

Educational Level, Work Experience, and Commitment as Determinants of Authentic Leadership Quality Among Elementary School Principals in Surakarta: A Correlational Study

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ABSTRACT

Purpose – This study investigates the influence of educational level, work experience, and work commitment on the quality of authentic leadership among elementary school principals in Surakarta. Given the initial findings indicating low levels of authentic leadership among these principals, the study seeks to fill a gap in the literature by exploring how these factors contribute to enhancing leadership quality in an educational context.

Design/methods/approach – A correlational research design was employed to explore the relationships between the variables. The study sampled 110 principals from a population of 255 in Surakarta using cluster random sampling. Data were collected through validated and reliable questionnaires measuring work experience, work commitment, and authentic leadership quality, alongside the educational level of the principals. Data analysis included classical assumption tests and regression analysis to determine the significance of the relationships.

Findings – The study found significant positive relationships between educational level, work experience, and work commitment with authentic leadership quality. Specifically, regression analysis revealed that higher education levels, greater work experience, and stronger work commitment positively influenced the quality of authentic leadership. These findings suggest that these factors are critical in developing authentic leadership in school settings.

Research implications – This research contributes to the understanding of authentic leadership within educational management by identifying key factors that enhance leadership quality among school principals. It provides empirical evidence supporting the importance of formal education, practical experience, and commitment in cultivating effective and authentic leadership.

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1. Introduction

Authentic leadership is one of the essential qualities for school principals in achieving institutional success, particularly in steering the school towards the attainment of its envisioned goals and mission. The quality of authentic leadership plays a crucial role in enhancing teachers' performance and exerts a positive influence on them in realizing the school's objectives. The quality of authentic leadership can be recognized through aspects such as self-awareness, self-acceptance, confidence, trust, values, morals, actions, and relationships (Suhartini, 2020). This suggests that authentic leadership is relevant across various aspects of life, including organizations like schools, where authenticity is a key element for achieving success in diverse life contexts.

Despite its importance, preliminary research indicates that elementary school principals in Surakarta exhibit low levels of authentic leadership quality. Initial survey results conducted by the



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researcher indicate that, across various indicators, principals in Surakarta still show low scores. This survey data reveals that all indicators of authentic leadership quality are below 50%, highlighting significant weaknesses in leadership within these schools. This underscores the need for further research to understand the factors contributing to the low quality of authentic leadership in elementary schools in Surakarta.

Several factors have been identified as important determinants in shaping the quality of authentic leadership, including the level of education, work experience, and work commitment. The level of education is considered crucial because it provides the knowledge and skills necessary to effectively implement authentic leadership. A leader needs to possess the skills to influence and coordinate many people, which are largely influenced by their educational background (Rahayu et al., 2022). It is also asserted that to qualify as a school principal, one must have certain qualifications, including the status of an elementary school teacher with a teaching certificate and a principal certificate, which can only be obtained through formal education processes (Basuki, 2020). Thus, the level of education plays a critical role in shaping the quality of authentic leadership.

In addition to education, work experience is also an important factor in shaping authentic leadership. Work experience provides school principals with practical lessons that can enhance their ability to fulfill their duties and responsibilities as school leaders. Work experience contributes to practical knowledge that helps principals improve their behavioral policies and strengthen their beliefs in the moral and religious values that underpin authentic leadership (Hartini, 2012).

Work commitment also has a significant impact on the quality of authentic leadership. Work commitment reflects an individual's dedication to upholding and implementing the values they believe in. Work commitment includes loyalty and the willingness to make sacrifices to achieve organizational goals, in this case, the school (Suhartini, 2020). Other studies also support this, showing that authentic leaders can enhance employees' emotional engagement and affective commitment to the organization, which ultimately contributes to the improvement of leadership quality (Alshammari et al., 2015; Semedo et al., 2019).

This study aims to examine the influence of education level, work experience, and work commitment on the quality of authentic leadership in public elementary schools in Surakarta. The research is based on preliminary findings indicating that the quality of authentic leadership among school principals in Surakarta is still low. By delving deeper into the impact of these three factors, this study is expected to fill gaps in the existing literature and provide a deeper understanding of how these factors contribute to shaping the quality of authentic leadership in public elementary schools in Surakarta.

