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Strategies for Improving Principals' Performance Through Modeling and Optimization of Management Resource Strengthening among Private Junior High School Principals in Garut Regency

Fiqra Muhamad Nazib¹, Bibin Rubini² Widodo Sunaryo³

¹ fiqranazib21@gmail.com

² bibinrubini@gmail.com

³ widodosunaryo20@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to formulate strategies for enhancing the managerial performance of private junior high school principals in Garut Regency through strengthening organizational culture, personality, job satisfaction, and decision-making. The research employs the Human Resource Management Strengthening Modeling and Optimization (POP SDM) method using a sequential exploratory design. The qualitative phase was conducted to identify dominant variables through in-depth interviews with 15 school principals, while the quantitative phase involved 128 principals as respondents and was analyzed using path analysis techniques. The findings indicate that organizational culture, personality, job satisfaction, and decision-making have positive and statistically significant direct effects on principals' managerial performance, with decision-making emerging as the most influential variable. Job satisfaction was found to function effectively as a mediating variable between organizational culture and personality in relation to managerial performance, whereas decision-making demonstrated a stronger mediating effect on personality than on organizational culture. Furthermore, SITOREM analysis identified priority indicators requiring improvement, particularly in decision-making processes, reward systems, organizational norms, and managerial functions, while indicators such as supervisory support, work relationships, and principals' emotional stability were identified as strengths that should be maintained. Overall, this study produces an empirical model and strategic recommendations that can serve as a foundation for evidence-based policy formulation aimed at the sustainable improvement of school principals' managerial performance

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Corresponding Author:

Fiqra Muhamad Nazib

Affiliation 1; fiqranazib21@gmail.com

1. INTRODUCTION

The quality of education is shaped by a complex and interrelated set of factors, including school leadership, teachers, students, educational facilities and infrastructure, the learning environment, and the curriculum (Sururuddin, Saputra, & Ramdan, 2025). Among these factors, the role of the school principal is particularly crucial in determining educational quality, as principals bear significant responsibility for guiding, motivating, and leading teachers, staff, and students toward the achievement of educational goals (Jimmi Reinhard Tambunan, Mananda Situmorang, 2024). Although school principals are not the sole factor influencing educational quality, their role and leadership can be pivotal in creating a positive and effective learning environment within a school (Putra & Fahmi, 2025).

Principals' performance is one of the key determinants of educational success, as school effectiveness often depends on how effectively principals carry out their responsibilities (Tshabalala, 2024). School principals who provide effective leadership can create a conducive learning environment that supports students' development and the overall growth of the school (Alghamdi, 2024). When a school principal possesses strong competencies, their performance tends to be higher; conversely, inadequate competencies are likely to result in lower performance (Alghamdi, 2024).

According (Kementerian Pendidikan Nasional Republik Indonesia, 2007) concerning the Standards for School/Madrasah Principals, a school principal is mandated as the highest leader in a school and is required to possess five dimensions of competence, namely personality, managerial, entrepreneurial, supervisory, and social competencies. Therefore, principals' competencies must be improved gradually and continuously through structured professional development and capacity-building programs, as stipulated in Regulation of the Minister of National Education of the Republic of Indonesia Number 13 of 2007 on the Standards for School/Madrasah Principals. However, in some private schools, the selection of school principals is often based more on nepotism than on the expected professional competencies (Abidin & Akyol, 2019). In addition, these schools also exhibit low levels of accountability and external oversight, which further exacerbate managerial conditions at the school level. This situation is compounded by inconsistencies in the implementation of principal recruitment practices that do not fully adhere to established regulations (Meriç & Fettahlioğlu, 2025).

According to *Badan Akreditasi Nasional Sekolah/Madrasah (BAN-S/M)* Accreditation data indicate that only 15.24% of private junior high schools in Garut Regency equivalent to 43 schools out of a total of 282—have achieved an A accreditation status. Similarly, teacher competence in Garut Regency remains relatively low. Teachers' competency levels have been assessed at only 48, whereas the expected standard is 70 or higher. In this context, school principals are required to be capable of mobilizing school resources, particularly in relation to school program planning and evaluation, curriculum development, instructional processes, human resource management, facilities and learning resources, financial management, student services, school-community relations, and the creation of a positive school climate. (Dyanty, Diko, & Nanywa, 2024). As educational leaders, school principals are required to possess a range of competencies, including strong personal attributes, comprehensive knowledge of educational personnel, a clear understanding of the school's vision and mission, effective decision-making abilities, and well-developed communication skills (Puspitasari & Prayito, 2024).

