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Participative Leadership and Shared Facility Management: An Integrated Model for Conducive Learning Environments

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Abstract: This study rigorously examines the implementation of participative leadership in the intricate context of shared facility management within multi-unit elementary school complexes, specifically focusing on the SDN Tegal Alur Complex. Employing a qualitative phenomenological approach, the research deeply probes the subjective experiences and perceptions of school principals, teachers, and administrative staff concerning interschool collaboration in resource allocation and maintenance. The investigation reveals a highly effective and robust operational model that synergistically integrates Rensis Likert's Participative Management Theory with W. Edwards Deming's Plan-Do-Check-Act cycle. This integrated framework's success is attributed to several key elements: active stakeholder participation in decision-making processes, which significantly fosters inclusivity and prevents conflicts; the establishment of transparent and responsive two-way communication channels; and the cultivation of a profound sense of ownership and collective responsibility among all parties, leading to voluntary maintenance and ethical usage. Furthermore, the pivotal "linking-pin" role played by school principals ensures seamless coordination and mediation between the autonomous school units, while the institutionalized PDCA-based evaluation and follow-up mechanism drives continuous improvement and adaptive problem-solving, effectively addressing challenges such as noise disturbances. This research critically addresses a significant gap in the literature regarding the systematic integration of leadership theories and facility management practices in shared educational settings. It offers an empirically derived, adaptable operational model that not only enhances resource efficiency but also actively promotes a collaborative culture, ultimately contributing to a more conducive and sustainable learning environment across multiple schools.

Keywords: Participative Leadership, Shared Facilities, PDCA Cycle, Phenomenological Study.

INTRODUCTION

Primary schools serve as an essential foundation within the overall education system, where students begin developing their character, basic knowledge, and social skills that shape their growth at subsequent levels (Toyinbo, 2023; Yangambi, 2023). At this stage, schools

function not only as learning spaces but also as environments that shape students' mindsets, habits, and values (Scruggs & Mastropieri, 2006). To support these objectives, the availability of adequate educational facilities and infrastructure plays a central role (Ruhyana & Aeni, 2019). Well-managed facilities enable the learning process to run more effectively, efficiently, and comfortably. (Nurafni et al., 2025; Yangambi, 2023) Elements such as lighting arrangements, classroom conditions, ventilation, open spaces, and proper sanitation facilities significantly influence students' comfort and motivation to learn (Nainggolan, 2024; Toyinbo, 2023). Conversely, facilities that are poorly planned or inadequately managed can lead to an uncondusive learning atmosphere, complaints from teachers and students, and a decline in the overall quality of educational services (Ruhyana & Aeni, 2019).

The challenges of facility management become even more complex when educational units occupy the same area and must share infrastructure with other schools (Le et al., 2023; Vincent, 2014). This situation is evident in the SDN Tegal Alur Complex comprising SDN Tegal Alur 06, 07 Pagi, and 21 Petang in West Jakarta which utilizes various facilities jointly, such as fields, halls, and multipurpose rooms (Aminpour et al., 2024). Ideally, the shared use of these facilities could enhance resource efficiency, expand opportunities for school activities, and encourage interschool collaboration. However, conditions in the field reveal several fundamental issues, including overlapping activity schedules, insufficient communication among stakeholders, and the absence of consistently agreed-upon usage regulations. These issues not only hinder the effectiveness of facility utilization but also have the potential to create conflicts among school communities due to differences in perceptions, priorities, and needs (Aminpour et al., 2024). Such conditions highlight that joint facility management cannot operate optimally without clear coordination and structured collaborative mechanisms.

These problems underscore the need for leadership capable of unifying diverse interests, managing interschool dynamics, and encouraging active participation from all school stakeholders in the management of shared facilities (Malepathirana, 2024; Pinheiro et al., 2025). In this context, Rensis Likert's Participative Management Theory provides a relevant conceptual framework (Likert & Likert, 1980). Likert views organizations as social systems that function optimally only when all members are meaningfully involved in decision-making processes (Hernthaisong et al., 2017). Such participation not only improves the quality of decisions but also fosters a sense of ownership, shared responsibility, and commitment to policy implementation (Malepathirana, 2024). Within educational settings, this participative approach becomes particularly important when facilities are used concurrently by multiple schools. As educational leaders, principals have a strategic role in guiding collaborative processes and ensuring that each school unit remains connected through effective communication (Hernthaisong et al., 2017; Kilag et al., 2023).

