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Supportive principal leadership and learning quality: the mediating role of teachers' affective commitment

Dede Mardani^{*}, Anisah Anisah, Lusi Susanti, Jasrial Jasrial

Universitas Negeri Padang, Padang, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to analyze the effects of supportive principal leadership on teachers' affective commitment and learning quality, as well as the mediating role of teachers' affective commitment in public elementary schools in Kinali District. This study employed a quantitative correlational design using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). The population consisted of 386 public elementary school teachers, with 196 respondents selected through proportional stratified random sampling. Data were collected using validated and reliable Likert-scale questionnaires measuring supportive principal leadership, teachers' affective commitment, and learning quality. The findings showed that supportive principal leadership significantly influenced teachers' affective commitment ($\beta = 0.73$; $CR = 6.84$; $p < 0.001$) and learning quality ($\beta = 0.41$; $CR = 4.12$; $p < 0.001$). Teachers' affective commitment also had a significant positive effect on learning quality ($\beta = 0.52$; $CR = 5.36$; $p < 0.001$). Indirect analysis revealed that supportive leadership affected learning quality through teachers' affective commitment with an indirect effect of 0.38 and a total effect of 0.79. The SEM model demonstrated good fit indices (RMSEA = 0.041; CFI = 0.96; TLI = 0.95). Supportive principal leadership and teachers' affective commitment play significant roles in improving learning quality in elementary schools.



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Corresponding Author:

Dede Mardani,
Universitas Negeri Padang
Email: dedemardani05@admin.sd.belajar.id

Introduction

Learning quality is a key indicator of educational effectiveness because it reflects the extent to which instructional processes support students' cognitive, affective, and psychomotor development (Kareem et al., 2023; Sanchez et al., 2022). In elementary schools, learning quality directly affects students' academic achievement and learning engagement. Despite ongoing educational reforms, differences in instructional quality remain evident across schools, indicating that educational success is influenced not only by curriculum implementation but also by organizational and human factors. Therefore, understanding the determinants of learning quality remains an important issue in educational management research (Sunarsi et al., 2020).

Principal leadership is widely recognized as a critical factor influencing school effectiveness. Principals shape teachers' professional practices through support, communication, and school climate development (Cansoy et al., 2022; Clarence et al., 2021). While previous studies have largely focused on transformational, instructional, and distributed leadership, supportive principal leadership has received less attention (Alzoraiki et al., 2023; İşik, 2020). This leadership approach emphasizes emotional support, teacher empowerment, and positive

interpersonal relationships, which can enhance teachers' motivation and professional performance (Bellibaş et al., 2020; Karacabey et al., 2022). However, its contribution to learning quality remains insufficiently examined.

Teachers' affective commitment is another important factor associated with instructional effectiveness. Affective commitment reflects teachers' emotional attachment, loyalty, and sense of belonging to their schools. Teachers with strong affective commitment are more likely to demonstrate dedication, responsibility, and active engagement in instructional activities (Bellibaş et al., 2021; Freeman & Fields, 2023). Such commitment can improve lesson preparation, classroom implementation, and learning evaluation. Nevertheless, affective commitment is strongly influenced by organizational conditions, particularly leadership support and school culture.

Several research gaps remain in the literature. Previous studies have predominantly examined transformational, instructional, or distributed leadership, while evidence regarding supportive principal leadership remains limited (Alzoraiki et al., 2023; Işık, 2020). In addition, leadership and learning quality are often investigated separately, with limited attention given to the mediating role of teachers' affective commitment. As a result, the mechanisms through which supportive leadership influences learning quality are not yet fully understood, particularly in Indonesian public elementary schools (Berkovich & Bogler, 2021; Hosseingholizadeh et al., 2023).

Methodologically, many previous studies have relied on regression or correlation analyses that cannot simultaneously evaluate direct and indirect relationships among variables. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) provides a more comprehensive approach by enabling the examination of causal relationships, mediation effects, and model fit within a single framework (Berkovich & Bogler, 2021; Mansor et al., 2021). Therefore, SEM is considered appropriate for explaining the complex relationships among supportive leadership, affective commitment, and learning quality.

