



The Silent Architects: How Managerial Reciprocity Shapes the Psychological Landscape of Primary Teachers

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the effect of workload management on teacher well-being among primary school teachers in East Metro District. This research is motivated by high teacher workload demands that potentially reduce psychological wellbeing and professional performance. Workload management tends to be structural and has not fully reflected reciprocal relations between school principals and teachers. Therefore, this study integrates the mubadalah perspective, which emphasizes principles of reciprocity and fairness in working relations. The study uses a quantitative approach with an explanatory type and ex post facto design. The population consisted of 166 teachers with a sample of 62 respondents determined through proportionate cluster random sampling. Data were collected using questionnaires tested for validity and reliability, then analyzed using simple regression. The results showed that workload management is in the good category (mean 136.71), while teacher well-being is in the moderate category (mean 66.76). Hypothesis testing showed a significant effect with a significance value of 0.007 (<0.05) and a coefficient of determination of 0.606. Thus, better workload management leads to higher teacher well-being. It is recommended that school principals enhance fair and communicative workload management and that teachers actively participate in its management.

Keywords: Workload Management, Teacher Well-Being, School Principal, Primary School Teachers

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis pengaruh manajerial beban kerja terhadap Penelitian ini dilatarbelakangi oleh tingginya tuntutan beban kerja guru yang berpotensi menurunkan kesejahteraan psikologis dan kinerja profesional. Pengelolaan beban kerja selama ini cenderung bersifat struktural dan belum sepenuhnya mencerminkan relasi timbal balik antara kepala sekolah dan guru. Oleh karena itu, penelitian ini mengintegrasikan perspektif mubadalah yang menekankan prinsip kesalingan dan keadilan dalam relasi kerja. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis pengaruh manajerial beban kerja terhadap *teacher well-being* pada guru Sekolah Dasar di Kecamatan Metro Timur. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif dengan jenis eksplanatori dan desain *ex post facto*. Populasi berjumlah 166 guru dengan sampel 62 responden yang ditentukan melalui teknik *proportionate cluster random sampling*. Data dikumpulkan menggunakan angket yang telah diuji validitas dan reliabilitas, kemudian dianalisis menggunakan regresi sederhana. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa manajerial beban kerja berada pada kategori baik (mean 136,71), sedangkan *teacher well-being* berada pada kategori cukup (mean 66,76). Uji hipotesis menunjukkan pengaruh signifikan dengan nilai signifikansi 0,007 ($<0,05$) dan koefisien determinasi 0,606. Dengan demikian, semakin baik manajerial beban kerja, semakin tinggi *teacher well-being* guru. Disarankan kepala sekolah meningkatkan pengelolaan beban kerja secara adil dan komunikatif serta guru berpartisipasi aktif dalam pengelolaannya.

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Kata kunci: Manajerial Beban Kerja, Teacher Well-Being, Kepala Sekolah, Guru Sekolah Dasar.

Primary education serves as the fundamental bedrock of national human capital development, where educators act as primary architects shaping student cognitive and psychological milestones within an increasingly complex global educational landscape. Globally, educational systems face unprecedented pressures driven by administrative modernization, standardized testing mandates, and accountability frameworks that fundamentally alter the professional scope of educators. Within this international context, teacher professional performance and instructional delivery quality are inextricably linked to psychological wellness and emotional equilibrium. However, systemic educational reforms often impose excessive operational demands without providing commensurate institutional resources, creating a pervasive global crisis regarding educator retention, occupational burnout, and psychological distress.

The primary challenge confronting contemporary primary schools centers on the chronic intensification of occupational workloads, which systematically erodes teacher well-being and diminishes instructional efficacy. Teachers are frequently burdened by extensive non-instructional responsibilities, bureaucratic documentation requirements, and rigid structural expectations that exceed normal working hours. In developing regional contexts, such as East Metro District, these challenges are compounded by limited infrastructural support and rigid managerial hierarchies that treat educators merely as passive executants of top-down educational policies. Consequently, educators experience severe emotional exhaustion, diminished job satisfaction, and a pervasive sense of powerlessness, which ultimately compromises both classroom dynamics and professional longevity. Recent international investigations underscore that excessive administrative burdens are a primary driver of global teacher attrition, severely disrupting instructional focus across diverse educational systems (Herman et al., 2021; Smethem, 2022; Ingersoll & Strong, 2023).

