ACCEPTANCE OF SERGEANT-LEVEL PRINCIPALS IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS ACCEPTANCE LEVEL, STRATEGIES AND CHALLENGES

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Abstract. This study aims to describe the acceptance of sergeant-level principals (serious but relaxed), the strategies used to obtain acceptance, and the challenges faced. This research approach uses the Grounded Theory Strauss & Corbin method with an analysis of the internal views of school residents and the external views of the school environment. Data were collected through in-depth interviews and participatory observation in three elementary schools in Mojokerto Regency. The results showed variations in the acceptance rate of sergeant levels, effective strategies used by school principals, and significant challenges faced in the admissions process. These findings provide important insights to improve the effectiveness of new school leadership.

Keywords: acceptance of principals; sergeants; strategies; challenges

I. INTRODUCTION

The acceptance of the principal is a key factor in determining the success of leadership in the school. Principals who are well received by teachers, staff, students, and school committees can be more effective in carrying out their duties and achieving educational goals. This study aims to describe the acceptance level of novice school principals, the forms of acceptance received, the strategies used to obtain acceptance, and the challenges faced in the process. This approach uses the analysis of the internal views of school residents to understand the internal perspectives of school residents and the analysis of the external views of the school environment to provide a more objective and theoretical view. Research on the acceptance of school principals is very important to understand the dynamics of leadership in elementary schools. This study explores different levels of school principals' acceptance based on empirical findings that affect the way of leadership and interaction in the school environment. The existing literature discusses more coping strategies and challenges faced by new school principals, but lacks the specific strategies used to gain acceptance from teachers and school committees. The influence of cultural context on the acceptance and effectiveness of school principals has not been widely researched. Cross-cultural comparative studies can provide valuable insights into how cultural nuances affect leadership practices in very few and acceptable ways.

Longitudinal studies on the development of school principal leadership are very few. Longitudinal studies are useful for tracking the development and acceptance of new principals over time. This kind of study can provide a comprehensive understanding of the evolution of the role of principals and the long-term impact of their leadership on school performance.

The integration of emotional intelligence in leadership practice is a significant contribution. Studies show that emotionally intelligent leaders are better able to handle stress and maintain positive relationships with school staff and communities (Fullan, 2001). This research was conducted in view of the need for further research that focuses on the acceptance strategy of the new principal from teachers and school committees. Understanding these strategies can aid in the development of targeted support programs and professional development initiatives to increase the effectiveness of new principals. The integration of emotional intelligence, adaptive leadership, and distributed leadership models provides a new direction for improving school leadership practices in a variety of contexts, especially at the level or level of principal acceptability;

II. RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses the Grounded Theory method of Strauss & Corbin. The data was collected through in-depth interviews with principals, teachers, staff, students, and school committees in three elementary schools in Mojokerto Regency. Participatory observation is also carried out to understand

social dynamics in schools. Data analysis was carried out by approaching the internal views of school residents and external views of the school environment to get a comprehensive picture of the acceptance level of novice school principals. Data analysis using the NVivo application was obtained through open coding, axial coding, and selective coding to produce a Pearson Coefficient Correlation result of proximity.

In this study, the data source used is a novice school principal who serves as a principal with a term of office of less than one year. This research involved the principals of SDN Tanjungkenongo 2 Pacet, SDN Ketapanrame 2 Trawas, and SDN Pagerluyung 1 Gedeg as the main informants of the primary informants and teachers and school committees as secondary informants. Moleong (2006) emphasized that the characteristics of primary data are in the form of words or oral speech and human behavior. Meanwhile, secondary data is sourced from documents and photos that can be used as a complement to primary data. The characteristics of secondary data are in the form of writings, recordings, images or photographs found at the research site.

