 376 profesores de las escuelas primarias remotas del sur de Papúa, Indonesia. Se utilizó el programa informático SPSS para realizar análisis estadísticos de los datos. El estudio descubrió que el liderazgo de los directores de escuelas primarias remotas tiene un impacto positivo significativo en el compromiso organizativo y la moral de los profesores de Papúa del Sur, Indonesia. El resultado de este estudio recomendó la necesidad de que el gobierno local de Papúa del Sur, Indonesia, establezca diferentes programas para ayudar a los directores a obtener los conocimientos y habilidades adecuados para ayudar a los maestros a estar más comprometidos con su trabajo y aumentar su moral. Los directores bien formados podrán animar a todos los componentes de la escuela a desarrollar constantemente el aprendizaje de todos los alumnos.

Palabras clave

Compromiso, escuela primaria, liderazgo, moral, director, profesor

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Students' academic achievement is greatly influenced by the educational standard set by the school principal, and the role of the school principal is critical in determining this standard (Bhujel, 2021). One of the most important issues facing today's school principals is how to effectively motivate teachers to participate in the life and progress of the school. This is a difficult task. It is widely recognized that school principal leadership is critical in encouraging these in-schools' lives and progress (Sheppard, 1996).

In Indonesia context, the following five standards were established as the minimum requirements for the candidates of and the school principal: “managerial skills, personal skills, social skills, entrepreneurial skills, and supervision skills” (Indonesian Education Minister Regulation No. 13 of 2007). Werang et al. (2017) revealed that most of the elementary school principals in the area of Southern Papua are not well educated and trained with the standards required. Regional consideration of selecting school principals based on their political interest has been costly since numerous school principals have left their respective schools for uncertain period of time (Werang, 2019). Naturally, this fact would have a detrimental effect on teachers' attendance and students' right to education. From this viewpoint, this study may be an urgent call to resolve the necessity for well-trained and honorably responsible school principals to face unpredictable, multifaceted, and challenging conditions and strive to collaborate with others to pursue productive and innovative solutions that support quality outcomes for all.

A variety of studies (e.g. Anderson, 2008; Barret & Breyer, 2014; Bolanle, 2013; Clark, et al., 2009; Herrera, 2010; Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Marks & Printy, 2003; The Wallace Foundation, 2013) have scrutinized the important roles of school principals in running schools into its success. Numerous studies indicated that the school principal leadership accounted for teacher organizational commitment (Ayidin et al., 2013; Herry et al., 2020; Marshall, 2015; Rizqiani et al., 2014) and has been widely recognized as a major stimulus for improving teacher morale (Littleford, 2007; MacKenzie, 2007; Werang, 2015). Simply to say, school principals' actions can either increase or decrease teacher organizational commitment and teacher morale and, in turn, improve the school climate and student academic progress (Webb, 2014).

The purpose of this study was to examine the leadership of remote primary school administrators and its effect on teachers' organizational commitment and morale in Southern Papua, Indonesia. Accepting the influence of a principal's leadership on the life of a remote elementary school in Southern Papua is critical for developing diverse programs that equip remote primary school principals with the necessary knowledge and abilities to lead their schools to success. Despite the aforementioned existing studies investigating the important role of school principals, we are still encouraged to explore more this topic to address the following two issues: [1] the issue of low learning achievement of indigenous Papuan students as indicated by Leba et al. (2021) and Werang and Leba (2022); and [2] the regional needs of having well-trained and morally qualified school leaders to move schools into its success as indicated by Werang (2018), Werang et al. (2019), and Werang et al. (2022). We do believe that well-trained and morally qualified school principals would be able to increase the organizational commitment and morale of the remote elementary school teachers of Southern Papua and, in turn, promote indigenous Papuan students' success.

To our understanding, current research on principal leadership and its effect on teachers' organizational commitment and morale has been conducted in both private and public schools throughout the world, but little attention has been paid to the private and public schools contexts in Eastern Indonesia in general and Southern Papua in particular. Thus, this study sought to close the gap and address the space in the literature by investigating the leadership of remote elementary school principals and its impact on the teachers' organizational commitment and morale, utilizing the remote primary school teachers in Southern Papua as the population and sample. The following are the two investigated research questions: (a) Does the leadership of the remote elementary school principals have a significant positive impact on the organizational commitment of teachers? And (b) Does the leadership of the remote elementary school principals have a significant positive impact on the morale of teachers? To address these two research questions, three survey questionnaires were used.

