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Direct and Indirect Pathways of Responsible Leadership on Student Discipline: The Mediating Role of Parental Involvement

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the effect of responsible leadership on student discipline with parental involvement as a mediating variable among 4th, 5th, and 6th grade students at SDN Merjosari 2 Malang City. Previous studies on this topic tend to be partial, examining either the direct effect of leadership on discipline or parental involvement on discipline, with limited focus on elementary school contexts. This research employs a causal quantitative approach. A saturated sampling technique (census) was used, involving all 84 parents as respondents. Data were collected through a 5-point Likert scale questionnaire and analyzed using Partial Least Square–Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) via SmartPLS 4.0. The results indicate that responsible leadership has a positive and significant effect on parental involvement (t=29.147t=29.147; P=0.000P=0.000) and on student discipline (t=3.702t=3.702; P=0.000P=0.000). However, parental involvement does not significantly affect student discipline (t=1.096t=1.096; P=0.273P=0.273) and fails to mediate the relationship between responsible leadership and student discipline (t=1.111t=1.111; P=0.266P=0.266). The findings suggest that the influence of responsible leadership on student discipline occurs dominantly through a direct mechanism, namely fair policies, consistent supervision, and role modeling, rather than through parental involvement.

Keywords: Responsible Leadership, Parental Involvement, Student Discipline, PLS-SEM

INTRODUCTION

In the perspective of organizational management, schools function not only as social institutions but also as formal entities that manage various resources to achieve strategic goals, one of which is the formation of student discipline. As the top

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management at the educational unit level, the principal has a central role in directing, coordinating, and controlling all organizational components to move synergistically. The success of school organizational management is highly determined by the quality of managerial leadership applied. In the context of contemporary management, the responsible leadership approach (Pless & Maak, 2011) is increasingly relevant because it emphasizes ethical accountability, relationship management, and decision-making that favors all stakeholders.

Empirically, student discipline is influenced by internal school factors and external factors. However, previous research still shows a partial tendency. Studies on parental involvement generally only highlight the direct effect on student discipline (Novianti Syintia, 2023; Lumbantobing W. L & Purnasari, 2021). On the other hand, research related to principal leadership mostly focuses on direct effects without involving intervening variables (Regina et al., 2023; Puspitasari et al., 2025). Studies using a mediation approach are relatively limited and generally applied in other contexts, such as teacher work discipline (Fiannisa et al., 2024; Dharma et al., 2023). Even when parental involvement is involved, as in research by Aqil Aziz & Nurlela (2024), the variable is positioned as a moderator, not as a mediating mechanism. In addition, studies at the elementary school level are still limited, even though this phase is a crucial stage in shaping student character. This condition indicates a research gap that needs to be filled through a more integrative approach.

This study offers an integrative approach by placing parental involvement as a mediating variable in the relationship between the principal's responsible leadership and student discipline. The objectives of this study are: (1) to analyze the effect of responsible leadership on student discipline through parental involvement; (2) to analyze the effect of responsible leadership on parental involvement; (3) to analyze the effect of parental involvement on student discipline; and (4) to analyze the effect of responsible leadership on student discipline.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Responsible leadership is defined as the art of building and maintaining moral relationships with all relevant stakeholders in an organization (Maak & Pless, 2006). Pless and Maak (2011) expand this definition by stating that responsible leadership is a value-centered relationship driven by ethical principles between leaders and stakeholders, aiming to produce positive outcomes for stakeholders and the wider community. In the school context, responsible leadership means the principal's ability to build and maintain ethical relationships with all educational stakeholders, both internal (teachers, staff, students) and external (parents, school committees, community).

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Student discipline is behavior that reflects compliance with rules, responsibility, and the ability to control oneself in carrying out obligations as a student. According to Armstrong (2020), discipline relates to an individual's effort to adjust behavior to predetermined standards through awareness and personal responsibility. Indicators of student discipline include compliance with rules, punctuality, responsibility, self-control, and behavioral consistency.

Parental involvement is the active participation of parents in supporting the child's education process and development through continuous cooperation with the school. According to Hornby (2016), parental involvement is a form of partnership between family and school that aims to create a conducive learning environment. Indicators of parental involvement include participation in school activities, communication with the school, support for learning activities at home, and partnership with the school.

Theoretically, responsible leadership drives parental involvement because it emphasizes ethical and collaborative relationships. High parental involvement is then expected to strengthen the formation of student discipline through continuity of supervision and habituation at home and school. However, in highly procedural organizations or those with dominant internal leadership, the direct effect of leadership on discipline may be stronger than the indirect mechanism through parents.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research employs a quantitative approach with an explanatory (causal) research type. The population in this study consists of all parents of 4th, 5th, and 6th grade students at SDN Merjosari 2 Malang City, totaling 84 people. Considering the relatively small population size, the sampling technique used is saturated sampling (census). Data were collected through a 5-point Likert scale questionnaire (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree).

Data analysis was performed using Partial Least Square–Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with the assistance of SmartPLS 4.0 software. The analysis stages include the evaluation of the measurement model (outer model) through convergent validity, discriminant validity, and reliability tests. Furthermore, the structural model (inner model) was evaluated using R2, Q2, and f2. Hypothesis testing was conducted through bootstrapping procedures to determine the direct and indirect effects, with the criteria of t−statistic>1.96t−statistic>1.96 and P−value<0.05P−value<0.05.

RESULTS

The evaluation of the measurement model indicates that all indicators are valid and reliable. Convergent validity was confirmed as all outer loading values for the indicators of Responsible Leadership, Parental Involvement, and Student Discipline

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ranged from 0.705 to 0.952, well above the 0.70 threshold. The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values were 0.785, 0.700, and 0.838 respectively, all exceeding the minimum requirement of 0.50. Furthermore, the reliability test showed excellent internal consistency, with Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values above 0.90 (see Table 1).

