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School Principals' Leadership Strategies in Creating a Quality Culture: A Systematic Literature Review in Secondary Education

Rahmat Rizky Basuki*, Desi Rahmawati, Heru Santoso, Syafaat Ariful Huda

Educational Management, Universitas Negeri Jakarta, East Jakarta, 13220, Indonesia

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* Corresponding author:

E-mail: cakricco.shakera@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

This study presents a bibliometric review of research on school leadership and educational quality in secondary education published between 2020 and 2025. The study aims to map the conceptual relationships among school leadership, teacher performance, and educational quality, as well as to identify emerging research trends in leadership innovation and quality management. Using a systematic literature review guided by the PRISMA protocol, publications were retrieved from Scopus and Google Scholar and analyzed using bibliometric mapping techniques. The results indicate that school leadership functions as a central connecting variable linking teacher performance and educational quality. Two dominant research trajectories were identified: a traditional focus on teacher professionalism and learning outcomes, and a more recent emphasis on leadership innovation, school-based management, and institutional quality strategies. Overall, the findings highlight the strategic role of school principals in fostering a quality-oriented school culture and suggest the need for future research employing longitudinal and mixed-method approaches to deepen understanding of leadership and quality improvement in secondary education.

1. Introduction

School principal leadership has long been recognized as a key determinant of educational quality and teacher performance in secondary schools. Empirical studies consistently demonstrate that transformational, innovative, and service-oriented leadership styles significantly influence teacher professionalism, instructional effectiveness, and student learning outcomes (Ali, 2022; Aslamiyah et al., 2022; Kamalia et al., 2022). Effective leadership also plays a critical role in shaping a positive school quality culture, which supports continuous improvement

and organizational sustainability, particularly when principals act as strategic leaders in managing school services and learning quality (Intan et al., 2025). In response to the increasing demands of twenty-first-century education, leadership research has expanded beyond instructional supervision to include broader dimensions such as school-based management, leadership innovation, and strategies for strengthening school image as part of educational service quality (Hallinger, 2011; Bush, 2020; Muzdalifa et al., 2025).

Although a substantial body of literature has examined the relationship between school leadership and educational quality, existing findings remain fragmented and insufficiently synthesized at a global level. Previous studies indicate that school leadership influences teacher performance both directly and indirectly through mechanisms such as academic supervision, teacher empowerment, work motivation, and the development of collaborative organizational cultures (Chalikias et al., 2020; Kamalia et al., 2022; Ekawati et al., 2024). Evidence from *Journal of Educational Sciences* further confirms that effective principal leadership strengthens teacher discipline, instructional planning, and institutional accountability (Kamalia et al., 2022; Rohyadi et al., 2025). Teacher performance, in turn, plays a decisive role in translating school vision and leadership direction into effective learning processes and improved student outcomes (Dearlina, 2020; Thai'Atun et al., 2024).

Beyond instructional and performance-related factors, recent studies emphasize that educational quality is also shaped by supportive school environments and systematic quality management practices. Frameworks derived from Total Quality Management (TQM) and the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) have increasingly been applied in educational contexts to promote continuous improvement, accountability, and stakeholder satisfaction (Anastasiou & Ntokas, 2024; Rusda et al., 2025). In the context of Indonesian secondary education, JES-based studies highlight that principals play a central role in aligning quality assurance systems with local values, organizational culture, and school autonomy (Rohyadi et al., 2025; Ridiyawati et al., 2025).

Recent developments in the literature further reveal the emergence of additional variables that enrich and complicate the conceptual landscape of school quality improvement. Innovative leadership has been shown to encourage adaptive, creative, and technology-responsive teaching practices that are essential for contemporary education systems (Ridwanulloh et al., 2022; Leithwood & Sun, 2018). At the same time, school brand image has gained increasing attention as an indicator of educational service quality, influencing public trust, parental choice, and institutional competitiveness, particularly in market-oriented educational environments (Anggra Prima et al., 2025; Ridiyawati et al., 2025). In parallel, school-based management reforms have demonstrated potential to enhance accountability, optimize resource utilization, and foster institutional innovation through decentralized decision-making and community participation (Asrin et al., 2022; Slamet et al., 2024; Muzdalifa et al., 2025).