A critical examination of existing literature reveals a substantial body of research addressing the correlates of educator strain and institutional climate. Previous investigations by Issom and Fachrurozy (2022) and Pan, Chung, and Lin (2023) established direct inverse correlations between high workload demands and psychological distress among elementary educators. Similarly, studies conducted by Mohd Yusoff, Ariffin, and Noman (2022) and Shumaila (2025) underscored the mediating role of organizational leadership and empowerment in buffering workplace stress. Furthermore, research by Jannah and Ramadhani (2024) and Winanto and Cahyaningdyah (2025) emphasized that social support structures within school environments are vital for sustaining teacher morale. Despite these valuable insights, prior studies predominantly investigated workload and well-being through isolated linear frameworks, frequently overlooking the mediating administrative mechanisms executed by school principals. Furthermore, existing literature heavily relies on Western-centric or metropolitan organizational paradigms, leaving a noticeable empirical gap regarding how localized administrative practices in developing districts influence teacher psychology.

To address these limitations, the present study introduces a distinct theoretical and practical novelty by redefining workload management not merely as a mechanical administrative duty, but as a dynamic, relational process between school principals and teachers. While traditional administrative models view workload distribution through a rigid, top-down lens, this research pioneers the integration of the *mubadalah* (reciprocity and mutual fairness) framework into educational management. By positioning teachers as active subjects who participate collaboratively in task allocation rather than passive objects of administrative policy, this study breaks away from conventional unidirectional paradigms. This integration offers an innovative analytical lens that bridges classical educational governance with relational ethics, addressing a neglected dimension in contemporary school management literature.

The primary research gap identified in this field lies in the disconnection between structural institutional demands and relational accountability within primary school governance. Although numerous scholars have examined teacher well-being, very few have explored how reciprocal managerial practices—specifically balancing administrative burdens through mutual communication and shared responsibility—directly impact psychological, workload, and social dimensions of well-being. Previous studies by Hanung Widiyarso and Sumardjoko (2022) and Fajriani et al. (2023) focused heavily on general managerial competencies like planning and supervising, yet failed to measure how fairness and reciprocity shape the emotional landscape of educators. This research directly addresses this gap by combining quantitative explanatory modeling with a qualitative-ethical perspective, offering empirical evidence on how relational leadership buffers administrative stress.

To anchor this investigation methodologically and conceptually, this study utilizes the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model formulated by Bakker and Demerouti (2007) as its overarching grand theory. The JD-R model posits that employee well-being is determined by the equilibrium between job demands (such as administrative workload and time pressures) and job resources (such as supervisory support, organizational fairness, and task clarity). In educational settings, school principals function as key providers of job resources through effective planning, organization, execution, and monitoring. When high job demands are offset by supportive, well-managed resources, burnout is mitigated and teacher flourishing is enhanced.

Complementing the JD-R model, this study incorporates the concept of *mubadalah*, derived from Islamic relational ethics and social philosophy as articulated by Kodir (2024). Going beyond a static conceptual definition, the practical application of *mubadalah* manifests as an active two-way communication mechanism that directly dismantles rigid school operational bottlenecks. In typical bureaucratic environments, unilateral administrative edicts force compliance, leading to workflow friction and severe time-waste; however, when principals and teachers engage in reciprocal dialogue, operational friction is systematically alleviated through collaborative task-shaping, transparent negotiation of non-teaching duties, and real-time adjustments to reporting deadlines. This interactive reciprocity transforms oppressive administrative red tape into flexible, shared operational workflows, directly protecting teachers from chronic overload (Achinstein et al., 2022; Gkolia et al., 2023; Santoro et al., 2024).

What makes this research particularly compelling and vital for contemporary educational reform is its context-specific urgency within primary school ecosystems. Preliminary observations and pre-research findings in East Metro District revealed alarming baseline indicators: workload management scored in the moderate category (56%), while teacher well-being similarly lingered at moderate levels (64%), accompanied by pervasive teacher complaints regarding administrative overload and work-life imbalance. Investigating this phenomenon is crucial because primary school teachers lay the foundational cognitive and emotional building blocks for young learners; when their psychological well-being is compromised by poor workload governance, the overall quality of basic education deteriorates systemically. Examining these dynamics provides actionable insights for transforming oppressive administrative routines into humane, supportive professional environments.