A preliminary survey conducted from March 4 to March 24, 2025, involving 40 private junior high school supervisors in Garut Regency through interviews and document analysis, yielded the following performance evaluation results:

First, 47% of school principals were identified as experiencing challenges in the planning function. This was evidenced by the limited articulation of school goals and vision, minimal involvement of teachers and staff in strategic planning, and the lack of systematic preparation of annual school budget plans.

Second, 44% of principals faced difficulties in the organizing function. Principals tended to inadequately involve teachers in position placement, provided insufficient training for teacher competency development, and demonstrated suboptimal management of laboratory facilities.

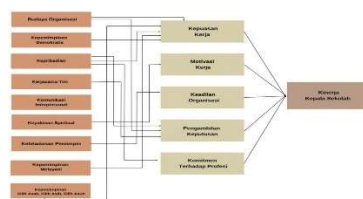
Third, 46% of principals encountered problems in the directing function. These issues included unclear guidance provided to teachers, limited recognition of teachers' achievements and career development, as well as an uncondusive and less supportive work environment.

Finally, 53% of principals showed weaknesses in the controlling function. Identified shortcomings included irregular monitoring of instructional administration and lesson plan (RPP) implementation, insufficient feedback to teachers for performance improvement, and ineffective management of student learning outcome standards.

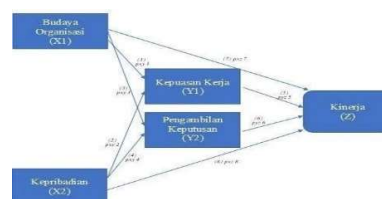
The findings of the preliminary survey require further analysis to identify the factors associated with principals' performance at the organizational level, as well as to determine appropriate action plans for improving such performance. Based on the empirical evidence obtained from the preliminary study, an in-depth investigation of principals' performance is therefore necessary. This investigation aims to reveal and analyze the factors influencing principals' performance in order to formulate strategies for improvement, enhancement, and capacity strengthening.

Based on field data collection, several factors were identified as potentially influencing principals' performance, which is positioned as the dependent variable in this study. Data were collected through interviews with informants who possess relevant expertise and experience in evaluating principals' performance. The following factors emerged from the interviews and are presented as the identified research problems

Dari data yang diperoleh di lapangan, ditemukan bahwa variabel yang paling banyak disebut oleh informan adalah kepuasan kerja 80% dan pengambilan keputusan 73%. Setelah melakukan wawancara kepada 15 kepala sekolah SMP Swasta di Kabupaten garut diperoleh data dari 13 jenis variabel faktor faktor yang mempengaruhi kepuasan kerja dan pengambilan keputusan. Sedangkan Data Variabel Yang Mempengaruhi Kepuasan Kerja Dan Pengambilan Keputusan Yang Banyak Disebutkan Oleh Narasumber adalah budaya organisasi 73% dan kepribadian 67%.



(a) Factors suspected to influence performance



(b) Research constellation

The results of the expert judgment indicate that all research variables are categorized as relevant to highly relevant. Both Expert I and Expert II assessed that the relationships among job satisfaction, decision-making, organizational culture, and personality with principals' performance are appropriate for further investigation. Therefore, both experts concluded that the study can be continued without revision, and the established variable constellation is considered valid and ready to be implemented in the subsequent stages of the research.

The field findings are consistent with several previous research results (Kurniawan, Setyaningsih, Abdullah, & Entang, 2022) Several variables that may influence principals' performance include organizational commitment, emotional intelligence, and achievement motivation (Wardiah, 2024). All independent variables contribute to improving principals' performance; however, emotional intelligence demonstrates the strongest correlation. An organizational climate that emphasizes clarity, commitment, standards, responsibility, recognition, and teamwork can significantly enhance principals' performance The relationship between integrity, decision making, and transformational leadership and principals' performance (Nizam, Rahman, & Wei, 2024).