Taken together, these findings suggest that school leadership functions not only as a driver of teacher performance but also as a strategic force shaping quality management effectiveness and institutional image. Studies published in *Journal of Educational Sciences* indicate that principals who integrate instructional leadership with innovation and service quality strategies are more effective in strengthening institutional competitiveness and sustaining school quality (Natasya & Maksum, 2025; Intan et al., 2025). Schools are therefore expected to pursue academic excellence while simultaneously fostering innovation, cultivating a sustainable quality culture, strengthening collaboration, and enhancing competitiveness in an increasingly dynamic educational environment (Pujiyati, 2020; Sumiran et al., 2022; Bush, 2020).

Accordingly, this study employs a bibliometric approach to systematically map conceptual relationships and identify research trends related to school leadership, leadership innovation, and quality management strategies in secondary education during the period 2020–2025. By synthesizing existing literature through bibliometric mapping, this study seeks to address the following research questions: (1) how are school leadership, teacher performance, and educational quality conceptually interconnected in the literature from 2020 to 2025; (2) what recent research trends have emerged regarding leadership innovation and quality management in secondary education; and (3) how does school principal leadership contribute to teacher professionalism, learning outcomes, and strategies for strengthening school image based on bibliometric evidence (Zen & Rodliyah, 2022; Natasya & Maksum, 2025). Through this approach, the study aims to identify dominant thematic clusters, clarify patterns of relationships among core variables, and provide a stronger empirical and theoretical foundation for effective school leadership strategies in the context of twenty-first-century education (Mumayyizah et al., 2024; Oktapia & Nasution, 2025).

2. Methodology

Research Design

This study employs a bibliometric research design to systematically map and analyze conceptual relationships among school leadership, teacher performance, and educational quality in secondary education. Bibliometric analysis is a quantitative approach used to examine the structure, development, and intellectual patterns of scientific literature through statistical analysis of publications (Zupic & Čater, 2015; Donthu et al., 2021). This method enables the identification of research trends, thematic clusters, and knowledge networks within a specific field (Moral-Muñoz et al., 2020). Bibliometric approaches have gained increasing recognition in educational research due to their capacity to process large volumes of literature in an objective and replicable manner, thereby revealing conceptual relationships that may not be evident through traditional narrative reviews (Hallinger & Kovačević, 2019). In this study, bibliometric techniques such as keyword co-occurrence analysis and network visualization were employed to provide an evidence-based overview of how research on school leadership and educational quality has evolved

over the period 2020–2025. This approach is particularly appropriate for identifying emerging research trends, influential themes, and research gaps related to leadership and quality management in secondary education contexts.

Data Collection Procedure

The literature search and selection process followed the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) protocol (Page et al., 2021) to ensure transparency and reproducibility. The overall stages of the identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion of studies are illustrated in Figure 1, which presents the PRISMA flow diagram of the review process. The PRISMA framework provides a standardized methodology for conducting systematic literature reviews and has been widely adopted in educational research (Moher et al., 2009). This systematic approach enhances the rigor and credibility of the review process by establishing clear guidelines for literature identification, screening, and selection (Liberati et al., 2009).

