The Predictive Role of Principals' Personality in Enhancing School Performance: Evidence from Junior High Schools in South Sulawesi

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Keywords: Principals' Personality School Performance Junior High Schools	**Purpose** – The purpose of this research is to examine how various aspects of a principal's personality, such as extraversion, agreeableness, emotional stability, and openness, contribute to the overall performance of junior high schools in South Sulawesi. **Methodology** – This study employed a quantitative research design, allowing the researcher to systematically test hypotheses and analyze the relationship between the principal's personality and distributed leadership on school performance. To assess the impact of the two independent variables on school performance, this study utilized multiple regression analysis. Teacher responses gathered from public junior high schools in South Sulawesi served as the primary data source and were analyzed quantitatively to evaluate the predictive role of each variable in shaping school performance. **Findings** – The study's results showed that the principal's personality traits of agreeableness and openness significantly predicted school performance in junior high schools in South Sulawesi. Agreeableness received a regression coefficient of $\beta = 0.21$ ($p < .05$), while openness had a coefficient of $\beta = 0.19$ ($p < .05$), indicating that both traits have a meaningful influence on school outcomes. Teachers described principals with strong agreeableness as individuals who worked well with others, were sincere, and willingly offered support, which in turn encouraged harmonious relationships and teamwork among school staff. Overall, the results suggest that fostering agreeableness and openness in school leaders is crucial in enhancing school performance and promoting a healthy educational environment. **Contribution** – This research highlights that the personality characteristics of school principals, particularly openness and agreeableness, are crucial factors that enhance school performance by strengthening management quality and improving accountability.

INTRODUCTION

Education is one of the fundamental human needs for improving the quality of human resources (HR) and achieving a higher standard of living (Alhabbsyi et al., 2022). Education plays a crucial role in preparing qualified human resources. Along with the advancement of time, the challenges faced by the education system have increased in terms of quality, quantity, and relevance (Carudin & Agus, 2022). One of the educational challenges faced by Indonesia is the low quality of education at all levels. In this context, Sihombing (2023) stated that the main challenge includes educational disparities. To date, Indonesia continues to face various problems of unequal education.

The existence of high-quality, competitive, and adaptable human resources is a crucial factor in achieving national goals and advancing the nation. Within the educational setting, the presence of qualified and capable human resources is crucial not only for enhancing the overall quality of education but also for maximizing students' academic outcomes. In addition, teachers who possess strong professional skills and the ability to innovate are vital in equipping learners to meet the demands of an increasingly globalized world. Strengthening the quality of human resources through continuous training and professional development will ensure that the education system remains relevant and responsive to the demands of the modern era (Tanjung et al., 2021).

School principals play a key role in determining the success and advancement of education. They carry out duties that include designing school programs, administering the curriculum, supervising teaching personnel, and strengthening accountability for student learning outcomes. According to Fera Ningrum et al. (2025), the principal plays a pivotal part in advancing the quality and standards of a school, particularly in exercising authority and responsibility when making strategic decisions. Vienty & Ajepri (2022) assert that as educational institution managers, principals play important roles as designers, organizers, implementers, managers of educational staff, and supervisors of educational programs.

In line with this perspective, Huzaifah & Turnip (2025) state that school principals hold a central role in the success of educational institutions. One of the core competencies determining leadership effectiveness is personality competence. Research in Indonesia indicates that many principals have not fully implemented personality-based leadership, as evidenced by a low learning culture, weak internal communication, and minimal initiative in building sustainable cooperation networks. According to Fernando (2023), adequate personality competence in both principals and teachers plays a crucial role in enhancing educational quality. This competence encompasses moral traits that serve as a good example, such as being polite, friendly, humble, caring toward members of the school community, and committed to upholding religious values. These qualities contribute to creating a positive and supportive school environment.

The contribution of principals' personality competence to the performance of elementary schools can be observed in several aspects. In this regard, since the level of personality competence is adequate, principals can make positive contributions by serving as role models for students and the community. Nevertheless, attitudes and discipline, which are currently at a sufficient level, still need continuous improvement so that principals can carry out their managerial duties more effectively, which in turn can influence the overall performance of the school (Fatimah et al., 2024).