The novelty of this study lies in its focus on supportive principal leadership, the inclusion of teachers' affective commitment as a mediating variable, and the application of SEM within the context of Indonesian public elementary schools. This study contributes to educational leadership and organizational behavior literature while providing practical insights for strengthening supportive leadership and teachers' emotional commitment to improve learning quality (Hosseingholizadeh et al., 2023; Thien & Adams, 2021; Eyal et al., 2026; Kılınç et al., 2024).

Method

This study employed a quantitative correlational design to examine the relationships among supportive principal leadership, teachers' affective commitment, and learning quality in public elementary schools in Kinali District, West Pasaman Regency. The population consisted of 386 teachers, and 196 teachers were selected through proportional stratified random sampling. The sample size was considered adequate for Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) analysis because it exceeded the minimum recommended sample size for covariance-based SEM. Respondents represented various demographic characteristics, including gender, age, teaching experience, and educational background. The study investigated supportive principal leadership as the exogenous variable, teachers' affective commitment as the mediating variable, and learning quality as the endogenous variable.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire with a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The supportive principal leadership construct was measured through four dimensions: emotional support and motivation, assistance in goal achievement, role modeling and positive influence, and participation in professional development. Teachers' affective commitment was measured through emotional attachment, organizational loyalty, value congruence, and active participation in school activities. Learning quality was assessed through learning planning, instructional implementation, learning evaluation, and student learning outcomes. Prior to the main survey, the instrument was pilot-tested on 30 teachers outside the research sample. Item validity was examined using Pearson Product Moment correlation, while reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha. All constructs demonstrated acceptable reliability coefficients above 0.70 and met the required validity criteria.

Data analysis was conducted using covariance-based Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). The analysis began with descriptive statistics, followed by assumption testing, including normality, multicollinearity, homogeneity, and outlier detection. The measurement model was then evaluated through Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) to assess factor loadings, construct reliability (CR), convergent validity using Average Variance Extracted (AVE), and discriminant validity. After the measurement model met the required criteria, the structural model was evaluated using Chi-square, GFI, AGFI, CFI, TLI, and RMSEA indices. Hypothesis testing was performed by examining path coefficients, critical ratio (CR), and probability values. The mediating

role of teachers' affective commitment was assessed through indirect effect analysis using bootstrapping procedures, enabling the estimation of direct, indirect, and total effects among variables.

Results and Discussions

This study examined the influence of supportive principal leadership and teachers' affective commitment on learning quality among public elementary school teachers in Kinali District. The findings are presented through descriptive statistics, assumption testing, model fit evaluation, coefficient of determination, and hypothesis testing using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM).

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Learning Quality Variable

Indicator	Mean	Median	Mode	SD	TCR (%)	Category
Learning Planning	4.12	4.00	4	0.61	82.4	High
Learning Implementation	4.08	4.00	4	0.58	81.6	High
Learning Evaluation	3.95	4.00	4	0.64	79.0	High
Student Learning Outcomes	4.02	4.00	4	0.60	80.4	High
Average	4.04	4.00	4	0.61	80.8	High

The descriptive analysis revealed that the overall learning quality variable was categorized as high, with an average score of 4.04 and a respondent achievement level of 80.8%. Among the indicators, learning planning demonstrated the highest achievement percentage (82.4%), indicating that teachers generally performed adequate instructional preparation before conducting classroom activities. Meanwhile, the learning evaluation indicator obtained the lowest percentage (79.0%), although it still remained within the high category. The relatively low standard deviation values indicated homogeneous responses among participants, suggesting consistency in teachers' perceptions regarding learning quality.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Supportive Principal Leadership Variable

Indicator	Mean	Median	Mode	SD	TCR (%)	Category
Emotional Support and Motivation	4.20	4.00	4	0.57	84.0	Strong
Assistance in Goal Achievement	4.05	4.00	4	0.60	81.0	Strong
Role Modeling and Positive Influence	4.18	4.00	4	0.55	83.6	Strong
Participation and Professional Development	4.10	4.00	4	0.59	82.0	Strong
Average	4.13	4.00	4	0.58	82.6	Strong