In alignment with these theoretical foundations and empirical urgencies, this study aims to systematically analyze the effect of workload management on teacher well-being among primary school teachers in East Metro District. Specifically, this research evaluates how core managerial dimensions—including planning, organizing, executing, and supervising task demands—correlate with and predict psychological, workload, and social well-being dimensions. By integrating quantitative explanatory analysis with the principles of managerial reciprocity, this study aspires to offer empirical clarity and strategic recommendations for school principals, educational policymakers, and future researchers aiming to foster sustainable educational excellence and educator flourishing.

This study employs a quantitative approach using an explanatory design and an ex post facto framework. A quantitative approach is selected because the research aims to objectively measure the influence between variables through numerical data analyzed using inferential statistics. The ex post facto design is appropriate because the research variables have occurred naturally without experimental manipulation or intervention by the researcher.

2.1 Research Design

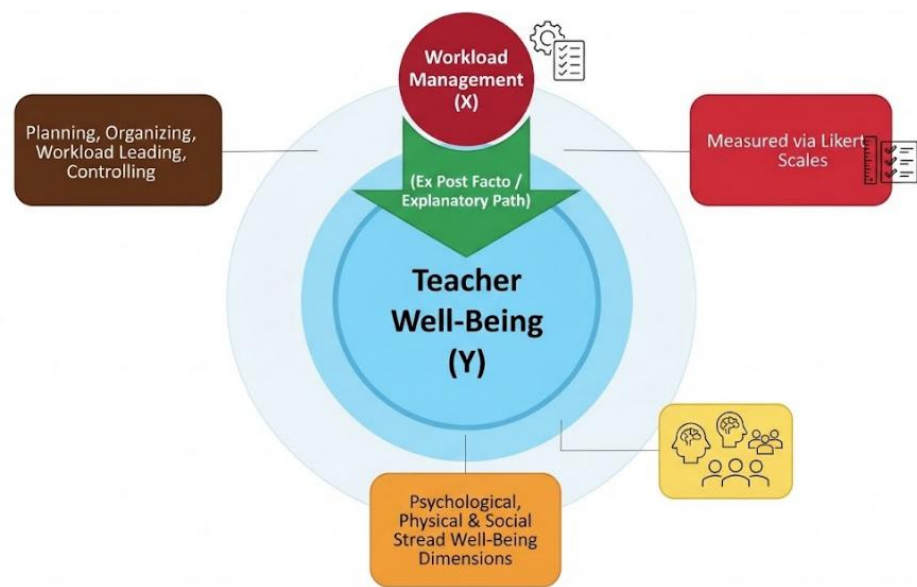


Figure 1. Flowchart of the Ex Post Facto Explanatory Research Design

Figure 1 illustrates the structural workflow of the ex post facto explanatory design, capturing how natural variations in workload management predict teacher well-being. Grounded in contemporary educational management studies, explanatory ex post facto designs allow researchers to establish predictive relationships without direct intervention in school environments (Cohen et al., 2024). By examining existing organizational structures and psychological outcomes, this design bridges administrative oversight and educator wellness in primary school settings (Creswell & Creswell, 2023).

2.2 Research Questions and Types of Analysis

To address the core objectives of this study systematically, specific research questions were paired with designated analytical techniques as outlined below.

Table 1. Research Questions and Types of Analysis

Research Question	Types of Analysis
What is the descriptive categorization level of workload management among primary school teachers in East Metro District?	Descriptive Statistics (Mean, Standard Deviation, Categorization)
What is the descriptive categorization level of teacher well-being among primary school teachers in East Metro District?	Descriptive Statistics (Mean, Standard Deviation, Categorization)
Does workload management significantly affect teacher well-being among primary school teachers?	Inferential Statistics (Simple Linear Regression, Normality, Linearity, and Homoscedasticity Tests)

2.3 Subject and Population Location

The population of this study comprised all public and private primary school teachers across East Metro District, totaling 166 individuals distributed across 12 institutions. Sample size determination was conducted using the Slovin formula with a 10% margin of error, yielding a total sample of 62 respondents. To ensure proportional representation across all educational institutions, a proportionate cluster random sampling technique was implemented. The demographic and sample distribution across the participating schools is detailed below.