Related Literature

Principal Leadership

The global education landscape now places significant importance on school leadership within its policies. With the rise in school autonomy and a stronger emphasis on academic outcomes, it has become crucial to reassess the role of school leaders (Pont et al., 2008). As educational systems worldwide prioritize school leadership, it is evident that strong leadership is fundamental for creating impactful and successful learning environments.

Leadership is classically defined as the power to influence the thinking and behavior of others (Lee, 2020). Numerous descriptions of leadership attest to the reality that there is no universally accepted meaning. Scholars frequently describe leadership in terms of their understanding of the notion and the potential consequences of doing so. Certain researchers (e.g., Yukl, 2006; Northouse, 2001) regarded leadership through a process-oriented lens. Yukl (2006: 8) described leadership as the process of influencing others to understand and agree on what needs to be done and how it should be done, as well as the process of fostering communal and individualistic efforts towards the achievement of shared goals; Northouse (2001) described leadership as the process by which an individual influences other to accomplish a shared goal. Another scholar (Wilson, 2005) described leadership in terms of a leader's capacity to shape an organization's environment or culture in such a way that others are encouraged to follow.

The term 'leadership' here refers to the school principal's leadership, which is a subset of leadership that specifically focuses on guiding and managing schools toward desired outcomes. It encompasses the capacity to inspire and encourage educators, students, guardians, and other individuals involved, while adeptly navigating challenges and fostering an atmosphere that supports learning and development. This understanding is supported by the extensive and ever-changing collection of information related to school principal leadership (Webb, 2014).

Scholars such as Murphy (1991), Newmann & Wehlage (1995), and Quinn (2002) emphasize the crucial and vital role of school principals in the success of a school. These scholars recognize that successful school principals are adept at managing resources, including budgeting, staffing, and facilities, to create optimal conditions for teaching and learning. They are effective communicators and collaborators, working closely with various stakeholders to establish partnerships and garner support for the school's mission and goals. Johnson (2006), identified the role of school principals as the following,

Supervising teachers' instructional work, setting a positive tone for positive interactions among school elements, developing teaching schedules that allow teachers to teach both individually and collaboratively, establishing a connection between the school and the local community, ensuring that the district provides teachers with instructional resources and adequate supplies, organizing professional development workshops to enhance teachers' knowledge and abilities, and assisting teachers in cooperatively developing school discipline norms with staff and students. (pp. 15-16)

Recognizing the multifaceted nature of leadership, Baldoni (2005) aptly stated that leadership entails working with people who have diverse physical, emotional, and spiritual needs (p. 33). Consequently, to truly enhance teaching and learning outcomes, it is essential to foster a culture of shared responsibility and accountability within a professional learning society (DuFour & Mattos, 2013).

The school principals do not run the school single-handedly. Though their role in leading the school is very crucial, their success is deeply intertwined with the collaborative efforts of the entire teaching staff. With a clear vision in mind, the school principals work closely with teachers, staff, and parents to create a positive and inspiring learning environment. They set ambitious goals and develop policies that encourage effective teaching and learning. They navigate challenges, adapt to changing educational landscapes, and advocate for equitable and inclusive practices, ensuring that every student has access to quality education.

Effective school principals provide critical and supportive feedback in order to improve teaching and learning practices and to promote more innovative and productive use of time and resources. They conduct regular classroom observations, providing constructive feedback to teachers that helps them refine their instructional techniques and enhance student engagement. Through their guidance and feedback, principals empower teachers to continuously enhance their teaching practices, resulting in a positive impact on student learning and achievement.

Effective school principals inspire and empower their teams, creating a supportive environment that encourages professional growth and enhances student outcomes. This is especially important in challenging circumstances, as principals strive to drive improvement and foster success for their schools. School improvement relies on competent and collaborative leadership that recognizes that teachers and students are on the same journey of personal growth that, in their case, leads to academic achievement (Hopkins & Craig, 2016).

School principals shoulder the responsibility of cultivating a proactive mindset within the school community, providing unwavering support and inspiration to teachers, and fostering their commitment and morale to excellence (Hopkins & Craig, 2016; Leithwood et al., 2008). The focus lies on continuous learning and improvement, as teachers engage in collaborative

reflection on their practices, share best practices, and actively participate in ongoing professional development. Hargreaves and Fink (2003) highlighted the need for a collaborative and empowering approach that involves building relationships, setting high expectations, providing support, and fostering a positive school culture. Through this culture of shared responsibility and accountability, teachers not only support one another but also hold each other accountable for their individual and collective efforts. This collaborative approach fosters a sense of trust, openness, and a shared commitment to the success and well-being of both students and teachers.

