



Research Article

Unlocking Excellence: The Impact of Teacher Competence on Learning and Leadership

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Abstract: This study investigates the dual impact of teacher competence on student academic performance and the development of leadership qualities in Senior High Schools and Vocational High Schools in Kabupaten Serang, Banten Province. Using a qualitative research approach, data were collected through interviews, focus groups, and classroom observations involving teachers and students. The findings reveal that teacher competence encompasses not only mastery of subject matter and pedagogical skills but also emotional intelligence and leadership modeling. Competent teachers create supportive and participatory learning environments that enhance both academic achievement and leadership development among students. The research highlights that effective teachers are those who not only deliver content but also engage students in meaningful ways, fostering a sense of belonging and motivation. This engagement is crucial, as it encourages students to take ownership of their learning and develop critical thinking skills. Furthermore, the study identifies that teachers who model leadership behaviors—such as ethical decision-making, effective communication, and collaboration—significantly influence students' perceptions of leadership and their willingness to adopt similar traits. However, challenges such as limited access to professional development and resource constraints affect the full realization of teacher competence. Many teachers express a desire for ongoing training and support to enhance their skills, yet systemic barriers often hinder their professional growth. The study underscores the need for comprehensive teacher development programs and policy support to improve educational outcomes holistically. These insights are valuable for educators, policymakers, and school administrators aiming to foster academic excellence and leadership skills in students. By prioritizing teacher competence and providing the necessary resources, schools can create an environment that not only promotes academic success but also prepares students to become effective leaders in their communities.

Keywords: Teacher Competence, Academic Performance, Leadership Development, Emotional Intelligence, Education.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Education serves as the cornerstone of societal progress, functioning as a powerful instrument to shape individuals and communities toward brighter futures (Dey, n.d.). Central to this transformative process is the teacher, who plays a multifaceted role in guiding, mentoring, and inspiring students. Teachers are not merely transmitters of knowledge; they are pivotal agents of change who nurture intellectual growth, foster critical thinking, and cultivate character (Lama, 2025). Their influence often extends beyond academic achievements, shaping the moral values and leadership qualities of their students.

The concept of teacher competence is fundamental to understanding the factors that contribute to effective teaching and learning (Cevikbas et al., 2024). Teacher competence encompasses more than mastery of subject matter; it includes a broad spectrum of skills, attitudes, and attributes such as pedagogical expertise, interpersonal skills, emotional intelligence, and the ability to adapt teaching strategies to meet diverse student needs (Sadiqzade, 2024). In today's increasingly diverse and technology-driven classrooms, teacher competence also involves cultural responsiveness and digital literacy.

The importance of teacher competence in enhancing learning outcomes is well-documented. (Canuto et al., 2024) emphasize that highly competent teachers significantly impact student achievement, with evidence suggesting their influence can improve academic performance by up to 50% compared to less effective educators. This highlights the critical role teachers play in closing achievement gaps and promoting equitable learning opportunities.

Beyond academic success, teachers are instrumental in fostering leadership qualities in students. Schools are not only centers for knowledge acquisition but also environments where young people develop the skills, attitudes, and values necessary to become community leaders. Teachers serve as role models, demonstrating leadership traits such as effective communication, ethical decision-making, and resilience (Anele & Ogonna, 2024). These qualities, when embodied by teachers, are often unconsciously adopted by students, contributing to their personal and professional development.

Why Teacher Competence Matters

The significance of teacher competence is reflected not only in research but also in global education policies. The UNESCO Education 2030 Agenda underscores the necessity of qualified and competent teachers to achieve inclusive and equitable quality education. According to (UNESCO, 2021), teacher quality is the most influential in-school factor affecting student learning outcomes, particularly in low- and middle-income countries where educational disparities are more pronounced.