The results showed that supportive principal leadership was perceived positively by teachers, with an average score of 4.13 and a respondent achievement level of 82.6%. Emotional support and motivation emerged as the strongest indicator, suggesting that school principals were considered capable of providing encouragement and psychological support to teachers in carrying out their professional duties. Conversely, assistance in goal achievement recorded the lowest score, although it still remained within the strong category. The findings indicate that principals' supportive behaviors contribute positively to teachers' professional experiences and organizational engagement.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of Teachers' Affective Commitment Variable

Indicator	Mean	Median	Mode	SD	TCR (%)	Category
Emotional Attachment to School	4.15	4.00	4	0.56	83.0	High
Organizational Pride and Loyalty	4.08	4.00	4	0.59	81.6	High
Alignment of Personal and School Values	4.05	4.00	4	0.61	81.0	High
Active Involvement and Social Participation	3.98	4.00	4	0.63	79.6	High
Average	4.06	4.00	4	0.60	81.2	High

The findings indicated that teachers' affective commitment was generally categorized as high, with an overall mean score of 4.06 and a respondent achievement level of 81.2%. Emotional attachment to the school showed the highest achievement percentage, demonstrating that teachers possessed a strong emotional bond with their institutions. In contrast, active involvement and social participation obtained the lowest score, although it still

remained within the high category. These results suggest that teachers tended to exhibit positive emotional engagement, organizational loyalty, and commitment toward school activities and responsibilities.

Table 4. Summary of Assumption Testing Results for SEM Analysis

Assumption Test	Indicator/Variable	Result	Criteria	Conclusion
Normality	Supportive Leadership (X1)	CR Skewness = -1.62; CR Kurtosis = -1.21	± 2.58	Normal
	Affective Commitment (X2)	CR Skewness = -1.74; CR Kurtosis = -1.33	± 2.58	Normal
	Learning Quality (Y)	CR Skewness = -1.58; CR Kurtosis = -1.17	± 2.58	Normal
Multicollinearity Homogeneity	X1 ↔ X2	$r = 0.731$	< 0.85	No Multicollinearity
	Supportive Leadership (X1)	Sig. = 0.287	> 0.05	Homogeneous
	Affective Commitment (X2)	Sig. = 0.314	> 0.05	Homogeneous
Outlier Detection	Learning Quality (Y)	Sig. = 0.265	> 0.05	Homogeneous
	Observation 45	$p2 = 0.015$	> 0.001	Not Outlier
	Observation 78	$p2 = 0.012$	> 0.001	Not Outlier
	Observation 112	$p2 = 0.018$	> 0.001	Not Outlier
	Observation 156	$p2 = 0.014$	> 0.001	Not Outlier

The assumption testing results demonstrated that all prerequisites for Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) were satisfied. The normality test indicated that all variables had critical ratio values for skewness and kurtosis within the acceptable threshold of ± 2.58 , confirming normal data distribution. The multicollinearity analysis revealed a correlation coefficient of 0.731 between supportive principal leadership and teachers' affective commitment, which was below the recommended threshold of 0.85, indicating no multicollinearity. Furthermore, all variables achieved significance values greater than 0.05 in the homogeneity test, confirming homogeneous variance. The Mahalanobis distance analysis also showed that all observations had $p2$ values greater than 0.001, indicating the absence of significant multivariate outliers. Therefore, the dataset fulfilled all SEM assumptions and was appropriate for subsequent model estimation and hypothesis testing.

Table 5. Goodness of Fit Indices of the SEM Model

Goodness of Fit Index	Cut-off Value	Model Result	Description
Chi-square	Smaller is better	412.57	Good
Probability	≥ 0.05	0.071	Good
RMSEA	≤ 0.08	0.041	Good
GFI	≥ 0.90	0.92	Good
AGFI	≥ 0.90	0.90	Good
TLI	≥ 0.90	0.95	Good
CFI	≥ 0.90	0.96	Good

The SEM model evaluation demonstrated satisfactory goodness-of-fit indices. The RMSEA value of 0.041 indicated a low approximation error, while the GFI, AGFI, TLI, and CFI values exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.90. Additionally, the probability value was greater than 0.05, indicating that the structural model adequately fit the empirical data. Overall, the findings confirmed that the proposed SEM model was statistically acceptable and appropriate for hypothesis testing.

