

Beyond Bureaucratic Supervision: Humanistic Adaptive Supervision and Teacher Psychological Safety in Rural Indonesian Elementary Schools

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Abstract: This study examines how school principals reconstruct supervisory practices and foster teachers' psychological safety in rural elementary schools in Indonesia. Using a qualitative multiple-case study design, the study involved 18 participants: six school principals, nine teachers, and three school supervisors from six public elementary schools in Grobogan Regency, Central Java. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, observations, and school documents and analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis. The findings indicate that supervision is gradually shifting from bureaucratic monitoring toward more dialogic, supportive, and developmental professional mentoring. Teachers' psychological safety is fostered through open communication, emotional support, constructive feedback, shared reflection, and greater flexibility in responding to professional challenges. The findings also indicate that principals increasingly position themselves as professional mentors who support teachers' reflection, learning, and instructional adaptation. The study shows that humanistic and adaptive supervisory practices can create more supportive conditions for teachers' professional learning and psychological safety in rural elementary schools.

Keywords: adaptive leadership; humanistic supervision; psychological safety; rural elementary school; teacher well-being.

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■ INTRODUCTION

Changes in the global educational landscape over the past decade have placed increasingly complex pressures on schools and the teaching profession (Jamil et al., 2025; Lo, 2016; Masbirorotni et al., 2026; Shafik, 2026; Shofwani et al., 2026). The digitization of education, demands for accountability, rapid curriculum changes, and a growing culture of performance have transformed the school environment into an arena that demands not only academic achievement but also psychological resilience and organizational adaptability (Kuèera, 2023; Singh, 2024). Across education systems, teachers now face not only pedagogical responsibilities but also increasing administrative burdens, documentation requirements, and

performance evaluations. This situation has made teachers' psychological well-being a critical issue in contemporary educational discourse (Collie, 2023; Kim, 2024). At the same time, school organizations must foster a safe, supportive, and collaborative work environment so teachers can maintain instructional quality amid rapid change.

In this context, school supervision has gained renewed attention. Supervision is no longer understood merely as an administrative control mechanism, but rather as a professional space that can strengthen teachers' capacities, foster a culture of learning, and improve the quality of interpersonal relationships in schools (Alkaabi, 2023; Kholid & Rohmatika, 2019; Taufikin et al., 2026). However, in many elementary schools, particularly in rural areas, supervision still follows

a bureaucratic approach that emphasizes administrative compliance, documentation, and formal evaluation. Teachers often view supervision as an anxiety-inducing assessment rather than an opportunity for professional reflection. This situation can undermine teachers' psychological sense of security and limit their willingness to innovate in teaching.

Theoretically, this study is based on the concept of psychological safety developed by Amy Edmondson. This concept explains that individuals are more willing to take professional risks, share ideas, and experiment in a psychologically safe environment (A. C. Edmondson, 2004). In a school environment, psychological safety enables teachers to engage in open discussions, acknowledge learning challenges, and innovate without fear of punishment or negative judgment. This perspective is reinforced by Heifetz's theory of adaptive leadership, which emphasizes that leaders not only resolve technical issues but also help organizations adapt to change through dialogue, collaboration, and collective learning (Heifetz et al., 2009). These two perspectives provide a conceptual foundation for understanding how school principals can reshape their supervisory practices to be more humanistic and adaptive.

Several previous studies have shown that school leadership significantly influences organizational culture and teacher well-being. Collie et al. (2015) found that organizational support and school leadership are associated with teachers' psychological well-being. Other research confirms that psychological safety is associated with learning, participation, and adaptive behavior in organizational settings (A. C. Edmondson et al., 2016; Frazier et al., 2017). In the context of educational leadership, Hallinger suggests that shifting school leadership toward a collaborative model is a key factor in improving

educational quality (Hallinger, 2003; Hallinger & Kovačević, 2022).

Research on educational supervision continues to evolve. Most studies focus on the effectiveness of academic supervision, teacher competency improvement, and school performance. Supervision is viewed as an evaluation tool to ensure learning quality and compliance with educational standards (Campuzano, 2023; Yuliana et al., 2023). Other research highlights the importance of principals' instructional leadership in improving learning quality and teacher professionalism (Rodrigues & Ávila de Lima, 2024; Xhomara, 2021). Nevertheless, most of these studies still view supervision as a managerial and administrative practice.

In contrast, research on psychological safety in education remains dominated by contexts in modern organizations, universities, or urban schools with relatively adequate infrastructure (Lateef, 2020; McClintock & Fainstad, 2022). Research on rural elementary schools in developing countries remains relatively limited. However, rural schools have distinct social characteristics, including limited resources, strong community ties, a collective culture, and more complex administrative challenges. These conditions give rise to leadership styles and supervisory practices that differ from those in urban schools.

