

# The Impact of School Principals' Managerial Competence and Customer Relationship Management on Educational Service Quality in Primary Schools

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## ABSTRACT

Improving the quality of educational services is essential for ensuring institutional effectiveness and stakeholder satisfaction. However, few studies have explored the combined impact of school leadership and stakeholder engagement—particularly in primary education contexts. This study aims to examine the influence of school principals' managerial skills and customer relationship management (CRM) on the quality of educational services in public elementary schools. A quantitative, correlational survey design was employed involving 97 teachers selected from a population of 128 through proportional random sampling. Data were collected using validated questionnaires and analyzed using descriptive statistics, prerequisite tests (normality, multicollinearity, heteroscedasticity, linearity), and hypothesis testing through simple and multiple linear regression. The results indicate that school principals' managerial skills significantly affect educational service quality, with a correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) of 0.823 and an  $R^2$  of 77.7%. Similarly, customer relations show a strong positive relationship with service quality ( $r = 0.857$ ;  $R^2 = 73.4\%$ ). When combined, these two variables yield an even stronger influence ( $r = 0.866$ ;  $R^2 = 75.0\%$ ). These findings highlight the critical role of effective leadership and stakeholder collaboration in enhancing educational services. Strengthening principals' managerial competencies and implementing CRM-oriented practices can lead to better communication, trust, and responsiveness in schools. This study offers practical implications for policymakers and school leaders to design targeted professional development and engagement strategies that support sustainable educational improvement.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The quality of educational services is a critical factor in determining an institution's competitiveness and its ability to meet stakeholder expectations. Globally, schools must continuously improve their service delivery to remain relevant, ensuring both academic excellence and holistic student development (Yuni et al., 2016). Locally, educational institutions in Indonesia face increasing pressure to align with national policies and global education standards. Service quality in education is measured by how well an institution meets the expectations of students, parents, and society (Lukita et al., 2019). A significant gap between expected and perceived service can lead to dissatisfaction and loss of credibility (Ekawarna et al., 2021), making continuous quality improvement essential for long-term success. Schools must leverage effective leadership, innovative teaching strategies, and structured management approaches to maintain high service quality (Darmawan & Hakim, 2023).

Managerial competence is a key determinant of educational service quality, with school principals playing a crucial role in shaping institutional performance. The POAC framework—planning, organizing, directing, and controlling—serves as a fundamental guideline for effective school leadership (Gusli et al., 2025). Principals must implement structured management strategies, monitor school programs, and foster collaboration with external stakeholders to enhance service delivery (Jannah & Inayati, 2025). However, challenges such as ineffective decision-making, resistance to feedback, and lack of transparency can hinder service quality (Supriadi & Wanto, 2023). Strengthening leadership competencies through targeted training and policy enforcement is essential for improving educational outcomes (Sholeh, 2023).

Beyond leadership, strong customer relationships are vital for maintaining educational service quality. Schools must actively engage with parents, students, and the community to address concerns and build trust (Hebel, 2012). Effective customer relationship management (CRM) strategies, including transparent communication, responsiveness to feedback, and stakeholder involvement in decision-making, contribute to institutional credibility and service satisfaction (Fredy et al., 2019). When schools prioritize these relationships, they create a supportive environment that enhances student learning experiences (Sudirjo et al., 2023).

Despite existing research on educational leadership and service quality, there is a notable gap in studies focusing on primary education, particularly in Limbangan District. While previous studies have explored service quality in secondary and higher education, limited research examines how managerial skills and stakeholder engagement impact service quality in primary schools. Addressing this gap is crucial for understanding how leadership practices at the elementary level influence educational outcomes and stakeholder perceptions (Nurafni et al., 2022).

This study aims to (1) determine the effect of school principals' managerial skills on educational service quality, (2) assess the impact of customer relations on educational service quality, and (3) analyze the combined effect of managerial skills and customer relations on educational service quality. By addressing these objectives, the research contributes to the development of evidence-based policies and practical strategies for enhancing service quality in primary education.

## 2. METHODS

This study adopted a non-experimental, descriptive correlational design to examine the influence of school principals' managerial skills and customer relationship management (CRM) on the quality of educational services in public elementary schools in the Limbangan District, Kendal. Utilizing an ex-post facto approach, the research explored naturally occurring variables without any manipulation, making it suitable for investigating existing relationships among managerial competence, CRM, and service quality.

The population consisted of 128 elementary school teachers across 10 public schools. Using Slovin's formula, a sample of 97 teachers was selected through proportional random sampling to ensure each school was adequately represented based on its teacher population.