Organizational Commitment

A considerable amount of research (e.g. Ayale, 2014; Bogler & Somech, 2004; Crosswell, 2006; Dee et al., 2006; Devos & Tuytens, 2013; Hamid et al., 2013; Kadyschuk, 1997; Lumley et al., 2011; Mousa & Alas, 2016; William, 2011) has been done on the concept of organizational commitment. These studies showed that organizational commitment has drawn tremendous attention in an effort of understanding and clarify the strength and consistency of workers' dedication to the organization.

In this study, the term 'organizational commitment' refers to the commitment of teachers. Mowday et al. (1982) described a teacher's commitment as a concept that reflects the psychological attitude of a teacher towards his or her school and the relative desire to incorporate it into the school. According to Morrow (1983), it's important for teachers to be willing to stay at the school, work hard for it, and agree with the school's values and goals. For this study, the commitment of a teacher might be viewed as a teacher's desire to actively participate in all the activities and become an inseparable part of a certain school. Rikard (1999) contended that the quality of teaching is settled not only by teachers' abilities but also by their eagerness for and liability to educate the youth. When teachers are passionate about and committed to their work, they will enthusiastically advocate for school-based improvements or inventions that benefit students' learning and development (Chan, 2006).

Teachers' commitment levels might range from high to low. Teachers that demonstrate a high level of commitment are more likely to devote themselves wholeheartedly to their student's education. Once teachers develop an affinity for the educational aims and values of the nation's next generation, they are less inclined to abandon their students, especially during moments of work discontent. Teachers with a high level of commitment perform better and expend more effort in creating ways to be productive (Whamond, 2011). Teachers who demonstrate a high level of commitment perform better and invest more effort in developing productive strategies (Whamond, 2011). By contrast, teachers who lack commitment may create problems and cause deviations from the school's objectives and values. Teachers who are not committed to their profession frequently exhibit the following four attitudes: (a) a diminished emphasis on professional development; (b) a diminished interest in pleasing their superiors than previously; (c) an indisposition to devote to long-term projects; and (d) accomplishing the minimum total of work necessary (The KMK Team, 2014).

Morale

Morale plays a critical role in organizational success as it reflects the attitudes and sentiments that individuals or groups have toward the objectives of the organization. Morale influences the level of employee engagement within an organization. Engaged employees are deeply committed to their work and the organization's success. They are more likely to go the extra mile, contribute innovative ideas, and actively participate in achieving organizational objectives. When employees have high morale, they are more likely to stay with the organization and exhibit loyalty. Positive attitudes towards the organization's objectives create a sense of belonging and commitment, reducing turnover rates. High morale fosters a sense of ownership and dedication, leading to increased employee engagement. This is crucial for organizational success as retaining talented and experienced employees helps maintain continuity, saves recruitment costs, and fosters a positive work culture.

The term 'morale' is etymologically originated from the Chinese words *sa* meaning 'soldier' and *gi* meaning 'energy'. The term morale initially referred to the citizens' collective will of a warring nation to continue fighting. In the later years, the term morale began to be applied to work organizations, schools, and even sports teams (Devi & Vijayakumar, 2016). Webster's Dictionary (2010) defined morale as an individual's or group's state of mind characterized by confidence, control, and motivation to carry out a task at hand. Leighton (2012) defined morale as a group's ability to work together continuously and consistently in pursuit of a shared goal; while Haddock (as cited in Ngambi, 2011) defined morale as the level of positive and supportive feelings that an organization's members have for the organization to which they belong.

In this study, the term 'morale' refers to the morale of teachers. According to Whiles and Lovell (1975: 227), a teacher's morale is "what the teacher believes and feels". Govindarajan (2012: 57) outlined a teacher's morale as "the degree to which the needs of a teacher are met and his/her understanding as to how the work situation has brought him/her happiness to fruition," whereas Werang (2015) deemed a teacher's morale as a teacher's fighting spirit to secure a qualified teaching position that would increase students' academic performance.

