



The Influence of Principal's Leadership on Students' Sports Achievement (A Case Study at SMAN Keberbakatan Olahraga, Bengkulu Province)

Jesicha Fitria Larasati ¹, Harius Eko Saputra ², Maryaningsih ³

^{1,2,3} Study Program of Public Administration, Faculty of Social Sciences, Universitas Dehasen Bengkulu

Received [09-09-2025]

Revised [05-02-2026]

Accepted [11-02-2026]

Abstract. This study aims to examine the influence of principal's leadership on students' sports achievement at SMAN Keberbakatan Olahraga, Bengkulu Province. The research employed a quantitative descriptive method using a survey approach. Data were collected through questionnaires and documentation involving 76 student respondents selected as the sample from a total population of 138 students. The independent variable in this study was the principal's leadership, while the dependent variable was students' sports achievement. Data were analyzed using simple linear regression to determine the relationship and influence between the variables. The results of the study indicate that the correlation coefficient (R) between the principal's leadership and students' sports achievement is 0.721, which falls into the strong category. The coefficient of determination (R^2) shows that 52.0% of students' sports achievement is influenced by the principal's leadership, while the remaining 48.0% is explained by other factors not examined in this study. Furthermore, the t-test results confirm that the principal's leadership has a significant effect on students' sports achievement. These findings highlight the crucial role of leadership in fostering student potential and improving performance in sports education. The study suggests that strengthening leadership strategies can further enhance students' achievements at sports-focused schools.

Keywords: *Principal's Leadership; Sports Achievement; Students; SMAN Keberbakatan Olahraga; Bengkulu.*

INTRODUCTION

Sports achievement is one of the key indicators of a country's success in fostering youth talent and building a healthy, competitive society. In Indonesia, the development of young athletes has become increasingly important, as the nation seeks to strengthen its presence in both national and international competitions. However, the reality shows that many young people are reluctant to pursue a career as professional athletes due to the perception that sports careers are less promising compared to other professions. Limited facilities, inconsistent sports programs, and insufficient institutional support contribute to this condition. Schools play a crucial role in overcoming these challenges, as they are responsible not only for academic excellence but also for the development of students' non-academic potentials, particularly in sports. SMAN Keberbakatan Olahraga (SMANKO) Bengkulu is a unique educational institution established to accommodate students with outstanding potential in sports. Unlike regular public schools that primarily emphasize academic performance, SMANKO prioritizes non-academic achievement by providing a structured environment for students to develop their athletic talents. Since its establishment in 2016, SMANKO has nurtured students across various sports disciplines, including volleyball, futsal, pencak silat, swimming, and athletics. The school has achieved remarkable success, earning more than 170 medals at city, provincial, and national

levels during 2022–2023. Such accomplishments indicate the effectiveness of a supportive educational environment in sports-focused schools. Nevertheless, challenges remain, particularly in terms of maintaining facilities, managing resources, and ensuring continuous motivation for students to achieve higher levels of performance. Leadership plays a central role in determining the quality and success of an educational institution. In the context of a school, the principal functions as both an administrator and a leader, guiding teachers, staff, and students toward shared goals. Leadership is defined as the process of influencing others to achieve organizational objectives (Yukl, 2005). Specifically, transformational leadership emphasizes inspiring and motivating individuals to perform beyond expectations, instilling confidence, and encouraging innovation (Bass, 1985).