Likert's Participative Management Model emphasizes five key components highly relevant to shared facility management (Likert & Likert, 1980). First, participation in decision-making ensures that all school members have the opportunity to express their needs and aspirations regarding facility use (Malepathirana, 2024). Second, two-way communication is crucial for building shared understanding and openly resolving emerging challenges. Third, a sense of ownership and shared responsibility encourages all parties to care about the sustainability of the facilities (Hernthaisong et al., 2017). Fourth, the linking-pin role played by principals ensures smooth coordination among schools through communication structures that connect various units (Likert & Likert, 1980). Fifth, evaluation and follow-up guarantee the consistency of the management process through continuous monitoring and improvement (Susanto et al., 2025). Together, these five aspects establish a foundation for the collaborative work patterns needed to manage shared facilities effectively.

To strengthen the implementation of participative management, the principles of Total Quality Management through Deming's Plan-Do-Check-Act cycle can serve as an operational instrument (Setthiya et al., 2015; Susanto et al., 2025). Through the Plan stage, schools within

the complex can formulate transparent plans for shared facility use (Susanto et al., 2025). The Do stage involves implementing the agreed-upon policies according to established commitments (Setthiya et al., 2015). The Check stage enables periodic monitoring and evaluation of implementation (Le et al., 2023). Finally, the Act stage facilitates follow-up improvements to address issues that arise (Susanto et al., 2025). The use of the PDCA cycle ensures that shared facility management is not merely based on initial agreements but is continuously refined in accordance with needs and field dynamics (Setthiya et al., 2015) This contributes to more effective facility utilization in terms of scheduling, maintenance, and the mitigation of obstacles such as noise disturbances that may affect learning comfort.

Given the complexity of interactions among educational actors in managing shared facilities, this study employs a phenomenological approach (Manuel et al., 2024; Soliva & Escote, 2024). This approach enables the researcher to understand the subjective experiences of principals, teachers, and educational staff in practising participative leadership (Ziduli & Buka, 2023). Phenomenology provides space to explore their meanings, perceptions, and interpretations of interschool collaboration processes, decision-making dynamics, and challenges encountered in managing joint facilities. (Soliva & Escote, 2024) Thus, this study not only describes managerial processes technically but also interprets how the values of participation and collaboration shape a collective work culture within a school complex environment.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research approach, specifically utilizing a phenomenological method, to explore and understand the profound meaning and essential experiences of individuals directly engaged in the phenomenon of participative leadership within elementary school contexts. The choice of phenomenology is deliberate, as the research's primary goal is not to test hypotheses or quantify relationships between variables, but rather to delve deeply into how school principals, teachers, and administrative staff interpret and practice participative leadership in the shared management of facilities and infrastructure (Creswell, 2018). This approach facilitates an in-depth investigation into the subjective meanings embedded in actions, interactions, and experiences of the research participants within their specific social milieu (Sugiyono, 2023).

The research was conducted at the Tegal Alur State Elementary School Complex, which comprises SDN Tegal Alur 06, 07 Pagi, and 21 Petang, located in Kalideres District, West Jakarta. This specific complex was strategically chosen due to its unique characteristic: three distinct schools co-existing within a single geographical area and sharing common facilities such as sports fields, halls, and multipurpose rooms. This configuration provides a rich and pertinent context for investigating the dynamics of participative leadership in the collaborative management of shared educational resources.

Research participants were selected through a purposive sampling technique, focusing on individuals identified as possessing a deep understanding of the researched phenomenon and direct involvement in the shared facility management process. The participant group included three school principals, six teachers, and three administrative staff members, representing each of the schools within the complex. The selection criteria emphasized active participation in the planning, utilization, and maintenance phases of the shared facilities. The final number of participants was determined by the principle of data saturation, ensuring that data collection concluded when no new significant information or themes emerged from further inquiry (Miles et al., 2014).

