

Strengthening Professionalism of School Principals Through Integrity, Communication Skills, and Teamwork

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ABSTRACT

In leading schools, principals often face ambiguity, changes in regulations, and challenges in learning. In dealing with these matters, the principal is required to always act professionally, so strengthening the principal's professionalism becomes important. There are many standards for the professionalism of school principals, including integrity, communication skills, and teamwork. The purpose of this study is to determine how integrity, communication skills, and teamwork affect the professionalism of Banten Province, Indonesia's school principals. This research is a quantitative study, with a sample of 122 school principals involved in Banten Province. The data were examined using multiple regression analysis, t-test, and F-test as hypothesis testing. The research results obtained are: i) Integrity has a positive and significant impact on strengthening the professionalism of school principals; ii) Communication skill has a positive and significant impact on strengthening the professionalism of school principals; iii) Teamwork has a positive and significant impact on strengthening the professionalism of school principals; iv) Integrity, communication skills, and teamwork simultaneously have a positive and significant effect on strengthening the professionalism of school principals by 62.1%. Based on these results, it is hoped that schools, supervisors, and the education office, especially Banten province, will pay attention and routinely carry out programs to strengthen the professionalism of school principals which include discussions on integrity, communication skills, and teamwork.

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1. INTRODUCTION

A school is a learning institution led by the principal. Effective school leadership is an essential aspect of improving the quality of education. If school leaders cannot manage school resources properly, then educational institutions will struggle to survive and thrive (Lumban Gaol, 2021). A leader in education must continuously make difficult decisions involving strategy, culture, relationships, administration, operations, and other factors that frequently go against their personal

beliefs. (Netolicky, 2020). The principal must be able to deal with any situation (Aldhaheeri, 2021), which can be expressed in various ways, one of which must adapt in the face of change.

Throughout the past three years, there are many policies that school principals must accommodate to deal with the transition from offline learning to online learning (Ma, Chutiyami, Zhang, & Nicoll, 2021) and online learning to offline learning (Marek, Chew, & Wu, 2021). Principals are tasked with leading the transition in the current crisis, supporting education staff, pupils, and families on "school" effectively in changing circumstances (Weiner, Francois, Stone-Johnson, & Childs, 2021). Uncertainty and shocks arising from COVID-19 hamper the professionalism of school principals (Stone Johnson & Miles Weiner, 2020). Seeing how principals spearhead schools in dealing with crises and unexpected situations, strengthening and professional development of school principals is necessary. So that some researchers (Wong & Liu, 2018)(Ng, 2017) have shown that principals should be supported with long-lasting programs because schools today deal with complex challenges like indecision, change, and diversity that demand them to undertake a non-linear learning process to accomplish school problems and challenges. Devi & Fernandes argue that school principals must be ready and accompanied by ongoing programs organized by district school authorities to improve student performance (Devi & Fernandes, 2019).

The school principal's professionalism is inherent in himself and how the principal runs it. Professionalism is recognized through collegiality, belief, and control, which individuals in positions of authority implement. (Macheridis & Paulsson, 2019). Xu in Jiang et al. (2018) describes the professionalism of school principals, whose work was seen as how the educational system would be saved and quality restored. Professionalism refers to a person's attitude in carrying out tasks well and overcoming situations to optimize work results. Strengthening professionalism must be based on the school principal's professional standards. The presence of professional standards determines the nature and quality of the work of the person practising the profession, in this case, the principal.

In addition, a professional principal requiring to carry out several tasks as follows: directing instruction and learning, establishing the school's direction, coordinating the standard of instruction and ensuring accountability, empowering and developing education staff, and managing the school as a whole; community cooperation; controlling school personnel; controlling and promoting extracurricular activities (Moorosi, 2021). Pless in Murakami & Törnsten emphasized that leadership is a normative disposition developed under three essential requirements: (a) fairness, ethics, and morality; (b) acknowledgment, respect, and value; and (c) a sense of care for self and others (Murakami & Törnsten, 2017). From the several standards of professionalism of principals described above, it can project that these standards are fulfilled in the five principal competencies. Based on Minister of Educational Regulations No. 13 of 2007, principals must have five competencies in carrying out their duties: personality, managerial, social, supervision, and entrepreneurship.