Teachers' morale determined how teachers perceive their profession. When morale is high, teaching is seen as a respected profession rather than just a job. Teachers' morale has two important effects on education. Firstly, it enhances the quality of school services, making them deserving of public respect. Secondly, enthusiastic teachers not only convey their satisfaction and approval to students but also to parents and the wider community. Having good teachers is an invaluable asset for any school system, as they contribute positively to the overall teaching environment. On the other hand, poor teachers can be detrimental. They require excessive supervision and administration, often undo the work of good teachers, are challenging to remove, and can disrupt the balance and morale of the entire teaching staff (Hess & Johnson, 2010).

High morale is a crucial factor that is strongly associated with increased productivity and competitiveness among teachers (Shaban et al., 2017). Conversely, low morale has detrimental effects on the overall well-being of the learning community (Francis, 2010), leading to negative outcomes such as distrust among teachers, a sense of disdain, loss of

interest, job insecurity, higher rates of absenteeism, and turnover (Shaban et al., 2017). Teachers who possess high morale are more likely to feel comfortable in their roles, work diligently, and contribute significantly to their schools compared to those with low morale (Hearn, 2019).

In a healthy school environment with high teacher morale, teachers not only feel satisfied with their own achievements but also draw motivation and inspiration from seeing their colleagues succeed. This collective sense of camaraderie and shared success fosters teamwork, encourages sharing of knowledge, and promotes a culture of continuous improvement (Hoy & Miskel, 1987). As a result, schools that prioritize a supportive atmosphere and nurture high teacher morale create a strong foundation for a successful educational institution that benefits both teachers and students.

Research has shown that high morale among teachers is positively correlated with student achievement and engagement. When teachers have high morale, they are more likely to be motivated, enthusiastic, and dedicated to their student's success. This positive attitude can create a supportive and inspiring learning environment that encourages student participation and enhances academic outcomes. On the contrary, low teacher morale can have detrimental effects on the overall school climate. It can contribute to a negative work environment, lack of collaboration, and decreased teacher effectiveness (Abazaoğlu & Aztekin, 2016; Anderson, 2014; Andrews, 1985; Bost, 2019; Sabin, 2015; Willis & Varner, 2010). Consequently, addressing and improving teacher morale becomes crucial for creating a positive educational atmosphere that benefits both teachers and students alike.

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative research approach to investigate the impact of school principals' leadership on the commitment and morale of elementary school teachers in remote areas of Southern Papua, Indonesia. We chose a survey design to examine this potential impact, taking into account several recent studies that highlighted the following benefits of using surveys: (a) cost-effectiveness, (b) ease of interpretation, (c) simplicity in data collection, and (d) statistical reliability (Habeahan et al., 2022; Sondakh et al., 2023; Wea et al., 2020; Werang et al., 2021; Wula et al., 2020).

We utilized quantitative research as we aimed to gather measurable data that would provide insights into the impact of school principal leadership on the commitment and morale of remote elementary school teachers in Southern Papua, Indonesia. The survey research design was used as it allowed for the collection of information from a large number of participants, enabling a comprehensive analysis of the research topic. Additionally, surveys provide clear and straightforward data, which facilitates the interpretation of results and enhances their reliability through statistical analysis.

Research Participants

This study involved all the remote elementary school teachers in Southern Papua, Indonesia, as the population. Due to the geographical proximity and availability at a given time, we employed a convenient sampling technique to establish the number of participants. The topographical features of the districts in Southern Papua areas are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Topographical features of the district in Southern Papua

| Sub-District | Geographical Conditions | Area Size (km) |
|--------------|-------------------------|----------------|
| Anim Ha | Rural | 1,465,60 |
| Eligobel | Rural-remote | 1,666,23 |
| Ilwayab | Swampy Remote | 1,999,08 |
| Jagebob | Rural | 1,364,96 |
| Kaptel | Remote | 2,384,05 |
| Kimaam | Swampy Remote | 4,630,30 |
| Kurik | Rural | 977,05 |
| Malind | Rural | 490,60 |
| Merauke | Urban | 1,445,63 |
| Muting | Rural-remote | 3,501,67 |
| Naukenjerai | Rural | 905,86 |
| Ngguti | Remote | 3,554,62 |
| Okaba | Remote | 1,560,50 |
| Semangga | Sub-urban | 326,95 |
| Sota | Rural | 2,843,21 |
| Tabonji | Swampy Remote | 5,416,84 |
| Tanah Miring | Sub-urban | 1,516,67 |
| Tubang | Remote | 2,781,18 |
| Ulilin | Rural-remote | 5,092,57 |
| Waan | Swampy Remote | 2,868,06 |

A convenient sampling technique was used based on the following three considerations: (a) geographical proximity, (b) most of the remote elementary schools are very difficult to reach and (c) many elementary school teachers were out of school during the time of data collection. Using the convenient sampling technique, a total of 376 remote elementary school teachers were established as the participants of this study. They were 287 males and 89 females, aged 31 to 55 years, with teaching experience ranging from 5 to 27 years.