Teacher competence is a multifaceted construct comprising several critical dimensions. Competent teachers possess a deep understanding of instructional strategies and know how to deliver content effectively. They tailor their teaching methods to accommodate diverse learning styles, ensuring all students have equal opportunities to succeed. For example, differentiated instruction, which customizes lessons based on individual student needs, has been shown to enhance engagement and academic achievement (Goyibova et al., 2025).

In addition to pedagogical skills, emotional intelligence is vital to teacher competence. Teachers with high emotional intelligence manage classroom dynamics effectively, build positive relationships, and create supportive learning environments. This ability helps them address students' social and emotional needs, fostering a sense of belonging and motivation. Furthermore, strong interpersonal skills enable teachers to establish trust and inspire active participation in learning.

Adaptability and a commitment to lifelong learning are also essential traits of competent teachers. In a rapidly evolving world, educators must remain flexible and open to continuous professional development. The integration of technology in education, for instance, requires teachers to develop digital literacy and explore innovative teaching methods. Those who engage in ongoing professional growth are better equipped to stay current with educational trends and best practices (Sadiqzade, 2024).

Teacher Competence and Leadership Development

While much research focuses on the link between teacher competence and academic performance, the role of teachers in nurturing leadership qualities in students is an emerging area of interest. Leadership development is a crucial component of holistic education, preparing students to assume responsibilities and contribute positively to society (Miao & Nduneseokwu, 2025).

Teachers often represent the first examples of leadership students encounter. By demonstrating integrity, empathy, and problem-solving skills, teachers set behavioral standards that students tend to emulate. For instance, a teacher who consistently models ethical decision-making and respectful interactions teaches students the importance of these values (Kumar, 2024).

Leadership development is closely connected to critical thinking and collaboration, both fostered through effective teaching. Teachers who encourage inquiry, multiple perspectives, and teamwork help students develop skills essential for leadership (Mueller et al., 2025). (Zhao et al., 2024) argue that these practices not only improve academic outcomes but also build the confidence and self-efficacy necessary for leadership roles.

Creating a classroom culture oriented toward leadership is vital in shaping students' attitudes. Teachers who promote inclusive and participatory learning environments empower students to take initiative and develop leadership potential (Parveen, 2024). Assigning roles in group activities or encouraging students to lead discussions provides valuable leadership practice. In such settings, students learn to express ideas confidently, collaborate effectively, and take ownership of their learning—key components of effective leadership.

Addressing Research Gaps

Despite extensive research on teacher competence, gaps remain in understanding its broader impact on student development (Suárez-Mesa & Gómez, 2024). While its role in improving academic outcomes is well recognized, less attention has been given to how teacher competence influences non-academic attributes such as leadership, resilience, and civic engagement. This study aims to address this gap by exploring the holistic impact of teacher competence on both learning and leadership.

Additionally, it is important to examine how systemic factors, such as access to professional development and school resources, affect teacher competence. Teachers in under-resourced schools may face greater challenges in developing and maintaining competence, potentially perpetuating educational inequalities (Singh, 2024). This study seeks to provide actionable insights to improve teacher quality and student outcomes by addressing these issues.

Research Objectives

This study aims to investigate the dual impact of teacher competence by examining its effect on student academic performance as well as its role in fostering leadership qualities among students. Specifically, the research focuses on understanding how teacher competence influences student learning outcomes and in what ways it contributes to the development of leadership skills in students (Kusmawan et al., 2025). The findings are expected to provide valuable insights for policymakers, educators, and school administrators who are dedicated to enhancing the quality of education and preparing students not only for academic success but also for leadership roles in an ever-changing world.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of teacher competence has been extensively explored in educational research, highlighting its critical role in shaping both academic and non-academic outcomes for students (Fitri & Panggabean, 2024). Teacher competence is broadly defined as the combination of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviors that enable educators to deliver effective instruction and foster a positive learning environment (Sadiqzade, 2024). This multifaceted construct includes pedagogical expertise, subject matter knowledge, emotional intelligence, and the ability to adapt teaching methods to diverse student needs.