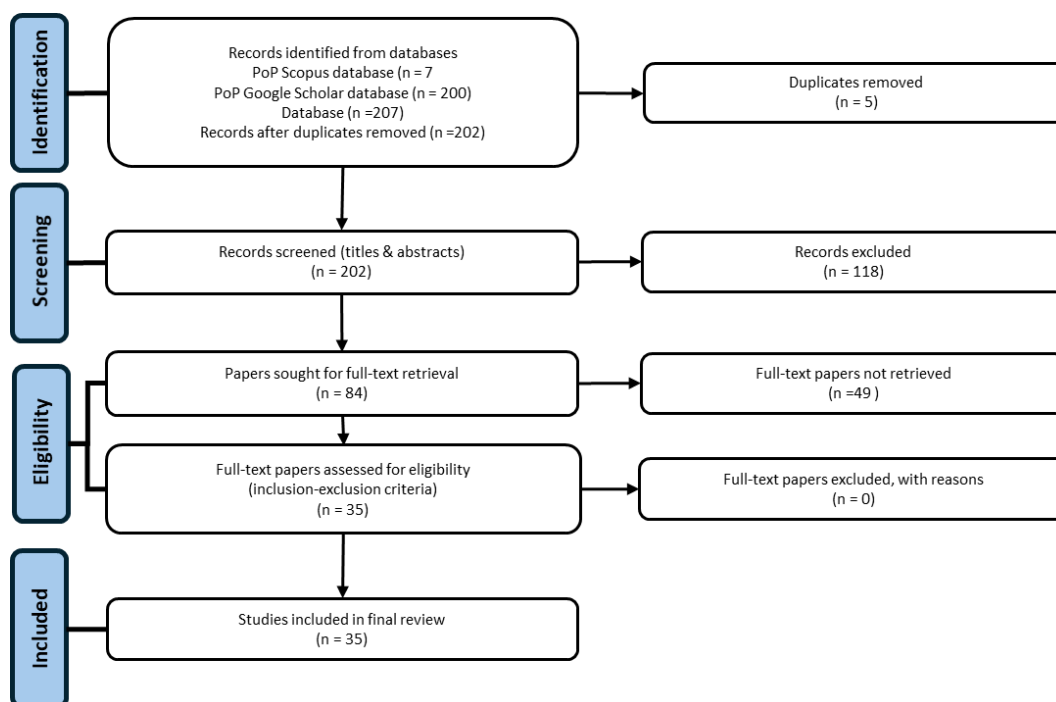


Figure 1. Prisma Diagram

Literature data were collected from the Scopus and Google Scholar databases for the period 2020 to 2025 using keywords related to school leadership, teacher performance, educational quality, quality culture, and school-based management. These databases were selected because Scopus provides access to high-quality peer-reviewed publications with comprehensive metadata, while Google Scholar offers broader coverage including institutional repositories and conference proceedings (Martín-Martín et al., 2018). The inclusion and exclusion criteria applied in this review are summarized in Table 1, ensuring consistency and relevance in the selection of studies. The search strategy employed Boolean operators and various

keyword combinations to maximize the retrieval of relevant publications while maintaining specificity to the research focus on secondary education contexts.

Table 1. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Criteria	Inclusion	Exclusion
Language	English and Indonesian	NonEnglish and Indonesian
Full text	Open access	Non open access
Type	Journal articles, books, or academic book chapters	Non academic articles such as blogs, opinion pieces, or popular articles
Relevance	Main topics: principal leadership, education quality management, school quality, or teacher performance improvement	Topics not relevant to school leadership, education quality, or teacher performance

The selection process was carried out through three stages following the PRISMA protocol (Page et al., 2021). First, in the identification and deduplication stage, a total of 207 publications were initially collected from the Scopus and Google Scholar databases. Five duplicate documents were removed using Mendeley reference management software, leaving 202 articles for further screening. Second, during the screening stage, titles and abstracts were reviewed to assess relevance to the research topics. Based on this screening, 84 publications met the relevance criteria related to school leadership and education quality. This screening process ensured that only studies with direct relevance to principal leadership practices and school quality improvement were retained for further evaluation. Third, in the eligibility assessment stage, articles were evaluated against the inclusion criteria outlined in Table 1. The inclusion criteria consisted of publication language (English and Indonesian), full access (open access), type of publication (peer-reviewed academic articles, books, or book chapters), and relevance to the research topic. Publications that did not meet these standards were excluded, resulting in a final set of 35 articles selected for bibliometric analysis. The selected literature reflects a combination of diverse methodologies and research contexts, ranging from empirical studies in secondary schools to literature reviews and educational quality assurance strategies, providing a comprehensive framework for analyzing the role of school principals in improving school quality and teacher performance.