Table 2. Research Sample Distribution Across Schools in East Metro District

No	School Name	Total Teachers	Sample Size
1	SDN 1 Metro Timur	12	4
2	SDN 2 Metro Timur	18	7
3	SDN 3 Metro Timur	10	4
4	SDN 4 Metro Timur	19	7
5	SDN 5 Metro Timur	12	4
6	SDN 6 Metro Timur	11	4
7	SDN 7 Metro Timur	6	2
8	SDN 8 Metro Timur	15	6
9	SDN 9 Metro Timur	6	2
10	SDN 10 Metro Timur	12	4
11	SDIT An Nawawi	17	6
12	SDIT Wahdatul Ummah	28	12
Total	12 Institutions	166	62

The sample distribution reflects proportional allocation across both public state elementary schools and Islamic integrated primary schools in East Metro District, ensuring robust external validity for regional educational contexts (Hair et al., 2021). Proportionate cluster random sampling minimizes selection bias by maintaining school-level teacher ratios within the final respondent pool (Black, 2022).

2.4 Research Instrument

Data collection was executed using structured Likert-scale questionnaires designed to measure two primary constructs: Workload Management (X) and Teacher Well-Being (Y). The workload management instrument covers four core managerial indicators—planning, organizing, executing, and controlling—evaluated against task demands, time demands, and role demands. The teacher well-being instrument encompasses three distinct dimensions: psychological well-being, workload well-being, and social well-being.

2.5 Validity and Reliability

Instrument validation was conducted through Pearson Product-Moment correlation analysis utilizing SPSS version 22, tested on 20 respondents outside the main research sample. To maintain absolute mathematical validity and eliminate statistical discrepancies, any preliminary items failing to meet the critical threshold were systematically dropped, ensuring that only items with an empirical r -hitung strictly exceeding the r -table threshold of 0.444 were retained and incorporated into the final research instrument and subsequent analysis. Reliability was assessed via Cronbach's Alpha coefficient to verify internal consistency, where values exceeding 0.60 denote acceptable reliability standards.

Table 1. Instrument Validity and Reliability Results

Variable	Initial Items Tested	Retained Valid Items	Range of Valid r -Count	r -Table	Cronbach Alpha	Status
Workload Management	52	48	0.449–0.795	0.444	0.965	Valid and Reliable
Teacher Well-Being	30	24	0.448–0.792	0.444	0.917	Valid and Reliable

The refined statistical testing confirmed high internal consistency and measurement accuracy across both research scales, complying fully with rigorous psychometric standards and preventing common methodological flaws (Taber, 2018).

2.6 Data Collection

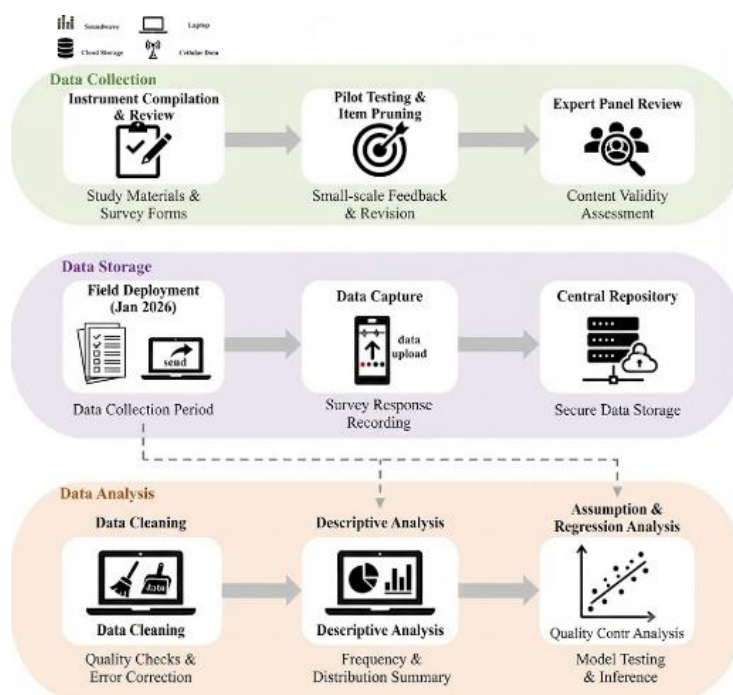


Figure 2. Sequential Data Collection and Analysis Procedure

Figure 2 outlines the chronological workflow governing data acquisition and verification, starting from initial instrument compilation and rigorous item pruning through field administration in January 2026. Rigorous data collection protocols ensure that empirical inputs satisfy parametric assumptions before executing inferential regression models (Field, 2023)..