Data collection was systematically carried out using three primary methods: in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation study. In-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted to allow participants ample freedom to articulate their unique perspectives and experiences regarding participative leadership practices. Interview questions

were meticulously crafted to address five core aspects of Likert's participative management system: involvement in decision-making, two-way communication channels, the cultivation of a sense of ownership and collective responsibility, the strategic role of linking pins, and mechanisms for ongoing evaluation and follow-up. All interviews were digitally recorded with explicit participant consent and subsequently transcribed verbatim to facilitate rigorous thematic analysis.

Participant observation was concurrently conducted to directly observe interactions among school principals, teachers, and staff during the use and scheduling of shared facilities. This method also captured communication patterns and coordination dynamics in their natural setting. The observations served a dual purpose: to validate data gathered through interviews and to document social dynamics that might not be fully articulated in formal conversations.

A comprehensive documentation study complemented the primary data collection. This involved analyzing relevant institutional documents such as minutes from inter-school coordination meetings, official joint decrees, facility usage schedules, photographic records of activities, and administrative data pertaining to infrastructure. These documented sources provided supplementary evidence, strengthening and cross-verifying findings derived from both interviews and observations (Sugiyono, 2023).

Data analysis was performed interactively and iteratively, following the robust model developed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña. This analytical framework encompasses three principal stages: data reduction, involving the systematic process of selecting, focusing, abstracting, and transforming the raw data collected from interviews, observations, and documentation; data display, wherein the reduced data are presented in coherent thematic narratives to facilitate the identification of patterns, categories, and relationships; and conclusion drawing and verification, which involves interpreting the emergent meanings from the data and ensuring the validity and trustworthiness of these interpretations by rigorously comparing findings across multiple data sources. The cyclical nature of this analysis meant that researchers continuously moved between data collection, analysis, and critical reflection on emerging themes until a holistic and comprehensive understanding of the investigated phenomenon was achieved.

To uphold the trustworthiness and credibility of the data, this study meticulously applied techniques such as methodological triangulation (integrating insights from interviews, observations, and documents) and member checking (presenting preliminary findings to participants for their feedback and validation).

Through this phenomenological lens, the research endeavours to uncover the collective lived experiences of principals, teachers, and staff in exercising participative leadership. The anticipated findings will offer profound insights into how Likert's five principles of participative management are instantiated in the practical management of shared facilities at the elementary school level, and how the interplay of communication, responsibility, and collaboration ultimately fosters a supportive leadership culture conducive to an optimal learning environment.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study reveals that the implementation of participative leadership at the SDN Tegal Alur Complex has created an ecosystem for managing shared facilities that is not only collaborative but also sustainable. The analysis shows that the five aspects of Likert's (1961) model operate synergistically, forming an integrated operational model that simultaneously addresses the research gap regarding the lack of systematic integration between participative management theory and continuous improvement principles in the context of shared facility management at the elementary school level. These findings provide empirical evidence that a participative approach is not only relevant but also highly effective in managing the complexity of multi-unit organizations sharing limited resources.

Participation in Decision-Making and Two-Way Communication: The Democratic and Dynamic Foundation of Collaboration

The first aspect, participation in decision-making, confirms that the active involvement of all stakeholders is a primary prerequisite for creating inclusive and fair facility governance. Field findings show that every policy related to the use of shared facilities, such as scheduling halls, fields, and multipurpose rooms, always goes through a deliberative process involving teacher and staff representatives from all three schools. The Principal of SDN 06 Pagi emphasized, "Every time we schedule activities, all parties are involved to prevent conflicts of interest." This statement indicates that participation is viewed as a preventive mechanism to anticipate conflict. Furthermore, a teacher expressed, "We feel valued because our opinions are heard before policies are set," showing that participation is not merely procedural but also psychological in building respect and inclusion. This finding aligns with literature stating that participative approaches improve educational environments, as such collective decision-making processes directly contribute to more comprehensive and widely accepted policies, which in turn reduce resistance and increase implementation commitment.