Research Materials and Tools

School principal leadership was measured by modifying the *Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) Form 6S* items into 12 positive statements which were divided over four dimensions as the following: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration. Each teacher-respondent was asked to rate their response on a four-point Likert scale. The following are some examples of the questionnaire: “The school principal treats teachers fairly,” “The school principal offers existing examples

of what teachers should do,” and “The school principal supports teachers to improve themselves.” We utilized Cronbach’s alpha coefficient to test the instrument’s reliability. The Cronbach’s alpha coefficient value of this study was 0.896.

Teacher commitment was measured using a questionnaire of 15 items from a recent study directed by Wullur and Werang (2020). Each teacher-respondent was asked to rate their response on a four-point Likert’s scale. The following are some examples of the questionnaire: “I know how my work of teaching relates to the school’s aims and values,” “I can make an extra effort of helping this school be successful,” and “the morale in this school is quite high.” We utilized the Cronbach’s alpha coefficient to test the instrument’s reliability. The Cronbach’s alpha coefficient value of this study was 0.916.

Teacher morale was measured using a questionnaire of 18 items from a study conducted by Wolomasi et al. (2019). Each teacher-respondent was asked to rate their response on a four-point Likert’s scale. The following are some examples of the questionnaire: "I am delighted with my daily earlier arrival at school," "I never leave the school without permission," and "I frequently use non-school-provided study tools." We utilized Cronbach’s alpha coefficient value to test the instrument’s reliability. The Cronbach’s alpha coefficient value of this study was 0.813.

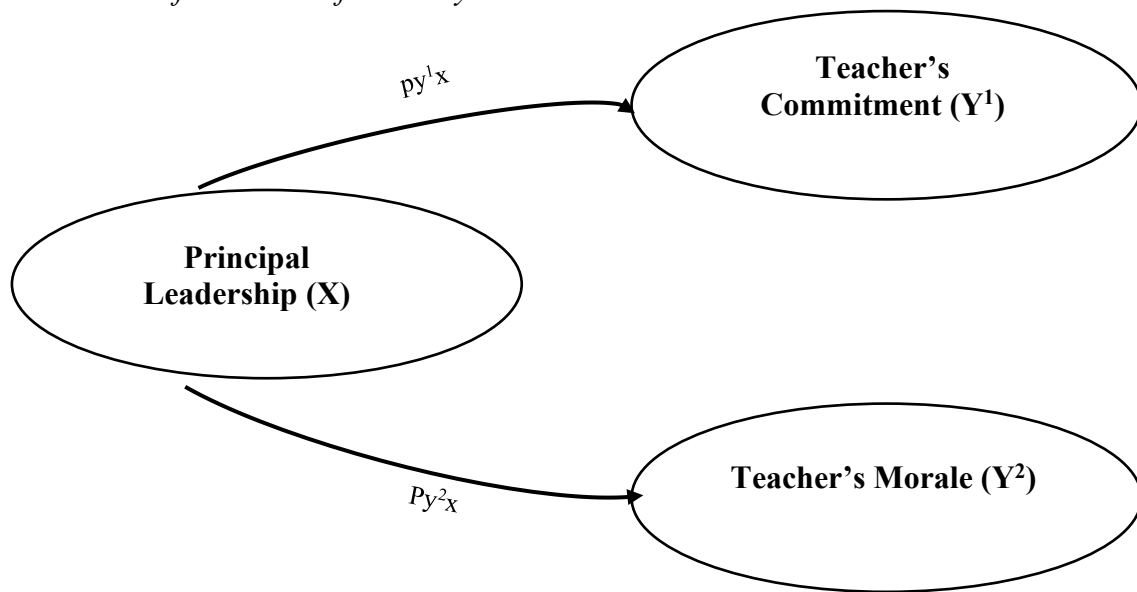
Data Collection and Analysis

As previously stated, the study used remote elementary school teachers as its population and participants. Using a four-point Likert scale, three survey questionnaires were spread to 376 elementary school teachers. Obtained data were analyzed using the SPSS software version 21. The following two hypotheses were proposed to be examined in this study: (a) the leadership of the remote elementary school principals impacts significantly positively the commitment of teachers in Southern Papua, Indonesia; and (b) the leadership of the remote elementary school principals impacts significantly positively the morale of the teachers in Southern Papua, Indonesia.