The eligibility stage further emphasized inclusion criteria which consisted of publication language (English and Indonesian), full access (open access), type of publication (peer-reviewed), and relevance to the research topic. Publications that did not meet these standards were excluded, resulting in a total of 35 articles eligible for analysis. The overall process of literature identification, screening, and eligibility assessment is illustrated in Figure 2, which presents the PRISMA flow diagram of the literature selection process. The selected literature reflects a combination of diverse methodologies and research contexts, ranging from empirical studies in secondary schools to literature reviews and educational quality assurance strategies. Thus, the included literature provides a comprehensive framework for analyzing the role of school principals in improving school quality and teacher performance on an ongoing basis.

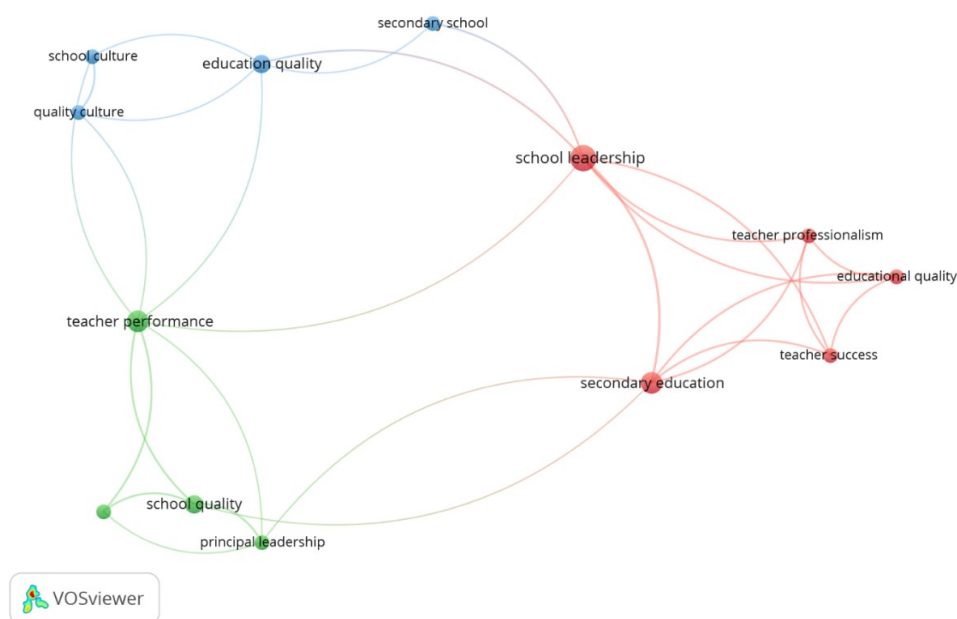


Figure 2. PRISMA Flow Diagram of Literature Selection Process

Data Analysis

The bibliometric analysis was conducted using network visualization methods to map keyword co-occurrence, construct keyword networks, and identify thematic clusters (van Eck & Waltman, 2010). Co-occurrence analysis examines the frequency with which pairs of keywords appear together in the literature, revealing conceptual relationships and research themes (Callon et al., 1983). This analytical technique is particularly valuable for identifying the intellectual structure of a research field by examining which concepts are frequently discussed together in published works (Cobo et al., 2011). The parameters analyzed included occurrence (the frequency of keyword appearance in the literature), total link strength (the cumulative strength of connections between keywords), and hub nodes (keywords with the highest number of connections, indicating central concepts in the research network). VOSviewer software version 1.6.18 was employed to generate network visualizations and identify thematic clusters based on the modularity-based clustering algorithm (van Eck & Waltman, 2010).