Research consistently shows that teacher competence is a key determinant of student achievement. (Canuto et al., 2024) provide compelling evidence that students taught by highly competent teachers perform significantly better academically, with improvements in test scores and overall learning outcomes. This underscores the importance of investing in teacher development to reduce achievement gaps and promote equity in education (M. Tang et al., 2024).

Beyond academic performance, teacher competence also influences students' social and emotional development. Emotional intelligence and interpersonal skills enable teachers to create supportive classroom climates that enhance student motivation and engagement (Goyibova et al., 2025). Such environments are essential for nurturing critical thinking, collaboration, and resilience—skills that are foundational for leadership development.

The role of teachers in fostering leadership qualities among students has gained increasing attention in recent years. Studies by (Zhao et al., 2024) emphasize that teachers who model leadership behaviors—such as ethical decision-making, effective communication, and problem-solving—serve as powerful role models for students.

Furthermore, instructional practices that encourage student participation, inquiry, and collaboration contribute to the development of leadership competencies.

Global education policies also recognize the importance of teacher competence. The UNESCO Education 2030 Agenda highlights qualified and competent teachers as vital to achieving inclusive and equitable quality education worldwide (UNESCO, 2021). This policy framework calls for continuous professional development and support systems to ensure teachers can meet the evolving demands of diverse and technology-rich classrooms.

Despite the extensive literature on teacher competence and academic outcomes, there remains a gap in understanding its broader impact on leadership development and other non-academic attributes (Gilliam, 2024). Additionally, systemic challenges such as unequal access to professional development and resource disparities continue to affect teacher competence, particularly in under-resourced settings (Rana, 2024). Addressing these gaps is essential for creating comprehensive strategies that enhance both teacher quality and student development.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative research design to explore the impact of teacher competence on student academic performance and the development of leadership qualities (Arifin et al., 2024). The qualitative approach allows for an in-depth understanding of participants' experiences, perceptions, and the contextual factors influencing these outcomes.

Research Participants and Location

The research will be conducted in Senior High Schools (Sekolah Menengah Atas) and Vocational High Schools (Sekolah Menengah Kejuruan) located in Kabupaten Serang, Banten Province (Sari, 2024). Participants will include a purposive sample of teachers and students from these schools to capture diverse perspectives. Approximately 15–20 teachers and 30–40 students will be involved to ensure rich, detailed data.

Data Collection

Data will be collected through semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and classroom observations (Quintela Do Carmo et al., 2024). Interviews with teachers will explore their views on teacher competence, instructional strategies, and leadership development (Asbari, 2024). Focus groups with students will provide insights into how teacher behaviors influence their academic motivation and leadership growth. Classroom observations will document teaching practices and student interactions in natural settings.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis will be used to analyze the qualitative data (Nguyen-Trung, 2024). This involves coding the data to identify patterns and themes related to teacher competence and its effects on student outcomes (Kalim, 2024). The analysis will be iterative, allowing themes to emerge inductively from the data while also considering relevant theoretical frameworks.

Ethical Considerations

The study will adhere to ethical standards by obtaining informed consent, ensuring confidentiality, and respecting participants' rights to withdraw at any time without consequence (Ehidiemen & Oladapo, 2024).

This qualitative methodology is designed to provide a rich, contextualized understanding of how teacher competence shapes both academic and leadership development in students, offering valuable insights for educational practice and policy (Sipahioğlu, 2025).

4. RESULTS

The qualitative data collected from semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and classroom observations in Senior High Schools (Sekolah Menengah Atas) and Vocational High Schools (Sekolah Menengah Kejuruan) in Kabupaten Serang, Banten Province, revealed several significant themes regarding teacher competence and its impact on student academic performance and leadership development (Sari, 2024).