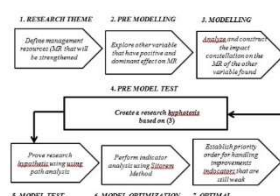
Based on the stated problem limitations, the formulation of the research problem in this study is focused on two main aspects. First, this study aims to examine whether there are direct and indirect effects of organizational culture and personality on principals' performance, either through job satisfaction or decision making. Second, this study seeks to analyze the priority order of indicators of the variables under investigation.

2. METHODS

This study employs the POP SDM method (Modeling and Optimization of Management Resource Strengthening) using a sequential exploratory approach. The method begins with a qualitative phase aimed at identifying variables that have dominant influences on the management resources to be strengthened. These variables are then organized into an influence constellation to formulate the research hypotheses. (Widodo Sunaryo, Sri Setyaningsih, 2020).

The subsequent stage is quantitative, involving hypothesis testing using path analysis. Based on the results of the path analysis, a systems analysis is conducted to determine priority actions for addressing weak indicators. The final outcome of the POP SDM application consists of prioritized recommendations and strategies for strengthening management resources to effectively and sustainably enhance organizational performance.

The POP SDM method consists of seven stages, namely: (1) Research Theme, (2) Pre-Modelling, (3) Modelling, (4) Pre-Model Testing, (5) Model Testing, (6) Model Optimization, and (7) Optimal Recommendation.



(c) Research Design and Flow Using the POP-SDM Approach

The population of this study comprises all principals of private junior high schools accredited B in Garut Regency, totaling 188 schools distributed across South Garut, Garut City, North Garut, and East Garut. The sampling technique employed two approaches. In the qualitative phase, the research informants consisted of 15 private junior high school principals selected purposively, based on the consideration that school principals possess comprehensive knowledge of school conditions and factors influencing principals' performance. In the quantitative phase, the sample was determined using proportional random sampling. The sample size was calculated using the Taro Yamane formula with a 5% margin of error (0.05), resulting in 128 respondents drawn from the population of 188 school principals.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Direct and Indirect Effects on Principals' Performance

Based on the path analysis results table, it can be explained that principals' managerial performance (Z) is influenced both directly and indirectly by organizational culture (X₁), personality (X₂), job satisfaction (Y₁), and decision making (Y₂), with varying levels of significance.

Tabel 1. Direct and Indirect Effects on Principals' Performance

No	Jalur	PLB	PTL	Pr Reg	Sobel (z) & Pr
1	X ₁ -Z	0,064	-	0.000	-
2	X ₂ -Z	0,073	-	0.000	-

No	Jalur	PLβ	PTL	Pr Reg	Sobel (z) & Pr
3	Y ₁ -Z	0,081	-	0.000	-
4	Y ₂ -Z	0,465	-	0.000	-
5	X ₁ -Y ₁	0,538	-	0.003	-
6	X ₂ - Y ₁	0,361	-	0.003	-
7	X ₁ -Y ₂	-0,096	-	0.000	-
8	X ₂ - Y ₂	0,014	-	0.000	-
9	X ₁ -Y ₁ -Z	(0,538) x (0,081)	0,0435	0.000	Z value 4,18> Z table 1,65
10	X ₂ -Y ₁ -Z	(0,361) x (0,081)	0,0292	0,012	Z value 2,24 > Z table 1,65
11	X ₁ -Y ₂ -Z	(- 0,096) x (0,465)	-0,0446	0,216	Z value -0,78 > Z table 1,65
12	X ₂ -Y ₂ -Z	(0,014) x (0,465)	0,0065	0,014	Z value 2,19 > Z table 1,65

Directly, organizational culture has a positive and significant effect on principals' managerial performance, with a path coefficient of 0.064 and a significance value of 0.000. This indicates that the stronger the organizational culture implemented in schools, the higher the principals' managerial performance. Personality also shows a positive and significant direct effect on principals' managerial performance, with a coefficient of 0.073 and a significance value of 0.000, suggesting that principals' character, attitudes, and personality traits play an important role in determining the quality of their performance. In addition, job satisfaction has a positive and significant direct effect on principals' managerial performance, with a coefficient of 0.081, indicating that higher levels of job satisfaction contribute to improved performance. Decision making exhibits the strongest direct effect on principals' managerial performance, with a coefficient of 0.465 and a significance value of 0.000. This finding demonstrates that principals' decision-making ability is the dominant factor in enhancing managerial performance.