Data were collected via a structured questionnaire using a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree), measuring three variables: educational service quality (Y), principals' managerial skills (X1), and customer relations (X2). The questionnaire was adapted from validated instruments used in prior studies and underwent expert validation and pilot testing. Construct validity was assessed using Pearson's Product-Moment correlation, while reliability was confirmed with Cronbach's Alpha, yielding coefficients above the 0.70 threshold for all variables.

Data analysis included descriptive statistics, prerequisite tests (normality, linearity, multicollinearity, and heteroscedasticity), and multiple linear regression to examine the individual and combined effects of the independent variables on the dependent variable. Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to determine the strength and direction of associations, and the coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) assessed the explained variance. Additionally, Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was employed to validate latent constructs and enhance the robustness of the model, particularly for handling non-normal data distributions. All analyses were conducted using SPSS version 26 and SmartPLS 4.0.

To uphold ethical standards, informed consent was obtained from participants, ensuring voluntary participation, confidentiality, and data anonymity. Data were securely stored with restricted access, and standardized instruments were used to minimize potential bias, including social desirability.

While the study offers valuable insights, it is limited by its geographical scope (a single district) and use of self-reported data, which may introduce subjective bias. Nevertheless, the findings contribute empirical evidence to inform school leadership practices and CRM implementation strategies aimed at enhancing educational service quality.

### 3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

#### 3.1. The Effect of Managerial Skills on Service Quality

Based on the research results regarding the variable of the Principal's Managerial Skills on the Quality of Educational Services, the findings can be described as follows:

**Table 1.** Summary of Principal's Managerial Skills on the Quality of Educational Services

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.823 <sup>a</sup>	.777	.674	6.724

The results of the simple linear regression analysis reveal that school principals' managerial skills significantly affect the quality of educational services. The coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) is 0.777, indicating that 77.7% of the variance in educational service quality can be explained by the principals' managerial skills, while the remaining 22.3% is influenced by other variables not examined in this study. Furthermore, the correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) of 0.823 demonstrates a very strong positive relationship between principals' managerial competence and service quality.

These findings align with previous research by Yahyuni et al. (2024), which reported that both principal and teacher competencies significantly influence educational quality, with statistical values indicating a strong predictive relationship. Their study emphasizes that effective leadership contributes not only to institutional management but also to the quality of instruction and school climate.

Managerial competence is thus central to the principal's role in ensuring effective planning, organizing, implementing, and evaluating educational programs. Daud (2023) describes managerial competence as a principal's ability to design strategies, manage resources, and empower stakeholders

to achieve institutional goals. Similarly, Abrori and Muali (2020) highlight that managerial competence encompasses strategic organization of human and physical resources, efficient personnel utilization, and clear communication with stakeholders, including teachers, parents, and students.

From an instructional leadership perspective, principals who effectively manage curriculum, time, and instructional resources play a critical role in improving student learning outcomes (Hesbol, 2019). Managerial competence is also consistent with the Stakeholder Theory, which posits that schools operate as interdependent systems where leadership must address the needs and expectations of multiple stakeholders (Freeman, Phillips, & Sisodia, 2020).

Moreover, the integration of managerial skills with Customer Relationship Management (CRM) principles helps to enhance service delivery by fostering trust, transparency, and responsiveness. This reflects the co-creation of educational value through ongoing engagement with school stakeholders—students, parents, teachers, and the community.

Empirical studies support these theoretical linkages. Hitt and Tucker (2016) underscore the relationship between effective leadership and improved student outcomes across varied educational contexts. Similarly, Day, Gu, and Sammons (2016) found that school leaders who invest in teacher development and strategically allocate resources achieve higher levels of student performance.

In the local context of Limbangan District, Kendal, managerial effectiveness goes beyond routine administration. It involves the strategic mobilization of school infrastructure, human capital, and community engagement to improve service quality. These findings support the need for continuous professional development programs for school leaders, focusing on supervision, planning, and evaluation processes.

Additionally, the implementation of support mechanisms such as workshops, peer mentoring, and leadership coaching is recommended. These efforts can build managerial capacity, enhance motivation among teaching staff, and cultivate a school culture oriented toward continuous improvement and accountability in educational service quality.

