

Teachers' Perceptions of School Principals' Social Competence in Public Vocational High Schools in Lubuk Begalung District, Padang City

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ABSTRACT

The social competence of school principals is one of the important aspects in supporting the successful implementation of education in schools. This competence plays a significant role in creating an effective, conducive, and harmonious educational environment. From teachers' perspectives, principals' social competence greatly influences work comfort, motivation, and enthusiasm in carrying out professional duties as educators. This study generally aims to examine teachers' perceptions of the social competence of school principals in public vocational high schools in Lubuk Begalung District, Padang City. The research employed a quantitative method with a descriptive approach. The population of this study consisted of all civil servant teachers working in public vocational high schools in Lubuk Begalung District, Padang City, totaling 140 teachers. The sampling technique used was proportional stratified random sampling, resulting in 61 teachers selected as the research sample. The results indicate that teachers' perceptions of the principals' social competence in public vocational high schools in Lubuk Begalung District, Padang City fall into the good category. This is evidenced by an average score of 4.43, which indicates that principals are perceived as being able to perform their social roles effectively within the school environment.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Education is a deliberate and structured process aimed at influencing individuals, groups, or society as a whole so that they act in accordance with the expectations of the educational providers (Yuliawati & Enas, 2018). Meanwhile, according to the Ministry of National Education (Depdiknas, 2002:263), education is defined as a process of changing attitudes and behaviors of individuals or groups in an effort to mature human beings through teaching and training activities, processes, methods, and educational practices. The school principal is a central figure in the field of education who bears significant responsibility for the success of educational implementation at the school level. Principals play a crucial role in improving the quality of education by utilizing available resources and potential within the school environment (Karina P. et al., 2014). As leaders of educational institutions, principals are not only responsible for administrative and academic aspects but are also required to possess strong social skills in order to build positive relationships with all school members and the surrounding community (Suharyanti, 2024). Therefore, to carry out these roles and responsibilities optimally, principals are required to have adequate competencies, particularly social competence as part of the professional competencies essential for educational leaders.

Competence refers to the ability that an individual must possess to perform tasks effectively. Wibowo (2013) states that competence is the level of ability, knowledge, and behavior demonstrated by individuals

in completing the tasks assigned to them within an organization. The competencies of school principals, as stipulated in the Regulation of the Minister of National Education of the Republic of Indonesia Number 13 of 2007 concerning School Principal Standards, consist of five competencies: (1) personality competence, (2) managerial competence, (3) entrepreneurial competence, (4) supervisory competence, and (5) social competence. Principals who possess these five competencies are considered capable of carrying out their duties and responsibilities effectively. Among these competencies, social competence is closely related to the daily execution of principals' duties in managing school programs.

The social competence of school principals is further regulated in the Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture Number 6 of 2018 concerning the Assignment of Teachers as School Principals, which establishes social competence as one of the five core competencies that principals must possess. Social competence includes the ability of principals to empower all members of the educational institution, collaborate with various stakeholders including the community, and actively participate in professional organizations and broader networks to improve the quality of educational institutions. Principals' social competence plays a vital role in planning and implementing educational programs that align with the needs of students and the community. Principals who are able to understand students' needs and potential are more effective in designing educational programs that contribute to the improvement of educational quality (Junaidi, 2023). This view is consistent with Mulyasa (2015), who asserts that principals' social competence refers to their ability to interact effectively with various parties within the school environment, such as teachers, students, parents, and the surrounding community. This competence encompasses communication skills, cooperation, conflict resolution, and the development of partnership networks to achieve educational goals. Therefore, the development of social competence is a crucial aspect of effective school management.

In this context, teachers' perceptions serve as an important indicator in assessing the extent to which principals' social competence is applied in school leadership practices. Teachers' perceptions are not merely responses to sensory stimuli but also involve prior experiences and knowledge in interpreting situations and interactions within the school environment (Rakhmat, 2007). Research conducted by Dewi and Hidayat (2022) emphasizes that teachers' perceptions are closely related to how teachers understand and evaluate the effectiveness of various educational practices, including the ability of schools to adapt policies and approaches to the characteristics of school members. Furthermore, a study by Totalia and Sujadi (2023) indicates that teachers' perceptions of educational process and assessment standards are strongly influenced by their level of understanding and practical experience in implementing these standards. Thus, teachers' perceptions represent an active process influenced by internal factors such as experience, knowledge, and beliefs, as well as external factors such as school policies and climate, which ultimately shape teachers' attitudes and evaluations of principals' social competence.