The existing literature indicates that previous research has primarily examined the effectiveness of academic supervision, highlighted principals' competencies, or evaluated teacher performance using administrative indicators. However, few studies have empirically linked supervisory practices to teachers' psychological safety in rural elementary schools. Existing studies predominantly examine instructional supervision and school effectiveness while paying limited attention to how supervisory practices foster

emotional security and professional courage among teachers. Furthermore, the relationship between principals' supervisory practices and teachers' psychological safety has not yet received adequate attention in the context of Indonesian elementary education.

Another limitation is the dominance of evaluative approaches in supervision studies. Many studies still view supervision as an instrument of organizational control and administrative compliance. Few studies view supervision as a relational practice involving emotional support, professional dialogue, and pedagogical guidance. Previous research has not sufficiently addressed how supervisory practices may function as spaces of trust, collaboration, and psychological support. Similarly, studies on rural schools in Indonesia still tend to focus on resource constraints rather than the potential for leadership innovation arising from the local context.

Given these circumstances, this study examines how school principals reconstruct academic and administrative supervision practices in rural elementary schools. This study also highlights how dialogic and supportive supervision practices can foster teachers' psychological safety and strengthen their pedagogical courage. Furthermore, this study expands the discussion of educational supervision by focusing on relational, emotional, and adaptive dimensions that the literature on school supervision has relatively neglected.

Specifically, this study seeks to answer three main questions: (1) how do school principals reconstruct supervision in rural elementary schools; (2) how do these supervisory practices foster teachers' psychological safety; and (3) how does humanistic-adaptive supervision emerge in the context of Indonesian elementary education? The study employs a qualitative approach with a multi-case design across several elementary

schools in rural areas of Grobogan Regency, Central Java.

The theoretical contribution of this study lies in expanding the discussion on the relationship between adaptive leadership and psychological safety in the context of educational supervision. The practical contribution lies in providing an understanding of more dialogic, reflective, and supportive supervision practices for school principals. Meanwhile, the social contribution of this study lies in efforts to strengthen teachers' psychological well-being as a crucial foundation for transforming elementary education in rural areas. Therefore, selecting a methodological approach that can capture the experiences, relationships, and meanings of supervision in depth is crucial for understanding the dynamics of leadership and psychological safety in the context of rural elementary schools in Indonesia.

■ METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative multiple-case study design to explore in depth how school principals reconstruct supervisory practices and foster teachers' psychological safety. The design was selected because it captures the complexity of social interactions, subjective meanings, and participants' experiences within the natural context of rural schools (Creswell & Creswell, 2022; Creswell & Poth, 2017; Yin, 2017). The study was conducted in six public elementary schools in rural areas of Grobogan Regency, Central Java, Indonesia.

Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the Research Ethics Committee of Universitas Muria Kudus through Ethical Clearance Letter No. 554/PPS.UMK/Ak/B.02.149/VIII/2026. All participants provided written informed consent after receiving a detailed explanation of the study objectives, confidentiality procedures, and their right to withdraw at any time without professional consequences.

Participants

Participants were selected through purposive sampling based on their direct involvement in school supervision and their professional experience in rural elementary education. The study included 18 participants: six school principals, nine teachers, and three school

supervisors. The principals provided perspectives on leadership and supervisory practices, teachers contributed first-hand accounts of supervision and psychological safety, and school supervisors provided an external professional perspective on supervisory practices in rural elementary schools.

Table 1. Demographic profile and distribution of research participants

Informant Group	Participant	Gender	Age	Educational Qualification	Position/Employment Status	Years of Experience
School Principals (n = 6)	Endah S.	Female	48	Bachelor's degree in Education	Principal, SDN 1 Selo	3.0
	Sri Hartati	Female	52	Bachelor's degree in Education	Principal, SDN 2 Wirosari	3.0
	Ana Riyanti, S.Pd.	Female	41	Bachelor's degree in Education	Principal, SDN 3 Tahunan	3.5
	Ambarwati, S.Pd.	Female	45	Bachelor's degree in Education	Principal, SDN 3 Wirosari	5.0
	Sutinah	Female	54	Bachelor's degree in Education	Principal, SD 3 Belor	8.0
	Rofiq Tri Paryanto, S.Pd.SD	Male	39	Bachelor's degree in Education	Principal, SDN 1 Godan	3.5
Teachers (n = 9)	Tyas Pitaloka	Female	34	Bachelor's degree in Education	Classroom Teacher / Civil Servant	7.3
	Pipit Linda Saputri, S.Pd.	Female	32	Bachelor's degree in Education	Classroom Teacher / Civil Servant	7.0
	Elysa Hariyani	Female	43	Bachelor's degree in Education	Classroom Teacher / Government Contract Teacher	18.0
	Diana Relly W. S. P.	Female	44	Bachelor's degree in Education	Classroom Teacher / Civil Servant	19.0
	Deti Maeda Triwardani, S.Pd.	Female	33	Bachelor's degree in Education	Classroom Teacher / Civil Servant	8.0
	Budi Ari Widodo	Male	31	Bachelor's degree in Education	Classroom Teacher / Government Contract Teacher	5.0
	Atik Susanti, S.Pd.SD	Female	42	Bachelor's degree in Education	Classroom Teacher / Civil Servant	15.0
	Sukron	Male	37	Bachelor's degree in Education	Classroom Teacher / Government Contract Teacher	11.0