This aspect is significantly reinforced by the success in building effective and multidimensional two-way communication. Communication occurs not only vertically between leaders and staff but also horizontally among teachers from different schools and diagonally across various work units. The Principal of SDN 21 Petang explained the practical mechanism: "Information regarding schedules and activities is always conveyed through a joint WhatsApp group so all parties can respond immediately." The use of group communication technology creates a transparent and responsive virtual public space where information is not only delivered one-way but can also be immediately confirmed, responded to, or corrected by other parties. This communication pattern minimizes information gaps and misunderstandings, which are often sources of conflict in shared resource management. The integration of substantive participation in decision-making with ongoing open communication creates a democratic foundation for collaboration. This foundation is a prerequisite for a conducive learning environment, as conflicts in facility use that often cause disruptions (such as noise) can be anticipated and resolved through dialogue, rather than through unilateral decisions that risk causing dissatisfaction.

Sense of Ownership, Collective Responsibility, and the Principal's Role as a Linking Pin: From Involvement to Sustainable Maintenance

The third aspect, the development of a sense of ownership and shared responsibility, emerges as a natural outcome of intensive participation and communication. Research findings indicate that this value has been internalized into daily norms and work culture. A teacher from SDN 07 Pagi stated with clear awareness, "We are accustomed to maintaining shared facilities because if they break, everyone cannot use them." This statement reflects a collective understanding of interdependence, which forms the logical basis for shared responsibility. This sense of ownership is not merely declarative but manifests in concrete actions such as cleaning the hall after use, reporting damage, and adhering to unwritten rules regarding usage ethics. This finding provides strong confirmation for literature suggesting that staff involvement in management fosters a sense of collective responsibility. In the context of shared facilities, this sense of ownership is a critical social capital because it reduces monitoring costs and encourages voluntary maintenance, ultimately extending the lifespan of shared assets and supporting operational sustainability.

However, in multi-unit organizations like this school complex, coordination among autonomous units presents its own challenge. This is where the principal's role as a linking pin becomes a determining success factor. Each principal acts as a connector bridging the internal interests of their school with the external coordination needs among schools. A verbatim quote from one principal illustrates this role: "We already have an open communication system; every

cross-school activity is discussed together so no one feels disadvantaged." This statement shows that principals are not merely receivers or givers of information but actively serve as facilitators and mediators ensuring that deliberations proceed fairly and yield decisions accepted by all parties. This linking pin role is crucial in managing group dynamics, preventing the dominance of one school over others, and ensuring that each unit's voice is heard. The in-depth findings on the mechanism of the linking pin role provide valuable contributions to educational management literature, which remains limited in discussing effective coordination in multi-elementary school organizational settings. This research demonstrates that the success of shared facility management heavily depends on leadership's ability to function as an active, trusted, and solution-oriented connecting node.

PDCA-Based Evaluation and Follow-Up: A Reflective Cycle for Adaptation and Continuous Improvement

The fifth aspect, evaluation and follow-up, is the component that transforms collaborative practice from mere routine activity into a learning and adaptive management system. The evaluation process at the SDN Tegal Alur Complex is not incidental but institutionalized in quarterly coordination meetings involving representatives from all schools. One principal described the follow-up nature of this evaluation: "Evaluation results are usually immediately followed up together, for example, by revising schedules or proposing facility maintenance to the education office." This mechanism clearly adopts Deming's Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) cycle. The Check stage is conducted through participative evaluation forums, while the Act stage is realized in immediate collective follow-up. Integrating the PDCA principle into a participative framework is a key finding of this research, as it produces a robust hybrid model: participation ensures commitment and relevance, while PDCA provides a systematic framework for improvement.

The implementation of this hybrid model was tested in addressing real challenges, such as the noise problem. Based on evaluation results, a School Environment Control Team was formed to coordinate outdoor activity schedules and monitor noise levels. Other concrete follow-ups included schedule adjustments, setting sound volume rules, and environmental ethics socialization. This strategy demonstrates a proactive and collaborative problem-solving approach, where operational issues are not resolved unilaterally or ad-hoc but through an institutional mechanism involving all affected parties. This proves that participative evaluation is not a mere ritual but becomes an engine for operational innovation and adaptation. This finding reinforces studies on the importance of good facility management for creating a conducive learning environment, while also providing an operational blueprint on how to achieve it through a structured cycle of planning, evaluation, and participation.

