

The Role of Principal Support in Enhancing Educators' Mental Health and Work Productivity

Reza Murtisari¹, Ali Formen², Diana³

¹ Universitas Negeri Semarang, Indonesia; rezamurtisari@students.unnes.ac.id

² Universitas Negeri Semarang, Indonesia; formen.ali@mail.unnes.ac.id

³ Universitas Negeri Semarang, Indonesia; diana@mail.unnes.ac.id

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ABSTRACT

The demanding workload and responsibilities faced by early childhood education (PAUD) teachers often contribute to mental health challenges, which in turn affect their productivity. Support from school principals is essential in fostering a healthy and effective educational environment. This study examined the influence of principal support on the mental health and work productivity of PAUD teachers in Semarang City. A total of 111 teachers were selected through purposive sampling using the Slovin formula with a 5% margin of error. The sample included only schools led by principals who do not simultaneously serve as teachers. Data were collected using a Likert-scale questionnaire distributed via Google Forms. Statistical analyses included tests for normality, significance, linearity, multicollinearity, heteroscedasticity, and multiple regression. The findings revealed that principal support has a significant positive effect on both the mental health and work productivity of PAUD teachers. Enhanced support from principals was associated with better mental well-being among teachers, which in turn led to increased productivity. Furthermore, the effect of principal support in maintaining teachers' mental health accounted for 46.2% of the variance in their work productivity. Principal support plays a vital role in maintaining teachers' mental health and enhancing their productivity. Strengthening leadership support within early childhood education settings can contribute to improved teacher performance and overall educational quality.

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Corresponding Author:

Reza Murtisari

Universitas Negeri Semarang, Semarang, Indonesia; rezamurtisari@students.unnes.ac.id

1. INTRODUCTION

Mental health has become a central issue in recent years and remains one of the most widely discussed topics in both public discourse and academic research. Its significance in daily life is undeniable, as mental well-being plays a crucial role in enabling individuals to manage stress, maintain balance, and remain productive (Fusar-Poli et al., 2020). For teachers, maintaining good mental health is particularly important, as they are expected to demonstrate emotional maturity, physical stamina, and psychological resilience in their professional roles. Teachers play a pivotal role in facilitating student learning, and their

mental condition directly influences the quality and effectiveness of the learning environment (Setiawan & Handoyo, 2020).

Mentally healthy individuals typically exhibit positive attitudes, strong character, and emotional stability (Apriyanto et al., 2022). These qualities not only contribute to personal well-being but also support a more active, productive lifestyle. In the context of education, teachers with good mental health are more likely to lead healthier lives, perform better professionally, and positively impact student outcomes (Triyanti et al., 2022).

A comfortable and supportive work environment significantly enhances teacher productivity. Conversely, high levels of stress and job fatigue are strongly correlated with reduced performance. Productivity, particularly in the educational sector, is vital, as it reflects a teacher's ability to carry out tasks efficiently and effectively within set timeframes (Firmansyah & Mistar, 2020). Productive teachers are those who can exceed expectations in planning, implementing, and evaluating instruction. They consistently deliver quality educational experiences, contributing meaningfully to student achievement and overall learning success (Devi et al., 2023).

In the world of education, productivity is closely related to teachers who can achieve results in accordance with the objectives. Supported by comfortable work, pleasant work will improve teacher performance (Hendrawan et al., 2018). This is in line with the opinion (Rustamaji et al., 2023) that leadership style and work environment, the higher the work productivity produced by the teacher. The better the leadership style and work environment, the higher the work productivity produced by the teacher. Based on research conducted at SMK Bakti Ponorogo, it shows that work stress has a negative effect on productivity (Wulandari et al., 2020). If work stress decreases, work productivity will also decrease. Similarly, fatigue and depression can have a negative influence on self and work including productivity (Capone & Petrillo, 2020).

Educators are not of the professions that really need to maintain their mental health because it is closely related to many people, namely children, parents, principals and others. When interacting daily, teachers not only take care of their personal problems but are also responsible for teaching, administration, teaching and the development of their students. Teacher mental health has become a major issue worldwide (Maharani & Dinni, 2022). The high workload and responsibility felt by teachers is a factor in teachers experiencing mental health problems (Hascher et al., 2021). Many teachers experience pressure, stress or even depression if they cannot manage their souls and minds well. If a teacher experiences mental health problems, it will affect the educator in working productively. This is in accordance with research conducted in New Orleans, United States with 454 teachers who experienced stressors that caused their mental health to be disrupted and affected their teaching quality. (Baker et al., 2021).

