

## The Influence of Principal Leadership, Educational Climate, and Guidance and Counseling Programs on the Incidence of Bullying Among Students in Public Senior High Schools in Manado City

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### Abstract

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*Bullying in senior high schools is a serious issue in educational management because it affects students' psychological safety, emotional well-being, and the effectiveness of the learning process. School principals are expected to play a key role in creating a safe, inclusive, and non-violent school environment. However, the extent to which principal leadership directly influences student bullying behavior has not been strongly supported by empirical evidence, especially in public high schools. Therefore, this study examines the effect of principal leadership on bullying behavior among students in public senior high schools in Manado City. This research used a quantitative approach with an explanatory survey design. The population consisted of all students in public senior high schools in Manado City, and 385 respondents were selected using the Lemeshow sampling formula. Data were collected through Likert-scale questionnaires measuring perceptions of principal leadership and bullying behavior. The data were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with AMOS software, including validity, reliability, model fit, and path analysis tests. The results indicate that principal leadership does not have a direct and significant effect on students' bullying behavior. This suggests that principal leadership operates more indirectly through school policies, management systems, and institutional structures rather than through direct interaction with students. Bullying behavior is found to be more strongly influenced by peer relationships, school climate, and daily social interactions within the school environment. In conclusion, the relationship between principal leadership and bullying behavior is complex and indirect. Therefore, efforts to reduce bullying should not rely solely on leadership but must also involve strengthening school culture, improving peer relationships, and implementing comprehensive anti-bullying strategies that support students' social and emotional development.*

**Keywords:** Principal Leadership, Bullying, Educational Management, SEM, Public Senior High School.

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## INTRODUCTION

Bullying has increasingly been recognized as a persistent and multidimensional problem in contemporary education, given its profound implications for school climate, students' psychological security, emotional stability, and the overall effectiveness of teaching and learning processes. Schools, which are normatively constructed as safe and developmental spaces for students' social, emotional, and cognitive growth, are in practice often shaped by complex

dynamics of power imbalance, peer domination, intimidation, and sustained psychological pressure (Sumual, S. D. M., Rawis, J. A. M., Lengkong, J. S. J., Ngadiorejo, H., & Sumarauw, L. E., 2025). This condition indicates that bullying cannot be understood merely as an individual behavioral deviation, but rather as a structural and relational phenomenon embedded within broader patterns of social interaction and institutional governance in schools.

From the perspective of educational management, bullying can be interpreted as a manifestation of systemic weaknesses in school protective mechanisms, social regulation, and the internalization of a healthy and inclusive school culture (Umbase, 2016). In response to this challenge, various educational policies at national and international levels consistently position school principals as strategic actors responsible for ensuring the creation of safe, inclusive, and child-friendly learning environments. Principals are expected to formulate visionary leadership, translate it into operational policies, enforce disciplinary systems, and mobilize collective commitment among teachers, staff, and students to reject all forms of violence (Makatengkeng, B. A., Tiwa, T. M., & Naharia, M., 2025). Nevertheless, empirical realities frequently demonstrate that bullying—whether in overt, covert, verbal, social, or psychological forms—continues to persist even within schools that already possess formal leadership frameworks and regulatory instruments.

This discrepancy between normative expectations and empirical conditions raises critical analytical questions regarding the actual extent of principal leadership influence on student bullying behavior. Specifically, it remains unclear whether such leadership exerts a direct behavioral impact on students, or whether its influence is mediated indirectly through institutional culture, policy implementation mechanisms, peer group dynamics, and the broader psychosocial environment of the school. These questions are particularly relevant because many educational interventions still assume a linear relationship between leadership effectiveness and student behavior change, often without sufficient empirical validation of the underlying causal pathways.