However, based on observations and information obtained by the researcher, some teachers still perceive that the social competence of school principals has not been fully optimized. This is reflected in several phenomena, including communication between principals and teachers that tends to remain formal, resulting in less effective coordination of school programs and creating a sense of rigidity and reluctance among teachers. In addition, cooperation between principals and teachers is considered less optimal, particularly in the planning and development of extracurricular activities. Principals' participation in various school activities also needs to be enhanced in order to create a conducive and collaborative working atmosphere, as uneven involvement may affect the overall effectiveness of school program implementation. Moreover, principals' social sensitivity toward teachers' aspirations and feedback still needs improvement so that harmonious working relationships within the school environment can be established.

Based on these phenomena and previous research findings, this study aims to examine teachers' perceptions of the social competence of school principals in public vocational high schools in Lubuk Begalung District, Padang City. This research seeks to obtain relevant data and information to determine the level of teachers' perceptions regarding principals' social competence.

2. METHOD, DATA, ANALYSIS

This study employed a quantitative descriptive research design, as it aims to describe or depict a single variable systematically, factually, and accurately without comparing it with other variables or formulating hypotheses. Quantitative descriptive research is used to describe particular phenomena or conditions using numerical data that are analyzed and interpreted based on predetermined parameters or criteria (Sugiyono, 2019). This study specifically examines teachers' perceptions of school principals' social competence in public vocational high schools in Lubuk Begalung District, Padang City.

A population refers to the entire set of objects or subjects to be studied. According to Sugiyono (2013), a population is a generalization area consisting of objects or subjects that possess certain qualities and characteristics determined by the researcher for investigation, from which conclusions are drawn. The population of this study comprised all civil servant teachers working in public vocational high schools in Lubuk Begalung District, Padang City, totaling 140 teachers.

A sample is a subset of the population that represents its characteristics. The sampling technique used in this study was proportionate stratified random sampling, which considers the proportional representation of each stratum within the population. The sample size was determined using Cochran's formula with a 95% confidence level, resulting in a total of 61 teachers from various lengths of work experience and rank strata in public vocational high schools in Lubuk Begalung District, Padang City.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

The description of the overall data processing results in this study is viewed from four aspects: (1) communication, (2) cooperation, (3) participation, and (4) social sensitivity. The following table presents the results of data processing for each indicator.

Figure 1. Average Scores of Teachers' Perceptions of Principals' Social Competence in Public Vocational High Schools in Lubuk Begalung District, Padang City

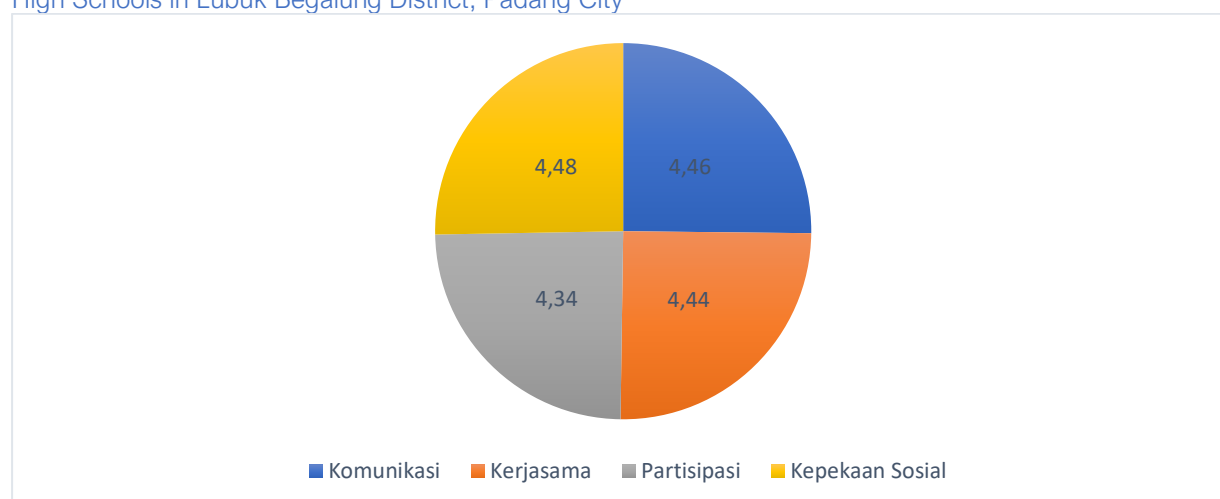


Figure 1 above presents data on teachers' perceptions of school principals' social competence across four indicators: communication, cooperation, participation, and social sensitivity. Based on the table, the results of data analysis show that the overall average score of teachers' perceptions of principals' social competence in public vocational high schools in Lubuk Begalung District, Padang City is 4.43. It can be observed that the highest indicator is social sensitivity, with an average score of 4.48, which falls into the good category. Meanwhile, the lowest indicator is participation, with an average score of 4.34, which is also categorized as good.