In the world of PAUD, in his research, Nasib Tua Lumban Gaol said that teachers are a profession that is prone to stress (Gaol, 2017). Based on research conducted by Harmsen, R., Helms-Lorenz, M., Maulana, R., & van Veen, K in the Netherlands stated that the job of being a teacher is the most stressful job (Harmsen et al., 2018). A profession that is both noble and stressful (Naono - Nagatomo et al., 2019). As a teacher, people will feel appreciated and happy because it benefits many people. However, this profession can often be stressful because teaching also involves emotions in interactions with students (Oplatka & Oren, 2020). It was found in the field that the population that experienced the highest stress was in early childhood teachers (Rancher & Moreland, 2023).

Job stress experienced by teachers can be triggered by various conditions in the surrounding environment as a consequence of the job they have chosen. Teachers in schools need to be supported and motivated by school leaders. The inappropriateness of the principal's leadership in leading teachers is one of the causes of mental health problems (Gaol, 2021). Based on interviews with several teachers in Semarang, they rarely receive support as teachers because they did not receive emotional support. Teachers who have been teaching for more than five years chose to resign as teachers because they did not receive emotional support. In the field, it was also found that in one PAUD institution in Pedurungan sub-district, a principal is still concurrently an operator and a class teacher, so that the role of a principal who ideally can provide support to teachers in his school is not implemented. As a principal, she cannot

provide support because she also has a dual role in her work. Ideally, the principal should provide support both emotionally and physically. In work discipline and performance, a teacher needs the role of the school principal in supporting (Sari et al., 2021).

The social support needed includes emotional support which includes expressions of empathy, care and concern for teachers (Sarafino & Smith, 2014), appreciation support, instrumental support and informative support (Pratiwi & Laksmiwati, 2012). According to research conducted by Ayu & Syarifuddin a teacher can achieve optimal workability. It requires the role of the principal in work productivity issues (Ayu & Syarifuddin, 2023). Principals ideally support emotionally such as providing attention, expressions of empathy so that teachers get a sense of comfort in the work environment. The existence of social support makes teachers feel confident that they are loved, valued so that they can cause tension, and feelings of discomfort at work and increase the occurrence of stress in a teacher. Therefore, it takes the support of leaders in schools to be able to maintain the mental health to their educators.

Unfortunately, the topic of stress in teachers is still rare in the context of Indonesian education (Gaol, 2021). When the topic of stress experienced by teachers is not discussed or studies, it can directly affect work productivity. Education provided by teachers in schools provides a stimulus for the development of children's character and cognition in order to live in society. Work stress experienced by teachers is still not the focus of attention of both researchers and policy makers in Indonesia. In fact, teacher stress has become a field of study for research on teacher stress in Indonesia, even though the mental state of teachers plays a vital role in the success of students learning in schools and is related to work productivity, this study is very important to do. In this regard, it is important to investigate the effect of principals' support in maintaining educators' mental health on their work productivity. This study will focus on the quality of accreditation of PAUD institutions. The support of principals whose institutions have A accreditation will affect educators' work productivity.

2. METHODS

This study employs a descriptive quantitative approach using a multiple linear regression model. The sample was determined using the Slovin formula with a 5% margin of error, ensuring the representativeness of the sample and enabling generalization of the findings without referring to standard sample size tables. As a result, a total of 111 early childhood education (PAUD) teachers in Semarang City, holding A accreditation, were selected through simple random sampling, without stratification.

Data collection was conducted using a structured questionnaire developed by the researchers. The instrument underwent both validity and reliability testing to ensure the accuracy and consistency of the measurements. The questionnaire consisted of 45 closed-ended items, distributed via Google Forms: 15 items measured principal support, 12 items assessed mental health, and 18 items evaluated teacher work productivity. Respondents were instructed to answer honestly based on their personal experiences, without external influence. The questionnaire was disseminated through WhatsApp groups associated with Himpaudi, PKG, and local schools.

The study utilized a multiple linear regression analysis to examine the contributions of the independent variables—principal support (X1) and mental health (X2)—to the dependent variable, teacher work productivity (Y). Prior to regression analysis, several assumption tests were conducted, including tests for normality, significance (levels I and overall), linearity, multicollinearity, and heteroscedasticity.

Hypothesis testing was performed using both the t-test (partial influence) and the F-test (simultaneous influence) to assess the following research hypotheses:

1. Principal support has a positive and significant effect on teacher work productivity;
2. Mental health has a positive and significant effect on teacher work productivity;

3. Principal support in maintaining teachers' mental health has a positive and significant effect on teacher work productivity.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Prerequisite Test Analysis

3.1.1 Normality Test

Before testing the hypothesis, first conduct an assumption test to determine accuracy of the estimate, so as not to be biased and to be consistent. The first step in the assumption is the normality test, here is the presentation.