The overall quality of a school is shaped by multiple elements, including its organizational culture, the leadership exercised by the principal, the school's organizational climate, the availability of facilities and infrastructure, teacher performance, and the adequacy of financial resources (Intan Slivana et al., 2016). The quality of a school is shaped by a range of contributing factors, such as its organizational culture, the principal's leadership, the overall organizational climate, the availability of facilities and infrastructure, the performance of teachers, and the level of financial support (Intan Slivana et al., 2016). The success or failure of a school organization is primarily determined by the quality of leadership demonstrated by those entrusted with leadership roles. Therefore, educational leadership needs to be strengthened by enhancing functional competencies, enabling leaders to effectively carry out their duties, exercise their authority, and achieve their objectives (Simanjuntak et al., 2024).

Schools, as formal educational institutions, function to produce human resources, which are vital components in development (Sudharta et al., 2018). To develop high-quality human resources, schools must be able to meet the expectations and needs of society. For this reason, it is essential to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of each school and ensure that continuous improvements are implemented, identifying existing challenges to increase productivity. Educational success is heavily influenced by principals' ability to manage teaching staff, educational programs, administration, professional development, and the utilization of facilities (Safitri, 2024; Safitri et al., 2025). Effective principals can produce better outcomes for teachers, students, and the schools they lead (Fitri et al., 2022).

Principals' personalities play a crucial role in student success and achievement. Fatimah et al. (2024). The study revealed that principals' personality competencies, together with teachers' achievement motivation, collectively influence the performance of elementary schools. This finding aligns with Rokhani (2020), who suggests that leadership style influences school performance both positively and negatively, depending on how leaders empower, involve, and instill a sense of belonging in their subordinates. Ulfa & Ramadhansyah (2023) add that principals must possess administrative skills, a high level of commitment, and flexibility in carrying out their duties.

Several studies have demonstrated a strong relationship between principals' personalities and school performance. Sakerani et al. (2021) found that principals' personal character forms the foundation of effective leadership, motivating teachers to achieve optimal performance, thereby improving overall school performance. Muadin & Akmalia (2022) highlight that democratic leadership, characterized by exemplary behavior, strong communication skills, sound decision-making, and the capacity to motivate teachers, plays a crucial role in shaping a school culture focused on high achievement. The personality competence of principals, reinforced by teachers' motivation to excel, serves as a crucial element in establishing a school environment that supports improved performance results.

Principals' personality competence affects student success. Setyawan & Santosa (2021) emphasize the principal's role in educational implementation. Julaiha (2019) highlights that principals serve as the driving force for school human resources, particularly teachers and staff. Astining Putri et al. (2019) found a significant influence of personality competence on SMP teacher performance in Kecamatan Seberang Ulu 1, Palembang. Sudharta et al. (2018) also demonstrate that the principal's personality is a significant factor in leadership. Qualities such as being friendly, courteous, humble, caring toward members of the school community, and committed to religious values demonstrate admirable character. Integrity is further reflected in actions marked by honesty, fairness, discipline, and a strong commitment to carrying out school programs and fulfilling responsibilities to the entire school community.

The principal's personality competence plays a crucial role in shaping effective leadership, as it helps create a positive work environment, strengthens interpersonal relationships with teachers, and enhances the motivation and performance of all school members. Principals who demonstrate integrity, a high level of responsibility, and practical communication skills are generally more capable of inspiring teachers and building a collaborative school environment that supports efforts to enhance educational quality (Huzaifah & Turnip, 2025).

