

# Analysis of the Influence of School Principal's Managerial Competence on Elementary School Organizational Climate

**Budi Prayogo<sup>1\*</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> Universitas PGRI Palembang

\*Corresponding author: [budiprayogo09@gmail.com](mailto:budiprayogo09@gmail.com)

## Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis secara mendalam pengaruh parsial dan simultan Kompetensi Manajerial Kepala Sekolah terhadap pembentukan Iklim Organisasi Sekolah Dasar (SD), khususnya dalam konteks implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka dan tuntutan digitalisasi. Metode yang digunakan adalah kualitatif dengan pendekatan Fenomenologi Interpretatif. Penelitian dilaksanakan di SDN 6 Karang Agung Ilir dengan melibatkan 10 guru inti sebagai partisipan utama melalui wawancara mendalam dan kuesioner kualitatif terbuka. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan adanya pengaruh positif dan signifikan, dengan temuan utama bahwa dimensi Supervisi/Evaluasi yang transparan merupakan prediktor terkuat dalam membentuk Keadilan Prosedural dalam iklim sekolah. Sebaliknya, dimensi Perencanaan menunjukkan pengaruh paling lemah terhadap Kolaborasi Guru. Kebaruan (novelty) penelitian ini terletak pada pemisahan tegas variabel Manajerial murni dari kepemimpinan transformasional, analisis mendalam per dimensi, serta penggunaan data empiris terkini pasca transisi Kurikulum Merdeka. Implikasi praktis dari temuan ini adalah rekomendasi kepada Dinas Pendidikan untuk memfokuskan program Pendidikan dan Pelatihan (Diklat) Kepala Sekolah pada penguatan akuntabilitas, transparansi, serta keterampilan Manajemen Supervisi/Evaluasi, di samping literasi digital. Kontribusi penelitian ini memperkaya literatur ilmu manajemen pendidikan di tingkat sekolah dasar dan menjadi landasan teoretis dalam pengembangan model manajemen sekolah yang lebih kontekstual di Indonesia.

**Kata kunci:** Kompetensi Manajerial, Iklim Organisasi Sekolah, Kepala Sekolah, Sekolah Dasar, Kurikulum Merdeka.

## Abstract

The aim of this research is to thoroughly analyze the partial and simultaneous influence of School Principal's Managerial Competence on the formation of School Organizational Climate in Elementary Schools (SD), specifically within the context of Kurikulum Merdeka (Independent Curriculum) implementation and digitalization demands. The method employed is Qualitative, utilizing an Interpretative Phenomenology approach, conducted at SDN 6 Karang Agung Ilir, involving 10 core teachers as main participants through in-depth interviews and open-ended qualitative questionnaires. The results show a positive and significant influence, with a key finding that the transparent Supervision/Evaluation dimension is the strongest predictor in establishing Procedural Justice in the school climate. Conversely, the Planning dimension showed the weakest influence on Teacher Collaboration. The Novelty of this study lies in the strict separation of pure Managerial variables from transformational leadership, an in-depth dimension-by-dimension analysis, and the use of up-to-date empirical data post-Kurikulum Merdeka transition. The Practical Implication of these findings is the recommendation for the Education Office to focus Principal Training (Diklat) programs on strengthening accountability, transparency, and Supervision/Evaluation Management skills, in addition to digital literacy. The Contribution of this research enriches the literature on educational management science at the elementary level and serves as a theoretical foundation for developing more contextual school management models in Indonesia.

**Keywords:** Managerial Competence, School Organizational Climate, School Principal, Elementary School, Kurikulum Merdeka.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Elementary School (*Sekolah Dasar/SD*) education constitutes the foundational layer of a nation's educational system, playing a pivotal role in shaping students' character formation, basic literacy, and numeracy skills during their developmental golden age. The attainment of these fundamental educational objectives is strongly contingent upon the effectiveness of school management practices. Within this framework, the School Principal occupies a strategic position as a manager, leader, and agent of innovation (Ardliana, et al., 2021; Kartini, et al., 2020). In managerial capacity, the principal is entrusted with executing classical management functions planning, organizing, implementing, and supervising (Nursidin, 2021; Palah, et al., 2022).