The principal must own the personality trait since they are expected to be reliable and appropriate in their words and deeds, demonstrating care and admiration for their personnel and enhancing the institution's mission utilizing their conduct (Benoliel & Schechter, 2017). Some researchers reveal the existence of Integrity in the professional standards of principals (Karataş, 2019)(Liu, Xu, Grant, Strong, & Fang, 2017). Integrity comes from the word integer, which in Latin means wholeness. This wholeness can describe as internal consistency, beliefs, words, and actions (Tullberg, 2012). Integrity is the harmony of norms, rules, and morals shown through the quality of action (Huberts, 2018). Integrity behavior shows harmony between words and actions that consistently manifests through leaders' values (Holmes & Parker, 2018). So, the notion of Integrity is the conclusion that a leader's actions, both now and in the future, will be predicted by what they say (Moorman, Blakely, & Darnold, 2018).

Behavioral integrity has two key elements: (1) the harmony of words and actions and (2) keeping promises and living by the values held, even if those values and promises are not morally ethically compatible (Holmes & Parker, 2018). Furthermore, Krylova *et al.* ensured that Integrity is linked to various values-related constructs such as morality, honesty, ethics, and fairness (Krylova et al., 2017).

Several factors support and strengthen school integrity where all school members have Self-motivation, assertiveness, moral courage, consistency, commitment, persistence, self-discipline, a sense of responsibility, trust, and justice (Barnard, Schurink, & De Beer, 2008). So that Integrity is a behavior reflected based on a leader's words and actions, usually including honesty and trustworthiness.

In strengthening the professionalism of school principals, one profound thing that the principal must have is communication with school residents (Stone Johnson & Miles Weiner, 2020). According to Van Ruler, The act of communicating involves the distribution of information to a recipient by the sender by expressing a message's meaning in a message conveyed (van Ruler, 2018). On the other hand, Beattie & Ellis Express communication as a human language conveys information (Beattie & Ellis, 2017). Hoy and Miskel, in Sapian *et al.*, define communication as a process that transmits messages using symbols and signs to express meaning between two parties (Sapian *et al.*, 2020). Communication is a tool or media that allows principals, teachers, and teacher-students to transmit and convey messages in the school environment. Creating school regulations and policies and formal and informal school dialogues are all examples of communication activities related to school management. (Yao, You, & Zhu, 2020).

So, the capacity for a person to share ideas and thoughts with others is what is meant by communication. Leaders spend much time communicating; Johansson *et al.* claim that leading others without communicating seems nearly impossible (Johansson *et al.*, 2014). In schools, communication occurs all the time, in all directions, and in different ways. The percentage of time the principal engages in verbal communication while leading is more than 70% of the working day (Holmes & Parker, 2018). Interpersonal communication is the exchange of meaning from one to another. There are eight indicators of interpersonal communication: sender, message, encode, line, decode, receiver, noise, feedback, and sender begins to encode the message (Robbins & Judge, T, 2017). For leaders to communicate effectively, they must pay attention to words, facial expressions, and, in general, non-verbal cues of communication, such as changes in voice and eye contact. Effective communication must show interest, understanding, and concern for the audience and their needs and problems (Anderson, Furlonger, Moore, Sullivan, & White, 2018).