Synthesis and Theoretical Contribution: An Integrated Operational Model Holistically, these five aspects interact to form a dynamic and self-correcting system for managing shared facilities. Participation and two-way communication form the democratic input and process. Sense of ownership and responsibility are the psychological and cultural outputs that drive maintenance behavior. The principal's role as a linking pin is the coordination mechanism that binds three different units into one unified system. Meanwhile, PDCA-based evaluation and follow-up function as the feedback and learning mechanism ensuring the system can adapt to new challenges and continuously improve.

This research provides several important contributions to filling literature gaps. First, it successfully performs an analytical integration between Likert's participative leadership theory and Deming's PDCA continuous improvement model in the context of shared facility management in elementary schools, a previously underexplored domain. Second, through a phenomenological approach, it successfully uncovers the how and why behind cross-school coordination mechanisms, providing an in-depth understanding of the subjective experiences of actors not captured by quantitative studies. Third, and most applicably, this research

formulates an integrated operational model derived from field best practices. This model offers a clear framework starting from building a participative and communicative foundation, strengthening coordination through the linking pin role, to ensuring sustainability through a participative evaluation cycle that can be adopted and adapted by other school complexes facing similar challenges.

Thus, this study concludes that the success of shared facility management at the SDN Tegal Alur Complex is not accidental but the result of intentional leadership and management design adhering to the principles of participation, coordination, and continuous learning. The resulting model demonstrates that creating a conducive learning environment is the outcome of an inclusive and adaptive management process, where well-managed facilities are both the means and the manifestation of a healthy culture of collaboration among all school members.

CONCLUSION

This study meticulously investigated the implementation of participative leadership in the management of shared facilities within the SDN Tegal Alur Complex, employing a phenomenological approach to understand the subjective experiences of school principals, teachers, and administrative staff. The findings unequivocally demonstrate that a synergistic application of Likert's Participative Management Model and Deming's Plan-Do-Check-Act cycle forms a robust and effective framework for shared facility governance in multi-unit elementary school settings.

Specifically, the research revealed that participation in decision-making and two-way communication are fundamental pillars, fostering inclusivity, preventing conflicts, and building a sense of value among stakeholders, with the use of joint communication platforms, such as WhatsApp groups, proving crucial for transparent and responsive information exchange. The cultivation of a sense of ownership and collective responsibility emerges naturally from active participation, leading to voluntary maintenance and adherence to usage ethics, thereby enhancing the sustainability and longevity of shared resources. The linking-pin role of school principals is critical for effective coordination, acting as facilitators and mediators to ensure fair deliberations and decisions among the autonomous school units. The PDCA-based evaluation and follow-up mechanism, institutionalized through quarterly coordination meetings, transforms collaborative practice into a continuous learning and adaptive management system, enabling proactive problem-solving, as exemplified by the effective management of noise disturbances, and ensuring ongoing improvement.

This study makes several significant contributions to the existing literature. First, it offers an analytical integration of Likert's participative leadership theory with Deming's PDCA model, addressing a critical gap in the context of shared facility management in elementary schools. Second, through its phenomenological methodology, it provides an in-depth understanding of the subjective experiences and "hows" and "whys" behind cross-school coordination mechanisms, which quantitative studies often overlook. Third, and of practical importance, this research culminates in an integrated operational model for shared facility management. This model, derived from field best practices, provides a clear, adaptable framework for other school complexes facing similar challenges, emphasizing a foundation of participation and communication, strengthened coordination through linking pins, and sustained effectiveness through continuous evaluation.

In conclusion, the success in managing shared facilities at the SDN Tegal Alur Complex is not an arbitrary outcome but a direct result of intentional leadership and management design, anchored in principles of participation, coordination, and continuous learning. This research underscores that creating a conducive learning environment is inherently linked to an inclusive and adaptive management process, where well-managed facilities are both a means and a manifestation of a healthy, collaborative culture among all school members.

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