Table 1. Measurement Model Evaluation (Validity and Reliability)

Variable	Outer Loading Range	AVE	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Description
Responsible Leadership (X)	0.794 -0.912	0.785	0.961	0.967	Valid & Reliable
Parental Involvement (Z)	0.771 – 0.886	0.700	0.939	0.949	Valid & Reliable
Student Discipline (Y)	0.705 – 0.952	0.838	0.978	0.981	Valid & Reliable

The structural model evaluation yields an R2 value of 0.850 for Parental Involvement and 0.825 for Student Discipline, both categorized as strong. The predictive relevance (Q2) test showed values above 0, indicating the model has good predictive relevance. The effect size (f2) test revealed that the influence of Responsible Leadership on Parental Involvement is 5.663 (large), Responsible Leadership on Student Discipline is 0.457 (large), and Parental Involvement on Student Discipline is 0.031 (small).

The hypothesis testing results are summarized in Table 2. Responsible Leadership has a positive and significant effect on Parental Involvement (Path Coefficient = 0.922; t = 29.147; p = 0.000) and a positive and significant direct effect on Student Discipline (Path Coefficient = 0.729; t = 3.702; p = 0.000). However, Parental Involvement does not significantly affect Student Discipline (Path Coefficient = 0.191; t = 1.096; p = 0.273). Consequently, Parental Involvement fails to mediate the effect of Responsible Leadership on Student Discipline (Path Coefficient = 0.176; t = 1.111; p = 0.266).

Table 2. Hypothesis Testing Results (Direct and Indirect Effects)

Hypothesis	Path Relationship	Path Coefficient	T-statistics	P-values	Result
H2	Responsible Leadership → Parental Involvement	0.922	29.147	0.000	Significant

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H4	Responsible Leadership → Student Discipline	0.729	3.702	0.000	Significant
H3	Parental Involvement → Student Discipline	0.191	1.096	0.273	Not Significant
H1	Responsible Leadership → Parental Involvement → Student Discipline	0.176	1.111	0.266	No Mediation

DISCUSSION

The finding that parental involvement does not mediate the effect of responsible leadership on student discipline indicates that the principal's influence occurs dominantly through a direct mechanism. The principal is considered most effective in shaping discipline through fair policies, consistent supervision, and daily role modeling. Parental involvement is the weakest path in this model, indicating that parents' involvement efforts are not strong enough to transform leadership influence into student disciplinary behavior. In the context of SDN Merjosari 2, most parents are of productive age with high work demands in the urban area of Malang, which limits their direct involvement in fostering children's disciplinary behavior. This finding differs from Saragih Hasmailena et al. (2026), who found that school leadership involving parents in educational programs can improve student discipline, because the characteristics of parents in this study are fundamentally different in terms of work mobility and activity.

Responsible leadership is confirmed to have a major contribution to increasing parental involvement. Parents assess that the principal has opened space for participation, responsive communication, and good service. However, the indicator of parents' trust in the school is the lowest score. This shows that although parents attend school activities and communicate with teachers, some still have doubts about the consistency and transparency of school policies. The diversity of parents' educational backgrounds (mostly high school and bachelor's degrees) creates different expectations. The principal needs to bridge this gap by implementing segmented communication strategies and consistently proving that their input is followed up.

Parental involvement does not significantly affect student discipline. Although parents are most active in providing motivation and supervising study at home, the aspect of cooperation in resolving student problems is the lowest. Parents tend to be involved in administrative and routine assistance but are less responsive when children face behavioral problems. The formation of discipline requires corrective intervention when deviations occur, not just routine supervision. In addition, the dominance of the school's

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influence is very strong. Students spend most of their active time at school, learning about rules and consequences through direct interaction with teachers and the principal. In a situation where the school environment has a very strong and consistent influence, the contribution of parents becomes difficult to detect statistically because it is covered by the much larger school influence.

Responsible leadership has the strongest and clearest direct effect on student discipline. Four mechanisms work simultaneously. First, the principal applies rules fairly without discrimination, creating certainty and a sense of security that encourages voluntary compliance. Second, consistent supervision is applied daily; students who violate rules always receive warning and guidance. Third, the principal provides role modeling in discipline, which is observed and imitated by students. Fourth, programs involving all parties (teachers, staff, and parents) create a sense of shared ownership and responsibility. This finding aligns with research by Ripin Ikhwandi et al. (2021) and Wafi (2024), which states that responsible and participatory principal leadership contributes strongly to student discipline.

CONCLUSION

Responsible leadership has a positive and significant effect on student discipline directly, but does not affect student discipline through parental involvement as a mediating variable. Responsible leadership has a positive and significant effect on parental involvement. Parental involvement does not significantly affect student discipline. The most effective relationship in this study is the direct effect of responsible leadership on student discipline, realized through fair rules, consistent supervision, role modeling, and stakeholder-involving programs.

Theoretically, this study broadens the perspective that the effectiveness of parental involvement as a mediating variable is highly dependent on organizational context and respondent characteristics, such as parents' work mobility. Practically, the principal needs to maintain the quality of responsible leadership by increasing transparency and communication to strengthen parental trust. Schools also need to design parental involvement programs that are not merely physical attendance but provide practical skills for parents to handle children's behavioral issues, such as scheduled consultations and simple guides for busy parents. For future research, it is recommended to consider other variables such as school culture, intrinsic motivation, or teacher-student relationship quality, and to use a wider scope of research to test the generalizability of these findings.

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