

Exploring the Effect of School Principal Leadership on Teacher Teaching Commitment: A Survey Study in Catholic Elementary Schools of Merauke

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<p>Corresponding Author Basilius Redan Werang</p> <p>Ganesha University of Education, Singaraja, Bali, Indonesia</p> <p>Article History</p> <p>Received: 06 / 09 / 2025</p> <p>Accepted: 24 / 09 / 2025</p> <p>Published: 28 / 09 / 2025</p>	<p>Abstract:</p> <p>Background: Teachers' teaching commitment is a vital component of educational success because it directly influences students' academic achievement and overall school performance.</p> <p>Objective: This study aimed to explore the influence of school principal leadership on teacher teaching commitment in Catholic elementary schools in Merauke, South Papua, Indonesia.</p> <p>Method: We utilized a quantitative research approach using a survey research design to obtain data from a total of 95 Catholic elementary school teachers in Merauke, South Papua, Indonesia. Obtained data were subjected to a quantitative statistical analysis using a simple linear regression analysis by employing Statistical Package for the Social Sciences version 25.</p> <p>Findings: The results of data analysis show a positive and significant effect of school principal leadership in teacher teaching commitment in Catholic elementary school teachers in Merauke, South Papua, Indonesia.</p> <p>Implication for Practice and Research: The findings highlight the need to strengthen leadership capacity among school principals through continuous professional development and leadership training. Effective leadership fosters a supportive and collaborative school climate, which enhances teacher motivation and contributes to improved teaching quality and student learning outcomes. Educational authorities and stakeholders are encouraged to invest in leadership development initiatives as a strategic means to promote teacher commitment and sustain educational excellence.</p> <p>Keywords: school principal leadership, teacher teaching commitment, Catholic elementary schools, South Papua.</p>
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Introduction

Teacher teaching commitment is a critical determinant of effective teaching performance, pedagogical innovation, and the willingness to undertake challenging professional responsibilities. It plays a pivotal role in enhancing student achievement (Altun, 2017) and is particularly vital during periods of educational reform, when it provides stability and facilitates the successful adoption of new ideas and practices. This intrinsic motivation compels teachers to invest substantial time and effort in their professional duties, thereby strengthening their emotional attachment to the school. Such commitment not only fosters continuous improvement in teaching practices but also contributes to the development of a supportive and effective learning environment that enables students to achieve their academic goals (Cramer et al., 2021; Lu, 2021; Park, 2005).

Teacher teaching commitment has been extensively examined in educational research and is widely regarded as a multifaceted construct encompassing teachers' dedication to their students, their profession, and their school organization (Crosswell & Elliott, 2004; Firestone & Rosenblum, 1988). Scholars have identified various dimensions of this commitment, including affective, continuance, and normative components, each reflecting the emotional, practical, and moral bonds teachers develop toward their work (Park, 2005; Meyer & Allen, 1997).

Previous studies have highlighted numerous factors that shape teachers' levels of commitment, ranging from personal characteristics such as intrinsic motivation and self-efficacy to organizational conditions including collegial relationships, workload, recognition, and opportunities for professional development (Ni, 2017; Pan, 2023; Wea et al., 2020; Werang et al.,

2021). Among these influences, the leadership practices of the school principal consistently emerge as one of the most decisive elements in fostering and sustaining teacher commitment (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006). Given this context, examining the impact of school principal leadership on teachers’ teaching commitment is essential for understanding how leadership behaviors and school management practices influence teachers’ motivation, performance, and ultimately, student outcomes. Insights from such research can guide policymakers and educational leaders in developing strategies that strengthen both teacher commitment and school effectiveness.

Although the effect of school leadership on teacher teaching commitment has been widely examined, much of the existing studies have often been context-dependent, with limited evidence drawn from schools undergoing systemic educational reform. In such reform contexts, where teachers face increased expectations and evolving professional roles, principal leadership becomes even more critical in sustaining teachers’ motivation and professional dedication. However, empirical studies exploring the effect of surveyed variable remain scarce, particularly in Catholic elementary schools of Merauke, South Papua, Indonesia.

Therefore, this study aims to investigate the influence of school principal leadership on teacher teaching commitment, emphasizing how leadership behaviors and practices contribute to maintaining and enhancing teachers’ engagement, professional responsibility, and long-term commitment to the teaching profession. We probed the following research question to guide this study: “Does school principal leadership effect significantly positively on the teaching commitment of teachers working at Catholic elementary schools of Merauke, South Papua, Indonesia? A quantitative research approach using a survey research design was employed to address this research question.

Method

The purpose of this study was to examine the influence of school principals’ leadership on the teaching commitment of Catholic elementary school teachers in Merauke, South Papua, Indonesia. To achieve this goal, a quantitative approach employing a survey research design was used. The survey design was selected because it facilitates the collection of objective data that can be analyzed statistically, while also enabling the assessment of principals’ leadership styles and their impact on teachers’ teaching commitment (Burrel & Gross, 2017). Moreover, recent studies (Jim et al., 2025; Werang et al., 2025a, 2025b, 2025c, 2025d) emphasize the advantages of survey research, including cost-effectiveness, efficient data collection, flexibility in administering instruments, and the potential for generalizing findings across broader contexts.

Data were gathered using two structured questionnaires: one measuring principals’ leadership and the other assessing teachers’ teaching commitment. The questionnaires were administered to 95 Catholic elementary school teachers, who were purposively selected as research participants. All items were presented in Indonesian to ensure clear understanding among respondents. The collected data were analyzed using simple linear regression to determine the effect of principals’ leadership on teachers’ teaching commitment. Statistical analyses were performed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25, ensuring accuracy and reliability in the results.