These interconnected functions, collectively conceptualized as Managerial Competence, encompass the ability to manage human resources, curriculum operations, facilities and infrastructure, and financial administration. In accordance with nationally mandated standards, managerial competence constitutes one of the principal competency domains required of School Principals, alongside personality, social, and supervisory competencies.

Empirical evidence consistently demonstrates a positive association between effective school management and improved student academic performance (Schildkamp, et al., 2019; Jubaedah & Wirza, 2022; Leithwood, et al., 2020). However, educational quality cannot be solely measured through academic output; it must also consider the internal organizational conditions in which teachers and staff operate. These internal dynamics are conceptualized as the School Organizational Climate defined as the collective perceptions of school members regarding their professional environment, shaped by leadership practices, institutional policies, and interpersonal relationships (Cappello, et al., 2025; Nurmiyanti & Candra, 2019; Marmoah, 2019). A constructive and supportive organizational climate has been shown to correlate strongly with teacher job satisfaction, professional commitment, and ultimately student engagement and achievement (Sarwono et al., 2020). Consequently, efforts to enhance the quality of elementary education must prioritize strengthening the managerial competence of School Principals.

Despite extensive discourse on the relationship between school management and organizational climate, several research gaps remain insufficiently explored. First, there is a scarcity of in-depth studies examining how specific dimensions of managerial competence \such as curriculum management versus facilities management differentially influence particular dimensions of organizational climate, including teacher collaboration or principal support. The elementary school context presents unique characteristics, particularly in relation to thematic curriculum management and the involvement of parents of early-age learners. Existing research often adopts aggregated measurement approaches, without identifying which managerial dimensions exert the most dominant influence on cultivating a conducive organizational climate (Yang et al., 2024; Batubara & Arifin, 2022).

Second, the introduction of contemporary educational policies in Indonesia most notably the Kurikulum Merdeka alongside increasing demands for school digitalization (e-budgeting systems, electronic reporting platforms), has fundamentally altered managerial challenges faced by School Principals. The managerial competencies required in the current era differ substantially from those examined in studies conducted five to ten years ago. Empirical investigations that specifically assess how contemporary managerial competence within the dual pressures of curriculum innovation and digital governance is perceived by teachers and how such perceptions shape the organizational climate remain limited. Therefore, this cause-

and-effect relationship requires re-examination within the context of current policy transformations (Aji, 2023; Tricahyati & Zaim, 2023; Santika Lya et al., 2024)

The theoretical foundations of educational management and organizational climate are deeply rooted in the works of Hallinger and Hoy, who identify leadership and management as primary predictors of school climate. Recent scholarship has shifted toward more specialized inquiries. Comparative global studies, for example, have begun analyzing how managerial styles operate across diverse cultural and systemic contexts. Research in East Asia suggests that centralized management structures may foster a sense of stability and psychological security within organizational climates (Rapp & Corral-Granados, 2024; Novak, et al., 2023).

Additionally, contemporary research increasingly links organizational climate to teacher mental health, highlighting correlations between unfavorable climates and burnout or occupational stress. This emerging perspective expands the evaluative focus of school management beyond academic performance to include teacher professional well-being. Furthermore, digital management competencies have gained scholarly attention, with recent studies examining how principals' proficiency in managing digital platforms such as Learning Management Systems (LMS) and online administrative reporting tools affects teachers' perceptions of work efficiency and institutional effectiveness (Anggriawan, 2019); Tanduklangi, et al., 2019; Aleksius, et al., 2022).

Nevertheless, much of this contemporary literature either (a) does not exclusively examine the Elementary School level within the Indonesian context, or (b) fails to clearly distinguish between leadership variables (visionary and inspirational functions) and managerial variables (procedural and administrative functions), despite their distinct mechanisms of influence on organizational climate. This conceptual overlap underscores the need for more precise analytical separation.

The novelty of this research is articulated through three principal contributions.

First, contextual and variable specificity: this study explicitly isolates and examines pure managerial competence focusing on planning, organizing, staffing, coordinating, reporting, and budgeting separate from transformational leadership, within the Elementary School context under Kurikulum Merdeka implementation. Such a strict conceptual separation remains rare in Indonesian educational research, particularly at the basic education level.