Referring to the existing literature investigating the impact of principal leadership on the organizational commitment and morale of teachers and the two proposed hypotheses, the theoretical framework of this study is reflected in Figure 1.

Figure 1

The theoretical framework of the study



Findings

As previously stated, the purpose of this study was to determine whether or not the organizational commitment and morale of remote elementary school teachers in Southern Papua, Indonesia, was significantly positively impacted by the leadership of the school principals. As a data analysis tool, Pearson's correlation coefficient was calculated using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21 software. Tables 2 and 3 indicated how the leadership of the remote elementary school principal affects the organizational commitment and morale of teachers in Southern Papua, Indonesia.

Table 2

The leadership of the school principal (X) and the organizational commitment of the teacher (Y¹)

| Model Summary | | | | | | Change Statistics | | | | |
|---------------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|---------------|-------------------|------|------|-------------|---|
| Model | R | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate | Square Change | F Change | df 1 | df 2 | Sig. Change | F |
| 1 | .971 ^a | .944 | .944 | 1.20036 | .944 | 6280.023 | 1 | 37 | .000 | |

a. Predictors: (Constant),PRINCIPAL LEADERSHIP

Data in Table 1 exposed that the R² coefficient value (.944) is significant (.000) at the alpha (α) level of .05. This suggests that the study hypothesis (H_a) that the remote elementary

school principal's leadership influences the remote elementary school teachers' commitment in Southern Papua Indonesia is confirmed, whereas the null hypothesis is denied. Additionally, because the R^2 coefficient is .944, it may be deduced that the leadership of the remote elementary schools anticipates 94.4 percent of the organizational commitment of teachers in Southern Papua, Indonesia.

Table 3

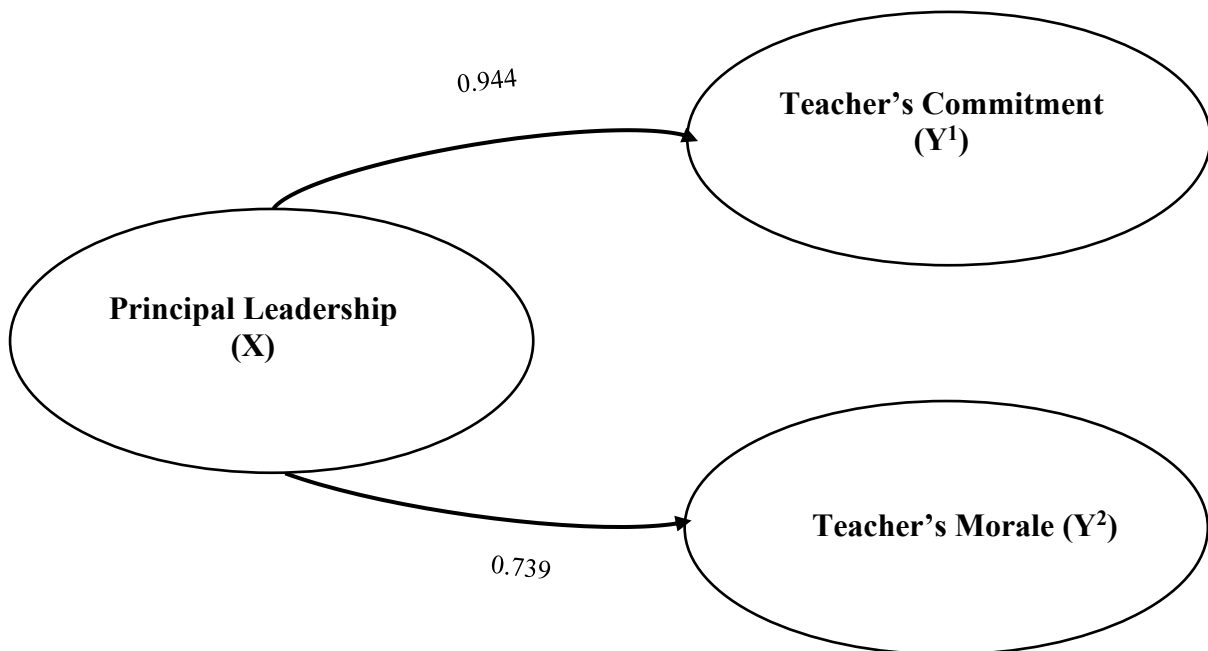
The leadership of the school principal (X) and the morale of the teacher (Y²)