Teamwork in schools is done to support organizational leadership processes and professional development (Lazarus Ndiku Makewa, Ngussa, Kuboja, & Arego, 2016). Teamwork is a primary work activity involving coordinating two or more individual efforts to achieve a desired result (Ogbonnaya, Tillman, & Gonzalez, 2018). Teamwork describes the strength of a group of individuals in decision-making efficiency (Schmutz, Meier, & Manser, 2019). Teamwork refers to a high-performing group with its members in the spirit of achieving group goals at work with confidence, reducing the workload, and enabling the exchange of ideas (Ballangrud, Husebø, & Hall-Lord, 2017). Wildman *et al.* explained that face-to-face engagement occurs during teamwork through coordination between various persons, time, geography, or online. (Wildman *et al.*, 2021).

Teamwork combines resources in a team to strengthen the performance and effectiveness of achieving group goals. Schools, as organizations, need leaders to motivate, direct and mobilize teachers and administrative staff to advance the school. Strong team leader capable of motivating, developing, and guiding teachers and administrative staff (Pitsoe & Isingoma, 2014). Principals who work together build a culture of trust and openness, where teachers can share their thoughts and goals, feel safe expressing their feelings, recognize their achievements, and know they are protected (Duyar, Gumus, & Bellibas, 2013). In addition, some of the principles of effective teamwork are good communication, understanding, and respect for each other's roles, skills, quality and caring outcomes, team processes that are commensurate with resources, clear goals and vision, individual bonuses, and opportunities, flexibility, good leadership, teamwork culture, training and development opportunities, external career image, good personality (Nancarrow *et al.*, 2013).

The constant challenge of managing uncertainty proves that school principals' professional development is increasingly important (Sarmurzin, Menlibekova, & Orynbekova, 2022). Moreover, this pandemic shows the importance of strengthening professionalism for school principals due to the

global pandemic's ambiguous effects on school administrators, which were made public at the beginning of 2020 (Sum, 2022). For this new normal period, the principal must be prepared to handle unforeseen occurrences like the COVID-19 pandemic and other risks affecting flows and management prospects. (Sarmurzin et al., 2022).

The presence of learning challenges during a pandemic indeed becomes a big scourge for all education stakeholders. Lots of new policies related to the implementation of learning during the pandemic, like it or not, make Principals must always be responsive in making decisions. Banten Province is one of the provinces that experienced an increase in the spread of Covid-19 due to the mutation of the Omicron virus. Provincial government Banten through the Office of Education and Culture implements Face to Face Learning by 25%. Based on the Letters Circular of the Governor of Banten Number 443/204-DinKes/2022 dated 27 January 2022. That also impacts how the head's leadership is implemented in school and further affects the level of professionalism of the head school.

Based on the explanation above, the professionalism of school principals is critical to improving in this era full of changes. Because of this urgency, researchers are interested in researching the strengthening of school principals. A search for the professionalism of school principals is carried out using the publish or perish application, resulting in less than 50 articles discussing the professionalism of school principals. The research conducted by Klein and Schwanenberg (Klein & Schwanenberg, 2022) focuses on finding indicators, essential things that are the focus areas for school principals to improve according to the study by Tuan *et al.* (Tuan, Depa, Yen, & Huyen, 2022) regarding how blended learning is used to cater to the professional development of school leaders. The novelty in this research is that no study analyzed strengthening the principal's professionalism, Integrity, communication skills, and teamwork simultaneously. This study examined how strengthening the professionalism of school principals in Banten Province was influenced by Integrity, communication skills, and teamwork. This research analyzes to inform policymakers at the regional and central levels that school principals must provide continuous professional development.

2. METHODS

This study utilizes a quantitative approach along with a survey methodology. Data collecting by distributing questionnaires with a five-answer Likert scale as a quantitative data measurement scale for strengthening the professionalism of school principals variable (Y); Integrity (X1); Ability to communicate (X2); and teamwork (X3)—the questionnaire preparation on the indicators obtained through the literature review discussion. A pre-study with 20 principals was used to test the questionnaire.