Results

As previously described, the data collected on school principal leadership and teachers’ teaching commitment were analyzed using simple linear regression. This analysis was conducted to determine the extent to which school principals’ leadership predicts teachers’ commitment to teaching in Catholic elementary schools in Merauke, South Papua, Indonesia. The results of the regression analysis are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. School principal leadership and its effect on teacher teaching commitment

Model Summary									
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	R Square Change	Change Statistics			
						F	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.863 ^a	.745	.742	2.50354	.745	271.604	1	93	.001

a. Predictors: (Constant), School_Principal_Leadership

The data presented in Table 1 revealed a strong positive relationship between school principals’ leadership and teachers’ teaching commitment (R = 0.863). The coefficient of determination (R² = 0.745) indicates that approximately 74.5% of the variance in teachers’ teaching commitment can be explained by the leadership practices of school principals. The adjusted R² value of 0.742 confirms that this model provides a reliable estimate when generalized to the population. The F-test coefficient value of 271.604 with p < .001 indicates that the regression model is statistically significant. This means that school principals’

leadership has a significant and substantial effect on teachers’ teaching commitment.

Discussion

Teachers’ teaching commitment is a vital component of educational success because it directly influences students’ academic achievement and overall school performance. This study aimed to explore the effect of school principal leadership on the commitment of teachers teaching at Catholic elementary schools of Merauke, South Papua, Indonesia. Committed teachers tend to

demonstrate a strong sense of responsibility, enthusiasm, and perseverance in carrying out their instructional duties. Their dedication helps create a structured, supportive, and engaging learning environment where students can thrive both academically and emotionally. When teachers are highly committed, they are more likely to employ effective teaching strategies, maintain positive classroom climates, and build meaningful relationships with learners — all of which contribute to student success and satisfaction.

The results of data analysis showed a positive and significant effect of school principal leadership on the teaching commitment of teachers teaching at Catholic elementary schools of Merauke, South Papua, Indonesia, as it was indicated by the R-square coefficient value of .745 and the Significant (Sig.) coefficient value of .001. It means that for every point added in the independent variable “school principal leadership” will add 0.745 point in the dependent variable “teacher teaching commitment” and vice versa. It demonstrates that the more effective the school principal leadership, the higher the teacher teaching commitment; the less effective the school principal leadership, the lower the teacher teaching commitment. This finding is in line with Werang et al.’s (2023) and Sucitra et al.’s (2024) research findings that teacher teaching commitment is predicted significantly positively by their school principal leadership.

The study underscores the pivotal role of principals in shaping teachers’ professional attitudes and behaviors within the school environment. Effective school leadership—characterized by a clearly articulated vision, the cultivation of a supportive school climate, and the provision of intellectual stimulation—serves as a catalyst for strengthening teachers’ sense of purpose and dedication to their teaching responsibilities. Principals who consistently demonstrate these leadership qualities are able to foster a positive organizational culture where teachers feel valued, trusted, and empowered to contribute meaningfully to the school’s mission. Such leadership practices enhance teachers’ sense of belonging and professional identity, which in turn promote greater commitment, creativity, and instructional effectiveness. These findings are consistent with previous research emphasizing the critical role of transformational and instructional leadership in enhancing teacher motivation, engagement, and performance (Hallinger & Ko, 2015; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006).

As the instructional and organizational leader, the principal plays a central role in shaping the school’s vision, culture, and overall climate. Effective leadership cultivates trust, collaboration, and professional growth, thereby strengthening teachers’ dedication to their work and alignment with the school’s mission. Conversely, weak or unsupportive leadership can undermine teacher teaching commitment, reduce engagement, and increase the likelihood of attrition.

Conclusion and Implications

Based on the results of the data analysis, it can be concluded that school principals’ leadership has a positive and significant effect on teachers’ teaching commitment in Catholic elementary schools in Merauke, South Papua, Indonesia. This finding underscores the crucial role of effective leadership in fostering teachers’ sense of responsibility, enthusiasm, and dedication to their professional duties. In practical terms, the stronger and more effective the leadership demonstrated by a

school principal, the higher the level of commitment exhibited by teachers in fulfilling their instructional responsibilities.

The results of this study hold important implications for both school leadership practices and educational policy development. The strong positive relationship between principals’ leadership and teachers’ teaching commitment highlights the need to cultivate leadership practices that inspire, support, and sustain teachers’ professional engagement. School administrators should prioritize creating a school climate that fosters collaboration, recognizes teacher achievements, and promotes shared decision-making in instructional processes.

Furthermore, school administrators and policymakers are encouraged to implement targeted interventions aimed at strengthening teachers’ professional commitment. Such initiatives may include mentorship programs for novice teachers, continuous professional development opportunities, recognition and reward systems, and the promotion of collaborative school cultures that value teacher input and participation. By enhancing teachers’ sense of professionalism and belonging, these interventions can sustain motivation, increase job satisfaction, and reinforce teachers’ long-term commitment to their work. Ultimately, enhancing school principal leadership is not merely a strategy for improving teachers’ teaching commitment—it represents a strategic investment in educational quality and student learning outcomes. Schools that nurture committed and motivated teachers under effective leadership are better positioned to build a stable, inspired, and high-performing teaching workforce capable of driving continuous improvement throughout the education system.

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