2. Methods

2.1. Research Design

This study employed a correlational design to explore the relationships between work experience, employee commitment, authentic leadership quality, and the education level of elementary school principals in Surakarta. This design was chosen because it allows the researcher to identify and analyze the relationships between these variables without experimental manipulation, making it relevant in the context of this study.

2.2. Sample/Participants

The population of this study consisted of all elementary school principals in Surakarta, totaling 255 individuals. To determine a representative sample size, the Slovin formula was used, resulting in a sample of 110 principals. The sampling technique employed was cluster random

sampling, which ensures that every member of the population has an equal chance of being selected while also accounting for the diversity among groups within the population.

2.3. Data Collection

The data for this study were collected through questionnaires designed to measure the variables of work experience, employee commitment, and authentic leadership quality. Additionally, data regarding the education level of the principals were collected as part of the respondents' demographic information, with options including Strata 1 (Bachelor's degree), Strata 2 (Master's degree), and Strata 3 (Doctoral degree). Prior to the distribution of the questionnaires, validity and reliability tests were conducted to ensure that the instruments used could generate accurate and consistent data.

The validity test results indicated that 20 items in the work experience questionnaire were valid. The reliability test for this variable yielded a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.961, indicating that the instrument is reliable. For the employee commitment questionnaire, 35 items were deemed valid, with a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.980. In the authentic leadership quality questionnaire, 20 items were found valid, while 6 items were not; the Cronbach's Alpha value obtained was 0.960, also indicating that this instrument is reliable.

2.4. Data Analysis

Before conducting data analysis, classical assumption tests were performed, including tests for sample randomness, data normality, linearity and significance of regression, and multicollinearity. Hypothesis testing in this study utilized correlation analysis to identify the strength and direction of relationships between variables, as well as regression analysis to examine the impact of the independent variables on the dependent variable.

2.5. Research Ethics

This study received approval from relevant authorities, including permissions from the schools where the research was conducted. Participation in this study was voluntary, and the confidentiality of participants' personal data was fully guaranteed in accordance with research ethics standards.

3. Results

3.1. Testing Analysis Requirements

a. Sample Randomness Test

The sample randomness test was conducted to ensure that the sample used in this study was randomly selected. The criteria used were as follows:

- The sample is considered random if $(r_1 < r_{run} < r_2)$.
- The sample is considered non-random if $(r_{run} < r_1)$ or $(r_{run} > r_2)$.

The following table shows the results of the sample randomness test for the variables of education level, work experience, work commitment, and authentic leadership quality:

Table 1. Sample Randomness Test Results

Variable	Test Value	Cases < Test Value	Cases \geq Test Value	Total Cases	Number of Runs	Z	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
Education Level (X1)	1.00	0	110	110	1		
Work Experience (X2)	70.00	53	57	110	58	0.398	0.691

Work Commitment (X3)	119.00	54	56	110	48	-	0.126
Authentic Leadership Quality (Y)	70.00	54	56	110	58	1.530	0.699

Source: Processed Data, 2023

Based on the results shown in Table 1, all variables (education level, work experience, work commitment, and authentic leadership quality) demonstrate that the sample was randomly selected, as indicated by the non-significant Z values (Asymp. Sig. > 0.05).

b. Data Normality Test

The data normality test was conducted to determine whether the data from each variable in this study were normally distributed. The decision criteria are as follows:

- If the significance value > 0.05, the data are normally distributed.
- If the significance value < 0.05, the data are not normally distributed.

Table 2. Normality Test Results

Variable	Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
Education Level (S1)	0.52	0.200(*)
Education Level (S2)	0.115	0.200(*)
Work Experience	0.546	0.926
Work Commitment	0.517	0.952
Authentic Leadership Quality	0.055	0.200(*)

Source: Processed Data, 2023

Table 2 shows that all variables in this study are normally distributed, as indicated by significance values greater than 0.05.

c. Linearity Test

The linearity test was conducted to determine whether there is a linear relationship between the independent variables (education level, work experience, and work commitment) and the dependent variable (authentic leadership quality).