Table 1. Normality Test

<i>Asymp Sig</i>	Normality Standard	Information
0.200	0.05	Normally Distributed

(Source: Researcher Data, 2024)

Based on these results, the normality test results obtained a significance value of 0.200 and exceeded 0.05 at the 5% level, which means that the data distribution of all variables is normal. Therefore, the assumption of normality is met in this study so that the tests used can be continued.

3.1.2 Linearity Test

Table 2. Linearity Test

			Sig > 0.5
Work productivity*	Between Groups	(Combined)	0.000
Principal Support		Linearity	0.000
		Deviation from Linearity	0.203
Work productivity*	Between Groups	(Combined)	0.000
Principal Support		Linearity	0.000
		Deviation from Linearity	0.683

(Source: Researcher Data, 2024)

Based on the results of the linearity test presented in Table 2, the significance value for the deviation from linearity between the principal support variable and work productivity is 0.203. Since $0.203 > 0.05$, it can be concluded that there is a linear relationship between principal support and work productivity. Similarly, the significance value for the deviation from linearity between the mental health variable and work productivity is 0.683. As $0.683 > 0.05$, this also indicates a linear relationship between mental health and work productivity. Therefore, it can be concluded that both independent variables—principal support and mental health—exhibit a linear relationship with work productivity, validating the use of a linear regression model for measuring or predicting work productivity in this study.

3.1.3 Multicollinearity Test

The multicollinearity test in a model is carried out to test whether the regression model finds a correlation between the independent variables. In the table above, the results of the VIF calculation for the two variables above the VIF value for $X_1 = 1.333$ and $X_2 = 1.333$, all < 10 , so it can be concluded that there is no multicollinearity between the independent variables. The multicollinearity test results can be seen in table 3.

Table 3. Multicollinearity Test

Model	Colinierity Statistics	
	Tolerance	VIF
(Constants)		
Principal Support	.750	1.333
Mental Health	.750	1.333

3.1.4 Heteroscedasticity Test

The results of the heteroscedasticity test of research data using SPSS version 25 can be seen in Figure 1.

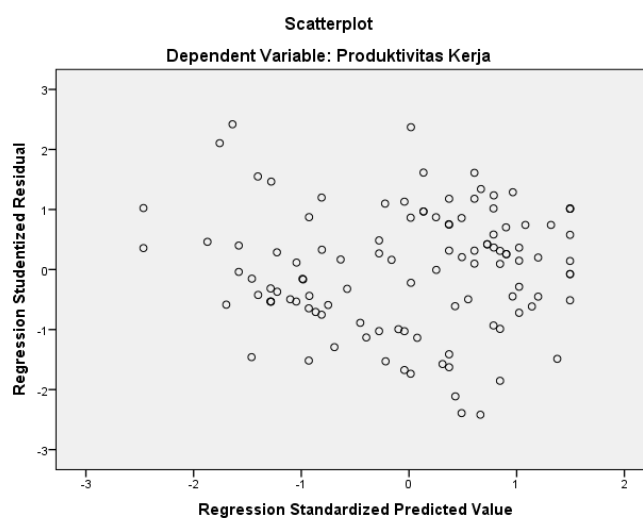


Figure 1. Heteroscedasticity test graph

Based on the output above, the studentized residual regression diagram shows that the points spread randomly and are spread as a whole both above and below the Y axis number, thus indicating that there is no heteroscedasticity in the regression model.

3.1.5 Correlation Test

The results of the correlation analysis, as presented in Table 4, indicate that the significance value (2-tailed) for both principal support and mental health is 0.000, which is less than the threshold of 0.05. This suggests that both variables have a statistically significant relationship with teacher work productivity.

In terms of the strength of these relationships, the Pearson correlation coefficient for principal support is 0.658, indicating a strong and positive correlation with teacher work productivity. This positive value suggests that as principal support increases, teacher work productivity also tends to increase in a unidirectional manner.

Similarly, the Pearson correlation coefficient for mental health is 0.477, which also reflects a moderate to strong positive relationship with teacher work productivity. This implies that improvements in mental health are associated with increases in work productivity, again indicating a unidirectional relationship.

Overall, both principal support and mental health are significantly and positively correlated with teacher work productivity.