The software's ability to handle large datasets and produce clear visual representations makes it one of the most widely used tools in bibliometric research (Moral-Muñoz et al., 2020). Keyword normalization was performed to ensure consistency, including merging synonyms and standardizing spelling variations. The interpretation of results was complemented by a comprehensive review of related empirical literature to understand conceptual relationships and research trends within the field of school leadership and educational quality, thereby providing both quantitative and qualitative insights into the structure and evolution of this research domain.

Ethical Considerations

This study utilized publicly available, open-access publications and did not involve human subjects, therefore formal ethical approval was not required. All sources were properly cited according to academic standards and the American Psychological Association (APA) citation guidelines to ensure proper attribution of intellectual work. The research adhered to the principles of academic integrity and responsible conduct of research as outlined by the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE, 2019). Data extraction and analysis were conducted objectively without selective reporting or manipulation of results. The open-access nature of the selected publications ensures that the findings of this study can be verified and replicated by other researchers. Furthermore, no commercial interests or conflicts of interest influenced the selection, analysis, or interpretation of the literature. The researchers-maintained transparency throughout the research process by documenting all methodological decisions and making the dataset available for verification purposes, thus upholding the highest standards of research ethics in bibliometric studies.

3. Results and Discussion

Results

The co-occurrence keyword analysis identified 26 interconnected keywords forming five thematic clusters, with a total of 68 links within the network. The keyword school leadership emerged as the most central node, showing 14 links, a total link strength of 21, and six occurrences, indicating its dominant position in the literature. Other highly connected keywords included teacher performance (11 links; total link strength = 13; four occurrences) and educational quality, which functioned as bridging terms connecting leadership-related themes with educational outcomes. Overall, the network structure indicates that research on secondary education quality is organized around leadership as a central connecting concept.

The cluster analysis revealed five distinct thematic groupings. Cluster 1 focused on leadership and learning outcomes, comprising keywords such as principal leadership, educational management, teacher performance, transformational leadership, and student outcomes. This cluster reflects studies emphasizing leadership practices and their association with pedagogical processes and academic achievement. Cluster 2 centered on leadership innovation and school-based management, including keywords such as school-based management, innovative leadership, brand image, secondary school, and education quality. Keywords in this cluster displayed relatively recent average publication years, indicating growing scholarly attention to leadership innovation, institutional image, and educational service management.

Cluster 3 highlighted themes related to quality culture and school culture, with keywords such as twenty-first century leadership, quality culture, and school culture, predominantly associated with elementary education contexts. Cluster 4

focused on teacher professionalism and secondary education, emphasizing keywords such as teacher professionalism, teacher success, and educational quality. Cluster 5 comprised quality management frameworks, including total quality management (TQM), EFQM, and quality enhancement, representing studies that apply formal quality models to educational improvement initiatives. Across all clusters, school leadership maintained multiple direct connections, confirming its role as the primary integrative variable in the network.

Temporal analysis of keyword occurrences indicated a shift in research emphasis over time. Classical themes such as teacher professionalism and teacher success were associated with earlier average publication years (around 2021), while topics such as innovative leadership, school-based management, and brand image showed more recent average publication years (2024–2025). This pattern suggests a transition in the literature toward managerial, organizational, and institutional dimensions of school quality. In addition to thematic patterns, the distribution of research methodologies employed in the analyzed studies is summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Distribution of Methodological Approaches in Analyzed Articles (2020-2025)

Methodological Approach	Percentage	Key Characteristics	Representative Studies
Quantitative Methods	~60%	Survey designs, linear regression, SEM-PLS, correlational analyses measuring leadership influence on teacher performance and school quality	Ekawati et al. (2024); Kamalia et al. (2022); Thai'Atun et al. (2024)
Qualitative Methods	~25%	Case studies, in-depth interviews, observations exploring leadership practices and quality culture implementation	Restiawati et al. (2025); Damainik & Muntazah (2021); Pratiwi et al. (2025)
Mixed Methods	~15%	Combined quantitative and qualitative approaches for comprehensive understanding	Mumayyizah et al. (2024); Sumiran et al. (2022)