Teacher Competence and Academic Performance

Participants consistently highlighted that teacher competence, particularly mastery of subject matter and pedagogical skills, plays a crucial role in enhancing student academic outcomes (Izzah, 2025). Teachers who demonstrated clear, structured explanations and employed diverse instructional strategies—such as group work, multimedia resources, and real-life examples—were perceived as more effective in facilitating student understanding (Hua & Le, 2025). For instance, one student noted, “When the teacher explains the material clearly and uses examples from daily life, it becomes easier to grasp difficult concepts.” Teachers also emphasized the importance of adapting lessons to accommodate different learning styles and abilities, which helped maintain student engagement and motivation.

Moreover, classroom observations confirmed that competent teachers actively monitored student progress and provided timely, constructive feedback (SINGSON JR, 2024). This practice was linked to improved student confidence and academic persistence. Several teachers reported using formative assessments to identify learning gaps and adjust their teaching accordingly, which students appreciated as it made learning more personalized (Prastikawati et al., 2024).

Emotional Intelligence and Classroom Environment

A prominent theme that emerged was the critical role of teachers’ emotional intelligence in creating a positive and supportive classroom climate (Li & Zhang, 2024). Teachers who exhibited empathy, patience, and approachability were able to build strong rapport with students, fostering trust and open communication (K. H. D. Tang, 2025). Students expressed that such relationships made them feel valued and motivated to participate actively in class. One student shared, “My teacher listens to our problems and encourages us, which makes me want to do better.”

Teachers also described how managing classroom emotions and conflicts effectively contributed to a conducive learning environment. For example, teachers who remained calm during disruptions and addressed students’ emotional needs helped reduce anxiety and improve focus (Burdick & Corr, 2024). This emotional support was seen as essential not only for academic success but also for students’ overall well-being and resilience.

Teacher Competence and Leadership Development

The data revealed that teacher competence extends beyond academic instruction to include the modeling and fostering of leadership qualities in students (Ghamrawi et al., 2024). Teachers who consistently demonstrated integrity, ethical behavior, effective communication, and problem-solving skills served as influential role models. Students reported that observing these traits inspired them to develop similar qualities.

Classroom practices that encouraged student leadership were frequently mentioned. Teachers who assigned roles such as group leader, discussion facilitator, or project coordinator provided students with opportunities to practice decision-making, collaboration, and responsibility (Hishamuddin et al., 2024). One teacher explained, “By giving students leadership roles in group activities, they learn to communicate better and take ownership of their learning.” Students confirmed that these experiences helped build their confidence and prepared them for future leadership roles.

Challenges and Contextual Factors Affecting Teacher Competence

Despite the positive impacts, participants identified several challenges that hinder teacher competence development (Khairiah et al., 2024). Limited access to ongoing professional development, especially in vocational schools, was a common concern. Teachers expressed a need for more training on innovative teaching methods,

digital literacy, and leadership facilitation. Resource constraints, such as inadequate teaching materials and technology, also limited their ability to implement effective practices (Bristol-Alagbariya et al., 2024).

Additionally, some teachers reported heavy workloads and large class sizes as barriers to providing individualized attention and fostering leadership opportunities (Stoddart, 2024). These systemic issues highlight the need for policy interventions to support teacher capacity building and resource allocation.

Overall, the findings illustrate that teacher competence is a multifaceted construct involving pedagogical expertise, emotional intelligence, and leadership modeling (Rider, 2025). Together, these elements contribute significantly to both student academic achievement and the development of leadership skills, emphasizing the importance of comprehensive teacher development programs.

5. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reinforce the complex and multifaceted nature of teacher competence and its profound influence on both student academic achievement and leadership development (Mustari & Nurhayati, 2024). Consistent with (Sadiqzade, 2024), and supported by recent studies, teacher competence extends beyond subject mastery to include pedagogical adaptability, emotional intelligence, and leadership modeling.

