

## *The Effect of Principal Leadership on Student Bullying Behavior in Public Senior High Schools in Manado City*

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### **Abstract**

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Bullying in senior high school settings constitutes a serious issue in educational management, as it directly affects students' sense of safety, psychological well-being, and the overall quality of the learning process. Principals are normatively positioned as strategic actors in fostering a safe, violence-free school culture. However, the assumption that principal leadership automatically exerts a direct impact on students' bullying behavior has rarely been examined empirically, particularly within the context of public schools. This study aims to critically analyze the influence of principal leadership on bullying behavior among students in public senior high schools in Manado City. This study employed a quantitative approach using an explanatory survey design. The research population consisted of all students enrolled in public senior high schools in Manado City, with a sample of 385 students determined using the Lemeshow formula. Data were collected through Likert-scale questionnaires measuring principal leadership and students' bullying behavior. The data were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with AMOS software, including validity testing, reliability testing, model fit evaluation, and structural relationship analysis. The results indicate that principal leadership does not have a direct and significant effect on student's bullying behavior. This finding suggests that principal leadership operates indirectly and primarily functions at the structural and policy levels, whereas bullying behavior is shaped through students' everyday social dynamics. Therefore, bullying prevention cannot rely solely on formal leadership, but requires the strengthening of school systems, a supportive school climate, and consistent educational practices. This study contributes theoretically by affirming that the relationship between principal leadership and bullying behavior is non-linear. Practically, the findings recommend that principals should not focus exclusively on administrative aspects, but also enhance the implementation mechanisms of anti-bullying policies to effectively reach students' actual behavior within the school environment.

**Keywords:** Principal Leadership, Bullying, Educational Management, SEM, Public Senior High School.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Bullying has emerged as a critical issue in modern education, as it is directly related to the quality of school life, students' mental health, and the effectiveness of the learning process. Schools, which are expected to serve as safe spaces that support students' social and emotional development, often become arenas of unequal power relations, intimidation, and psychological pressure. This phenomenon indicates that bullying is not merely an issue of individual student

behavior, but rather a reflection of broader social dynamics and institutional governance within schools.

From an educational management perspective, bullying can be understood as an indicator of weaknesses in protection systems, social regulation, and the establishment of a healthy school culture. Various national and international policies position the school principal as a key actor in creating a safe and child-friendly learning environment. Principals are expected to formulate a clear vision, establish policies, enforce discipline, and mobilize all members of the school community to reject all forms of violence. However, in practice, cases of bullying—both latent and overt—are still found, even in schools that already have formal leadership structures in place.

This condition raises critical questions: to what extent does principal leadership truly influence students' bullying behavior? Does principal leadership have a direct impact on students' social behavior, or is the influence indirect, mediated through certain institutional mechanisms? These questions are important because many educational policy interventions still rely heavily on the figure of the principal as the primary solution, often without sufficient empirical evidence regarding the effectiveness of leadership in directly shaping student behavior.

In the context of public senior high schools in Manado City, bullying remains a serious concern. Various reports and empirical findings indicate that bullying persists in verbal, social, and psychological forms within secondary school environments. Nevertheless, research that specifically examines the influence of principal leadership on students' bullying behavior using quantitative approaches and structural analysis remains very limited. Most previous studies tend to focus on case descriptions or associate bullying with individual and family-related factors.

Based on this background, this study aims to empirically and critically examine the influence of principal leadership on bullying behavior among students in public senior high schools in Manado City. This article seeks not only to test statistical hypotheses but also to provide a theoretical reflection on the role of school leadership within the framework of bullying prevention based on educational management.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Principal Leadership in Educational Management**

Principal leadership is one of the central concepts in educational management, as the principal is positioned as the primary director of the school organization. Leadership is not merely understood as a formal position, but as the ability to influence, mobilize, and guide members of the school community to work collectively toward achieving educational goals. In this context, the principal serves as a visionary leader, manager, decision-maker, as well as a guardian of the school's values and culture.