The distribution of methodological approaches indicates that quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-method designs were all employed in studies on school leadership and educational quality during the 2020–2025 period. Quantitative approaches were most frequently used to examine statistical associations among leadership, teacher performance, and quality-related variables, while qualitative studies primarily explored leadership practices and organizational dynamics within school contexts. Mixed-method designs were applied to integrate numerical findings with contextual insights, providing a more comprehensive understanding of leadership phenomena. This methodological variation reflects the multifaceted nature of research on school leadership and educational quality.

Discussion

The bibliometric mapping demonstrates that school leadership functions as the most dominant element in the research network related to educational quality and teacher performance, confirming its role as a critical leverage point for school improvement initiatives. The strong relationships between school leadership, principal leadership, and transformational leadership with teacher performance and school quality align with the findings of Ali (2022) and Aslamiyah et al. (2022), who emphasize that the principal's leadership style significantly influences teacher performance and school quality. These findings are also consistent with international studies by Hallinger and Heck (2010), Day et al. (2016), and Leithwood, Harris, and Hopkins (2020), which demonstrate that leadership effects on student learning are mediated through organizational conditions and teacher motivation.

However, the literature reveals a critical gap: while correlational relationships are well-established, causal mechanisms explaining how specific leadership practices translate into improved educational outcomes remain underexplored (Leithwood et al., 2020). This limitation suggests that future research should move beyond demonstrating associations toward explaining the processes through which leadership influences quality culture and performance, a need that becomes particularly evident when examining the complex interactions between leadership styles, organizational contexts, and educational outcomes across diverse school settings.

Shift of Research Trends 2020–2025 Toward More Modern Leadership Models

The development of literature during the 2020–2025 period shows a significant shift from traditional focuses such as academic supervision, teacher professionalism, and learning outcomes toward leadership models that are more innovative, collaborative, and adaptive, marking a paradigm transformation from a control-based approach to an innovation-based, collaboration-oriented, and institution image-oriented approach. Ali (2022) confirms that principals today are required to become transformational leaders who can drive change and improve teacher performance systematically, while Sumiran et al. (2022) show that effective leadership is able to create a school culture that supports sustainable quality. This shift reflects broader societal changes including increased accountability demands, school choice policies, and the marketization of education (Lubienski, 2009). In the global context, Worku (2024) finds that principals must have the capacity to respond to rapid changes in the educational environment, including digitalization and stakeholder engagement. Furthermore, Amelia and Siahaan (2025) show that modern leadership is no longer merely focused on administration, but also on innovation management, collaboration, and strengthening educational services, demonstrating how contemporary principals must balance traditional pedagogical leadership with modern managerial and strategic responsibilities (Crow et al., 2017).

Increasing Studies on Innovative Leadership

The concept of innovative leadership has become one of the most dominant themes in the literature from 2023–2025, representing an emerging research trajectory that emphasizes adaptability, creativity, and organizational transformation in school contexts. Ridwanulloh et al. (2022) emphasize that innovative leadership is needed to create an educational system that is responsive to twenty-first century demands, moving beyond conventional administrative practices toward more dynamic and forward-thinking approaches. Anastasiou and Ntokas (2024) highlight that leadership innovation is closely related to the development of quality systems based on TQM and EFQM, thus encouraging the effectiveness of school management through systematic integration of quality principles and innovative practices. Ridwan, Masruhim, and Sjamsir (2024) add that innovative leadership does not only focus on technology adoption, but also on organizational creativity and the transformation of teacher work culture, creating environments that foster experimentation and continuous improvement. This aligns with the findings of Sumiran et al. (2022) and Mumayyizah et al. (2024), which show that innovative leaders are able to create a school environment that is adaptive, collaborative, and conducive to learning innovation, thereby positioning schools as organizations capable of responding to rapid educational changes.