Table. 1 Result of Validity and Reliability Test of Variables X1, X2, X3, and Y

Variable	Total Question Item	Valid Question Items	Value of r Count (Pearson)	Reliability Coefficient	Description
Strengthening the professionalism of school principals (Y)	35	32	0.4321-0,6875	0.921	Reliable
Integrity (X1)	30	27	0.4331-0.7059	0.860	Reliable
Communication Skills (X2)	30	27	0.4440-0.8321	0.918	Reliable
Teamwork (X3)	30	26	0.4597-0.8060	0.928	Reliable

The population in this research was 175 school principals in Banten province in Indonesia. The sample in this study consisted of 122 school principals in the province of Banten using the Slovin formula (5%). Simple random sampling was used as the sampling method.

A multiple linear regression model was employed for the data analysis. The requirement to perform multiple regression analysis is to do a pre-analysis test. This pre-analysis test includes normality, linearity, multicollinearity, and heteroscedasticity tests—hypothesis testing using partial t-test and simultaneous F test. The hypotheses of this research were: i) Integrity positively and significantly influenced the strengthening the professionalism of school principals; ii) Communication Skills positively and significantly influenced the strengthening the professionalism of school principals; iii) Teamwork positively and significantly influenced the strengthening the professionalism of school principals; iv) Both Integrity, communication skill, and teamwork positively and significantly influenced strengthening the professionalism of school principals.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Findings

3.1.1 Pre-Analysis Test

Pre-analysis tests using the help of the SPSS 25 application. The following table summarizes the results of the pre-analysis show that:

Table 2. Pre-Analysis Test Result

Test Name	Result	Requirement	Description
Normality test	0.200	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) > 0.05	Normal
Linearity test	0.142 (X1*Y)	Sig.>0.05	Linear
	0.185 (X2*Y)		
	0.053 (X3*Y)		
Multicollinearity test	X1= 0.378 (Tolerance) 2.645 (VIF)	Tolerance value>0.10	no multicollinearity symptom
	X2= 0.386 (Tolerance) 2.590 (VIF)		
	X3= 0.616 (Tolerance) 1.623 (VIF)		
Heteroscedasticity test	X1= 0.125 X2= 0.414 X3= 0.192	Sig. > 0.05	no heteroscedasticity symptom

Normality tests in this study using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. The calculation results obtained Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) value of 0.200 > 0.05. That leads to the conclusion that the findings are normally distributed.

A linearity test is done with a linearity test. Based on the table of pre-analysis test results, The significant value of variable Integrity (X1) towards the variable strengthening the professionalism of school principals (Y) is 0.142 > 0.05, showing that the two variables are linear. Next is the significant value of the variable Communication Skill (X2) towards the variable strengthening the professionalism of school principals (Y) is 0.185 > 0.05, showing that the two variables are linear. Following the result of the significant value of the variable Teamwork (X3) towards the variable strengthening the professionalism of school principals (Y) is 0.053 > 0.05, indicating that the two variables are linear.

The multicollinearity test was held by noticing the results of tolerance and VIF. Based on the table of pre-analysis test results, the variable X1 obtained a tolerance value of 0.378 > 0.10, while for VIF, it is at 2.645 < 10.00. Then, variable X2 obtained a tolerance value of 0.386 > 0.10, while VIF is at 2.590 < 10.00. On the calculation results, variable X3 obtained a tolerance value of 0.616 > 0.10, while for VIF, it was

1.623 < 10.00. According to the conclusion, based on the results of calculating the tolerance and VIF values for each variable, There is no multicollinearity symptom.

The heteroscedasticity test is conducted using the Glejser test. According to the result above, the value of Sig. for Integrity is 0.125 > 0.05. Then, the value of Sig. for communication skills is 0.414 > 0.05. Then, the value of Sig. for teamwork is 0.192 > 0.05. The result shows that heteroscedasticity did not occur in this regression model.