Second, dimension-by-dimension analytical depth: the study employs structural modeling or multiple regression techniques to analyze the relative contribution of each managerial dimension to specific aspects of the organizational climate. This approach generates a more precise and applicable influence map, which can inform targeted Principal professional development and training (Diklat) programs (Burawat, 2019; Liu, et al., 2020; Nurmiyanti & Candra, 2019).

Third, up-to-date empirical relevance: the data collection reflects current conditions (2025), capturing the dynamic transition of elementary schools adapting to curriculum reform and digital governance systems.

Theoretically, this research contributes to the advancement of educational management scholarship by validating and refining the relational model between managerial competence and School Organizational Climate at the elementary level. The findings may serve as a

foundation for developing a more context-sensitive theory of school management aligned with the characteristics of Indonesian basic education.

From a practical perspective, several implications emerge. For Education Offices, the findings provide empirical guidance regarding which managerial competencies most significantly influence the creation of a healthy organizational climate, thereby informing the design of more focused and effective principal training modules. For School Principals, the study offers reflective feedback to identify managerial weaknesses that may adversely affect workplace climate and prioritize corrective action. For teachers, identifying positively perceived managerial practices can strengthen supportive professional environments and enhance overall well-being.

Based on the outlined background and research gaps, this study seeks to address the following primary research question:

To what extent do the components of the School Principal's Managerial Competence (Planning, Organizing, Program Implementation, and Supervision/Evaluation) exert partial and simultaneous effects on the Elementary School Organizational Climate?

The proposed research hypotheses are formulated as follows:

H<sub>0</sub>: The School Principal's Managerial Competence has no significant effect on the Elementary School Organizational Climate.

H<sub>1</sub>: The School Principal's Managerial Competence exerts a significant partial and simultaneous effect on the Elementary School Organizational Climate.

## **2. METHOD**

This study employs a qualitative research design rooted in Interpretive Phenomenology, as conceptualized by Creswell and Creswell (2023), with the aim of understanding the lived experiences and perceptions of teachers regarding the School Principal's Managerial Competence and its impact on the organizational climate of an elementary school. The research adopts a deep exploration approach, seeking to uncover not just the correlations, but the underlying mechanisms that drive the evolution of the school's organizational climate in response to specific managerial actions. According to Patton (2020) and Oe et al. (2022), this phenomenological method allows for a nuanced interpretation of how school leadership practices influence the dynamics of a school's environment, particularly in transitional educational contexts like the implementation of Kurikulum Merdeka and digital school management systems.

The research site, SDN 6 Karang Agung Ilir in Banyuasin Regency, South Sumatra, was deliberately chosen due to its unique context involving the adaptation to new educational policies and digitalization. This selection is significant as it aligns with the study's goal of examining the role of managerial competence in shaping organizational climates during times of educational transition. As such, the study context provides a real-world backdrop to explore how leadership practices manifest within evolving educational structures.

Data were collected using a variety of qualitative techniques to ensure robust and reliable results. In-depth interviews served as the primary data collection method, allowing for rich,

interpretive insights into how teachers perceive the impact of the principal's managerial practices on the school's climate. These interviews were structured dimensionally to focus on specific areas, such as facilities management and teacher collaboration, which are critical elements in the development of a supportive school environment (Aleksius et al., 2022). Additionally, an open-ended qualitative questionnaire was used to gather descriptive data on teachers' perceptions, which were later analyzed as narratives to identify dominant themes (Suyitno et al., 2021). Document analysis also played a crucial role in verifying the formal implementation of managerial policies by examining institutional documents such as the School Work Plan (RKS) and financial reports.

To ensure the trustworthiness and validity of the findings, the study applied multiple triangulation strategies. Source triangulation involved comparing perspectives from various informants, including teachers, the school principal, and the school supervisor, while method triangulation integrated interview data, questionnaires, and document analysis. The study also emphasized the use of thick description to provide a detailed context, ensuring that the findings could be applied to other schools facing similar challenges (Sakhiyya, 2019).

Through this comprehensive and iterative analytical process, the study seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of how school leadership, particularly the principal's managerial competence, influences the organizational climate in elementary schools undergoing significant changes, such as those driven by educational reforms and technological advancements. The findings aim to provide actionable insights that can inform educational leadership practices and enhance school environments in transitional periods.