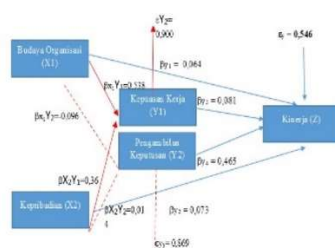
Furthermore, the analysis results indicate direct effects of organizational culture and personality on the intervening variables. Organizational culture has a positive and significant effect on job satisfaction, with a coefficient of 0.538 and a significance value of 0.003. This suggests that a supportive work environment, strong organizational values, and clear norms contribute to higher levels of principals' job satisfaction. Personality also has a positive and significant effect on job satisfaction, with a coefficient of 0.361 and a significance value of 0.003, indicating that mature and positive personality traits foster greater satisfaction at work. In addition, both organizational culture and personality directly influence decision making. Organizational culture shows a coefficient of -0.096 with a significance value of 0.000, while personality has a coefficient of 0.014 with a significance value of 0.000. These findings indicate that both variables play a role in shaping principals' decision-making processes, although the magnitude of their effects is relatively small.

In terms of indirect effects, organizational culture has a positive and significant impact on principals' managerial performance through job satisfaction, with an indirect effect coefficient of 0.0435. The Sobel test results indicate a calculated z-value of 4.18, which is higher than the critical z-value of 1.65. This finding confirms that job satisfaction functions as an effective mediating variable in strengthening the influence of organizational culture on managerial performance. Similarly, personality has a positive and significant indirect effect on managerial performance through job satisfaction, with a coefficient of 0.0292 and a calculated z-value of 2.24, which exceeds 1.65. This result demonstrates that job satisfaction serves as an important pathway linking principals' personality to improvements in their managerial performance.

However, the indirect effect of organizational culture on principals' managerial performance through decision-making shows a coefficient of -0.0446 and is not statistically significant, with a

calculated z-value of -0.78, which is lower than the critical z-value of 1.65. This indicates that decision-making does not function effectively as a mediating variable between organizational culture and principals' managerial performance. In contrast, personality has a positive and significant indirect effect on managerial performance through decision-making, with a coefficient of 0.0065 and a calculated z-value of 2.19, which exceeds 1.65. This implies that principals' personality influences managerial performance indirectly through the quality of the decisions they make.

Overall, the results of the path analysis confirm that decision-making and job satisfaction are key variables in enhancing principals' managerial performance. Organizational culture and personality are shown to have both direct and indirect effects, with job satisfaction serving as the most consistent mediating variable, while decision-making is more effective in mediating the influence of personality than that of organizational culture. These findings provide a strong foundation for formulating strategies to improve principals' performance through strengthening organizational culture, developing personality traits, enhancing job satisfaction, and optimizing decision-making processes.



(d) Path Analysis

Research by (Suherman, 2022) It indicates that organizational culture has a positive and direct effect on junior high school principals' performance, based on a causal analysis of 63 principals in Murung Raya Regency, Central Kalimantan. Organizational culture has a positive and direct effect on principals' performance; therefore, changes in organizational culture can significantly explain variations in principals' performance (Taufik, 2022).

Personality has a positive and significant direct effect on principals' managerial effectiveness. This indicates that principals with positive and well-developed personality traits tend to demonstrate higher levels of managerial effectiveness. Principals' personality is therefore one of the key determinants that plays an important role in overall school performance and leadership effectiveness. (Serepina Tiurmaida, 2023) . There is a relationship between principals' personality dimensions and leadership as well as performance aspects, although the strength of the relationship varies across different dimensions (Süle, Kiral, & The, 2022).

Job satisfaction influences the performance of educational personnel, particularly teachers, indicating that the level of job satisfaction affects the performance of education workers. This finding is relevant as evidence that job satisfaction has a significant impact on performance within the school context (Ahmad & Fitriani, 2023). here is a positive relationship between job satisfaction and the performance of educational personnel (Simanjuntak, Situmorang, & Purba, 2023). Results from meta-analyses and organizational psychology studies indicate that job satisfaction is positively associated with job performance across various work contexts, including the education sector (Ahmad & Fitriani, 2023).

Principals' decisions are positively and significantly related to various aspects of school performance, including teaching strategies, student engagement, and the school work climate, which together form part of overall managerial performance (Ahmad & Fitriani, 2023). Principals' decision-making has a positive and significant effect on teacher performance, which is one of the important components of school managerial performance (Jefri Mailool, 2018).