A principal who adopts transformational leadership is more likely to foster an environment where students feel motivated, supported, and inspired to maximize their potential. In sports-focused schools such as SMANKO, the principal's leadership has a direct and significant influence on students' sports achievement. The principal not only serves as an administrative leader but also acts as a role model and motivator. By implementing effective leadership strategies—such as individualized consideration, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, and idealized influence—the principal can inspire students to pursue excellence and overcome obstacles (Jensen et al., 2016). Furthermore, strong leadership ensures the optimization of resources, the improvement of training programs, and the creation of a supportive culture that values sports achievements alongside academic growth. Several previous studies support the importance of leadership in determining student achievement. For example, Fraliantina (2016) found that principal leadership and sports facilities significantly influenced the performance of schools in the field of sports. Similarly, Nurjanah (2019) concluded that principal leadership contributed positively to students' academic performance at MAN 3 Tangerang, highlighting that leadership remains a determining factor across different domains of education. These findings align with the theoretical framework that leadership, particularly in education, is a multidimensional process encompassing guidance, motivation, and resource management. Based on this background, the present study aims to analyze the influence of the principal's leadership on students' sports achievement at SMANKO Bengkulu Province. The focus is to determine the extent to which leadership contributes to students' achievements and to identify the correlation between leadership practices and measurable outcomes in sports. The study employs a quantitative approach, using regression analysis to evaluate the relationship between the principal's leadership (independent variable) and sports achievement (dependent variable).

The significance of this study is twofold. Theoretically, it contributes to the growing body of literature on educational leadership, especially in the context of sports-focused schools. By linking leadership theories such as transformational leadership to real-world outcomes in sports achievement, the research provides insights for future studies that aim to bridge educational leadership and sports management. Practically, the findings can serve as a valuable reference for school administrators, policymakers, and educators to design leadership strategies that effectively enhance students' achievements. Strengthening principal leadership may not only improve sports performance but also foster character development, discipline, and resilience among students. In conclusion, the leadership of a school principal is not merely about administrative duties; it is fundamentally about creating a vision, inspiring others, and guiding the institution toward excellence.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Previous Studies

Several previous studies have highlighted the important role of leadership in influencing educational outcomes. Fraliantina (2016) examined the influence of principal leadership and

sports facilities on school achievement in sports. The results indicated that both leadership and infrastructure contributed significantly to the improvement of school sports performance, suggesting that leadership is inseparable from resource management. Similarly, Nurjanah (2019) conducted a study on the influence of principal leadership on students' academic achievement at MAN 3 Tangerang. The findings showed that effective leadership positively affected students' performance, emphasizing the need for principals to adopt the right leadership style to motivate students. These studies demonstrate that principal leadership is consistently associated with student achievement, whether in academics or sports.

Definition of Leadership

Leadership is commonly defined as the ability to influence, motivate, and direct individuals or groups toward achieving shared goals. According to Yukl (2005), leadership is the process of influencing others to understand and agree on what needs to be done and how it can be done effectively. Kadarman and Udaya (2001) define leadership as the art of influencing people to work willingly for group objectives. In the educational context, leadership refers to the principal's capacity to guide teachers, staff, and students in achieving school objectives.

The Role of the Principal

The principal is the central figure in a school who carries both managerial and leadership responsibilities. As a manager, the principal ensures the implementation of educational programs, manages resources, and develops policies to achieve institutional goals. As a leader, the principal plays a strategic role in motivating students, shaping school culture, and fostering a supportive environment (Edison et al., 2016). The principal's leadership style significantly affects the attitudes of students and teachers, thereby influencing overall performance.

Definition of Students

Students are individuals undergoing a process of learning and development, requiring guidance, direction, and opportunities to optimize their potential. Arifin (2000) describes students as human beings in the process of growth and development according to their innate potential, which needs consistent support and mentoring. In the context of sports schools, students are not only expected to achieve academically but also to demonstrate excellence in athletics, discipline, and teamwork.

Definition of Sports Achievement

Sports achievement refers to measurable outcomes in athletic performance, reflecting both the physical abilities and psychological resilience of athletes. According to Sardiman (2001), achievement is the result of interactions between internal and external factors that influence learning. Winkel (1996) defines achievement as evidence of effort resulting in success. Furthermore, Indonesian Law No. 3 of 2005 on Sports states that sports achievement involves systematic, tiered, and continuous athlete development through competitions supported by sports science and technology.