Although many previous studies have shown a relationship between principals' personalities and school performance, these studies are still limited to specific contexts and have not been widely focused on junior high schools in South Sulawesi. Drawing on this background, the current research aims to investigate how various dimensions of principals' personalities, including extraversion, agreeableness, emotional stability, and openness, impact the performance of junior high schools in South Sulawesi. The findings of this study are expected to provide practical guidance for school principals and policymakers to enhance school leadership and performance, as well as contribute to the theoretical understanding of personality-based leadership in the Indonesian educational context.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employs a quantitative research design, specifically a survey method, which allows the researcher to systematically test hypotheses and analyze the relationship between variables using statistical methods. The survey method was chosen because it enables the collection of data directly from respondents, in this case, teachers, to examine the influence of the principal's personality and distributed leadership on school performance. The quantitative design provides measurable and objective data, which helps to determine the strength and significance of the relationships between independent and dependent variables (Sugiyono, 2022).

Population and Sample

The population of this study consists of teachers serving in State Junior High Schools (SMP Negeri) in South Sulawesi Province. Teachers were selected as the study population because they directly experience and evaluate the principal's leadership style and personality in the school context. Based on data from the South Sulawesi Provincial Education Department (2012), there are a total of 9,934 teachers working in 454 SMP Negeri schools across six selected districts/cities (Makassar, Pangkep, Barru, East Luwu, Tana Toraja, and Wajo). These six districts were chosen purposively because reports from the Education Department indicated relatively low student achievement and ineffective leadership practices among principals in these areas. From this population, a total of 540 teachers from 60 schools were selected as the study sample. The sample size was determined proportionally, based on the number of schools and teachers in each district relative to the total population of schools and teachers.

Sampling Technique

The quantitative sampling employed a proportional stratified random sampling technique. Schools in each district were first identified, and then both schools and teachers were selected proportionally to their population size. This ensured that every teacher had an equal opportunity to be included and that the sample accurately represented the diversity of the population.

Instruments

The research instruments used in this study were questionnaires, which served as the primary data collection tool. The questionnaires consisted of two instruments: the Principal Personality Questionnaire and the School Performance Questionnaire. The Principal Personality Questionnaire consisted of 19 items, measuring four primary constructs: extraversion, agreeableness, emotional stability, and openness to experience. Each construct comprised several indicators describing the principal's behaviors and traits, such as activity level, friendliness, openness in expressing opinions, caring, and humility. Meanwhile, the School Performance Questionnaire consisted of 41 items covering three dimensions: input, process, and output. The input dimension examined aspects such as the curriculum, available facilities, and school-related expenses. The process dimension focused on instructional practices and assessment activities, while the output dimension measured the competencies achieved by graduates.

The instrument development process began by determining the variables and their dimensions through a review of the literature and earlier research. Each variable was further detailed into sub-variables and measurable indicators so that every questionnaire item accurately reflected the intended constructs. The items were then drafted using a combination of positively and negatively worded statements to minimize response bias. Afterward, experts in leadership and education reviewed all items to assess their content validity, and consensus among the evaluators was analyzed using Fleiss' Kappa, as the assessment involved multiple raters.

The validity of the instruments was assessed in two stages: content validity and construct validity. Content validity ensured that all items were appropriate for the intended measurement and received approval from experts. Construct validity was examined using Rasch analysis, which evaluated how well

each item aligned with the intended construct. Items that did not meet the fit criteria were removed. The analysis results showed that the remaining items used in the main study had adequate validity and consistently measured their respective constructs.

Instrument reliability was tested using Cronbach's Alpha and the Rasch Measurement Model. The pilot study, involving 50 teachers, demonstrated that the Principal Personality Questionnaire had individual reliability of 0.83 and item reliability of 0.84, indicating a high level of reliability. The School Performance Questionnaire had an individual reliability of 0.93 and an item reliability of 0.72, also indicating high reliability. These results demonstrate that the instruments were stable and consistent, making them trustworthy for measuring principal personality and school performance variables in this study.

Data Analysis

The statistical testing in this study employs inferential statistical methods, including Pearson's correlation coefficient (r), multiple regression, and principal component analysis, to test each hypothesis. The results will determine whether the hypotheses are accepted or rejected. Testing is conducted at a 95% confidence level or a significance level of $\alpha = 0.05$ to indicate a statistically significant relationship between variables.