Theoretically, principal leadership encompasses various dimensions, including the formulation of vision and mission, resource management, development of organizational culture, academic supervision, and the fostering of social relationships within the school environment. Effective leadership is believed to create a conducive working climate, enhance teacher professionalism, and strengthen the commitment of school members toward shared goals. However, the

influence of leadership on student behavior is often indirect, operating through systems, policies, and daily practices within the school.

In practice, not all principals are able to implement transformative leadership. Some remain confined to administrative leadership patterns that emphasize compliance with rules and procedures, without being accompanied by efforts to build a participatory and responsive school culture that addresses students' needs. Such leadership patterns have the potential to create a gap between school management and students' social lives, resulting in policies that do not fully reach actual behaviors in the field.

### **Student Bullying Behavior as a School Social Phenomenon**

Bullying in schools is an aggressive behavior that is intentional, repetitive, and involves an imbalance of power between the perpetrator and the victim. In the context of secondary schools, bullying often manifests in verbal, social, and psychological forms that are not always easily recognized by school authorities. These forms of bullying are often normalized as jokes or part of adolescent dynamics, despite their serious impact on victims.

From a social perspective, bullying does not occur in a vacuum, but is influenced by group norms, peer relationships, and school culture. A school environment that is permissive toward symbolic violence or lacks firmness in enforcing rules tends to provide space for bullying behavior to develop. Therefore, bullying should be understood as an institutional phenomenon that reflects the overall quality of school governance.

### **The Relationship Between Principal Leadership and Bullying**

Conceptually, principal leadership is assumed to have a strategic role in bullying prevention through policy formulation, the creation of a positive school climate, and the strengthening of student protection systems. However, the relationship between leadership and bullying is not always linear. Principal leadership primarily operates at the structural and cultural levels, while bullying behavior occurs at the level of students' everyday social interactions.

Based on this framework, this study tests the hypothesis that principal leadership influences students' bullying behavior. The testing is conducted directly to determine whether there is a significant relationship between students' perceptions of principal leadership and the tendency of bullying behavior.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study employed a quantitative approach with an explanatory survey design. The population consisted of all public senior high school students in Manado City. The sample comprised 385 students, determined using the Lemeshow formula by considering the confidence level and margin of error.

Data were collected using a Likert-scale questionnaire measuring two main variables: principal leadership and student bullying behavior. The principal leadership variable was measured through indicators reflecting leadership vision, rule enforcement, attention to school safety, and support for students. Meanwhile, the bullying behavior variable was measured through indicators of verbal, physical, social, and psychological bullying.

Data analysis was conducted using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with the assistance of AMOS software. The analysis procedures included testing

the validity and reliability of the instruments, evaluating the measurement model, assessing model fit (goodness of fit), and examining the structural relationship between principal leadership and bullying behavior.

## **RESULTS**

The results of the descriptive analysis indicate that students' perceptions of principal leadership fall within the moderate to good category. This suggests that, in general, principals are perceived to have performed their administrative and managerial leadership functions adequately.

However, the results of the structural model testing show that the path of influence between principal leadership and bullying behavior is not significant. The path coefficient is below the significance threshold, with a critical ratio value of less than 1.96 and a probability value greater than 0.05. Therefore, the hypothesis stating that principal leadership influences students' bullying behavior is rejected.

## **DISCUSSION**

The finding that principal leadership does not have a direct effect on students' bullying behavior is both significant and challenges normative assumptions in educational management. This result indicates that the presence of formal leadership does not automatically extend to or influence students' social behavior. Principal leadership operates at the level of policy and organizational structure, whereas bullying behavior is shaped by students' everyday interactions.

The findings of this study suggest that the influence of leadership on bullying is indirect and requires institutional mediators such as school climate, teaching practices, and monitoring systems. Without these mechanisms, anti-bullying policies formulated by principals risk remaining at the level of documentation and may not be internalized within the school culture.

## **RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS**

Theoretically, these findings reinforce the view that school leadership should be understood as a systemic process rather than a simple linear relationship. Practically, principals need to shift their focus from an administrative approach toward strengthening school systems that are capable of effectively influencing students' behavior in real contexts.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study concludes that principal leadership does not have a direct and significant effect on bullying behavior among students in public senior high schools in Manado City. Bullying prevention requires a more comprehensive institutional approach through strengthening the school climate and other supporting systems.

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