School Brand Image as an Indicator of Modern Educational Quality

In recent years, school brand image has increasingly been viewed as an important indicator for assessing school quality, reflecting the growing influence of market dynamics on educational institutions and the need for schools to differentiate themselves in competitive environments. Anggra Prima et al. (2025) emphasize that a strong school image not only affects public perception but also influences parents' decisions in choosing schools, making branding a strategic priority for school leaders. Ridiyawati et al. (2025) show that branding-related strategies, service quality, and leadership visibility contribute to strengthening school reputation and competitiveness. In addition, Chalikias et al. (2020) explain that academic reputation and educational services play an important role in building public trust, creating a virtuous cycle where strong reputations attract resources that further enhance quality. However, critical perspectives suggest potential tensions: while strategic branding may drive schools toward greater efficiency and responsiveness to stakeholder needs, it also raises ethical concerns about equity, social justice, and the potential marginalization of disadvantaged communities who lack resources to compete in educational markets (Apple, 2006; Oplatka & Hemsley-Brown, 2012).

Strengthening School-Based Management as a Pillar of Quality Management

School-based management continues to develop as one of the main frameworks for enhancing autonomy, accountability, and school innovation, representing a decentralization approach that empowers local decision-making and community engagement in educational governance. Asrin et al. (2022) show that the implementation of school-based management enables schools to manage resources independently and respond to environmental needs more flexibly and appropriately,

creating conditions for context-responsive educational improvement. Slamet et al. (2024) reinforce this argument by proving that school-based management increases community participation and quality oversight in schools, strengthening the accountability mechanisms that connect schools to their stakeholders. Meanwhile, Mumayyizah et al. (2024) assert that the application of school-based management encourages internal collaboration and strengthens the quality assurance system through distributed leadership and shared responsibility for outcomes. The findings of Anggra Prima et al. (2025) also prove that integrating school-based management with educational service management can increase school competitiveness while providing wider space for innovation for school principals. However, the effectiveness of school-based management depends critically on the capacity of school leaders and communities to exercise autonomy productively, raising questions about whether all schools possess the necessary human and financial resources to benefit equally from decentralized governance structures (Dimmock & Walker, 2005).

Critical Synthesis and Future Directions

The cluster analysis reveals two major pathways in contemporary school leadership research, representing both continuity and change in the field and highlighting tensions between traditional educational values and contemporary market pressures. The traditional pathway emphasizes teacher professionalism, academic supervision, and learning outcomes as the primary mechanisms through which leadership influences educational quality (Nyoman & Prayito, 2024; Ekawati et al., 2024), rooted in instructional leadership theory that focuses on principals' direct engagement with teaching and learning processes (Hallinger, 2005). Conversely, the emerging pathway integrates school-based management, leadership innovation, and institutional branding strategies, reflecting a shift toward viewing schools as competitive organizations operating in educational markets (Anggra Prima et al., 2025; Ridwanulloh et al., 2022). This dual trajectory suggests that contemporary principals must balance traditional pedagogical leadership with modern managerial and strategic responsibilities, a challenge that existing leadership preparation programs may not adequately address (Crow et al., 2017). The tension between these pathways raises important questions about whether schools can simultaneously pursue pedagogical excellence and market competitiveness without compromising their core educational mission, particularly regarding equity and access for disadvantaged students (Ball, 2003; Thrupp & Wilmott, 2003).

The position of school leadership as the central hub connecting quality management theories (TQM, EFQM) with contextual practices indicates its integrative function within school improvement frameworks, demonstrating how leadership mediates between systematic quality approaches and the complex realities of school practice. Studies by Anastasiou and Ntokas (2024) confirm that quality management approaches, originally developed in business contexts, can be effectively adapted to educational settings when mediated by strong leadership that understands both technical quality systems and educational values. However, critical perspectives on this transfer suggest potential tensions between standardized quality frameworks and the complex, values-based nature of educational work. The application of

business models to education has been critiqued for potentially reducing teaching and learning to measurable outputs while neglecting less quantifiable but equally important educational goals such as critical thinking, creativity, and social-emotional development (Fielding, 2001). Therefore, while the integration of quality management systems may enhance organizational efficiency, school leaders must ensure that such systems serve pedagogical purposes rather than becoming bureaucratic ends in themselves, maintaining focus on substantive educational improvement rather than mere compliance with quality standards.