The multiple regression test is conducted to examine the influence of the principal's personality factors and distributed leadership on school performance. This test is also used to assess the extent to which differences in the principal's personality and distributed leadership effectively determine school performance. The multiple regression equation used to analyze the proposed model is as follows:

$$\tilde{Y} = \alpha + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \varepsilon$$

The description are α is constant (intercept), β_1, β_2 are coefficients of each independent variable, $\tilde{Y}$ is school performance data, X_1 is principal's personality factor data, X_2 is distributed leadership data, and ε is standard error.

FINDINGS

Normality Test for Personality Variable

The normality test is a fundamental requirement prior to conducting regression analysis. For this reason, the researcher examined the data distribution before running the regression to confirm that the dataset followed a regular pattern. Indicators such as skewness and kurtosis were used to assess the normality of the data. The findings of the normality test for the personality variable are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Normality Test for Personality Variable

Statistic	Value	Std. Error	Interpretation
Mean	4.1613	0.01779	—
95% Confidence Interval for Mean (Lower–Upper)	4.1264 – 4.1962	—	—
5% Trimmed Mean	4.1804	—	—
Median	4.2401	—	—
Variance	0.151	—	—
Standard Deviation	0.38846	—	—
Minimum	2.74	—	—
Maximum	4.94	—	—
Range	2.21	—	—
Skewness	–0.790	0.112	Within –2 to +2 → normally distributed
Kurtosis	0.716	0.223	Within –2 to +2 → normally distributed

Table 1 displays the normality test results for the personality variable, which include several descriptive measures such as the mean, median, variance, standard deviation, range, skewness, and kurtosis. The mean score of 4.1613 suggests that respondents generally view the principal's personality positively. The similarity between the mean (4.1613), median (4.2401), and the 5% trimmed mean (4.1804) indicates that the data distribution is pretty symmetrical. In addition, the variance (0.151) and standard deviation (0.38846) indicate a relatively narrow spread, suggesting that respondents' answers are pretty consistent. The skewness value of –0.790 and the kurtosis value of 0.716, along with standard errors of 0.112 and 0.223, fall within the acceptable range of –2 to +2. These results indicate that the data for the personality variable are typically distributed, fulfilling one of the key assumptions required for regression analysis. Therefore, the dataset is suitable for further statistical testing to examine the influence of the principal's personality on school performance.

Personality Factors That Can Predict School Performance

The data analysis results using SPSS provide an explanation of how the principal's personality traits contribute to School Performance in SMP South Sulawesi and answer the null hypothesis (H0) of this study. This analysis shows the required values in a multiple regression test. The results of the regression test are presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Personality Traits Contributing to School Performance.

Model		Unstandarized coefiecient		Std. coefficient	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Ralat	Beta		
1	(Constant)	3.038	.127		23.936	.000
	Agreeableness	.305	.030	.423	10.160	.000
2	(Constant)	2.675	.140		19.077	.000
	Agreeableness	.209	.034	.289	6.123	.000
	Openness	.191	.035	.257	5.435	.000
a. Independent variable: Personality Traits						

Table 2 shows that only two principal personality traits at junior high schools (SMP) in South Sulawesi can predict school performance: agreeableness and openness. This is evidenced by the value of the agreeableness aspect ($\beta = 0.289$, $p < .05$), which is a significant predictor of school performance. In contrast, the openness aspect has a value of ($\beta = 0.257$, $p < .05$). Based on these regression analysis results, the researcher concludes that agreeableness and openness personality traits are significant predictors of school performance in junior high schools in South Sulawesi. Therefore, the Performance Improvement Model is as follows: School Performance = 2.675 + 0.289 (Agreeableness) + 0.257 (Openness).