In the context of public senior high schools in Manado City, bullying remains a complex and ongoing issue, manifested in various forms such as verbal aggression, social exclusion, relational manipulation, and psychological intimidation (Tuju, A. A., Lumapow, H. R., & Kumaat, T. D., 2024). Despite its prevalence, research that specifically employs quantitative approaches and structural modeling techniques to examine the influence of principal leadership on bullying behavior remains limited. Existing studies tend to emphasize descriptive analyses or focus on individual, familial, and peer-related determinants, thereby leaving a conceptual and empirical gap in understanding the role of institutional leadership.

Based on these considerations, this study aims to conduct an empirical and critical examination of the influence of principal leadership on students' bullying behavior in public senior high schools in Manado City. Beyond statistical testing, this research also seeks to contribute to a more nuanced theoretical understanding of school leadership as a mediated and context-dependent factor within bullying prevention frameworks in educational management.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Principal Leadership in Educational Management**

Principal leadership is a fundamental concept in educational management because the principal functions as the key figure who directs and coordinates the entire school organization. Leadership is not limited to a formal structural position, but refers to the capacity to influence, motivate, and guide all school members to work collaboratively in achieving shared educational objectives. Within this framework, the principal acts simultaneously as a visionary leader, organizational manager, decision-maker, and custodian of school values and culture.

From a theoretical standpoint, principal leadership consists of multiple interrelated dimensions, such as the development and communication of vision and mission, effective management of human and material resources, cultivation of a positive organizational culture, academic supervision, and the strengthening of social relationships within the school environment. When implemented effectively, such leadership is expected to create a supportive and productive school climate, improve teacher performance and professionalism, and enhance collective commitment among school stakeholders. Nevertheless, the impact of leadership on student behavior is generally indirect, as it is mediated through institutional systems, policy implementation, and everyday school practices.

In practical implementation, however, the quality of principal leadership varies significantly. Not all principals are able to adopt a transformative leadership style that actively responds to the dynamic needs of students and school communities. In some cases, leadership remains largely administrative in nature, focusing on rule enforcement, procedural compliance, and bureaucratic responsibilities, without sufficient emphasis on participatory engagement or the development of a responsive school culture. This condition may create a disconnect between school-level management structures and the lived social realities of students, resulting in policies that are not fully effective in influencing actual student behavior or addressing emerging social problems within the school environment.

### **Student Bullying Behavior as a School Social Phenomenon**

Bullying in schools is defined as intentional aggressive behavior that occurs repeatedly and involves a power imbalance between the perpetrator and the victim. In secondary school contexts, bullying typically takes the form of verbal, social, and psychological aggression, which is often subtle and not easily identified by school authorities. Such behaviors are frequently minimized as harmless jokes or normal adolescent interaction, even though they may cause significant and long-term harm to victims.

From a sociological viewpoint, bullying is not an isolated or spontaneous act, but rather a phenomenon shaped by peer group interactions, shared social norms, and the broader culture of the school. When a school environment tolerates symbolic violence or fails to consistently enforce rules and boundaries, it can unintentionally create conditions that allow bullying to persist. In this regard, bullying should be understood as an institutional reflection of school governance quality, particularly in relation to how discipline is implemented and how interpersonal relations are regulated within the school setting.

Within this framework, principal leadership is conceptually positioned as a crucial factor in preventing bullying. Through the formulation of school policies, the development of a positive and inclusive school climate, and the strengthening of student protection systems, principals are expected to reduce the occurrence of bullying behaviors. However, the influence of leadership on bullying is not necessarily direct or straightforward. Principal leadership tends to function at the structural and cultural levels of the school organization, whereas bullying emerges primarily from day-to-day interactions among students in peer groups.

Based on this conceptual foundation, this study proposes and examines the hypothesis that principal leadership has an influence on students' bullying behavior. The analysis is aimed at identifying whether there is a statistically significant relationship between students' perceptions of principal leadership and their tendencies to engage in or experience bullying within the school environment.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study employed a quantitative approach with an explanatory survey design. The population consisted of all public senior high school students in Manado City. The sample comprised 385 students, determined using the Lemeshow formula by considering the confidence level and margin of error.