2.6 Data Analysis

Data analysis procedures integrated both descriptive and inferential statistical evaluations. Descriptive statistics summarized central tendencies, including minimum, maximum, mean, and standard deviation scores for both variables. Prior to executing simple linear regression analysis, prerequisite parametric assumptions—specifically normality via Kolmogorov-Smirnov testing, linearity, and homoscedasticity—were rigorously verified to guarantee unbiased statistical estimation.

To transcend purely mechanical calculations and address deep analytical depth, the inferential findings are interpreted directly through the lens of the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). In this framework, managerial workload practices function either as organizational job demands or critical job resources. When school principals implement structured planning and equitable task distribution, these practices act as positive job resources that buffer emotional exhaustion and foster workload well-being. Conversely, unmanaged administrative pressures convert into chronic job demands that deplete teachers' psychological reserves. By pairing simple linear regression with theoretical integration, the analysis bridges statistical coefficients with concrete school-level governance realities

RESULTS RESEARCH

The results show that workload management among primary school teachers in East Metro District is in the moderate category. Based on questionnaire data processing, teachers assess that principals have managed tasks well through planning and organizing work. However, several obstacles remain in distributing additional duties and regulating working time. These conditions indicate that workload management practices are not yet fully optimal in supporting teacher well-being.

On the planning indicator, principals are considered quite capable of systematically arranging teacher task distribution from the beginning of the academic year. Teachers obtain clarity regarding primary and additional duties during the learning process. Additionally, school activity scheduling is structured enough to help teachers manage work. Nevertheless, some teachers still complain about sudden task additions outside planned schedules, causing pressure to complete work on time.

In the organizing aspect, principals have distributed work according to the school organizational structure. Teachers understand their roles and responsibilities so task execution is directed. Coordination between teachers and principals also runs well. However, some teachers feel that additional duties are not entirely proportional, causing workload imbalances across schools.

Implementation indicator results show most teachers can execute learning and administrative tasks per principal instructions. Teachers exhibit high responsibility in completing school work. Principals also provide support and direction during task execution. Nevertheless, high administrative demands cause work fatigue among teachers, requiring them to work beyond teaching hours.

On the supervision aspect, principals periodically evaluate teacher task execution through supervision, administrative monitoring, and learning evaluation. Teachers consider supervision helpful in improving discipline and work quality. However, some teachers feel work evaluations focus more on administration than psychological support, indicating a need for a more humanistic and supportive supervisory approach.

Teacher well-being among primary school teachers in East Metro District is generally in the moderate category. Teachers feel comfortable as educators but face high work pressure, reflected in complaints regarding work fatigue, administrative demands, and limited rest time. Nonetheless, most teachers maintain good motivation and enthusiasm in conducting learning, showing high professional commitment.

Under psychological well-being, teachers show good job satisfaction, feeling their profession provides meaning and social contribution. Positive student relationships are a source of happiness. However, high task pressure causes stress and emotional fatigue, indicating that psychological well-being requires further attention.

The workload well-being dimension shows teachers still face high workloads involving administrative duties and additional tasks, requiring work outside formal hours. This causes physical and mental fatigue, making balanced workload management an important need.

Meanwhile, social well-being shows positive relationships with colleagues and principals. Conducive school environments help teachers cope with work pressure through mutual communication and cooperation. Open principal communication creates emotional support essential for teacher well-being.

Simple linear regression analysis showed that workload management has a positive and significant effect on teacher well-being. A significance value of 0.000 (<0.05) indicates the hypothesis is accepted. Better workload management increases teacher well-being, while suboptimal management increases psychological pressure and fatigue.