Table 6. Structural Model Results

Relationship / Endogenous Variable	Estimate (β)	CR	p-value	Direct Effect	Indirect Effect	Total Effect	R ²	Description
Supportive Leadership to Teachers' Affective Commitment	0.73	6.84	0.000	0.73		0.73	0.54	Significant
Supportive Leadership to Learning Quality	0.41	4.12	0.000	0.41	0.38	0.79	0.63	Significant
Teachers' Affective Commitment to Learning Quality	0.52	5.36	0.000	0.52		0.52		Significant

Note: R² for Teachers' Affective Commitment = 0.54; R² for Learning Quality = 0.63.

The structural model results demonstrated that supportive principal leadership significantly influenced teachers' affective commitment ($\beta = 0.73$, CR = 6.84, $p < 0.001$) and learning quality ($\beta = 0.41$, CR = 4.12, $p < 0.001$). Teachers' affective commitment also had a significant positive effect on learning quality ($\beta = 0.52$, CR = 5.36, $p < 0.001$). The coefficient of determination showed that supportive principal leadership explained 54% of the variance in teachers' affective commitment, while supportive principal leadership and teachers' affective commitment jointly explained 63% of the variance in learning quality. Furthermore, mediation analysis indicated that supportive principal leadership exerted an indirect effect of 0.38 on learning quality through teachers' affective commitment, resulting in a total effect of 0.79. These findings confirm that teachers' affective commitment partially mediated the relationship between supportive principal leadership and learning quality, highlighting the importance of leadership support in strengthening teachers' commitment and improving instructional quality.

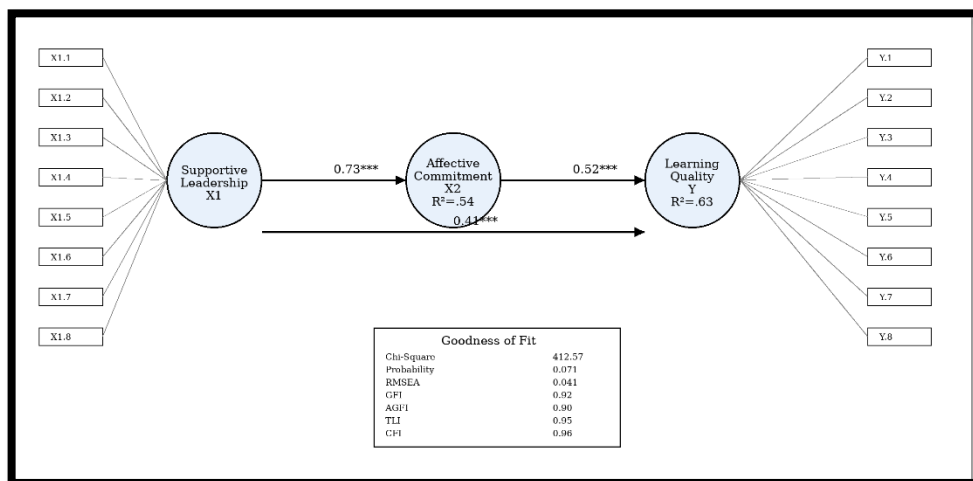


Figure 1. Structural Equation Model of the Effects of Supportive Principal Leadership and Teachers' Affective Commitment on Learning Quality

Figure 1 presents the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) results illustrating the relationships among supportive principal leadership, teachers' affective commitment, and learning quality in public elementary schools in Kinali District. The model demonstrates that supportive principal leadership has a strong positive effect on teachers' affective commitment, with a standardized path coefficient of 0.73, indicating that principals who provide emotional support, motivation, and professional guidance are able to strengthen teachers' emotional attachment to the school organization. Furthermore, supportive principal leadership also exerts a direct positive influence on learning quality with a coefficient value of 0.41, while teachers' affective commitment significantly affects learning quality with a coefficient of 0.52. These findings indicate that teachers who possess stronger emotional commitment and organizational loyalty tend to demonstrate higher instructional performance in classroom learning processes. In addition, the coefficient of determination (R²)

values reveal that supportive principal leadership explains 54% of the variance in teachers' affective commitment, whereas supportive leadership and affective commitment together explain 63% of the variance in learning quality. Overall, the structural model confirms that supportive leadership practices play a crucial role in enhancing teachers' commitment and improving the overall quality of learning.