From a practical standpoint, these findings suggest that effective school quality improvement requires a multi-dimensional approach combining leadership capacity building, teacher professional development, and quality culture strengthening, as demonstrated in studies by Ali (2022), Afrianti et al. (2021), and Sumiran et al. (2022). However, the current literature exhibits three significant limitations that constrain its practical utility and theoretical advancement. First, the reliance on cross-sectional designs in the majority of quantitative studies prevents understanding of how leadership-quality relationships evolve over time, limiting insights into sustainability and long-term effects of leadership interventions (Hallinger & Heck, 2010). Second, the predominance of studies from specific national contexts (particularly Indonesia, as evidenced in the analyzed literature) raises questions about the transferability of findings across different educational systems, cultures, and policy environments, suggesting the need for more comparative international research (Dimmock & Walker, 2005; Kamalia et al., 2022). Third, the conceptual nature of keyword co-occurrence relationships does not establish causality, meaning the observed associations between leadership and quality may be influenced by unmeasured confounding variables such as socioeconomic context, government policies, or historical school performance, necessitating more rigorous experimental or quasi-experimental designs to establish causal claims (Witziers et al., 2003).

Based on these findings and critical reflections, several recommendations emerge for advancing both research and practice in this field. First, researchers should prioritize longitudinal and mixed-methods designs that can capture the dynamic, context-dependent nature of leadership influence on school quality, moving beyond static correlational studies to examine how leadership-quality relationships develop and change over time (Day et al., 2016). Second, comparative studies across different national, cultural, and policy contexts are essential for understanding the boundary conditions of current theories and identifying culturally responsive leadership approaches that acknowledge local values and practices (Dimmock & Walker, 2005). Third, empirical research should investigate the mechanisms through which innovative leadership and branding strategies translate into improved educational outcomes, rather than assuming their effectiveness based solely on correlational evidence (Bush & Glover, 2014). Fourth, critical scholarship is needed to examine the equity implications of market-oriented school reforms, ensuring that quality improvement efforts benefit all students rather than deepening existing inequalities between advantaged and disadvantaged schools and communities (Thrupp & Wilmott, 2003; Apple, 2006). Finally, leadership preparation programs should be redesigned to equip principals with both traditional

pedagogical leadership competencies and contemporary skills in strategic management, organizational innovation, and stakeholder engagement, while maintaining a strong ethical foundation oriented toward educational equity and social justice (Crow et al., 2017).

4. Conclusion

This bibliometric study provides a systematic overview of research on school principal leadership and its relationship with teacher performance and educational quality in secondary education during the 2020–2025 period. The findings indicate that school leadership occupies a central position in the literature, consistently connecting key themes related to teacher professionalism, school quality, and educational management. The keyword network and cluster analysis reveal that leadership functions as an integrative concept linking pedagogical, organizational, and quality-oriented perspectives. The results also show a shift in research trends from a primary focus on instructional leadership and teacher performance toward broader concerns, including leadership innovation, school-based management, quality culture, and institutional competitiveness. This trend reflects the growing recognition of school principals not only as instructional leaders but also as strategic actors in managing educational quality and organizational development. Overall, this study contributes to the literature by mapping dominant themes, emerging topics, and methodological patterns in school leadership research, thereby providing a comprehensive reference for scholars and practitioners. Future studies are encouraged to complement bibliometric findings with longitudinal and empirical approaches to deepen understanding of causal relationships between leadership practices, teacher performance, and sustainable educational quality improvement.

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