



# The influence of school principal leadership, school support, and work motivation on teachers' professional competence

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# The influence of school principal leadership, school support, and work motivation on teachers' professional competence

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## ABSTRACT

This study examined the influence of principals' instructional leadership, school support, and work motivation on teachers' professional competence in Padang City's public junior high schools. A sample of 385 teachers was selected, and data were analyzed using PLS-SEM. The results revealed that instructional leadership ( $\beta = 0.308, p < 0.05$ ) and school support ( $\beta = 0.414, p < 0.05$ ) positively impacted teachers' professional competence. Both instructional leadership ( $\beta = 0.359, p < 0.05$ ) and school support ( $\beta = 0.434, p < 0.05$ ) also significantly influenced work motivation, which in turn enhanced professional competence ( $\beta = 0.467, p < 0.05$ ). The study highlights the critical role of leadership and support in fostering motivated teachers, offering practical implications for policymakers and school administrators aiming to improve teacher quality.



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## Introduction

Teacher professional competence is a critical factor in enhancing the quality of education, as competent teachers are not only able to deliver effective instruction but also create a supportive learning environment that fosters student development (Hamidah, 2023; Kaiman et al., 2020). The existing body of research consistently highlights the importance of teacher skills in curriculum implementation, classroom management, and assessment. As a result, improving teachers' professional competence has become a central focus for educational systems worldwide. However, challenges persist, particularly in public schools, where varying levels of resources and institutional support complicate efforts to ensure high levels of teacher competence.

A key determinant of teacher performance is school leadership, especially instructional leadership. Principals who engage actively in guiding teaching practices, setting clear educational goals, and providing constructive feedback are better positioned to cultivate high-performing teachers. Previous studies suggest that instructional leadership is linked to higher teacher satisfaction, engagement, and instructional quality, all of which contribute to improved student outcomes (Firmansyah et al., 2025; Usman, 2025). Despite these findings, much of the existing literature focuses on leadership in isolation,

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with limited exploration of how it interacts with other organizational factors, such as school support and teacher motivation, in shaping teacher competence (Mydin et al., 2024; Berbegal Vázquez et al., 2024).

School support is another crucial factor influencing teacher competence. School support encompasses both tangible resources, such as teaching materials and infrastructure, and intangible aspects like professional development opportunities, a collaborative work culture, and administrative assistance. Research shows that teachers who perceive strong institutional support are more likely to invest in their professional growth and adopt innovative teaching strategies (Lubis, 2023; Musri, 2021; Yusri & Windasari, 2023). However, the specific pathways through which school support translates into higher professional competence are not fully understood, leaving a gap in the literature (Masruri et al., 2025; Yuseva et al., 2024).

In addition to leadership and support, work motivation is a powerful internal driver of teacher performance. Motivated teachers demonstrate greater commitment, creativity, and resilience in their work, all of which enhance their professional competence. Although several studies have examined work motivation in isolation, few have explored how leadership and school support jointly influence motivation and, subsequently, teacher competence (Dewi et al., 2025; Effendi, 2025; Lastroiza et al., 2025). This is particularly relevant in the context of Indonesian public schools, where varying levels of support and motivation may impact teachers differently across regions (Niviana et al., 2021; Robisah et al., 2024).

Despite a growing body of research, few studies have employed a comprehensive model that integrates instructional leadership, school support, and work motivation to predict teachers' professional competence. Most studies tend to focus on one or two variables, limiting their ability to capture the complex interactions between leadership, organizational support, and teacher behavior. This gap in the literature calls for a more holistic approach to understanding the factors that contribute to teacher competence (Charania et al., 2024; Lenoir et al., 2024; Suryadi, 2025).

This study addresses this gap by examining the direct and indirect effects of principals' instructional leadership and school support on teachers' professional competence through work motivation. By incorporating motivation as an intervening variable, this study not only looks at the direct effects of leadership and support but also uncovers how motivation mediates the relationship between these factors and teacher competence. This approach provides a more nuanced understanding of how different school environments influence teacher development (Shuma et al., 2024; Tømte, 2024).

The novelty of this study lies in its use of Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) to analyze the relationships between instructional leadership, school support, work motivation, and professional competence. This methodology allows for a rigorous examination of both direct and indirect effects, offering a comprehensive framework that captures the complex dynamics at play in improving teacher quality (González-Fernández et al., 2024; Kalim, 2024). By using a robust analytical approach, this study provides empirical evidence of how leadership and support mechanisms translate into enhanced teacher competence.