### **3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

#### ***Result***

The thematic narrative analysis derived from in-depth interviews and open-ended qualitative questionnaires conducted at SDN 6 Karang Agung Ilir reveals a substantively positive and meaningful relationship between the School Principal's Managerial Competence and the Elementary School Organizational Climate. These qualitative findings provide strong empirical support for Proposition H1. The influence manifests differently across managerial dimensions, with varying degrees of impact.

#### **1. Dominant Influence: Supervision/Evaluation on Procedural Justice**

The most prominent qualitative finding indicates that the Supervision and Evaluation dimension serves as the strongest predictor of the Procedural Justice component within the organizational climate. Teachers consistently emphasized that objective, transparent, and standardized supervision practices such as performance appraisals grounded in formal instruments rather than subjective preferences significantly enhanced perceptions of fairness in decision-making processes (Adams, et al., 2022; Patton, 2020).

Participants highlighted that transparent allocation of teaching hours and clearly communicated evaluation criteria fostered a sense of equitable treatment. Importantly, teachers associated fairness not with outcomes, but with the clarity and consistency of procedures. This reinforces the centrality of process-based accountability in cultivating organizational trust.

#### **2. Strong Influence: Organizing and Implementation on Support and Work Efficiency**

The Principal's competence in organizing institutional resources including facilities management and coordination of the Kurikulum Merdeka alongside effective program implementation, particularly in digital management systems (e.g., e-budgeting and online reporting), contributed to the development of a supportive and efficient work climate (Bahufite, et al., 2023)

Teachers reported that streamlined administrative procedures and improved access to instructional resources reduced bureaucratic burdens and allowed greater focus on pedagogical responsibilities. Digital governance practices were perceived as enabling efficiency rather than adding administrative complexity, thereby strengthening institutional support structures (Septiany et al., 2024)

### 3. Weakest Partial Influence: Planning on Teacher Collaboration

In contrast, the Planning dimension demonstrated the weakest thematic influence on the Teacher Collaboration/Cohesion aspect of organizational climate. Teachers generally perceived program planning as a formal administrative obligation often limited to documentation requirements rather than as a collaborative strategic process. Collaborative practices among teachers were more frequently driven by urgent instructional needs related to curriculum adaptation rather than by formal planning initiatives initiated by the Principal (Setyaningrum, et al., 2022; Suyitno et al., 2021; Priestley, et al., 2021).

## **Discussion**

The confirmation of Proposition H1 reaffirms the theoretical framework proposed by scholars such as Philip Hallinger and Wayne K. Hoy, which argues that effective school management plays a pivotal role in shaping organizational climate (Leithwood et al., 2020; Hallinger, 2018). In the context of elementary education, particularly during transitions like the shift to a new curriculum, managerial competence functions as a stabilizing force, balancing the demands of innovation with the need for operational coherence. This assertion highlights the significant role of leadership in maintaining a positive school climate while navigating systemic changes, aligning with findings from Aji (2023) and Gurr (2021), who emphasize that principal leadership can either promote or hinder the development of a positive organizational culture during curriculum reforms.

In particular, the finding that supervision and evaluation exert the strongest influence on procedural justice represents a key theoretical contribution of the study. Procedural justice, as opposed to distributive justice, emphasizes fairness in the decision-making processes within an organization (Adams et al., 2022). The study underscores how transparent supervision, particularly in areas such as financial management (BOS fund management) and workload distribution, fosters teacher trust and commitment while reducing stress. These results align with the work of Aji (2023), who suggests that managerial accountability in Indonesian schools is crucial for building trust among teachers and improving job satisfaction. Furthermore, this finding supports the broader view of instructional supervision not only as an evaluative mechanism but as a relational tool for building trust within the school environment (Sudarwan, 2020).

The role of digital efficiency in shaping perceptions of institutional support and work efficiency also emerged as a significant theme. Principals proficient in digital systems were perceived to streamline bureaucratic processes, reducing administrative burdens and enabling faster decision-making. This finding is consistent with emerging research on digital

educational leadership, which highlights the role of technology in enhancing organizational effectiveness (Aleksius et al., 2022; Novak et al., 2023). Digital competency among principals, therefore, plays a key role in creating a work environment that supports teacher collaboration and reduces administrative friction.