### 3.2 The Effect of Customer Relations on Service Quality

Based on the research results regarding the variable of Customer Relations on the Quality of Educational Services, the findings can be described as follows:

**Table 2.** Summary of Customer Relations on the Quality of Educational Services

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.857 <sup>a</sup>	.734	.731	6.103

*Predictor: (Constant), Customer Relations*

The results of the regression analysis indicate that customer relations have a substantial impact on the quality of educational services in public elementary schools. The coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) is 0.734, meaning that 73.4% of the variance in educational service quality can be explained by the quality of customer relationships, while the remaining 26.6% is influenced by other factors not examined in this study. The correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) of 0.857 indicates a very strong positive relationship between customer relations and the quality of educational services.

These findings are consistent with the study by Anjani and Dafit (2021), which demonstrated that improved customer relations—particularly between schools and stakeholders such as parents and students—positively influence both the quality of educational services and student learning outcomes. Strengthening customer relationships, therefore, is essential for creating an environment conducive to student success.

Customer Relationship Management (CRM) in education is defined as the strategic process of building, maintaining, and enhancing interactions with stakeholders to ensure service satisfaction and institutional credibility. According to Handayani and Pratama (2018), CRM involves delivering value to stakeholders and ensuring long-term satisfaction. Buttle and Maklan (2019) further explain that CRM includes acquiring, retaining, and developing relationships with customers through targeted services,

effective communication, and data-driven decision-making—principles increasingly adopted in educational institutions.

In this context, stakeholder satisfaction—particularly from students and parents—serves as a key indicator of service quality. As Lokolo et al. (2024) highlight, satisfaction arises not only from the academic services delivered but also from the trust cultivated between institutions and stakeholders. Thus, CRM serves as a bridge between institutional goals and community expectations, contributing directly to educational outcomes and institutional reputation.

The strong statistical relationship found in this study reinforces the importance of viewing stakeholders—students, parents, and the community—as active partners in the educational process. This perspective aligns with Stakeholder Theory, which emphasizes the need for institutions to engage with and respond to the interests of all parties involved (Freeman, Phillips, & Sisodia, 2020). Schools that foster transparent communication, responsiveness, and collaborative decision-making are better positioned to adapt and maintain service quality (Ovenden-Hope & Passy, 2021).

Moreover, from the lens of Instructional Leadership, school leaders who maintain effective stakeholder relationships indirectly support learning by creating a school culture where feedback informs instructional practices. Day, Gu, and Sammons (2016) argue that effective instructional leaders not only supervise teaching but also engage stakeholders in shaping educational strategies, leading to stronger learning environments.

International research also supports this notion. Buttle and Maklan (2019) emphasize that CRM involves an integrated approach combining technology, behavior, and strategy to better understand client needs. In educational settings, this translates into treating students and parents as central clients whose feedback and engagement shape institutional services. Daniel, Quartz, and Oakes (2019) found that schools with structured community engagement strategies reported greater stakeholder satisfaction, improved trust, and better student retention rates.

In the local context of Limbangan District, this study suggests that proactive communication, regular parental engagement, and service responsiveness play critical roles in elevating educational quality. School principals act as key facilitators of this relationship, embodying Transformational Leadership by practicing individualized consideration, trust-building, and stakeholder empowerment (Groves, 2014).

Therefore, integrating CRM-based strategies—such as feedback surveys, parent-teacher communication platforms, and stakeholder forums—can bridge the gap between institutional services and community needs. Such initiatives not only enhance service quality but also foster inclusive, student-centered learning environments that are aligned with local expectations and institutional goals.

### 3.3 The Effect of Managerial Skills and Customer Relations on the Quality of Educational Services

Based on the research results regarding the variables of Principal's Managerial Skills and Customer Relations on the Quality of Educational Services, the findings can be described as follows:

**Table 3.** Summary of Principal's Managerial Skills, Customer Relations, and the Quality of Educational Services

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.866 <sup>a</sup>	.750	.745	5.946

Predictor: (Constant), Customer Relations, Principal's Managerial Skills

The results of multiple regression analysis show that the relationship model between the principal's managerial skills and customer relations on the quality of educational services is expressed with the equation  $\hat{Y} = 21.632 + 0.345 X_1 + 0.771 X_2$ . The partial t-test results indicate that the t-value of  $X_1$  on  $Y$  is 2.461, while the t-table value is 1.661052. This means that  $t\text{-calculated} > t\text{-table}$  ( $2.461 > 1.661052$ ), so the variable of the principal's managerial skills has a significant partial effect on the variable of educational service quality. The t-value of  $X_2$  on  $Y$  is 5.243, while the t-table value is 1.661052.