| Model Summary | | | | | | | | | |
|---------------|-------------------|-------------------|----------------------------|-------------------|----------|-----|-----|-------------|---|
| Model | R | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate | Change Statistics | | | | | |
| | | | | R Square Change | F Change | df1 | df2 | Sig. Change | F |
| 1 | .860 ^a | .739 | 2.32260 | .739 | 1057.574 | 1 | 374 | .000 | |

a. Predictors: (Constant), PRINCIPAL_LEADERSHIP

Data in Table 2 exposed that the R^2 coefficient value (.739) is significant (.000) at the alpha (α) level of .05. This suggests that the study hypothesis (H_a) that the remote elementary school principal's leadership influences the remote elementary school teachers' morale in Southern Papua Indonesia is confirmed, whereas the null hypothesis is denied. Additionally, because of the R^2 coefficient value is .739, it may be deduced that the leadership of the remote elementary schools anticipates 73.9 percent of the morale of teachers in Southern Papua, Indonesia.

Referring to the statistical results above, the practical framework of this study might be figured as seen in Figure 2.

Figure 2*The practical framework of the study*

In order to have a better understanding of how the leadership of the remote elementary school principals in Southern Papua impacts teacher organizational commitment and morale, we endeavored to elucidate the correlation between the actions of school principals and their impact on teachers. We have gathered input from several teachers who have shared the following information.

The principal, who is the leader of the school, has control over all the teachers. When the principal clearly communicates their expectations, gives timely feedback, and keeps the teachers informed about important decisions or changes, it increases the teachers' commitment and overall job satisfaction (T1-310523).

Effective communication from school principals impacts greatly the level of commitment and morale among teachers. When principals are actively involved and show support for their teachers, it has a positive impact on their commitment and morale. (T5-060623)

When we were conversing about the role of remote elementary school principals in providing direction for the teachers, two remote elementary school teachers shared the following feedback.

For me, it is not a matter of setting the direction for teachers to do or not to do something for the good of the school. The matter is whether the school principal is at school or not. (T3-100623)

Forget about getting directions. I don't even know exactly where the school principal is right now. (T2-100623)

Keeping the balance, we turn to ask for clarification about the teachers who are absent from school. One teacher provided extremely poignant feedback as the following.

The principal serves as a role model for the teachers. The actions of the principal often set an example for the teachers to emulate. When it comes to the issue of teachers' absenteeism at school, I believe it serves as a notable example where teachers follow the lead of their frequently absent principal (T7-200623).

We then shifted the discussion to another topic regarding the decision-making process. Three surveyed teachers expressed a feeling of isolation, as the principals of remote elementary schools in Southern Papua failed to provide a platform for teachers to offer input and discuss their concerns. The isolation experienced by these teachers hindered their professional growth and development. The absence of a platform for input and discussion made it difficult for them to voice their concerns and contribute to important decisions that impacted their work and the education of their students.

The surveyed teachers even perceived a lack of inclusion in any school decision-making processes. The teachers highlighted the importance of collaborative decision-making in fostering a positive and effective learning environment. They emphasized that when teachers are involved in the decision-making process, they feel a sense of ownership and commitment to the outcomes, which ultimately benefits both the teachers and the students.

Regardless of the sentiments expressed by the principals of remote elementary schools in Southern Papua, it was observed that the majority of surveyed principals were absent from school during the data collection period. The absence of principals affected the overall organizational commitment and morale of the teachers. They felt unsupported and overlooked, which had a negative impact on the quality of education provided to the students

Discussion and Conclusion

This paper provided findings from a study using survey questionnaires in which the principal's leadership, teacher's commitment, and teacher morale were recorded from a total of 376 remote elementary school teachers in Southern Papua, Indonesia. Two research hypotheses (H_a) were examined in this study to provide an unblemished depiction of how the leadership of the remote elementary school principals impacts the organizational commitment and the morale of the remote elementary school teachers of Southern Papua, Indonesia.