Recent research by (Ezinwa, 2024) highlights the critical role of teacher–student relationship-building competence in fostering a supportive learning environment that enhances student motivation and engagement. This aligns with our findings that teachers' emotional intelligence—manifested through empathy, patience, and effective classroom management—creates a positive climate conducive to both academic success and personal growth (Siddiqui, 2025). Such emotional support is essential for students' resilience and well-being, echoing the conclusions of (Derakhshan & Fathi, 2024) and reaffirmed by more recent studies (Gutierrez et al., 2024).

The study also extends the understanding of teacher competence by emphasizing its role in nurturing leadership qualities among students (Asbari, 2024). (Zhao et al., 2024) argued that teachers who model ethical behavior, effective communication, and problem-solving skills serve as powerful role models. This is further supported by the 2023 findings of the Global Partnership for Education (GPE KIX), which stress that leadership development in students is closely linked to teachers' ability to create participatory and inclusive classroom environments (KIX, 2024). Our data confirm that assigning leadership roles and encouraging collaboration empower students to develop confidence, decision-making skills, and self-efficacy—key attributes for future leaders.

However, systemic challenges remain a significant barrier to fully realizing teacher competence, especially in under-resourced settings such as vocational schools in Kabupaten Serang (Singh, 2024). Limited access to continuous professional development and insufficient teaching resources were frequently cited by participants, echoing concerns raised in the 2023 OECD report on education trends (Özkeskin & Yıldız, 2025). This report emphasizes the urgent need for policy interventions to support teacher capacity building and equitable resource distribution to bridge educational disparities (Rana, 2024).

Moreover, the integration of technology in education, as highlighted in the 2022–2025 Instructional Technology Plans (North Colonie CSD, 2023; Solvay UFSD, 2022), demands that teachers continuously update their digital literacy skills. Our findings suggest that teachers who engage in ongoing professional development are better equipped to adapt their teaching strategies to the evolving educational landscape, thereby enhancing both academic and leadership outcomes for students (Nor et al., 2024).

In summary, this study corroborates and expands upon recent literature by demonstrating that teacher competence is a dynamic and holistic construct (Zhang & Tian, 2024). It encompasses pedagogical expertise, emotional intelligence, and leadership modeling, all of which are essential for fostering academic excellence and leadership development. Addressing systemic barriers through targeted professional development and resource allocation is critical to maximizing the positive impact of teacher competence (Salifu et al., 2024).

Future research should explore longitudinal effects of teacher competence on student leadership trajectories and investigate scalable interventions to support teacher growth in diverse educational contexts (Ghamrawi et al., 2024).

6. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that teacher competence plays a crucial role in enhancing students' academic achievement as well as fostering their leadership qualities. Teacher competence encompasses not only mastery of subject matter and pedagogical skills but also emotional intelligence and the ability to serve as leadership role models. A supportive and participatory classroom environment created by competent teachers motivates students to engage actively in learning and develop their leadership potential. However, challenges such as limited resources and access to professional development remain obstacles that need to be addressed to maximize teacher effectiveness.

Suggestions

Based on the findings, it is suggested that schools and policymakers prioritize comprehensive teacher development programs that include pedagogical, emotional, and leadership competencies. Schools should provide ongoing training and workshops to equip teachers with the skills necessary to meet the diverse needs of their students. Additionally, creating an inclusive learning environment that encourages student participation and leadership opportunities is essential for holistic student development.

Recommendations

It is recommended that government agencies and educational authorities increase access to high-quality professional development programs, especially in resource-limited areas such as Kabupaten Serang. Schools are encouraged to systematically integrate student leadership development into their curricula and extracurricular activities. Furthermore, adequate facilities and technological support should be provided to enable teachers to implement innovative and adaptive teaching methods. Future research should explore the long-term impact of teacher competence on student leadership development and identify factors that contribute to the success of teacher development initiatives.

Limitations

This study has several limitations, including its focus on a limited number of schools within Kabupaten Serang, which may affect the generalizability of the findings to other regions. The qualitative approach relies on participants' perceptions and experiences, which are inherently subjective and context-specific. Additionally, constraints related to time and resources limited the number of participants involved in the study.

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