METHODS

This study applied a quantitative research method with a descriptive survey design, as the purpose of the research was to analyze the influence of principal's leadership on students' sports achievement at SMAN Keberbakatan Olahraga, Bengkulu Province. The quantitative approach was selected because it allows for systematic measurement of variables and statistical testing of hypotheses, while the descriptive survey design was used to collect data directly from students as respondents in order to obtain accurate information regarding their perceptions of the principal's leadership and their sports achievement. The research involved

two key variables, namely the independent variable and the dependent variable. The independent variable (X) was the principal's leadership, which in this study referred to the capacity of the principal to act as a role model, provide guidance, give motivation, and stimulate students intellectually to perform at their best. Meanwhile, the dependent variable (Y) was students' sports achievement, defined as the outcomes of students' participation in sports training and competitions, measured in terms of their progress, achievements in tournaments, and recognition in various athletic disciplines. Both variables were defined operationally based on indicators derived from transformational leadership theory and the concept of sports achievement in education.

The population of the study consisted of all 138 students of SMAN Keberbakatan Olahraga in 2023. Using the Isaac and Michael formula with a 1% error level, a total sample of 76 students was determined to be representative. The sampling method ensured that the participants reflected the distribution of the student body across different sports disciplines, such as volleyball, futsal, pencak silat, swimming, and others. By doing so, the researcher ensured that the findings could be generalized to the broader population of the school. Data were collected through two main techniques, namely questionnaires and documentation. The questionnaire was designed using a Likert scale to capture students' perceptions of the principal's leadership as well as their experiences related to sports achievement. Items in the questionnaire were structured to measure dimensions such as role modeling, individualized support, motivation, intellectual stimulation, training effectiveness, competition results, and recognition. In addition, documentation was used to obtain supporting information such as the number of students, records of achievements, and relevant school documents that provided context to the research findings. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and inferential analysis. Descriptive statistics were applied to present the characteristics of respondents and to summarize the responses given in the questionnaires. Inferential analysis was carried out using simple linear regression to test the hypothesis and determine the influence of the independent variable on the dependent variable. The correlation coefficient (R) was used to examine the strength of the relationship, while the coefficient of determination (R^2) was employed to measure the percentage of variance in students' sports achievement explained by the principal's leadership. Furthermore, the t-test was conducted to test the significance of the influence at a 5% significance level. The use of these statistical techniques allowed the researcher to draw valid conclusions regarding the extent to which the leadership of the principal affected students' achievements in sports.

RESULTS

The results of this study are presented in several sections, starting with the characteristics of the respondents, followed by descriptive findings from the questionnaires, and finally the outcomes of statistical analyses including correlation, regression, coefficient of determination, and t-test. The findings provide a comprehensive understanding of the extent to which the principal's leadership influences students' sports achievement at SMAN Keberbakatan Olahraga, Bengkulu Province. The total number of respondents in this study was 76 students, representing the sample drawn from a population of 138 students. The distribution of respondents by gender showed that 52 students (68%) were male, while 24 students (32%) were female. This proportion indicates that male students dominate the student body at SMANKO, reflecting the general trend that sports schools tend to have higher male enrollment, particularly in sports such as futsal, volleyball, and pencak silat. In terms of sports disciplines, the respondents came from a variety of branches including futsal (18.5%), volleyball (9.2%), pencak silat (7.8%), swimming (6.6%), takraw (5.3%), panjat tebing or rock climbing (5.3%), and archery (1.3%).