The study also found that the principal's competence in organizing facilities and curriculum resources positively impacted collaborative dynamics among teachers. When resources were accessible and well-managed, teachers experienced increased professional interaction and exchange. This finding aligns with the notion that a well-organized school structure can foster collaboration and improve teaching practices (Sakhiyya, 2019). Conversely, the relatively weak influence of the planning dimension on collaboration suggests that teachers often view planning documents as compliance tools rather than dynamic instruments for fostering collaborative action. This finding challenges the traditional view that strategic planning is a central driver of collective engagement (Burawat, 2019).

An interesting exception to these findings emerged in cases where a strong organizational climate persisted despite perceived low managerial competence. This phenomenon can be explained by the concept of teacher collective efficacy, where internal teacher dynamics—such as collaboration and shared beliefs in their abilities—can compensate for weaknesses in leadership (Adams et al., 2022). In these cases, a positive climate could still be maintained, underscoring the importance of teacher agency and internal coherence.

The study also highlighted that in certain contexts, centralized supervisory practices contributed to a sense of stability and security, a finding that contrasts with the Western emphasis on decentralization and participatory management (Patton, 2020). This insight resonates with findings from East Asian educational systems, where centralized structures are often associated with greater clarity and psychological safety for teachers (Sudarwan, 2020).

Overall, this study extends contemporary educational management discourse by demonstrating how principal managerial competence not only affects administrative processes but also has profound psychological and relational effects on the school climate. Supervision grounded in procedural fairness was found to be the most influential factor, followed by organizing and digital management practices. Planning, while essential, emerged as less impactful unless it is transformed from a bureaucratic tool into a more participatory and dynamic instrument for strategic collaboration. These findings contribute to the growing body of literature that explores the intersection of leadership, trust, and organizational climate in educational settings (Sakhiyya, 2019; Gurr, 2021).

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

This qualitative investigation confirms that the School Principal's Managerial Competence exerts a significant and positive influence on the development of Organizational Climate at the Elementary School level, particularly within the ongoing transition toward the Kurikulum Merdeka and the broader shift toward digitalized school governance. The findings provide strong qualitative validation of Hypothesis H1.

A central contribution of this study lies in identifying Supervision and Evaluation when implemented objectively, transparently, and through standardized performance instruments as the most influential managerial dimension in fostering Procedural Justice within the

organizational climate. Procedural justice, characterized by fairness in decision-making processes rather than outcomes, was found to significantly strengthen teacher trust, professional commitment, and perceptions of work stability. These results underscore the psychological and relational dimensions of managerial practice, extending beyond administrative compliance.

Additionally, the Principal's competence in resource organization and digital management systems was found to directly enhance perceptions of institutional support and work efficiency. Effective digital governance such as streamlined reporting systems and transparent budgeting procedures reduces administrative burdens and enables teachers to refocus on instructional responsibilities. Thus, managerial competence operates not only structurally but also as a catalyst for professional well-being and operational effectiveness.

From a policy perspective, the findings suggest that Education Offices should recalibrate Principal Professional Development and Training (Diklat) programs to emphasize accountability, transparency, and supervision/evaluation competencies, including digital managerial literacy. Training modules should move beyond conventional administrative planning skills and instead prioritize procedural fairness, objective evaluation systems, and adaptive digital governance practices.

For School Principals, the study offers reflective guidance to prioritize fair, standardized, and efficient supervisory mechanisms. Strengthening transparent decision-making processes and optimizing digital resource management are strategic pathways for cultivating teacher trust, enhancing morale, and sustaining organizational stability.

Future studies are encouraged to expand this inquiry through large-scale quantitative investigations or comparative multi-site case studies. Specifically, subsequent research should examine the potential moderating or mediating role of Teacher Collective Self-Efficacy in the relationship between Managerial Competence and Organizational Climate. Exploring this variable would be particularly valuable in exceptional cases where a positive organizational climate persists despite perceived managerial limitations, thereby offering a more comprehensive explanatory model of school effectiveness.

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