III. **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Acceptance Level of Sergeant-level Principal

Based on data analysis using NVivo, nine levels of acceptance of school principals were obtained, each of which represented various types of responses and attitudes received by school principals from school residents, including teachers, students, school committees and the surrounding community. From the display of the data findings, a set of data closeness was obtained into nine colors. Each of these colors represents a definition of the principal's acceptance level. Since the content of the color is the diversity of the strongest codings that correspond, it should be given a new name, based on the collection of the strongest codings of one color. After being concluded, the content of the nine color levelings is (1) Optimistic Level Acceptance: hopeful (2) Pragmatic Level Acceptance: looking for opportunities (3) Normative Level Acceptance: finding a safe way (4) Investigative Level Acceptance: looking for weaknesses in disguise (5) Acceptance Level Nriman: follow as it is (6) Executive Level Acceptance: having influence on others (7) Pessimistic Level Acceptance: Conditional acceptance (8) Apathy Level acceptance: no matter (9) Sergeant Level acceptance: Serious and casual.

In this article, the acceptance of sergeant level (serious but casual) is discussed. From the perspective of the internal views of school residents, school residents describe various levels of acceptance of the new principal. One of the prominent acceptance levels is the Sergeant Level Acceptance, which is characterized by the principal being accepted with a serious but relaxed attitude, showing firmness but remaining relaxed and familiar in daily interactions.

The principal showed a firm but relaxed attitude in carrying out his duties and interacting with school residents. Perseverance in attitude refers to the ability of the principal to show a firm but relaxed attitude in carrying out duties and interacting with school residents. Principals who have perseverance in attitude are able to defend their principles and policies in a non-authoritarian way, but rather with a relaxed and flexible attitude. The principal remains firm in setting and implementing policies, but does so in a way that is not rigid. Principals show flexibility in policy implementation, are able to adapt their approach to the situation and needs of school residents and principals balance assertiveness with a friendly and relaxed attitude in interacting with teachers and school committees, and students.

> "Yes, we respect each other's opinions. This is shown by the way we solve school problems through deliberation both on the teacher side and the school committee. We consider differences of opinion as something commonplace, but we can resolve them because of the principle of mutual respect" (Interview with the principal of A1).

According to research (Blase & Kirby, 2008) perseverance in a leadership attitude that balances assertiveness and flexibility is the key to creating a supportive and collaborative environment in schools. The principal received support and positive response from the school community because of the balanced approach between assertiveness and familiarity. The principal's approach to all parties will quickly solve problems and obstacles. This also increases cohesiveness and togetherness in the school environment. With the hope that the school environment will become a comfortable place. From the perspective of the external view of the school environment, the acceptance of school principals can be measured through performance indicators and school community satisfaction surveys. Principals who are accepted with a serious but relaxed attitude tend to show leadership that is balanced between firmness in policy and familiarity in social interactions. According to the research of Hallinger and Heck (1998), leadership that balances assertiveness and familiarity is very effective in improving school performance and building strong relationships with school residents. A conducive work environment occurs if the principal succeeds in creating a comfortable and harmonious work environment through a balanced approach. The work environment at our school is very conducive. The principal always makes sure the school residents have everything they need to work well and feel comfortable. Leithwood and Riehl (2003) show that a conducive work environment is essential to support the academic and operational success of schools.

Strategies for Gaining Acceptance

School principals use various strategies to gain acceptance, such as listening to the needs of school residents, communicating transparently, and showing empathy. School principals who listen to the needs and concerns of school residents and show empathy are more easily accepted make school residents feel appreciated.

Principals who are accepted with a serious but relaxed attitude tend to show leadership that is balanced between firmness in policy and familiarity in social interactions. Balanced leadership refers to the ability of school principals to strike a balance between firmness in policy and familiarity in

social interactions. Principals who are received with a serious but relaxed attitude are able to combine aspects of firmness and warmth in their leadership, creating an effective and harmonious working atmosphere. The principal is firm in setting policies and ensuring that the policies are implemented properly. This includes rule enforcement, performance evaluation, and thoughtful decision-making. The principal shows warmth and friendliness in daily interactions with teachers and the school committee, students, and parents. They create a good and supportive relationship, so that all parties feel valued and heard. The principal is able to balance between firmness and familiarity, so that he can overcome

Effective strategies include participatory leadership and the achievement of clear goals. Participatory Leadership is leadership that involves school residents in decision-making. Fullan (2001) emphasizes the importance of active participation in the decision-making process to increase a sense of belonging and support. The principal sets and achieves clear goals to improve school performance. Leithwood and Riehl (2003) show that the achievement of clear goals increases acceptance and support for principals.