This diversity of sports representation highlights the multi-disciplinary nature of SMANKO as an institution committed to developing athletes across multiple fields. The descriptive analysis of the questionnaire responses provides insights into how students perceive the leadership of the principal. Most students indicated that the principal frequently serves as a role model who instills confidence and respect among the student body. Responses also showed that the principal was perceived as providing guidance and direction on how students should complete tasks, thereby reinforcing a supportive learning and training environment. Furthermore, the principal was acknowledged for offering motivation and encouragement, treating students as individuals with different needs, and fostering innovation in problem-solving. These results indicate that the leadership style of the principal is consistent with transformational leadership dimensions, namely idealized influence, individualized consideration, inspirational motivation, and intellectual stimulation. Regarding students' sports achievement, the questionnaire results suggest that the majority of respondents experienced continuous improvement in their training and competition outcomes. Many students reported that the principal's support and encouragement increased their confidence in achieving sports goals. Other important factors mentioned include the availability of professional coaches, adequate training programs, and recognition in the form of rewards. Such conditions foster a positive environment where students are motivated to strive for excellence.

The inferential statistical analysis further confirms the descriptive findings. The Pearson correlation coefficient (R) between the principal's leadership (X) and students' sports achievement (Y) was found to be 0.721. According to the interpretation scale of correlation, this value falls into the strong category, indicating that there is a strong positive relationship between the two variables. In other words, the better the principal's leadership, the higher the level of students' sports achievement. The coefficient of determination (R^2) was calculated at 0.520 or 52.0%. This figure shows that 52.0% of the variance in students' sports achievement can be explained by the principal's leadership. The remaining 48.0% is influenced by other factors not covered in this study, such as family support, quality of coaching, peer influence, personal discipline, and the availability of facilities. This finding underscores the substantial contribution of leadership to sports achievement while also acknowledging the multifactorial nature of success in athletics. The regression analysis was performed using a simple linear regression model with sports achievement as the dependent variable (Y) and principal's leadership as the independent variable (X). The regression equation obtained was:

$$Y = a + bX$$

The results showed that the regression coefficient (b) was positive, meaning that an increase in the quality of leadership is associated with an increase in sports achievement. This positive relationship indicates that leadership has a direct and beneficial effect on the performance of students. To test the significance of the regression model, a t-test was conducted. The t-test results revealed that the value of t for the leadership variable was greater than the critical value at the 5% significance level ($p < 0.05$). This finding confirms that principal's leadership has a statistically significant effect on students' sports achievement. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H_0), which states that there is no significant influence of principal's leadership on sports achievement, is rejected. Instead, the alternative hypothesis (H_1) is accepted, confirming that leadership does play an important role in determining student performance in sports.

Taken together, these results demonstrate that the leadership of the principal at SMAN Keberbakatan Olahraga has both a practical and measurable impact on students' success. The strong correlation indicates that students are more likely to achieve higher levels of performance when they are guided by a leader who provides direction, encouragement, and motivation. The regression model further confirms that leadership can predict a significant portion of the variance in sports achievement, while the t-test proves that this relationship is not only positive