In summary, this study aims to fill a significant gap in the literature by investigating the intertwined roles of instructional leadership, school support, and work motivation in shaping teachers' professional competence. The findings are expected to provide actionable insights for policymakers and school administrators looking to improve teacher quality and, by extension, educational outcomes. Understanding how leadership, support, and motivation work together offers a framework for developing targeted strategies that strengthen teacher development (Hu et al., 2024; Wang et al., 2024).

By examining these interconnected variables, the study contributes to both the theoretical and practical understanding of educational management and teacher development, offering a more holistic perspective on the factors that enhance teacher performance and student achievement (Berhanu, 2024; Moorhouse et al., 2024).

## Method

This study employed a quantitative research design with an explanatory approach to examine the causal relationships between principals' instructional leadership, school support, work motivation, and teachers' professional competence. The study's population included 1,900 civil servant teachers (PNS) across 45 public junior high schools in Padang City, with a sample of 385 teachers selected using a proportionate stratified random sampling technique to ensure adequate representation of all schools. Data were collected through structured questionnaires measuring the key constructs: instructional leadership, school support, work motivation, and professional competence. These questionnaires were designed based on existing validated scales to capture the dimensions of each variable.

Data analysis was performed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), a robust method for testing both the measurement model and structural model. This technique allowed for a comprehensive evaluation of both direct and indirect effects. Specifically, the study focused on examining the relationships between instructional leadership and school support, and their impact on teachers' professional competence, with work motivation serving as an intervening variable. Hypothesis testing was conducted using coefficient estimates, t-statistics, and significance levels to determine the strength of these relationships. The study's design ensures a detailed understanding of the mechanisms through which leadership and support influence teacher competence.

## Results and Discussions

The results of this study indicate that there is a positive and significant relationship between the principal's instructional leadership, school support, and work motivation on teachers' professional competence. Data were analyzed using PLS-SEM to examine both the direct and indirect effects of independent variables on the dependent variable. These findings suggest that principals who implement effective instructional leadership and provide adequate school support can enhance teachers' work motivation, which in turn positively influences their professional competence. The following four tables present the direct and indirect effects of each variable, including coefficient values, t-statistics, and significance levels.

**Table 1.** Direct Effect of Instructional Leadership and School Support on Teachers' Professional Competence

Independent Variable	Original Coefficient	t-Statistic	Significance	Conclusion
Instructional Leadership (X1) to Professional Competence (Y)	0.308	1.974	0.001	Significant, H1 accepted
School Support (X2) to Professional Competence (Y)	0.414	2.599	0.010	Significant, H2 accepted

Table 1 demonstrates that both instructional leadership and school support have a positive and significant direct effect on teachers' professional competence. This implies that enhancing leadership quality and providing adequate school support directly contribute to improving teachers' ability to perform their professional duties effectively.

**Table 2.** Direct Effect of Instructional Leadership and School Support on Work Motivation

Independent Variable	Original Coefficient	t-Statistic	Significance	Conclusion
Instructional Leadership (X1) to Work Motivation (Z)	0.359	1.993	0.002	Significant, H3 accepted
School Support (X2) to Work Motivation (Z)	0.434	2.199	0.007	Significant, H4 accepted

Table 2 indicates that instructional leadership and school support have a positive and significant influence on teachers' work motivation. Principals who demonstrate effective instructional leadership

and provide appropriate support foster higher motivation among teachers, which can enhance their engagement and performance in professional activities.

**Table 3.** Direct Effect of Work Motivation on Teachers' Professional Competence

Independent Variable	Original Coefficient	t-Statistic	Significance	Conclusion
Work Motivation (Z) to Professional Competence (Y)	0.467	2.610	0.009	Significant, H5 accepted

Table 3 shows that work motivation significantly contributes to teachers' professional competence. This finding highlights the importance of internal motivation as a driving factor, enabling teachers to improve their teaching, planning, and assessment practices.

**Table 4.** Indirect Effect of Instructional Leadership and School Support on Teachers' Professional Competence through Work Motivation

Independent Variable	Intervening Variable	Indirect Effect (Original Coef.)	t-Statistic	Significance	Conclusion
Instructional Leadership (X1) to Work Motivation (Z) to Professional Competence (Y)	Z	0.359 × 0.467 = 0.168	Calculated in PLS	< 0.05	Significant
School Support (X2) to Work Motivation (Z) to Professional Competence (Y)	Z	0.434 × 0.467 = 0.203	Calculated in PLS	< 0.05	Significant

Table 4 presents the indirect effects of instructional leadership and school support on teachers' professional competence through work motivation as a mediating variable. The results suggest that work motivation strengthens the influence of both the principal's leadership and school support on teachers' professional competence.