Overall, the average score of teachers' perceptions of school principals' social competence in public vocational high schools in Lubuk Begalung District, Padang City falls within the good category. This indicates that, according to teachers' perceptions, school principals' social competence has been well implemented.

Discussion

According to M. Ali (2015), the indicators of principals' social competence include communication, cooperation, participation, and social sensitivity. These four indicators are interrelated and collectively contribute to the success of a group or organization. By developing these aspects in a balanced manner, school principals are able to create a productive, inclusive, and harmonious working environment, which ultimately supports the achievement of educational organizational goals.

- a. Teachers' Perceptions of Principals' Social Competence in Public Vocational High Schools in Lubuk Begalung District, Padang City on the Communication Indicator

Communication as part of principals' social competence, according to Regulation of the Minister of National Education No. 13 of 2007, refers to the process of effective information exchange in which principals are required to communicate clearly and accurately, listen to feedback, and build positive

relationships in order to create a harmonious working atmosphere. In the educational context, communication not only involves the delivery of information but also includes the ability to listen to and understand others' perspectives. Ideally, principals' communication should support the development of teachers' thinking skills, emotional aspects, values, and specific competencies that are unique and relevant to their professional roles and responsibilities in the teaching process (Fatimah et al., 2015).

The results of this study indicate that teachers' perceptions of principals' social competence in public vocational high schools in Lubuk Begalung District, Padang City, viewed from the communication indicator, fall into the good category, with an average score of 4.46. This shows that principals' communication skills are generally perceived as good. However, among the items within this indicator, the lowest score was found in the statement "The principal is friendly when interacting with teachers," with an average score of 4.18, although it still falls within the good category.

The relatively lower score on this item may be influenced by several factors, one of which is the limited time available for non-formal interactions between principals and teachers. As a result, communication tends to occur mainly in formal forums, such as meetings or administrative activities, thereby limiting opportunities to build a more relaxed and friendly atmosphere.

One effort that principals can undertake to optimize communication within the school environment is to allocate time for non-formal interactions with teachers during school activities. Such interactions can help build emotional closeness and create a more comfortable and conducive working atmosphere. In addition, principals can show appreciation toward teachers, which may enhance and strengthen harmonious working relationships. As stated by Melin (2025), effective communication is capable of creating harmonious relationships between principals, teachers, and students.

In conclusion, teachers' perceptions of principals' social competence in terms of communication are already in the good category. Nevertheless, principals are expected to further optimize their time for direct communication and interaction with teachers.

b. Teachers' Perceptions of Principals' Social Competence in Public Vocational High Schools in Lubuk Begalung District, Padang City on the Cooperation Indicator

Cooperation is an essential aspect of principals' social competence that contributes to the success of school management and the improvement of educational quality. Principals need to collaborate with teachers, students, parents, and the community to create a positive learning environment. Such collaboration not only supports innovation in teaching but also increases parental involvement, which ultimately impacts student achievement. According to Fullan (2022), cooperation is the key to educational innovation. He emphasizes that principals must encourage collaboration among teachers and staff in order to create better and more responsive learning practices that meet students' needs.

The results of the study show that teachers' perceptions of principals' social competence on the cooperation indicator generally fall into the good category, with an average score of 4.44. This indicates that, according to teachers, principals' cooperation skills are well developed. However, among the items within this indicator, the lowest score was found in the statement "The principal involves teachers in school decision-making," with an average score of 4.32, which still belongs to the good category.

The lower score on this item may be attributed to several factors, including time constraints and certain situations that require principals to make quick decisions, thereby limiting direct teacher involvement. In addition, a more centralized leadership style may result in principals involving only certain parties, such as vice principals or school management teams.

To optimize this aspect, principals are encouraged to increase teacher involvement in decision-making processes, especially in policies directly related to teachers' working environments. This can be achieved through deliberation forums, regular meetings, and group discussions that provide opportunities for teachers to express their opinions and suggestions. Furthermore, principals should promote open and participatory communication so that teachers feel they have a meaningful role in school development. As explained by Sagala (2017), collaborative leadership encourages principals not to act in a centralized manner but to share roles and responsibilities with teachers. Through active teacher involvement in decision-making, principals can build trust, strengthen teamwork, and create a conducive working climate for professional development.

In summary, principals' social competence on the cooperation indicator is already in the good category. However, teacher involvement in school decision-making still needs to be enhanced to achieve more optimal cooperation.

c. Teachers' Perceptions of Principals' Social Competence in Public Vocational High Schools in Lubuk Begalung District, Padang City on the Participation Indicator

Participation in the educational context refers to the active involvement of all stakeholders in the educational process, including principals, teachers, students, parents, and the community. Principals' involvement in collaborative activities with teachers and educational staff is essential for building a conducive working culture. Principals who encourage active participation from all members of the school community can strengthen social skills as well as leadership capacity (Prasetyo et al., 2021).