Table 3. Linearity Test Results

Variable	F	Sig. Deviation from Linearity
Education Level (X1)	2.807	0.097
Work Experience (X2)	1.461	0.082
Work Commitment (X3)	0.847	0.732

Source: Processed Data, 2023

Table 3 shows that the significance values for all three independent variables (education level, work experience, and work commitment) concerning authentic leadership quality are greater than 0.05, indicating that the relationships between these variables are linear.

d. Regression Significance Test

Regression analysis was used to determine the extent to which the independent variables influence the dependent variable.

Table 4. Regression Significance Test Results

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
(Constant)	14.449	7.238				1.996
Education Level (X1)	5.986	2.463	0.186		0.186	2.430
Work Experience (X2)	0.402	0.084	0.411		0.411	4.808
Work Commitment (X3)	0.175	0.051	0.289		0.289	3.395

Source: Processed Data, 2023

The regression results indicate that all three independent variables (education level, work experience, and work commitment) have a significant positive relationship with authentic leadership quality. The regression equation is:

$$Y = 14.449 + 0.186X_1 + 0.411X_2 + 0.289X_3$$

This means that increases in education level, work experience, and work commitment will enhance authentic leadership quality.

e. Multicollinearity Test

The multicollinearity test was conducted to check whether there was any high correlation between the independent variables that could lead to multicollinearity issues.

Table 5. Multicollinearity Test Results

Variable	Tolerance	VIF
Education Level (X1)	0.995	1.005
Work Experience (X2)	0.798	1.253
Work Commitment (X3)	0.801	1.248

Source: Processed Data, 2023

Based on the results in Table 5, the tolerance values are greater than 0.1, and the VIF values are less than 10 for all variables, indicating that there is no multicollinearity among the independent variables.

3.2. Hypothesis Testing

a. The Relationship Between Education Level and Authentic Leadership Quality

The first hypothesis of this study is that there is a relationship between education level and authentic leadership quality.

Table 6. Relationship Between Education Level and Authentic Leadership Quality

Variable	Pearson Correlation	Sig. (2-tailed)	N
Education Level (X1)	1	0.017	110
Authentic Leadership Quality (Y)	0.159	0.017	110

Source: Processed Data, 2023

The results of the correlation analysis in Table 6 show that the Sig. (2-tailed) value is $0.017 < 0.05$, indicating a significant relationship between education level and authentic leadership quality.

b. The Relationship Between Work Experience and Authentic Leadership Quality

The second hypothesis is that there is a relationship between work experience and authentic leadership quality.

Table 7. Relationship Between Work Experience and Authentic Leadership Quality

Variable	Pearson Correlation	Sig. (2-tailed)	N
Work Experience (X2)	1	0.000	110
Authentic Leadership Quality (Y)	0.528	0.000	110

Source: Processed Data, 2023

The correlation test results in Table 7 indicate that the Sig. (2-tailed) value is $0.000 < 0.05$, showing a significant relationship between work experience and authentic leadership quality.

c. The Relationship Between Work Commitment and Authentic Leadership Quality

The third hypothesis is that there is a relationship between work commitment and authentic leadership quality.

Table 8. Relationship Between Work Commitment and Authentic Leadership Quality

Variable	Pearson Correlation	Sig. (2-tailed)	N
Work Commitment (X3)	1	0.000	110
Authentic Leadership Quality (Y)	0.472	0.000	110

Source: Processed Data, 2023

Table 8 shows that the Sig. (2-tailed) value is $0.000 < 0.05$, indicating a significant relationship between work commitment and authentic leadership quality.

From the hypothesis testing results, it can be concluded that education level, work experience, and work commitment all have a significant positive relationship with authentic leadership quality. All hypotheses proposed in this study are accepted based on the statistical analysis results.

4. Discussion

The results of this study demonstrate a significant relationship between education level, work experience, and work commitment with the quality of authentic leadership among public elementary school principals in the Surakarta Municipality. These findings are relevant in the context of educational management, where the quality of school leadership significantly influences the performance and development of schools.

The study found that education level has a positive and significant relationship with authentic leadership quality. The regression coefficient of 5.986 indicates that each increase in the education level of school principals enhances their authentic leadership quality. This supports the hypothesis that higher education enables school principals to gain broader insights and deeper understanding, which in turn improves their ability to lead authentically.