Based on the results of this regression analysis, the researcher concludes that the personality traits of agreeableness and openness are significant predictors of school performance in junior high schools in South Sulawesi. Agreeableness, which reflects a principal's tendency to cooperate, be approachable, offer support, and act transparently, contributes to school performance because principals with this trait are more likely to foster constructive interactions with teachers, staff, and students, thereby creating a learning atmosphere that supports collaboration and productivity. Likewise, openness, which indicates a principal's readiness to embrace new ideas, experiences, and input from others, is crucial for promoting school innovation, responding to educational developments, and making decisions that improve the quality of instruction and student learning results.

The results of this study, in addition to their direct statistical significance, also highlight the broader implications of leadership personality within the school environment. Principals who display agreeableness tend to handle conflicts more constructively, build and sustain trust among members of the school community, and support the achievement of shared objectives—factors that indirectly contribute to stronger school performance. Likewise, principals who are open to new ideas are better positioned to implement evidence-based strategies, utilize emerging technologies, and motivate teachers to experiment with various

instructional approaches, thereby supporting both teacher development and student success. In short, beyond their statistical relevance, the qualities of agreeableness and openness highlight the interpersonal and relational aspects of leadership that foster long-term enhancements in school effectiveness.

DISCUSSION

Principal's Personality

The personality of a principal is a crucial element in leading a school and managing its success. Therefore, a principal must possess positive personality traits such as agility, agreeableness, emotional stability, and openness. Based on descriptive analysis, the findings of this study show that the aspect of agility is at the highest level. The results indicate that the selected teachers agreed that the principal possessed and practiced the trait of agility.

Based on the descriptive analysis and questionnaire responses, the aspect of the principal's agility was found to be the most suitable personality trait for someone to be appointed as principal in junior high schools in South Sulawesi. The study found that many respondents strongly agreed about the principal's agility. Among the five questions about the principal's personality, agility traits such as friendliness, activeness, enthusiasm, sociability, and approachability with teachers and school staff were highlighted. Most respondents agreed or strongly agreed, although a few remained unsure or disagreed. This demonstrates that a principal must possess strong leadership and management skills. Furthermore, aspiring teachers who wish to become principals should also demonstrate good personality traits.

Principals are expected to demonstrate strong personality characteristics in order to lead effectively, as their behavior becomes a model for teachers, staff, and students. In line with this, Raimah and Kamaruddin (2022) demonstrated that principals' leadership has a significant impact on teachers' work motivation, which in turn contributes to improved school performance. Likewise, the present study reinforces that principals' leadership affects teacher performance both directly and indirectly through supervision and motivation, underscoring the value of positive personality traits such as friendliness and agility in fostering a supportive work environment and enhancing school quality.

From the researcher's perspective, the findings suggest that the agility aspect of the principal's personality, such as friendliness, contributes to creating a positive work atmosphere for teachers and staff. This finding is consistent with the study by Tanjung et al. (2021). Based on the results of Fatimah et al. (2024), Huzaifah & Turnip (2025), and Suharyanti (2024), it can be concluded that the principal's personality competence plays a crucial role in creating effective leadership and has a positive impact on teacher performance, as well as the overall quality of schools. Principals with strong personalities, characterized by integrity, exemplary behavior, responsibility, discipline, and practical interpersonal skills, can serve as role models for teachers and foster a positive working environment. This personality competence has been proven to significantly contribute to improving teachers' motivation and performance, as principals with strong personal qualities can establish harmonious communication, conduct adequate academic supervision, and foster the development of a professional and collaborative school culture. Therefore, strengthening personality competence should be a primary focus in the professional development of school principals to enhance teacher performance and improve the quality of education in elementary schools.

Based on the results of studies by Gazali et al. (2023), Jalilah et al. (2025), and Romadhon & Zuleha MS (2021), it was found that the principal's leadership has a positive and significant influence on teacher performance. These studies demonstrate that principals who effectively carry out their leadership functions through proper management, guidance, and supervision can enhance teachers' motivation, responsibility, and productivity in performing their duties. Additionally, effective school management contributes to improving teacher performance, both individually and collectively, within the school environment. Although the influence of principal leadership is not entirely dominant due to other contributing factors, the findings of these three studies emphasize that the principal's role as a leader and school manager is essential

in creating a conducive work climate, enhancing teacher professionalism, and promoting the overall quality of education.

The descriptive analysis results for the agreeableness aspect show that many respondents agreed or strongly agreed. However, some respondents disagreed or were uncertain. From the five items related to agreeableness, many agreed that principals were helpful, sincere, considerate, cooperative with staff, and honest. This indicates that some principals do exhibit agreeableness traits. However, some respondents disagreed, stating that certain principals lacked cooperation with teachers and staff.

Further findings from some respondents on agreeableness revealed that principals often helped others, acted as counselors, and provided solutions to their subordinates. These findings are also consistent with Sulfemi (2020), who conducted research in Junior High Schools in Ciampea District, Bogor Regency, and found that good principal leadership styles have a significant and positive influence on teacher performance. His study emphasized that principals who can guide, motivate, innovate, and position teachers as professional partners through continuous communication and support can effectively enhance teacher performance. Thus, the researcher concludes that principals should embody agreeableness to set an example for teachers, staff, and students, thereby improving school performance.

Therefore, based on previous studies on principal personality, it is evident that principals must possess positive traits, as these can influence the school climate and teacher performance. Sudharta et al. (2018) highlight that principals should demonstrate exemplary character, such as being friendly, polite, humble, caring toward the school community, and showing integrity reflected in honesty, discipline, and a strong sense of responsibility, while also engaging in continuous self-development through seminars, training, and independent learning to create a favorable school climate. Similarly, Tugiono's (2020) findings emphasize that principals' personality competencies, such as strong integrity, openness, self-control, and commitment to the development of both themselves and their teachers, are crucial in addressing challenges related to human resources and educational facilities. These efforts ultimately foster a conducive work environment and contribute to the overall improvement of school performance.

Lastly, the descriptive analysis of the principal's openness revealed that while many respondents agreed or strongly agreed, others were unsure or disagreed. Of the five items provided, many respondents agreed that principals were transparent, honest, open to criticism, and receptive to others' opinions, although some disagreed, particularly regarding transparency. These quantitative findings are supported by interview data, in which several respondents stated that their principals were open, accepted criticism, and listened to suggestions from teachers and staff. These findings align with the theoretical framework, suggesting that the better the principal's personality competence, the higher the overall school performance. In this context, openness as part of the principal's personality competence plays a crucial role in fostering a transparent and collaborative school environment. Principals who are open, communicative, and receptive to feedback not only build trust among teachers and staff but also contribute to improving the school's effectiveness and student achievement (Fatimah et al., 2024).

The results related to the principal's emotional stability—drawn from the descriptive analysis—indicate that although some respondents agreed, many were unsure, and a smaller portion disagreed with statements describing the principal's emotional stability. Across the four items assessed, most respondents agreed; however, a noticeable number remained uncertain or disagreed, particularly regarding the principal's openness to change.

The quantitative findings above support the interview data, as shown by several statements from respondents regarding the principal's emotional stability, particularly noting that the principal's humility well accepted teachers, staff, and students. Traits of emotional stability, such as self-confidence, humility, and a sense of humor, are identified as key factors influencing student performance. These findings are consistent with Suharyanti (2024), which highlights that a principal's personality competence has a significant influence on teacher performance. Her findings emphasize that principals who demonstrate openness, strong interpersonal skills, role modeling, and emotional stability create a conducive work

environment, boost teacher motivation, and have a positive impact on teaching effectiveness and student achievement. These results are consistent with the current study, which shows that the principal's personality plays a key role in enhancing teacher performance, even though there are still technical aspects of teaching that require improvement.

Overall, the findings from surveys and interviews reinforce that the principals' personalities are generally functioning well, particularly in terms of agility. This is evident in the increased motivation of teachers, staff, and students to fulfill their responsibilities at school. Principals become role models for their subordinates when they demonstrate agile behaviors such as being friendly, approachable, and actively engaged in school activities. Nonetheless, their personalities may also display less desirable characteristics, including indifference, limited openness, insufficient support, irritability, high sensitivity, a lack of transparency, and minimal consideration of teachers' opinions, as well as weak stakeholder involvement.

Therefore, these personality traits are crucial and should serve as good examples for principals aiming to achieve school success. Drawing on insights from earlier studies as well as information obtained from interview participants, the researcher concludes that the personality traits of principals in junior high schools across South Sulawesi have a substantial impact on school performance, as these traits are expected to contribute to improved school outcomes. Principals act as central decision-makers who set an example through their behavior and inspire teachers, staff, and students throughout the school community. Nevertheless, as human beings, principals also have flaws and weaknesses. Several respondents acknowledged some undesirable traits in their principals, but these findings can serve as a resource for improving personality traits to enhance school performance.

Personality as a Predictor of School Performance

Based on the study's results, of the four personality dimensions examined, only agreeableness and openness emerged as factors that can predict improvements in school performance. The regression analysis further showed that openness has a significant positive influence on performance. These findings align with Maryodona (2025), who stated that a principal's openness influences the performance of teachers, staff, and students, and contributes to overall school effectiveness, as teachers and all school members feel more comfortable carrying out their duties when the principal is open in decision-making and executing responsibilities.

Moreover, the study also found that a principal's openness can contribute to creating a favorable school climate. This finding aligns with research by Intan Slivana et al. (2016), who revealed that transformational leadership of principals has a strong and significant influence on school quality. Their study on accredited public elementary schools in Cianjur revealed that principals who employ transformational leadership, characterized by openness, collaboration, and motivation, can enhance both teacher performance and overall school quality. Research by Sudirjo & Wulan (2015) also demonstrated that supervision, leadership, and work motivation have a positive influence on teacher performance, indicating that effective principal leadership, combined with intense supervision and motivation, can foster a cooperative and productive school environment. Similarly, research by Manik & Siahaan (2021) showed that principals with strong managerial skills and appropriate reward strategies can enhance teacher motivation, which in turn improves teacher performance and contributes to better school outcomes.

On the other hand, the personality traits of extraversion and emotional stability were not predictive factors of school performance. These findings are inconsistent with previous studies, which have argued that extroverted traits, such as sociability, friendliness, and enthusiasm, can enhance student performance. Similarly, other studies suggested that principals need to understand and apply strategies to improve school performance. However, this study aligns with Fatimah et al. (2024) and Gazali et al. (2023), who noted that principals with poor emotional awareness tend to behave in self-centered ways that harm teachers and diminish their respect for the principal, and that principals who often exhibit harsh attitudes can negatively influence the performance of both teachers and students.

The findings of this study offer meaningful practical implications, particularly for the recruitment and development of school principals. Education authorities should prioritize candidates who exhibit strong agreeableness and openness, as these traits are associated with better school performance. Training and professional development programs for principals should also focus on strengthening these characteristics alongside enhancing leadership and managerial skills. Theoretically, this study contributes to the formulation of a personality-based leadership framework in education by showing that specific personality traits can directly influence school outcomes. The results further underscore that a principal's effectiveness is shaped not only by administrative strategies and managerial competence but also by personal qualities, especially agreeableness and openness. These insights can guide future research on leadership, teacher motivation, and school improvement efforts, and they support the integration of personality assessments into leadership development initiatives.

CONCLUSION

The findings show that the principal's personality has a significant influence on improving school performance in junior high schools in South Sulawesi. Principals who demonstrate positive personality traits such as openness, empathy, flexibility, and agreeableness can create a conducive school climate, motivate teachers, and enhance student achievement. Certain personality aspects, particularly agility and agreeableness, are important factors in determining the success of principals in building harmonious relationships with all members of the school community.

In addition, a firm principal's personality supports the practice of distributed leadership, which is reflected in a culture of mutual respect, professional development of teachers through training, and teacher involvement in curriculum design and decision-making. Therefore, the principal's personality, when combined with effective distributed leadership, is a key element in ensuring school quality, improving educational performance, and serving as a benchmark for school success in South Sulawesi.

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