The coefficient of determination showed workload management contributes 0.606, explaining 60.6% of teacher well-being variation, while 39.4% is explained by other variables outside this model, such as work motivation, family support, organizational culture, and working environment conditions.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics for Workload Management and Teacher Well-Being

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation	Category
Workload Management	136.71	13.11	Good
Teacher Well-Being	66.76	6.36	Moderate

The empirical findings establish a statistically significant, positive relationship between workload management and teacher well-being among primary school educators in East Metro District, with a determination coefficient of 0.606. This confirms that systemic task allocation, administrative planning, and structured principal support account for over sixty percent of the variance in teacher flourishing. Far from being merely descriptive or mechanical, these results reflect a profound structural tension within contemporary primary education, where escalating bureaucratic demands continuously collide with educators' psychological resilience. When interpreted through the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model developed by Bakker and Demerouti (2007), workload management operates as a vital organizational resource designed to counterbalance high job demands. However, as contemporary international studies emphasize, standard structural frameworks often fail to capture the relational nuances of school governance, frequently reducing educators to passive recipients of top-down mandates rather than active architects of their professional environments.

Confronting these empirical outcomes with global literature reveals both a confirmation of broader trends and a distinct localized divergence. While global studies consistently highlight that administrative overload is a primary driver of emotional exhaustion and burnout across diverse educational ecosystems (Edú-valsania et al., 2022; Pan et al., 2023), the situation in East Metro District introduces unique socio-cultural and structural constraints. Unlike centralized educational settings in high-income nations where digital automation mitigates paperwork, primary teachers here face a dual burden: managing traditional classroom instruction alongside heavy manual reporting systems. This structural friction explains why teacher well-being remains stagnant at a moderate level despite good administrative ratings. Furthermore, this dynamic directly challenges conventional linear assumptions in organizational psychology, demonstrating that formal planning by school principals is insufficient unless paired with empathetic, ongoing communication and operational flexibility.

To transcend the limitations of conventional management theories, this study integrates the *mubadalah* (reciprocity and mutual well-being) perspective, offering a unique theoretical and pedagogical contribution rooted in relational ethics and social justice (Kodir, 2024). In contrast to western paradigms that often frame principal-teacher interactions through strict hierarchy or transactional compliance, the *mubadalah* framework posits that institutional equilibrium is achieved only when leadership and execution share a mutually respectful, symbiotic relationship. When school principals practice managerial reciprocity—actively listening to teacher feedback, adjusting workloads to individual capacities, and fostering collaborative problem-solving—they cultivate psychological safety and social cohesion. This relational alignment bridges the gap between administrative expectations and human capacity, transforming schools from high-stress bureaucracies into supportive communities that actively nurture educator resilience.

The long-term practical and policy implications of these findings demand a fundamental restructuring of educational governance at both the school and district levels. Practically, school leadership must move beyond superficial supervision and embrace a human-centric approach to workload distribution, ensuring that administrative tasks do not infringe upon core pedagogical time or personal rest. Institutionally, regional education authorities must prioritize bureaucratic simplification and digital integration to alleviate the crushing reporting burdens currently placed on primary teachers. Theoretically, future research must continue to expand cross-cultural frameworks by incorporating indigenous relational ethics into organizational models. Ultimately, fostering sustainable teacher well-being is not merely an administrative luxury but a fundamental prerequisite for delivering high-quality, equitable primary education in developing regions.

CONCLUSION

5.1 Conclusion

1. The workload management of primary school teachers in East Metro District is categorized as good, with a mean score of 136.71 and a standard deviation of 13.11, whereas teacher well-being is categorized as moderate, with a mean score of 66.76 and a standard deviation of 6.36.
2. Hypothesis testing using simple linear regression reveals a positive and significant effect of workload management on teacher well-being, indicated by a significance value of 0.007 (less than 0.05) and a coefficient of determination of 0.606.
3. The empirical findings demonstrate that although structured workload planning and organization are well-established by school principals, existing administrative pressures and unbalanced task distribution continue to constrain optimal psychological and professional well-being among educators.
4. Integrating a reciprocal and fair relational framework, such as the mubadalah perspective, into school governance is essential to ensure that workload distribution is mutually supportive, balanced, and responsive to teachers' professional capacities.

5.2. Suggestions

School principals should enhance communicative, fair, and human-centric workload management by actively involving teachers in task distribution to mitigate occupational stress and foster a healthier school environment, while future research should explore multidimensional organizational factors and longitudinal designs across broader educational districts to deepen the understanding of teacher well-being dynamics.

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