This means that  $t\text{-calculated} > t\text{-table}$  ( $5.243 > 1.661052$ ), so the customer relations variable has a significant partial effect on the educational service quality variable. The combined influence of the principal's managerial skills (X1) and customer relations (X2) on educational service quality (Y) is obtained from the R-square value of 75.0%.

Given the above results, strong principal managerial skills and good customer relations are needed to improve the quality of educational services. The principal is one of the key determinants of the success of education outcomes. The success of educational implementation is largely determined by how well a principal prepares themselves with good performance to create high-quality schools (Hartati, 2022). The principal's managerial skills and the implementation of customer relations play a crucial role in improving the quality of educational services in schools (Hasan et al., 2022). When these two aspects work synergistically, they can create a better learning environment, enhance the quality of educational services, and strengthen relationships between the school and stakeholders such as students, parents, teachers, and the community.

A principal with managerial skills can effectively manage school resources such as budgets, facilities, and teaching staff (Victor, 2017). Combined with customer relations, resource management becomes more responsive to the needs of students and parents. Information obtained through customer relations helps the principal make decisions that align with stakeholder expectations, thereby improving service quality (Iswati et al., 2023). Managerial skills enable open and transparent communication with students, parents, and teachers, while customer relations foster more personal and data-driven interactions (Erviana et al., 2024). Effective relationship management increases stakeholder satisfaction and trust, directly impacting the quality of educational services, as students and parents feel valued and heard by the school.

The principal can gather feedback from students and parents regarding teacher performance and use this information to identify areas that need improvement. Good managerial skills encourage teachers to continuously develop, ultimately enhancing the overall quality of educational services. The principal's managerial skills and customer relations are two complementary components in improving the quality of educational services (Ilham, 2021).

The synergistic relationship between principal's managerial skills and customer relations reflects the intersection of internal leadership capacity and external stakeholder engagement in shaping school quality. This synergy underlines a holistic approach to school improvement, one that merges effective leadership with relational capital.

From the standpoint of Transformational Leadership Theory, school leaders who demonstrate strong managerial competencies foster a shared vision, build trust, and empower stakeholders. (Bass & Riggio, 2006) emphasized the role of transformational leaders in cultivating motivation and performance through inspirational communication and individualized consideration—qualities that align with high-functioning customer relations in educational settings.

Instructional Leadership Theory, meanwhile, stresses the importance of monitoring teaching, promoting teacher development, and managing the learning environment (Liu et al., 2021) The current findings suggest that these leadership dimensions, when complemented by responsive customer relations, foster a more agile, data-informed, and student-focused school culture.

The results also resonate with Stakeholder Theory (Freeman et al., 2020) which posits that organizational success is contingent upon satisfying the interests of all stakeholders. In the school context, customer relations (especially with parents and students) act as a strategic feedback mechanism, enabling evidence-based decision-making. When principals listen to stakeholders and incorporate their feedback, service delivery becomes more contextually relevant.

International literature supports this view. For instance, (Sanders, 2012) found that schools in Chicago with strong leadership and parent-community ties were more likely to experience sustained academic gains. Similarly, (Bennett et al., 2014) assert that successful school reform requires capacity-building leadership combined with relationship-building practices.

While this research demonstrates strong correlations, caution must be taken when interpreting causality. The cross-sectional design limits our ability to claim that improved managerial skills and customer relations directly cause better service quality. However, the strength and consistency of findings across both variables and previous studies suggest that managerial and relational competencies may function as causal enablers in complex educational systems.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that both principals' managerial skills and customer relationship management (CRM) significantly and synergistically contribute to the quality of educational services in public elementary schools in the Limbangan District, with a combined explanatory power of 75.0%. When analyzed independently, managerial skills accounted for 77.7% and customer relations for 73.4% of the variance in service quality, highlighting their distinct yet complementary roles. These findings provide empirical support for the integration of Transformational and Instructional Leadership theories, as well as Stakeholder Theory and CRM principles, in educational leadership discourse. Practically, the results underscore the need for professional development programs that enhance not only technical managerial competencies but also interpersonal and communication skills essential for stakeholder engagement. Despite its contributions, the study is limited by its cross-sectional design, which restricts causal interpretation, and its geographic scope, which may limit generalizability beyond the Limbangan District. Therefore, future research is encouraged to adopt longitudinal or mixed-method designs, expand the population to include diverse educational actors such as students, teachers, and school committees, and test these findings across varied educational settings and levels to build a more comprehensive understanding of how leadership and stakeholder engagement drive service quality in education.

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