The findings showed that supportive principal leadership had a strong positive effect on teachers' affective commitment ($\beta = 0.73$; $p < 0.001$), indicating that leadership support is a key factor in strengthening teachers' emotional attachment to their schools. Principals who provide emotional support, recognition, and participative communication are more likely to foster organizational loyalty and psychological well-being among teachers. This finding supports previous studies highlighting the role of leadership in enhancing teacher commitment, trust, and motivation (Al-Zu'bi et al., 2024; Ayumi & Nasution, 2025). However, affective commitment may also be influenced by other organizational factors, such as school culture and collegial relationships.

Supportive principal leadership also significantly influenced learning quality ($\beta = 0.41$; $p < 0.001$). This result suggests that supportive leadership contributes directly to instructional effectiveness by creating conditions that help teachers improve lesson planning, classroom implementation, and learning evaluation. The descriptive findings showed that learning planning obtained the highest score, indicating that leadership support may be particularly important in strengthening instructional preparation. These findings reinforce the view that leadership is a strategic determinant of educational quality improvement (Al-Adwan et al., 2025; Kausar, 2024; Thien & Adams, 2024).

Teachers' affective commitment significantly affected learning quality ($\beta = 0.52$; $p < 0.001$), demonstrating a stronger effect than the direct influence of supportive leadership. Teachers with stronger emotional attachment and organizational loyalty tend to show greater responsibility, engagement, and dedication to instructional activities. This finding is consistent with previous studies reporting that committed teachers are more adaptive, innovative, and motivated to improve student learning experiences (Anders, 2025; Rowe et al., 2025). Therefore, affective commitment represents an important psychological factor that supports instructional quality.

The mediation analysis revealed that teachers' affective commitment partially mediated the relationship between supportive principal leadership and learning quality. The indirect effect was 0.38, while the total effect reached 0.79, indicating that supportive leadership improves learning quality both directly and indirectly through teachers' emotional commitment. This finding highlights that leadership practices become more effective when accompanied by strong teacher commitment and supports the integration of leadership and psychological perspectives in explaining educational effectiveness (Fairros, 2025; Zhang et al., 2025).

The SEM model demonstrated satisfactory fit indices (RMSEA = 0.041; CFI = 0.96; TLI = 0.95), confirming the adequacy of the proposed model. Supportive principal leadership explained 54% of the variance in teachers' affective commitment, while supportive leadership and affective commitment jointly explained 63% of the variance in learning quality. These findings confirm the important role of leadership and commitment in shaping instructional quality, although other factors may also contribute. The study extends educational leadership literature by demonstrating the mediating role of affective commitment and suggests that schools should strengthen emotional support, teacher empowerment, and collaborative leadership practices to improve learning quality (Beck, 2025; Bresser, 2025; Gaikwad et al., 2025; Castro-Kemp & Melander, 2025; Klinthaisong et al., 2025; Ma & Zhang, 2025; Siliņa-Jasjukeviča et al., 2025).

Conclusions

Based on the results of this study, it can be concluded that supportive principal leadership and teachers' affective commitment significantly contribute to improving learning quality in public elementary schools in Kinali District. Supportive principal leadership was proven to have a positive and significant effect on teachers' affective commitment as well as on learning quality. In addition, teachers' affective commitment also positively influenced learning quality. The study further revealed that teachers' affective commitment partially mediated the relationship between supportive principal leadership and learning quality, indicating that principals' supportive behaviors can strengthen teachers' emotional attachment and organizational loyalty, which subsequently enhances instructional quality. Therefore, strengthening supportive leadership practices and fostering teachers' affective commitment are essential strategies for improving the effectiveness and quality of learning processes in elementary schools.

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