3.1.2 Multiple Regression Test Results

Table 2 displays that the constant value of strengthening the professionalism of school principals variable is 34,990. While the regression coefficient of the integrity variable (X1) shows that if there is a 1% reinforcement of Integrity, the professionalism of the principal will increase by 0.411. Furthermore, the regression coefficient of the communication skills variable (X2) shows that if there is a reinforcement of communication skills by 1%, the professionalism of the principal will increase by 0.283. Then the regression coefficient of the teamwork variable (X3) shows that if there is a 1% reinforcement of Integrity, the professionalism of the principal will increase by 0.353.

Table 3. Variable Regression Equation X1, X2, X3, Y and T-Test Results

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients	
		B	Std. Error
1	(Constant)	34.990	8.580
	Integrity	.411	.107
	Communication Skills	.283	.096
	Teamwork	.353	.091

The resulting regression equation is:

$$Y = 34.990 + 0.411 X1 + 0.283 X2 + 0.353 X3$$

Table 4. Coefficient of Determinant Variable X1, X2, X3 and Y

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.788 ^a	.621	.612	5.909

The value of the determinant coefficient or R square obtained is 0.621. So it is known that the influence given by the variables X1, X2, and X3 to the Y variable is 0.621 or 62.1%. The remaining 37.9% is also impacted by additional factors that this study did not examine.

3.1.3 T-test

Determines the impact of each independent variable on the dependent variable using the partial t-test.

Table 5. T-test Result

	Model	T	Sig.
1	(Constant)	4.078	.000
	Integrity	3.829	.000
	Communication Skills	2.947	.004
	Teamwork	3.856	.000

The variable integrity t. count value obtained is $3.829 > 1.980$, with a sig count of $0.000 < 0.05$. Then, the integrity variable has a positive and significant influence on strengthening the professionalism of school principals. Meanwhile, the count value of the communication skill variable $2,947 > 1,980$, with a sig. count $0.000 < 0.05$. So, there is a positive and significant influence on the communication skill variable with strengthening the professionalism of school principals. Furthermore, the teamwork variable count value obtained is $3,856 > 1,980$. Based on these results, there is a conclusion that each variable X partially has a positive and significant effect on strengthening the professionalism of school principals.

3.1.4 F-test

The F test determines the influence of variable X on variable Y simultaneously. The outcomes of the F test are displayed in the following table:

Table. 6 F-Test Results

ANOVA						
		Sum	of			
Model		Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	6761.632	3	2253.877	64.551	.000 ^b
	Residual	4120.146	118	34.916		
	Total	10881.779	121			

a. Dependent Variable: Strengthening of the principal's professionalism variable
b. Predictors: (Constant), Teamwork, Communication Skills, Integrity

Based on Table 6, the F count is $64,551 > 2.68$ with a sig. count $0.000 < 0.05$. Together with these results, the variables X1, X2, and X3 simultaneously have a positive and significant effect on strengthening the professionalism of school principals.

3.2 Discussion

According to the research findings outlined above, the variables integrity, communication ability, and cooperation have a significant effect on strengthening the professionalism of school principals both partially and concurrently. Accordingly, the results of the t-test, there is a positive and significant effect of the integrity variable on the strengthening of the principal's professionalism variable. That has been shown in the outcomes of the value of t. count $3,829 > 1,980$. The findings support the opinion that the growing trust between the principal and the school community will present an effective performance and work environment (Leroy, Palanski, & Simons, 2012). The research findings by Lleo et al. revealed that the principal's ethics of trust (benevolence, Integrity) is the key to generating trust and affective commitment to the school. Research conducted by Welch & Hodge revealed that Integrity is one of the competency models needed to develop school principals (Welch & Hodge, 2018). Research conducted by Gawlik revealed that Integrity is one of the soft skills that show the quality of a school principal

(Gawlik, 2018). A school principal who is always able to maintain good Integrity in every word or action will be able to foster the school community's trust. This form of growing trust is one of the managerial aspects of a professional school principal.