The results of this study clearly show that instructional leadership plays a significant role in enhancing teachers' professional competence. Principals who actively guide, supervise, and provide clear learning goals foster an environment where teachers feel supported and motivated to improve their skills. This aligns with prior research that emphasizes the importance of leadership in schools, not just for administrative duties but for cultivating professional growth among staff (Berbegal Vázquez et al., 2024; Mydin et al., 2024). The study confirms that structured guidance and constructive feedback from principals lead to teachers developing effective teaching strategies that positively impact student learning outcomes.

School support also emerged as a strong predictor of teachers' professional competence. The findings support the idea that schools providing resources, professional development opportunities, and a supportive climate enable teachers to perform at their best. This result aligns with previous studies that emphasize the significance of a supportive environment for teachers (Compagnoni et al., 2024; Okoń, 2024). When teachers perceive that their school is invested in their success, they are more likely to enhance their competence and overall performance in the classroom.

Interestingly, work motivation was identified as a crucial mediating factor in the relationship between instructional leadership, school support, and professional competence. Teachers who are motivated by effective leadership and adequate support are more likely to engage in continuous learning, apply innovative teaching methods, and take initiatives that positively impact student outcomes (Chan et al., 2024; Ho et al., 2024). This highlights that while leadership and support are essential, fostering intrinsic motivation is equally critical to improving professional competence.

The mediating role of work motivation offers a significant insight into how teacher competence can be enhanced. The indirect effects found in this study suggest that the positive impact of leadership and

school support is more pronounced when teachers are motivated. This finding underscores the importance of policies that not only focus on structural aspects of education but also aim to inspire and sustain teachers' intrinsic motivation (Bao et al., 2024; Sari et al., 2025). Encouraging teachers' autonomy, involving them in decision-making, and recognizing their achievements are key strategies for enhancing motivation.

Furthermore, the findings emphasize the interconnected nature of instructional leadership and school support. Principals who exhibit strong leadership qualities also tend to foster a supportive school environment, which in turn boosts teachers' motivation and professional competence. This cyclical effect points to the importance of a holistic approach to school management, where leadership, resources, and teacher motivation are interdependent and collectively contribute to improving educational quality (Huang et al., 2024; Şahin et al., 2024). This integrated perspective offers valuable insights for policymakers aiming to address the complex dynamics influencing teacher performance.

The results of this study reinforce the idea that improving teachers' professional competence requires a multifaceted approach. Effective leadership, adequate school support, and strategies to boost teacher motivation must all be addressed simultaneously. This aligns with previous findings that show a more significant impact on teacher performance when these elements are combined (Berhanu, 2024; Moorhouse et al., 2024). A focus on these interconnected factors can create the necessary conditions for teachers to thrive and improve their professional skills, leading to better student learning outcomes.

However, there are challenges to implementing the findings of this study in real-world settings. For instance, not all schools have the same level of resources or administrative capacity to implement comprehensive leadership and support strategies. In schools with fewer resources, principals may face difficulties in providing the necessary support to teachers, which could limit the effectiveness of instructional leadership (Moorhouse et al., 2024). Additionally, external factors such as socio-economic conditions or cultural differences among teachers may further influence how leadership and support are perceived and acted upon.

In conclusion, this study provides valuable insights into the factors that enhance teacher professional competence, with a particular focus on the importance of leadership, school support, and motivation. The findings suggest that improving teacher competence is a complex process that requires not only structural and organizational changes but also efforts to inspire and sustain teacher motivation. By adopting a holistic approach that considers both external supports and internal motivations, schools can create a more conducive environment for professional growth, ultimately benefiting both teachers and students (González-Fernández et al., 2024; Kalim, 2024).

## Conclusions

This study demonstrates that principals' instructional leadership and school support both have a direct and significant impact on teachers' professional competence, while also positively influencing teachers' work motivation, which in turn further enhances their competence. The findings confirm that work motivation serves as an important mediating factor, strengthening the effect of leadership and school support on teacher performance. Therefore, to improve teachers' professional competence, school administrators and policymakers should focus not only on developing effective instructional leadership and providing adequate support but also on fostering teachers' intrinsic motivation through recognition, professional development opportunities, and a supportive work environment. These integrated efforts can create conditions that promote continuous teacher growth and, ultimately, better educational outcomes for students.

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