Challenges in Gaining Acceptance

One of the challenges faced by school principals is resistance to change and negative issues that circulate before the arrival of the new principal. Some school residents showed resistance to the changes proposed by the new principal. Negative issues or rumors can hinder the admission process. There are rumors circulating about the new principal that make some people hesitate.

The low level of trust is also a challenge for the acceptance of school principals. Lack of trust can hinder the acceptance of school principals. Bryk and Schneider (2002) emphasized the importance of building trust to create a supportive school environment. Conditional support depends on the performance of the principal. Leithwood and Riehl (2003) showed that conditional support can hinder leadership effectiveness if not managed properly.

The challenges faced by school principals in obtaining admission include resistance to change and negative issues that circulate before the arrival of new school principals. Resistance to Change arises if some school residents show resistance to the changes proposed by the new principal, for example there are some teachers who are afraid of the changes brought by the new principal. Negative issues or rumors can hinder the acceptance process. There are rumors circulating about the new principal that make some people hesitate.

The main challenge in obtaining the acceptance of the principal is the low level of trust and conditional support. Low Trust Level or lack of trust can hinder the acceptance of school principals. Bryk and Schneider (2002) emphasized the importance of building trust to create a supportive school environment. Conditional Support is a conditional support depending on the performance of the principal. Leithwood and Riehl (2003) show that conditional support can hinder leadership effectiveness if not managed properly.

To address the challenges faced in the course of duty, the concept of adaptive leadership during crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, offers new insights into how school principals can effectively manage unexpected challenges and maintain school operations ((Sahlin et al., 2023). The integration of emotional intelligence in leadership practice is a significant contribution. Studies show that emotionally intelligent leaders are better able to handle stress and maintain positive relationships with school staff and communities (Fullan, 2001)

The principal shows a firm but relaxed attitude in carrying out duties and interacting with school residents (Wijaya et al., 2022). Perseverance in attitude refers to the ability of the principal to show a firm but relaxed attitude in carrying out duties and interacting with school residents. Principals who have perseverance in attitude are able to defend their principles and policies in a non-authoritarian way, but rather with a relaxed and flexible attitude. The principal remains firm in setting and implementing policies, but does so in a way that is not rigid. Principals show flexibility in policy implementation, are able to adapt their approach to the situation and needs of school residents and principals balance assertiveness with a friendly and relaxed attitude in interacting with teachers and school committees, and students.

> "Yes, we respect each other's opinions. This is shown by the way we solve school problems through deliberation both on the teacher side and the school committee. We consider differences of opinion as something commonplace, but we can resolve them because of the principle of mutual respect" (Interview with the principal of A1).

According to the research of Blase and Blase (2000), perseverance in a leadership attitude that balances assertiveness and flexibility is key to creating a supportive and collaborative environment in schools

The principal uses a familiar and familial approach in building relationships with school residents. The familial approach refers to the ability of the principal to build close and familial relationships with school residents. Principals who use this approach create a warm and supportive environment, where everyone feels valued and welcomed. The principal shows a warm and friendly attitude in interacting with teachers and school committees, and students (Azizah, 2024). The principal takes a personal approach in relating to the school community, getting to know them individually and showing concern for their well-being and encouraging close collaboration, creating a sense of community and solidarity among the school community.

> "We feel comfortable with him because he always accepts us as we are and never judges. This makes us feel closer and support him in every program that is carried out" (Interview with the principal of A3).

Leithwood and Riehl (2003) emphasized that the familial approach in leadership is very effective in building strong and supportive relationships between principals and school residents.

The principal received support and positive response from the school community because of the balanced approach between assertiveness and familiarity. Positive responses and support refer to the principal's ability to gain support and positive responses from school residents through a balanced approach between assertiveness and familiarity (Cornelissen & Smith, 2022). Principals who are well received tend to have strong support from teachers and school committees. The principal received a positive response from the school community to their policies and actions. Teachers and school committees provide strong and active support to programs and initiatives proposed by principals. The principal creates effective collaboration with the school community, increasing participation and involvement in school activities.