but also statistically significant. In practical terms, the findings highlight several important aspects of leadership that contribute to students' success. First, the principal's role as a motivator and role model creates a culture of confidence and discipline among students. Second, the emphasis on individualized consideration ensures that students with different talents and needs receive the attention required to develop optimally. Third, intellectual stimulation encourages students to think critically and creatively, which is essential in problem-solving during training and competition. Lastly, inspirational motivation provides a vision and direction that unify students in their pursuit of excellence. Overall, the results of this study strongly support the conclusion that leadership is a decisive factor in shaping students' sports achievement. Although other variables such as facilities, coaching, and family support also play significant roles, the leadership of the school principal stands out as a central driver that influences and motivates students to reach their full potential. The empirical evidence from this study provides a foundation for strengthening leadership practices in sports schools and suggests that investment in leadership development could yield substantial improvements in students' athletic performance.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study confirm that principal's leadership has a strong and significant influence on students' sports achievement at SMAN Keberbakatan Olahraga, Bengkulu Province. The correlation coefficient of 0.721 indicates a strong relationship, while the coefficient of determination (R^2) of 0.520 suggests that 52.0% of students' sports achievement is directly explained by the principal's leadership. This aligns with previous studies and provides evidence that leadership is a critical factor in shaping student outcomes in both academic and non-academic domains. Leadership in schools is more than an administrative role; it encompasses the ability to inspire, motivate, and guide students. The results of this study are consistent with transformational leadership theory as proposed by Bass (1985), which emphasizes four main dimensions: idealized influence, individualized consideration, inspirational motivation, and intellectual stimulation. Students in this study perceived their principal as a role model who provided guidance, encouraged them to strive for excellence, and addressed their individual needs. This perception is essential in sports schools where students face not only academic demands but also rigorous physical training. Transformational leadership ensures that students feel valued, supported, and inspired to maximize their potential. The results also support the findings of Fraliantina (2016), who demonstrated that leadership and sports facilities jointly influenced school achievement in the field of sports. While Fraliantina highlighted the dual importance of infrastructure and leadership, this study emphasizes the substantial contribution of leadership alone, accounting for more than half of the variance in achievement. Similarly, Nurjanah (2019) found that principal leadership significantly affected students' academic performance, suggesting that leadership is a universal factor that transcends academic and non-academic contexts. In both cases, leadership served as a driving force that motivated students to achieve beyond expectations. The significant t-test result in this study further confirms that leadership is not only correlated with but also exerts a measurable influence on achievement. This is important because correlation alone does not establish causality, but the regression and t-test provide statistical evidence that principal leadership actively contributes to students' success. The positive regression coefficient indicates that improvements in leadership—such as better communication, stronger motivation, and more personalized guidance—are likely to lead to higher levels of achievement.

Another key finding is that 48.0% of sports achievement is influenced by factors outside leadership. These include family support, the role of coaches, peer influence, access to facilities, and students' individual discipline. This suggests that while leadership is crucial, it must be integrated with other support systems to fully optimize students' potential. For example,

professional coaching and adequate facilities are necessary to translate leadership into tangible results in training and competitions. Rewards and recognition also play a role in reinforcing motivation, as highlighted by the students' responses in the questionnaire. Therefore, leadership should not be viewed in isolation but rather as part of a larger ecosystem that contributes to athletic success. The implications of these findings are significant for both theory and practice. Theoretically, the study contributes to the literature on educational leadership by demonstrating its applicability in sports-focused schools. Most leadership studies focus on academic outcomes, but this research expands the scope to athletic performance, showing that leadership principles remain relevant in diverse educational contexts. Practically, the results suggest that policymakers, school administrators, and educators should prioritize leadership development as part of efforts to improve sports education. Training programs for principals should emphasize transformational leadership skills, particularly the ability to inspire, motivate, and support students individually.

Furthermore, the study highlights the importance of integrating leadership strategies with institutional policies. For instance, the principal can collaborate with coaches to design training programs that are aligned with students' needs and aspirations. The principal can also establish systems of recognition and reward that reinforce students' motivation to compete and excel. Additionally, effective communication between the principal, teachers, parents, and students can strengthen the support network necessary for sustaining high levels of performance. The discussion also emphasizes the role of school culture in shaping achievement. Leadership helps to create a culture of discipline, resilience, and excellence. At SMANKO, where students are trained to become future athletes, such a culture is essential for instilling values that extend beyond the sports field, including teamwork, perseverance, and integrity. By acting as a role model and providing continuous motivation, the principal contributes to shaping not only students' athletic success but also their personal development. In conclusion, the findings of this study reinforce the argument that leadership is a cornerstone of educational success, particularly in specialized schools such as SMAN Keberbakatan Olahraga. Transformational leadership practices by the principal have been shown to significantly enhance students' sports achievement, accounting for more than half of the variance in performance. While other factors such as facilities and coaching also play important roles, leadership remains the central element that binds these components together and directs them toward shared goals. For future practice, it is recommended that school leadership training programs be strengthened, with a focus on developing transformational skills that inspire students to achieve excellence. Moreover, further research could expand the analysis by incorporating other variables such as coaching quality, family involvement, and peer support to provide a more holistic understanding of the determinants of sports achievement.