The principal assists in communicating the school's vision and gaining buy-in from all stakeholders (Wendels, 2012). Effective leadership begins with the formation of a shared vision for the school's commitment to high standards and the achievement of all students. The principal of the school was deemed to be quite influential in determining the degree of teacher commitment to and engagement with new programs and changes (Day, 2000; Fullan, 2002). Studies on the school principal-teacher connection have shown a strong influence on the organizational commitment of teachers (Aziz, 2013). Mulford (2003, p. 18) found that teachers will be involved in, and remain in, the teaching profession if they feel that they are part of the school and consider that their works contribute much to the school's effectiveness and students' success.

The result of statistical analysis showed that the principal's leadership significantly positively predicts the commitment of the remote elementary school teachers of Southern Papua, Indonesia. The R^2 coefficient value = .944 is significant at the alpha (α) level of .05. This suggests that increasing the principal's leadership by one point would result in an increase of 0.944 points in the commitment of remote elementary school teachers in Southern Papua, Indonesia. Reduce one point in the principal's leadership, on the other hand, reduces

the commitment of remote elementary school teachers in Southern Papua, Indonesia, by 0.944 points. Teachers will become more committed if their school principals support them, and will become more uncommitted if their school principals do not support them. The findings of this study corroborate Danneta's (2002) observation that teachers' commitment to teaching is mostly determined by the support of school leaders and the interaction between school leaders and teachers. This study's findings also reflect Lay et al.'s (2014) finding that teachers will be more devoted to their teaching duties if school principals can provide good, motivating, and efficacious workplaces for teachers.

Teachers' commitment to the school can work as an incentive for individuals who take on school leadership responsibilities, promoting the school from a number of perspectives (Ritchie, 2020). A greatly committed teacher has a strong emotional link to his or her school, students, subject area, and society. A greatly committed teacher prioritizes students' learning and interests, understands the importance of completing work begun earlier in the term/semester/school year, and goes above and beyond to keep past commitments (The KMK Team, 2014).

The result of statistical analysis also showed that the principal's leadership significantly positively predicts the morale of the remote elementary school teachers of Southern Papua, Indonesia. The R^2 coefficient value = .739 is significant at the alpha (α) level of .05. This suggests that increasing the principal's leadership by one point would result in an increase of 0.944 points in the morale of remote elementary school teachers in Southern Papua, Indonesia. Reducing one point in the principal's leadership, on the other hand, reduces the morale of remote elementary school teachers in Southern Papua, Indonesia, by 0.739 points. The findings of this study corroborate Hindt's (2012) research that school principals' leadership habits have an immediate impact on the morale of teachers and student academic performance.

Organizations, even loosely organized ones like schools, would not be able to achieve their goals without the dedication of teachers. From this viewpoint, teacher morale is critical as it has an effect not only on teacher behavior, but also on their students' learning and the overall quality of the program (Hebert, 2019). As the leadership of school principal is inextricably linked to the principal's method of encouraging followers to do their best to achieve educational goals (Werang, 2015), a brilliant effort must be made to equip all school principals working in Southern Papua's remote elementary schools with the necessary knowledge and skills. School principals who fail to address teacher morale can result in a high rate of teacher absenteeism and turnover, as well as the high cost of recruiting and instructing substitute teachers. This is because when teachers leave the school and involve in other activities they take with them the knowledge, skills, and abilities that had helped them contribute to the success of the school (Blankenship, 2014).

When teachers come together to discuss concerns and share innovative ideas, they can actively participate in shaping the policies and practices of their schools. The study highlighted the need for a more inclusive and participatory approach to the decision-making process. By fostering collaboration, communication, and respect for teachers' perspectives, school principals can create a supportive and empowering environment that benefits both educators and students.

To conclude, the leadership of school principals and its navigating style has a significant impact on teachers' commitment to being an essential element of their schools and on teachers' morale to perform thoroughly for the student's attainment. The results may be critical for the regional authorities to establish a range of programs aimed at arming the school principals with the necessary knowledge and skills essential to enhance school effectiveness. Given the scarcity of research on this subject in Papua Province in general and in Southern Papua in particular, the findings might conceivably add to current understanding by expanding information on this subject outside of the specific context of Southern Papua, Indonesia.

This study has two limitations that should be seriously taken into consideration. Firstly, this study focuses only on how the leadership of school principals affects the commitment and morale of remote elementary schools in Southern Papua. The study would not cover other variables out of these three. Secondly, the data were only gathered from 376 teachers in the area of Southern Papua, which was conveniently drawn due to the remoteness and many teachers of surveyed schools were out. As a result, the findings should be read and interpreted carefully. To have a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon, future studies on this topic should be addressed these two research limitations.

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