The results of the study indicate that teachers' perceptions of principals' social competence on the participation indicator fall into the good category, with an average score of 4.34. This suggests that principals' participation skills are generally perceived as good. However, the lowest score within this indicator was found in the statement "The principal shows concern for the success of school activities," with an average score of 4.08. This indicates that principals have not fully demonstrated concern for the success of school activities, although the overall category remains good.

This lower score may be influenced by the heavy administrative workload borne by principals, which limits their ability to be directly involved in every school activity. In addition, principals' concern is often expressed through policies or task delegation, which may lead to differences in teachers' perceptions regarding the level of principals' involvement.

To improve this aspect, principals are encouraged to demonstrate concern more visibly by increasing their direct involvement in school activities and providing moral support to teachers and educational staff. Such concern can be expressed through appreciation, feedback, and evaluation of school activities. According to Mulyasa (2018), principals as educational leaders are required to show genuine concern for school activities through active involvement, support, and recognition of achievements. This concern is an essential part of social competence that enhances participation and motivation among school members.

In conclusion, teachers' perceptions of principals' social competence in terms of participation are already in the good category. However, principals' concern for the success of school activities still needs to be optimized so that participation can be more effective and evenly perceived.

d. Teachers' Perceptions of Principals' Social Competence in Public Vocational High Schools in Lubuk Begalung District, Padang City on the Social Sensitivity Indicator

Teachers' perceptions of principals are strongly influenced by the social competence demonstrated in daily school life. Principals who are sensitive to teachers' problems, able to communicate effectively, and capable of responding appropriately to teachers' needs tend to receive positive evaluations. This indicates that social sensitivity is a crucial factor in shaping teachers' perceptions of principals' leadership (Nurhadi, 2019).

The findings show that teachers' perceptions of principals' social competence on the social sensitivity indicator fall into the good category, with an average score of 4.48. This indicates that principals' social sensitivity is generally perceived as good. However, the lowest score within this indicator was found in the statement "The principal is open to teachers' needs," with an average score of 4.38, which still belongs to the good category. This suggests that principals have not yet maximized openness toward teachers' needs.

This lower score may be caused by limited opportunities for direct communication between principals and teachers, resulting in teachers' needs not being fully conveyed or identified. In addition, leadership patterns that focus heavily on tasks and administration may reduce principals' attention to individual teachers' needs. Differences in teachers' perceptions regarding the expected form of openness also influence their assessment of principals' competence.

To optimize this aspect, principals are encouraged to develop open, empathetic, and continuous communication by providing both formal and informal dialogue spaces where teachers can express their needs, aspirations, and challenges. Principals should also enhance active listening skills and demonstrate positive responses to teachers' concerns. Openness can further be realized through proportional and transparent follow-up actions on teachers' input, so that teachers feel valued and supported. As stated by Wahjosumidjo (2015), principals with high social sensitivity are able to create harmonious interpersonal relationships with teachers by providing dialogue opportunities, actively listening, and responding positively to teachers' needs.

In conclusion, teachers' perceptions of principals' social competence on the social sensitivity indicator are already in the good category. However, principals' openness to teachers' needs still needs to be strengthened so that social sensitivity can be more optimally and evenly experienced. Enhancing open, empathetic, and sustainable communication is a key step in improving principals' social competence.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the research and discussion regarding teachers' perceptions of the principal's social competence at public vocational high schools (SMK Negeri) in Lubuk Begalung District, Padang City, it can be concluded that the principal's social competence is generally in the good category. This is reflected in the overall mean score of 4.43.

In terms of each indicator, the principal's social competence in the communication aspect is in the good category with a mean score of 4.46. In the cooperation aspect, the principal's social competence is also categorized as good with a mean score of 4.44. Furthermore, the participation aspect shows a good category with a mean score of 4.34. Meanwhile, the social sensitivity aspect obtained the highest mean score of 4.48, which is also classified as good. Thus, the results of this study indicate that, according to teachers' perceptions, principals have demonstrated adequate social competence in carrying out their roles within the school environment.

Based on the research findings, the social competence of principals at public vocational high schools in Lubuk Begalung District is categorized as good. Therefore, principals are expected to maintain and further improve their social competence, particularly in the aspect of participation. Teachers are expected to continue fostering good cooperation and communication with principals. In addition, the Education Office is expected to support the improvement of principals' social competence through coaching and development programs. Future researchers are recommended to examine principal competency aspects more broadly.

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