Considering the t-test findings, the communication skills variable positively and significantly strengthens the principal's professionalism variable. That has been shown in the outcomes of the value of t. count $2.947 > 1.980$. These results support Service & Thornton's opinion that one of the skills needed by school principals in carrying out their duties is communication skills (Sun, Lin, Wu, Zhou, & Luo, 2018). In line with the opinion expressed by Salazar that open and democratic communication is an important factor in effective school leadership and affects school quality (Salazar, 2008).

Meanwhile, according to Meyer, 'very effective communication with staff, parents and the supervisory board to ensure a collaborative teamwork culture so that communication skills become one of the skills in developing the professionalism of school principals' (Meyer, Sinnema, & Patuawa, 2019). The ability to communicate must be possessed by school principals related to how they relate to others in the task (Edwards-Groves & Grootenboer, 2021). Leaders are synonymous with how they communicate with other people, and professional principals can certainly manage good communication with school members.

Considering the t-test findings, the teamwork variable has a positive and significant influence on strengthening the principal's professionalism variable. That is shown in the results of the value of t. count $3.856 > 1.980$. Research (Sanyal & Hisam, 2018) shows that teamwork positively and significantly affects performance, as indicated by the t-value of 4.23. Accordingly, teamwork, including the principal, is important for school members' professional growth (Newman et al. in Lazarus Ndiku Makewa et al., 2016). The principal is responsible for building teamwork awareness that each strategy cannot be separate from other strategies in a school system (Juharyanto et al., 2020). School is a system, so in that work, the school principal works with others but works together with teachers and education staff.

While the value of Fount is $64,551 > 2.68$ with a sig. count $0.000 < 0.05$. The influence of variables X1, X2, and X3 on Y is 62.1% or 0.621. Following research by Manullang, soft skills positively and significantly affect the principal's leadership (Manullang, 2017). Regarding the variables in the research, soft skills consist of Integrity, communication, and teamwork (Robles, 2012). The influence of soft skills on fulfilling the principal's performance will determine the principal's readiness to carry out leadership strategies and the effectiveness of teaching and learning activities in school life (Manullang, 2017). Following the above results, this study conducted by Robles shows an important level of soft skill mastery of leaders. Integrity gets a percentage of 93%, communication 91.2%, and teamwork occupies a percentage of 43.9%. The success of an organization, including educational organizations, is determined by the quality of the principal's Integrity as an educational leader (Gunawan, Bafadal, Nurabadi, Juharyanto, & Prayoga, 2020). Effective communication for school principals can facilitate communication and objective feedback. Teamwork facilitates school coordination and collaboration to implement educational goals (Muchanje, 2021). That proves that Integrity, communication skills, and teamwork are soft skills that are indicators of strengthening the professionalism of school principals.

4. CONCLUSION

This research analyzes the influence of Integrity, communication skills, and teamwork on strengthening the professionalism of school principals in Banten Province. Following the results and discussion, it concludes that Integrity, communication skills, and teamwork have a partial and simultaneously effect on strengthening the professionalism of school principals by 62.1%. The implications of the results of this research are to be policy input for the Banten Provincial Education Office, School Supervisors, and Schools in the Banten Province region, namely: i) Programs to strengthen the professionalism of school principals on an ongoing basis as needed because the principal

holds a central position in making school decisions; ii) Integrity, communication skills, and teamwork have been tested in this study as indicators in strengthening the professionalism of school principals; iii) Integrity, communication skills, and teamwork are skills that must possess by school principals and include in the professional standards of school principals. Each country has various professional standards for principals, such as the United States, Australia, China, Vietnam, Malaysia, and Indonesia. There are many factors and indicators in the professional standards of school principals. Because of this, future researchers can use this factor to improve this research by conducting an in-depth analysis of the professionalism factors that most often appear or adding and reducing variables that can improve the professionalism of the principal.

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