Data were collected using a Likert-scale questionnaire measuring two main variables: principal leadership and student bullying behavior. The principal leadership variable was measured through indicators reflecting leadership vision, rule enforcement, attention to school safety, and support for students. Meanwhile, the bullying behavior variable was measured through indicators of verbal, physical, social, and psychological bullying.

Data analysis was conducted using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with the assistance of AMOS software. The analysis procedures included testing the validity and reliability of the instruments, evaluating the measurement model, assessing model fit (goodness of fit), and examining the structural relationship between principal leadership and bullying behavior.

## **RESULTS**

The results of the descriptive analysis show that students generally perceive principal leadership as being in the moderate to good category. This indicates that, overall, principals are viewed as having carried out their administrative and managerial roles at an adequate level, particularly in relation to school organization and management functions.

However, the results of the structural model analysis reveal that the relationship between principal leadership and bullying behavior is not statistically significant. The estimated path coefficient does not meet the required significance criteria, as indicated by a critical ratio value below 1.96 and a probability value greater than 0.05. Based on these findings, the hypothesis proposing that principal leadership has a significant influence on students' bullying behavior is not supported and is therefore rejected.

These results suggest that although principal leadership is perceived positively in general, it does not directly translate into changes in students' bullying behavior. This implies that bullying is more likely influenced by other contextual

and social factors within the school environment, rather than being directly determined by leadership performance alone.

## **DISCUSSION**

The finding that principal leadership does not exert a direct effect on students' bullying behavior is significant, as it challenges common normative assumptions in educational management. This result suggests that the existence of formal leadership alone does not automatically translate into an influence on students' social interactions or behavioral patterns. Instead, principal leadership tends to operate primarily at the level of policy formulation and organizational structuring, while bullying behavior is more directly shaped by students' daily interactions within peer groups.

These findings further indicate that the effect of leadership on bullying is likely indirect and depends on the presence of supporting institutional mechanisms. Elements such as school climate, instructional practices, teacher involvement, supervision systems, and behavioral monitoring function as mediating factors that connect leadership decisions to student behavior. In the absence of these mediators, anti-bullying policies initiated by principals may remain largely procedural or administrative in nature, without being fully embedded in the lived culture of the school.

Consequently, this study highlights that leadership effectiveness in addressing bullying cannot be understood in isolation, but must be viewed within a broader systemic framework of school governance. For anti-bullying strategies to be effective, leadership initiatives need to be translated into consistent practices and reinforced through daily school routines, ensuring that policies are not only formally established but also socially internalized within the school environment.

## **RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS**

Theoretically, these findings strengthen the argument that school leadership should be conceptualized as a systemic and multidimensional process rather than a simple linear cause-and-effect relationship. In this perspective, principal leadership does not directly determine student behavior, but instead functions through interconnected institutional components that collectively shape the school environment. This includes organizational culture, regulatory systems, teacher practices, peer interactions, and the overall climate of the school. Therefore, the influence of leadership is better understood as indirect, mediated, and context-dependent.

Practically, the results imply that principals need to move beyond a purely administrative leadership approach that focuses on formal duties, compliance, and documentation. Instead, greater emphasis should be placed on strengthening school systems that can meaningfully shape students' behavior in real-life contexts. This involves building consistent supervisory mechanisms, fostering a positive and inclusive school climate, empowering teachers as daily behavioral models, and ensuring that anti-bullying policies are actively implemented rather than remaining at the procedural level. Through this systemic approach, leadership can have a more substantial and sustained impact on student behavior within the school environment.

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that principal leadership does not have a direct and statistically significant effect on students' bullying behavior in public senior high schools in Manado City. These findings indicate that bullying cannot be explained solely through variations in leadership performance, but is more closely related to broader contextual and social factors within the school environment.

Accordingly, efforts to prevent bullying require a more comprehensive and integrated institutional approach. Strengthening school climate, improving peer relationships, enhancing teacher involvement, and optimizing supervision and monitoring systems are essential components in addressing bullying more effectively. In this sense, sustainable bullying prevention depends not only on formal leadership, but also on the collective functioning of the entire school system.

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