This study shows that organizational culture has a positive and significant effect on employees' job satisfaction (Fikri & Hartono, 2021), Organizational culture has a positive and significant effect on job satisfaction based on regression analysis (Silalahi, Sinaga, Candra, & Simatupang, 2021). Organizational culture has a direct and positive influence on employees' job satisfaction (Fikri & Hartono, 2021).

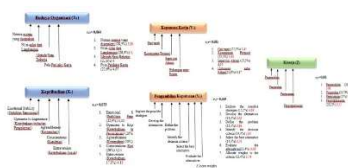
The principal's/leader's personality has a positive and significant relationship with job satisfaction and also influences managerial effectiveness and organizational commitment in the context of private elementary schools in Jakarta (Yusof, 2025). Several personality dimensions (e.g., extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness) have a significant effect on teachers' perceptions of job satisfaction in schools (William, 2023).

Organizational culture influences the decision-making process in the public sector, as it provides a framework of values and norms that shape how managers make decisions (Chatterji & Sharieff, 2015). The stronger and more positive the organizational culture, the more effective the decision-making process in higher education institutions (Kuwait University), with a significant relationship between organizational culture and decision-making (Al-zufairi & Alenezi, 2021). A strong organizational culture positively influences managerial decision-making, especially in organizations that support collaboration and innovation (Silalahi et al., 2021). Organizational culture plays an important role in decision-making by influencing the values, norms, and cognitive frameworks of organizational members (Nurhikmah et al., 2024).

Personality dimensions have a positive and significant effect on individual decision-making styles, including components such as conscientiousness, openness, and emotional stability, which influence how individuals make effective decisions (Çelik & Yilmaz, 2020) Personality traits influence the quality of the decision-making process in organizational and professional environments. Research findings show a significant relationship between personality aspects and decision-making processes and outcomes (Freitas, Salanova, & Llorens, 2019). Personality dimensions such as openness and conscientiousness are positively associated with rational decision-making (Omari & Jagero, 2010).

SITOREM analysis

To determine the magnitude of the influence between the independent and dependent variables and to obtain optimal solutions from this study, the research constellation and statistical analysis based on the Scientific Identification Theory for Operations Research in the field of Educational Management, known as SITOREM, can be examined (Widodo Sunaryo, Sri Setyaningsih, 2020).



(e) Analysis SITOREM

An optimal solution was generated to improve principals' performance by improving weak indicators and maintaining or further developing indicators that are already strong. The indicators that need to be improved include: 1st Explore the possible strategies 2nd Develop the alternatives 3rd Define the problem 4th Identify the decision criteria 5th Select the best alternative 6th Evaluate the alternatives 6th Evaluate the alternatives 7th Allocate weights to the criteria 8th Salary/wages 9th Promotion opportunities 10th Norms agreed upon by members 11th Environmental values 12th Controlling, 13th Direction 14th Planning, 15th Organizing. Meanwhile, the indicators that should be maintained and further developed are: 1) Supervision by superiors,, 2) Relationships among colleagues, 3) Emotional Stability, 4) Openness to Experience, 5) Agreeableness, 6) Conscientious, 7) Extraversion, 8) Work methods, 9) Work behavior patterns

4. CONCLUSION

This study aims to formulate strategies for improving the managerial performance of principals of private junior high schools in Garut Regency through strengthening organizational culture, personality, job satisfaction, and decision-making. The results show that all four variables have a direct, positive, and significant effect on principals' performance, with organizational culture and personality emerging as the most dominant factors. Meanwhile, job satisfaction and decision-making have not yet functioned optimally as intervening variables; therefore, performance improvement is more effectively achieved through direct strengthening of organizational values and the leadership character of school principals. These findings produce a validated path analysis model that can serve as a reference for policy making in improving the quality of school leadership.

In addition, this study identifies priority indicators that need improvement, particularly in decision-making aspects, reward systems, organizational norms, and managerial functions, as well as indicators that should be maintained and further developed, such as supervision by superiors, relationships among colleagues, and key personality characteristics of school principals. Future research is recommended to expand the model by incorporating additional variables, such as leadership style, organizational commitment, or digital leadership competencies, and to employ a longitudinal approach in order to capture sustainable changes in performance. Several follow-up programs in the form of training and seminars to enhance principals' performance are also being prepared as practical implementations of the findings of this study.

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