> "Approaching all parties, problems and obstacles are quickly resolved. This also increases cohesiveness and togetherness in the school environment. With the hope that the school environment will become a comfortable place" (Interview with A4 teachers).

Tschannen-Moran (2004) showed that positive responses and support from school residents are essential to creating an environment that supports academic and operational success.

Perseverance in attitude, family approach, and positive response and support are the three main parameters in the principal's serious but relaxed level acceptance. Principals who show these attitudes tend to be more effective in leading, creating a harmonious and supportive environment, and gaining strong support from school residents. These findings are reinforced by empirical data and supported by the educational leadership literature, which emphasizes the importance of balancing assertiveness and familiarity in primary education leadership.

Acceptance of school principals from a more objective point of view, using a theoretical framework and broader empirical data. Based on this analysis, the acceptance of the sergeant level can be identified through balanced leadership and a conducive work environment.
challenges firmly but still maintaining good relations with all parties.

> "He has always been consistent in implementing the policies that have been agreed. This makes us feel safe and confident in the direction of the school's policy" (Interview with A3 teachers).
> "Our principal is very warm and friendly in interacting. He always listens to our input and creates a comfortable environment to work in" (Interview with the principal of B1).

According to research, leadership that balances assertiveness and familiarity is very effective in improving school performance and building strong relationships with school residents (Hallinger & Heck, 1998)

Principals who succeed in creating a comfortable and harmonious work environment through a balanced approach. A conducive work environment refers to the ability of school principals to create a comfortable and harmonious work atmosphere through a balanced approach (Ucok et al., 2021). A conducive work environment supports collaboration, creativity, and productivity among teachers and school committees, and students. The principal creates a comfortable work atmosphere where everyone feels safe and valued. They encourage togetherness and teamwork among teachers and school committees. The principal is able to manage conflicts well, so that the work atmosphere remains harmonious and productive. They also promote open and honest communication. The principal provides adequate support to teachers and the school committee, and motivates them to achieve the best performance. They also gave awards and recognition for their achievements.

> "Approaching all parties, problems and obstacles are quickly resolved. This also increases cohesiveness and togetherness in the school environment. With the hope that the school environment will become a comfortable place" (Interview with the principal of A4).
> "The work environment at our school is very conducive. The principal always makes sure we have everything we need to work well and feel comfortable" (Interview with C2 teacher).

(Leithwood & Riehl, 2003)) shows that a conducive work environment is essential to support the academic and operational success of schools. School principals who are able to create a harmonious and supportive work atmosphere tend to be more successful in leading the school.
Balanced leadership and a conducive work environment are two important parameters in the acceptance of the school sergeant level. School principals who show leadership that is balanced between assertiveness and familiarity, as well as creating a comfortable and harmonious work environment, tend to be more effective in leading and gaining strong support from school residents. These findings are reinforced by empirical data and supported by the educational leadership literature, which emphasizes the importance of balance in leadership and the creation of a conducive work environment in basic education leadership (Martinez et al., 2023; Uy et al., 2024).

Empirically, these findings are consistent with the literature on educational leadership that emphasizes the importance of balancing assertiveness and familiarity in the success of new principals. Principals who demonstrate balanced leadership tend to be more successful in building strong and harmonious relationships with school residents.

(Blase & Kirby, 2008) shows that school principals who use a familial approach and remain firm in their policies are more successful in building positive relationships and gaining support from school residents. Northouse (2018) emphasizes that effective leadership requires a balance between

decisiveness in decision-making and the ability to interact in a relaxed and familiar way

IV. CONCLUSION

This study shows that the acceptance of novice principals is greatly influenced by the attitudes and perceptions of school residents as well as the strategies used by school principals to build relationships and get support. The analysis of the internal views of the school community provides insight into direct experiences and daily interactions, while the analysis of the external views of the school environment offers a more objective and theoretical view. Effective strategies and transparent communication are essential to address challenges and increase acceptance. Success in obtaining this acceptance will support the effectiveness of the principal's leadership and the success of the school's programs as a whole. Acceptance: Based on the corroborating data found, a new definition of acceptance, the principal at the sergeant level with the indicator of the operational verb "feel serious but relaxed", was concluded

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