Table 4. Correlation Test Results

		Principal Support	Mental Health	Work Productivity
Principal Support	Pearson Correlation	1	.500**	.658**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000
	N	111	111	111
Mental Health	Pearson Correlation	.500**	1	.477**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000
	N	111	111	111
Work Productivity	Pearson Correlation	.658**	.477**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	
	N	111	111	111

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

(Source: Research Data, 2024)

3.1.6 Hypothesis

To address the first research question regarding the effect of principal support on teacher mental health, a multiple regression analysis was conducted. This analysis aimed to determine whether principal support significantly contributes to variations in teachers' mental health. The results of the regression test are presented in Table 5 below.

Table 5. Multiple Regression Test Results of the Effect of Principal Support on Teacher Mental Health

	B	P < .01
Principal Support	0.262	0.000

(Source : Researcher Data, 2024)

Based on the regression analysis results presented in Table 5, the p-value for the principal support variable is 0.000, which is less than the significance level of 0.05, and the standardized coefficient (β) is 0.262. These results indicate that the hypothesis is supported—principal support has a significant positive effect on teachers' mental health. In other words, higher levels of principal support are associated with improved mental health among teachers.

This finding is further reinforced by the regression results specific to PAUD teachers in Semarang City, which confirm that principal support plays a meaningful role in enhancing teachers' mental health. When principals consistently offer support, teachers tend to experience greater psychological well-being.

These results align with the theoretical framework discussed in Chapter Two, particularly social support theory and human needs theory. Social support theory posits that supportive social interactions can help individuals meet essential needs—such as safety, belonging, and self-actualization—and mitigate stress and burnout. According to Russell et al. (1987), social support from superiors, colleagues, and others can reduce emotional exhaustion. For teachers, support from school leaders—such as being listened to, encouraged, provided with resources, or given constructive feedback—can ease their workload and alleviate both physical and psychological strain.

Teachers who receive consistent and meaningful support from their principals report better mental health compared to those who do not. Principals who foster a supportive and nurturing school environment contribute to stronger interpersonal relationships and improved psychological well-being

among staff. Therefore, principal support is not only beneficial but essential in maintaining teachers' mental health and reducing burnout.

In conclusion, enhancing teachers' mental health requires the active involvement of principals in providing social support. Such support helps sustain teachers' psychological resilience and fosters a healthier, more productive school environment.

Following this, the second research question—concerning the effect of principal support on teacher work productivity—is addressed as follows:

Table 6. Multiple Regression Test Results of the Effect of Principal Support on Teacher Productivity

	B	P < .01
Principal Support	0.891	0.000

(Source: Researcher Data, 2024)

Based on the results presented in Table 6, the p-value for principal support is 0.000, which is less than the significance threshold of 0.05, and the standardized coefficient (β) is 0.891. These findings indicate that the hypothesis is accepted—principal support has a significant and positive effect on teacher work productivity. In practical terms, this suggests that higher levels of support from school principals are associated with increased work productivity among teachers.

The results of the hypothesis testing for early childhood education (ECE) teachers in Semarang City further confirm that principal support significantly influences teacher productivity. The greater the level of support provided by school principals, the higher the productivity levels observed among teachers. This underscores the importance of leadership and social support in enhancing workplace outcomes.

These findings are consistent with previous research. For instance, Wulansari (2020) found a significant positive relationship between job stress and work productivity, suggesting that managing stress through support can improve performance. Similarly, Monintja and Trang (2024) demonstrated that social support positively influences employee productivity. Furthermore, Rudianto and Murniati (2019) showed that social support plays a moderating role in the relationship between organizational communication and job stress, indicating that such support can reduce stress and enhance employee performance.

The role of social support from principals—expressed through recognition, empathy, and attention—has a direct impact on teacher productivity. This is consistent with the findings of Rahmawati et al. (2016), who noted that teachers without sufficient support from their school leaders tend to face greater challenges in fulfilling their professional responsibilities. Therefore, the presence of social support is a critical factor in facilitating optimal teacher performance.

In conclusion, principal support has a clear and significant effect on teacher work productivity. The more consistent and meaningful the support provided by school leadership, the greater the resulting improvement in teacher productivity.

The following section addresses the third research question, which examines whether the principal's support in maintaining mental health influences teacher work productivity.

Table 7. Multiple Regression Test Results The Effect of Principal Support in Maintaining Teacher Mental Health on Teacher Work Productivity

	B	P < .01
Principal Support	0.758	0.000
Teacher Mental Health	0.509	0.017

(Source: Researcher Data, 2024)

Based on these results, the p value of principal support is 0.000 < 0.05, and the B value is 0.758. So,

the hypothesis is accepted, meaning that principal support affects teacher work productivity. When principal support is high, teacher work productivity is high. Meanwhile, the p value of mental health is $0.017 < 0.05$ and the B value is 0.509. Then the hypothesis is accepted, meaning that mental health affects teacher work productivity. When mental health increases, teacher work productivity is high.

Table 8. Model Summary^b

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R	
			Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.680 ^a	.462	.452	4.66000

a. Predictors: (Constant), Kesehatan Mental, Dukungan Kepala Sekolah

b. Dependent Variable: Produktivitas Kerja

Table 9. Multiple Regression Test Results The Effect of Principal Support in Maintaining Teacher Mental Health on Teacher Work Productivity per Indicator

	B	P < .01
Emotional Support	0.236	0.371
Award Support	1.592	0.011
Concrete Support	1.010	0.020
Information Support	-0.479	0.715
Physiological Needs	0.552	0.589
Comfort Needs	0.424	0.586
Social Needs	0.965	0.042
The need to be valued	1.076	0.017
Self-Actualization Needs	0.123	0.825

(Source: Researcher Data, 2024)

3.2 Discussion

The results of the multiple regression analysis indicate that several dimensions of principal support significantly influence teacher work productivity. Specifically, appreciation support yielded a p-value of 0.011 (< 0.05) and a standardized coefficient (β) of 1.592, indicating a significant and positive effect. This suggests that when teachers receive recognition and rewards for their performance, their work productivity increases. Similarly, concrete support also showed a significant effect, with a p-value of 0.020 (< 0.05) and a β of 1.010, implying that tangible assistance from principals—such as direct help in completing tasks—can enhance teacher productivity.

In addition, social needs demonstrated a significant positive relationship with work productivity, with a p-value of 0.042 and a β of 0.965. This means that when teachers' needs for social interaction and belonging are fulfilled, their work productivity improves. The need to be appreciated also had a significant effect ($p = 0.017$, $\beta = 1.076$), indicating that feeling valued and acknowledged contributes meaningfully to a teacher's ability to perform effectively.

Conversely, several dimensions of support—emotional support, informational support, physiological needs, comfort needs, and self-actualization needs—did not show a statistically significant effect on work productivity, as their p-values exceeded the 0.05 threshold. This suggests that while emotional closeness or being informed may be appreciated, these types of support are not as influential on productivity as concrete actions or recognition. These findings contrast with the buffering hypothesis proposed by Cohen and Wills (1985), which posits that social support mitigates stress and enhances mental health, thereby improving performance. While the theory emphasizes the broad benefits of social support, this study reveals that not all forms of support are equally effective in enhancing work productivity.

Further analysis, as presented in Table 4.10, examined the impact of principal support in maintaining teacher mental health on work productivity. The results confirm a significant positive effect: as principals increase their efforts to support and preserve teachers' mental health, teacher productivity correspondingly improves.

These findings are consistent with prior research. Audina et al. (2023) reported that mental health has a positive and significant effect on work productivity, with an influence of 31.92%. Likewise, Monintja and Trang (2024) found that social support partially but significantly contributes to increased productivity. Adnyaswari and Adnyani (2017) also found that higher levels of social support enhance nurse performance and reduce burnout, particularly in high-stress work environments such as hospitals.

The results of this study support both Maslow's hierarchy of needs and social support theory, which suggest that individuals perform better when their basic psychological and emotional needs—such as comfort, appreciation, and social belonging—are met. Teachers who feel supported, valued, and connected within their professional environment are more likely to be productive and resilient in their roles.

In conclusion, while emotional and informational support may contribute to general well-being, it is the more tangible forms of support—such as appreciation, direct assistance, and fulfilling social needs—that have the most substantial impact on teacher work productivity. Principals play a crucial role in providing this support, and their involvement is essential in promoting both mental health and performance among teachers.

4. CONCLUSIONS

This study provides valuable insights into the influence of principal support on mental health and work productivity of early childhood education teachers. Hypothesis testing confirms that the variable of principal support has a positive influence on mental health and work productivity. This study has several limitations. First, this study only focuses on early childhood education schools in a particular area, which may limit the generalization of the findings to other educational environments or areas. Second, this study only uses quantitative methods, which may not be able to capture the deeper nuances of how mental health and work productivity interact. Future research should address these limitations by expanding this study to include diverse educational contexts and areas, adopting a mixed-method approach to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics at play. This study can be an input for policymakers to make principal support a requirement for schools to obtain accreditation and to be an input for principals as leaders of educational institutions to develop stress management through comprehensive guidance and counselling programs for teachers, education personnel, and students so that stress levels in the school environment are not dangerous.

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