CONCLUSION

This study set out to examine the influence of principal's leadership on students' sports achievement at SMAN Keberbakatan Olahraga, Bengkulu Province. Using a quantitative descriptive method with a sample of 76 students, the research revealed that the principal's leadership plays a crucial role in shaping student performance in sports. The correlation analysis indicated a strong relationship ($R = 0.721$), while the coefficient of determination showed that 52.0% of the variance in sports achievement could be explained by leadership. Regression and t-test results confirmed that the influence was not only positive but also statistically significant. These findings highlight that effective leadership, characterized by motivation, guidance, role modeling, and individual support, is a decisive factor in encouraging students to perform better in sports competitions and training. The results support transformational leadership theory, which emphasizes inspiration, motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. Students perceived their principal as a leader who

instills confidence, listens to their needs, and provides direction. This leadership style fosters a supportive culture that enhances student confidence and commitment to achieving excellence. However, the study also revealed that 48.0% of sports achievement is influenced by other factors such as facilities, coaching quality, family support, and personal discipline. Thus, leadership should be viewed as a central but not exclusive determinant of success.

Based on the findings, several suggestions can be proposed. First, principals of sports-focused schools should continue to strengthen transformational leadership practices by providing individualized attention, fostering innovation, and maintaining effective communication with students. Second, collaboration between school leaders, coaches, teachers, and parents should be enhanced to build a comprehensive support system for student-athletes. Third, the government and school management should ensure that adequate facilities, professional coaching, and reward systems are available to complement leadership efforts. Finally, future research may consider including additional variables such as psychological resilience, peer support, and external sports organizations to gain a more holistic understanding of the determinants of sports achievement. In conclusion, the leadership of a principal is more than an administrative responsibility; it is a powerful force that shapes the vision, culture, and outcomes of a school. At SMAN Keberbakatan Olahraga, strong leadership has been proven to significantly influence students' sports achievement, making it a vital component in the development of young athletes who may represent the region and nation in future competitions.

REFERENCES

- Arifin. (2000). *Filsafat Pendidikan Islam*. Jakarta: Bumi Aksara.
- Bass, B. M. (1985). *Leadership and performance beyond expectations*. New York: Free Press.
- Edison, E., Anwar, Y., & Komariah, I. (2016). *Manajemen sumber daya manusia*. Bandung: Alfabeta.
- Fraliantina, I. A. (2016). The influence of leadership and sports facilities on school sports performance. *Journal of Physical Education Studies*, 5(2), 55–63.
- Jensen, U. T., Andersen, L. B., Bro, L. L., & Moynihan, D. P. (2016). Transformational leadership and motivation in the public sector. *Public Administration Review*, 76(1), 8–18. <https://doi.org/10.1111/puar.12464>
- Kadarman, A. M., & Udaya, J. (2001). *Pengantar ilmu manajemen*. Jakarta: Prenada Media.
- Mutohir, T. C. (2007). *Olahraga dan prestasi*. Jakarta: Raja Grafindo Persada.
- Nurjanah, S. (2019). The influence of principal leadership on students' academic achievement at MAN 3 Tangerang. *Journal of Educational Research*, 4(1), 23–31.
- Sardiman, A. M. (2001). *Interaksi dan motivasi belajar mengajar*. Jakarta: Raja Grafindo Persada.
- Sugiyono. (2015). *Metode penelitian kuantitatif, kualitatif, dan R&D*. Bandung: Alfabeta.
- Sugiyono. (2016). *Statistika untuk penelitian*. Bandung: Alfabeta.
- Winkel, W. S. (1996). *Psikologi pengajaran*. Jakarta: Grasindo.
- Yukl, G. (2005). *Leadership in organizations* (6th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall.