

IMPROVING THE SERVICE EXCELLENCE OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATIVE PERSONNEL THROUGH PRINCIPAL LEADERSHIP IN SMK NEGERI PADANG

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to see how principals of public vocational schools in Padang City can lead their workforce to provide better and more efficient services. The existing phenomenon in the education industry is the low standard of service quality provided by administrative staff. The purpose of the predictors that influence principals' leadership is to improve the performance of school administrative staff. The purpose of this study is to find out how the administrative staff of public vocational high schools in Padang City can provide better and improved services under the direction of the school principal. To achieve the research objectives, this study employed a qualitative approach, conducted in accordance with the established criteria. 67 members of the school administration who became informants in the data collection process, which involved observations and interviews. The model approach developed by Miles and Huberman was used to scrutinise the qualitative data. The results showed that the quality of principals' leadership remains at a moderate level, as do their efforts to improve the standard of administrative services provided to SMK Negeri in Padang City. The research also shows that principals' leadership is a key factor in improving the quality of services provided by school administrative staff. To improve the standard of services provided by school administrative staff, it is recommended that principals engage more actively and creatively with education stakeholders and other administrative team members. Based on the findings, it can be concluded that to improve the quality of services provided by the school's administrative staff and principals' leadership, it needs to be strengthened.

Keyword: Principals' Leadership; School Administrative Staff; Service Quality; Vocational High Schools; Qualitative Study

Introduction

Schools are a form of educational service for students and the community. The purpose of education is to educate the nation. Providing services is not an easy thing. Even in an institution, there are standard operating procedures that need to be considered. If we are willing to serve others, then we are willing to be servants for others. It requires obedience in serving and consideration of the personalities of those being served. The role of school administration personnel is very important in assisting schools in terms of administration, as well as supporting the running of the education process in schools effectively and efficiently (Nellitawati, 2023; Yuliani Tri & Kristiawan, 2016). The task of serving school community is closely related to the role of school administration personnel. The implementation of school administrative affairs includes: school administration personnel (TAS) who are responsible for staffing, finance, facilities and infrastructure, public relations, correspondence and filing, student affairs, and curriculum. (Permendiknas No. 24 of 2008). (Rahmawati et al., 2021) in

their research found that the efforts made by administrative staff to improve the quality of educational administration are that they try to provide excellent service, namely by doing work outside working hours (overtime) to complete tasks. In addition, they also prioritise and establish good cooperation by filling in the gaps between administrative staff colleagues. However, currently there are many problems related to services that are often found in schools. The services provided are sometimes delivered without a smile, carried out in a bureaucratic and rigid manner, less responsive, less friendly, and less educational value. Very different from what is expected and does not reflect excellent service. (Sulistiyono, 2021) explains that the excellent service of an administrative staff is reflected in the aspects of always providing convenience of service to customers, implementing services in accordance with standard operating procedures, empathising with customers, looking excellent, keeping promises, being friendly and polite, easy to contact and communicative. Excellent Service is a form of service that prioritises the satisfaction of service recipients by providing services quickly, precisely, friendly, courteous and in accordance with the standards set. This definition is in line with the opinion (Tjiptono, 2022) that excellent service is the best service that is carried out professionally, friendly, fast, and in accordance with customer expectations in order to create customer satisfaction and loyalty. Excellent service adopts principles that emphasise customer satisfaction, responsiveness, and proactivity in meeting the needs of service recipients. Or called the 3 A concept, namely attitude (Attitude), Attention (Attention) and Action (action). (Alimansyah & Suratman, 2023; Munawir et al., 2022; Sembiring & Nazifah, 2024; Tampubolon et al., 2025).

Achieving service excellence requires skills, commitment and, most importantly, behaviours that reflect a dedication to providing the best for service recipients. Excellent service cannot be achieved without the positive and proactive behaviour of officers who involve themselves in the service process (Daming, 2024). The criteria for excellent service from school administration personnel include: (1) providing easy service, (2) implementing services according to standard operating procedures, (3) showing empathy, (4) maintaining a professional appearance, (5) keeping promises, (6) being friendly and polite, (7) easy to contact, and (8) communicative. (Permendiknas No. 24 of 2008).

In the implementation of excellent service, school administration is closely related to the leadership of the school principal who consistently provides direction and guidance to improve the quality of service at school. The principal must be able to direct and influence activities related to his/her duties. Principals are responsible for the organisation and continuity of the teaching and learning process in schools. (Mulyasa, 2011) explains that there are 10 keys to successful principal leadership, some of which are providing the best service, responsibility, exemplary, developing / fostering its members and utilising its expertise. Furthermore (Gaol & Siburian, 2018) explains that principal leadership is one of the driving factors for schools to be able to achieve organisational goals effectively and efficiently. In terms of managing and developing a school that he leads, the principal must also master all school activities both in terms of administration, management and

appropriate leadership.

First, in terms of administration (Sukiyanto & Maulidah, 2020) explains that school leadership is a spirit that functions as a central source of organisational movement to achieve goals in increasing opportunities for effective mentoring and coaching with school administrative staff in a conducive situation so that excellent service can be carried out properly. The principal's behaviour must be able to encourage the performance of school administrative staff by showing a friendly, close, and attentive attitude to administrative staff, both as individuals and as a group (Andriani, 2024; Wahyuni, 2020). Second, in terms of management, the principal must be able to manage all resources owned by the school, both human resources, finance, facilities and infrastructure, as well as time, effectively and efficiently. (Daud, 2023) explains that efforts to achieve educational goals must be planned by taking into account existing resources, situations, and conditions in order to achieve effective goals. All related resources and the implementation of these activities need to be coordinated integrally in order to achieve a harmonious cooperation in achieving these goals. Of course, the integration of organisational work requires direction, encouragement, coordination, and effective leadership. The implementation of all these activities must be controlled, monitored and evaluated for effectiveness and efficiency. By the principal as the highest leader in the school institution.

Third, the principal must be able to adopt an appropriate leadership style in order to show concern for the school community, especially teachers and students. Educational leaders must be able to establish harmonious cooperation between teachers, staff, students and parents in order to create a productive and positive environment. In addition, the leadership of the school principal must also create an innovative environment and have a clear vision and mission to support creativity, encourage cooperation and collaboration between all parties (Munir et al., 2025; Mustaghfirin et al., 2025). In relation to excellent service, a communicative and supportive leadership style will encourage administrative staff to provide services that are fast, precise, friendly, and according to standards. Consistent support and guidance from the school principal is the key so that administrative staff can carry out their duties professionally and orientated towards the satisfaction of service recipients. Thus, the purpose of this study is to observe and investigate the improvement of excellent service by school administration personnel through the leadership of school principals in State Vocational High Schools in Padang City.

Methods

This research utilises a qualitative case study methodology. Case studies are defined as an integrated and comprehensive method of understanding individuals with the aim to solve problems and encourage personal development by offering a comprehensive picture of individuals and the difficulties they face (Chatra et al., 2023; Rahardjo & Gudnanto, 2013). To find out how school leadership can improve the good service provided by administrative staff in schools, a case study was used in this research. All administrative staff in public

vocational high schools in Padang City became the research population. The research sample of this study included 67 school administrative staff members. The instruments used were structured interviews and observation. The interview guide contains several questions related to services in SMK N Padang added to the respondent's name. The data collection strategy in this study uses interview and observation techniques. To get responses from informants to the questions asked, researchers used tools such as tape recorders and mobile phones, which also functioned as documentation tools or research instruments. Based on (Miles & Huberman, 1994), the data analysis used in this study consisted of three steps: (1) data reduction; (2) data presentation; and (3) conclusion drawing/verification.

Results and Discussion

The results of the principal's leadership in improving the provision of excellent services by administrative personnel are outlined in this chart.



Results Interviews with a number of informants who serve stakeholders as members of the school administration were used to collect data. The interviews were conducted from 2 September 2023. During the interviews, the researcher used unstructured and open-ended interviews, but had key points to ask. The chart above explains that the principal's leadership drove a number of outstanding service elements from the administrative personnel. The principal's development initiatives for the performance of the school's administrative staff are closely related to the performance of the administrative staff and the leadership of the principal. However, it is also evident that the school administrative staff practise their outstanding service.

In improving services, the principal first organises training and some things should be prepared, especially on the main service quality of administrative staff in schools should be evaluated using the following criteria: 1) making the service easy for customers to use; 2) carrying out the service according to standard operating procedures; 3) showing empathy to customers; 4) maintaining a professional appearance; 5) honouring commitments; 6) being friendly and polite; 7) being accessible; and 8) being communicative.

In excellent service, convenience for customers is one of the important aspects carried

out by administrative staff. Providing ease of service means that every party receiving services can feel a simple and uncomplicated process. In excellent service, service procedures or procedures must be organised easily, smoothly, quickly, straightforwardly, and easily understood and implemented by service recipients. This convenience is supported by the availability of human resources who are ready to help, simple service requirements, and supporting facilities such as a comfortable waiting room (Dwiyanto, 2021; Ferine & Juniarti, 2022).

Based on the research findings, the informants stated that the services provided by school administration personnel regarding service convenience and service implementation in accordance with standard operating procedures were optimal. It can be seen that school administration personnel do not discriminate in providing services, every visitor who comes is not seen from his background. They are approached or addressed directly and invited to enter immediately, and services are also provided in accordance with operational working hours of course. In addition, regarding the service system provided, the school administration has implemented polite and friendly behaviour towards everyone who has a need. However, there are still some school administrative staff who do not know the regulations regarding the services provided by school administrative staff. Due to the lack of knowledge about these regulations, administrative staff try to serve as well as possible, even though they do not know in detail about the regulations related to providing excellent service.

It can be concluded that excellent service means providing convenience to customers and carrying out according to standards. This is because they carry out service tasks that provide convenience to customers and do so in accordance with the standard operating procedures of administrative staff. Special service according to Tjiptono (2017) is extraordinary service because it provides special service to provide the best service to make it easier for consumers to meet their needs and achieve satisfaction, thus making consumers remain loyal to the business. In order to encourage the formation of orderly service institutions by creating a service standardisation system from input to service output, clear service standards are needed. These standards must contain procedures, deadlines, and if necessary, clear pricing. Service standards that are used as guidelines or benchmarks in service delivery must be posted (Kusuma & Larasati, 2021; Yuliani Tri & Kristiawan, 2016).

The next question is related to empathy, attention, friendliness, and politeness among school administrative staff in carrying out their duties. The researcher asked several questions and concluded that the administrative staff had not fully fulfilled the criteria of empathy, friendliness, and politeness. However, there is evidence that the empathy, friendliness and courtesy of the school administrative staff in performing their duties contributed to the excellent service. However, on the other hand, although reluctant to serve parents of students who are somewhat impolite, she still serves them with a sense of empathy. (Yuliani Tri & Kristiawan, 2016) explains Empathy is one form of self-conscious

emotion in addition to feelings of shame jealousy pride and guilt (Somawijaya et al., 2021) explains Unique individuals with different personalities also show differences in their behaviour. However, there are times when certain factors, such as the demands of a job or profession, cause individuals to be friendly and polite, especially when providing services. The friendly and polite attitude of service officers when serving is an added value to service quality that can support the realisation of excellent service.

In the next question regarding appearance, keeping promises, being approachable, and being communicative, the researcher asked questions regarding these aspects, such as having a commitment to the job, which can be expressed by endeavouring to be communicative and using easy-to-understand language. This overall shows that the school administrative staff have done a very good job in providing services, keeping their promises in terms of scheduling for each individual, and making every effort to fulfil those commitments. Being approachable and communicative are the most important points in providing services. (Anggraini et al., 2024) explained In establishing effective communication patterns, service officers must be responsive and provide clear and effective feedback. Effective services in schools will benefit both service recipients, such as students, parents, and administrative staff. If service recipients can clearly understand the explanations given by administrative staff, they will feel more comfortable and satisfied. Good understanding also helps the administrative staff save time because they do not need to repeat the same explanation, so the service process becomes faster. Thus, administrative staff can immediately serve the next service recipient who needs assistance, after the problem being handled is resolved. The quality of service communication will also be affected by the language and sentence structure used. Effective communication is not only about conveying messages, but also affecting the dynamics of relationships between individuals. Good communication can increase mutual understanding, co-operation, and satisfaction among individuals (Nurrachmah, 2024).

According to the various statements made by the informants, this is undoubtedly related to the principal's leadership in encouraging and working to ensure that school administrative services can improve and maximise in delivering services in accordance with relevant laws or ministerial decrees. In addition, there were some questions regarding the function of principals as leaders in carrying out their obligations and responsibilities. It is important for principals, as school leaders, to perform their duties well. Principals can improve the excellent service quality of school administrative staff by providing adequate training and facilities to support optimal and effective work for administrative staff.

Conclusion

To understand how to improve the excellent service of school administrative staff under the leadership of school principals in public vocational high schools in Padang City, the results of this study are discussed and compared with the findings of previous research. This study found that the level of service excellence among school administrative staff has

improved, as a previous study revealed a low level of service excellence among these staff members. In contrast, this study found a similarly low level of service excellence among school administrative staff. In addition, this study demonstrated that the principal's leadership has a significant impact on the quality of service provided by school administrative staff. However, the level of excellent service provided by the school's administrative staff, under the principal's leadership, is moderate. Therefore, the principal's leadership needs to provide opportunities to gain greater benefits, especially to improve the excellent service of the school administrative staff.

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