This finding aligns with previous literature, which suggests that higher education provides greater capability to accept and implement effective leadership (Azis & Suwatno, 2019). It is also emphasized that education and training are crucial for increasing productivity and work efficiency, which is pertinent for school leaders (Yuniarti & Suprianto, 2020).

The study also shows that work experience has a positive and significant relationship with authentic leadership quality, with a regression coefficient of 0.402. This means that the longer the work experience of the school principal, the higher the quality of authentic leadership they demonstrate.

This result supports existing literature, which states that work experience can influence a leader's effectiveness in an authentic context (Javed et al., 2018; Zhang et al., 2018). Extensive work experience allows leaders to make wiser and more accurate decisions, which is crucial in the educational environment (Truong et al., 2017). This finding is further supported, as leaders with rich work experience can create a positive and creative environment (Phuong & Takahashi, 2021).

Work commitment was also found to have a positive and significant relationship with authentic leadership quality, with a regression coefficient of 0.175. This suggests that the higher the work commitment of the school principals, the higher their authentic leadership quality.

This result is consistent with previous research showing that authentic leadership can enhance affective commitment and individual creativity within organizations (Ribeiro et al., 2018). It is also asserted that high work commitment is closely related to positive perceptions of authentic leadership, which impacts employee dedication and job satisfaction (Angelou, 2021).

Theoretically, these findings strengthen the understanding of the factors influencing authentic leadership quality in the context of education. Education, work experience, and work commitment are essential elements that contribute to the development of authentic and effective leadership.

Practically, the results of this study can be used as a basis for educational policymakers to design training and development programs focused on enhancing the education level, work experience, and

work commitment of school principals. By doing so, the quality of leadership in schools can be improved, ultimately having a positive impact on the overall quality of education.

Despite providing important insights, there are some limitations to note in this study. First, the contribution of each independent variable to authentic leadership quality remains relatively small, as evidenced by the low R square values. This indicates that many other factors may influence leadership quality but have not been measured in this study. Second, the study was conducted in only one city, namely Surakarta Municipality, so the results may not be generalizable to other regions with different contexts.

Future research could expand the scope by involving more variables that may influence authentic leadership quality, such as organizational culture and social support. Additionally, cross-regional or cross-national studies could be conducted to see if these findings are consistent in different contexts.

Overall, this study makes an important contribution to the literature on authentic leadership, particularly in the context of education. Education level, work experience, and work commitment have been shown to have a significant impact on the authentic leadership quality of school principals. These findings can serve as a foundation for developing more effective leadership development programs in the future.

5. Conclusion

This study has successfully revealed the positive and significant influence of education level, work experience, and work commitment on the quality of authentic leadership among elementary school principals in Surakarta Municipality. These findings indicate that school principals with higher education, more extensive work experience, and stronger work commitment tend to exhibit better authentic leadership quality. This reinforces previous literature emphasizing the importance of these factors in the development of effective leadership within the educational context.

Practically, the results of this study provide a foundation for educational policymakers to design more focused school principal development programs, particularly those aimed at improving formal education, enriching work experience, and strengthening work commitment. With this approach, the quality of leadership in schools can be enhanced, which in turn will contribute to the achievement of the overall vision and mission of educational institutions.

Although this study has provided valuable insights, there are several limitations to note. First, the contribution of the independent variables to authentic leadership quality remains relatively small, indicating that other unmeasured factors may have a significant impact. Second, the geographical scope of the study was limited to Surakarta Municipality, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other areas with different conditions.

For future research, it is recommended to expand the study scope by involving more variables, such as organizational culture and social support, as well as conducting cross-regional or cross-national research to test the consistency of these findings in different contexts. By doing so, the understanding of authentic leadership can be broadened, and the results can be used to develop more effective and contextually appropriate leadership development programs.

Overall, this study provides an important contribution to the enrichment of the literature on authentic leadership, particularly in the context of education, and offers recommendations that can be applied to improve the quality of leadership in elementary schools.

Declarations

Author contribution statement

Nur Hidayah initiated the idea and all activities in this research paper. Purwanto, Giyoto, Yusup Rohmadi, and Fitri Wulandari as the parties who have been guiding the completion of the research paper.

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Data availability statement

The datasets generated during and analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Declaration of Interest's statement

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have influenced the work reported in this paper.

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