	Muhamad Khiarun Ni'am, S.Pd.	Male	30	Bachelor's degree in Education	Classroom Teacher / Government Contract Teacher	6.0
School Supervisors (n = 3)	Idih Trirelianto, M.Pd.	Male	53	Master's degree in Education	School Supervisor, Korwilcam Tawangharjo	4.0
	Joni Cahyono	Male	56	Bachelor's degree in Education	School Supervisor, Korwilcam Ngarangan	12.0
	Moh Zaenal Arifin, S.Pd.	Male	50	Bachelor's degree in Education	School Supervisor, Korwilcam Gabus	6.0

Note. Participant characteristics described the research context and were not treated as analytical variables.

Data Collection

Data were collected over four months through semi-structured interviews, field observations, school document analysis, and teacher reflective accounts. These sources were used to capture participants' experiences and examine supervisory practices within their natural school settings (Knott et al., 2022; Morgan, 2022; Ponticell et al., 2018).

Observations covered pre-supervision activities, classroom instruction, and post-supervision feedback sessions. The researchers spent 12–16 hours observing at each school, distributed across four to five field visits. Supervisory interactions were documented using structured observation notes and qualitative anecdotal records. Particular attention was given to professional dialogue, reflective discussions, supportive feedback, respect for teachers, responses to professional difficulties, and opportunities for teachers to participate in supervisory discussions. Observation records were used as qualitative contextual evidence and were not converted into numerical scores.

Semi-structured interviews lasted approximately 45–75 minutes per participant, were audio-recorded with participants' permission, and were transcribed verbatim. Interview questions addressed academic and administrative supervision, school leadership, professional communication, responses to

mistakes, instructional innovation, administrative challenges, and psychological safety. Questions were adapted to participants' professional roles. Principals were asked about their leadership and supervisory practices, teachers about their experiences and perceptions of supervision, and school supervisors about broader supervisory conditions in rural elementary schools.

Relevant school documents were also examined, including supervision records, administrative materials, feedback records, follow-up documentation, teacher reflections, and professional development plans. These documents were used to contextualize participants' accounts and compare reported supervisory practices with documented institutional processes.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) following Braun and Clarke (2006, 2019, 2025). The analysis began with repeated reading of interview transcripts, observation records, reflective accounts, and relevant documents to establish familiarity with the dataset. Meaningful segments were then coded in relation to the research questions. Related codes were examined and organized into candidate themes. The candidate themes were reviewed against the coded material and the dataset as a whole, refined for coherence, and

subsequently defined and named. The final stage involved developing an interpretive account that connected the themes across participant groups and cases.

The analysis focused on recurring patterns concerning innovative leadership, dialogic and humanistic supervision, adaptive supervisory practices, professional support, psychological safety, administrative flexibility, and instructional innovation. Accounts from teachers, principals, and school supervisors were compared to identify convergence and divergence across cases. No statistical analysis was conducted because the study was designed to develop a contextual and interpretive understanding of supervisory practices and teachers' experiences.

Interviews were conducted in the participants' original languages, primarily Indonesian and Javanese, to preserve the authenticity of their expressions and culturally situated meanings. The interview transcripts were subsequently transcribed and translated for international scholarly presentation. Selected quotations were translated into English using a back-to-back translation procedure involving two independent translators. Limited language editing was applied to the translated quotations solely to improve academic readability while preserving the substantive meaning of the participants' accounts.

Member Checking and Trustworthiness

To enhance the trustworthiness of the findings, member checking was conducted through two systematic stages. First, the raw interview transcripts were returned to each participant for review and confirmation of the accuracy of their accounts. Participants could clarify, correct, or confirm their statements.

Second, the researchers conducted follow-up confirmation discussions, either individually or in small school-level groups, to present the preliminary themes generated from the analysis. These discussions were used to examine whether

the researchers' interpretations adequately reflected participants' experiences and intended meanings. Clarifications obtained through this process were considered during the refinement of the final thematic interpretations.

■ RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Transformation of Supervision Practices: From Administrative Inspection to Professional Mentoring

The first finding shows that supervisory practices in the six rural elementary schools were being reconstructed from administrative inspection toward professional mentoring. The reconstruction was driven by principals' recognition that conventional supervisory practices could create anxiety and encourage teachers to present an idealized picture of their practice rather than openly discuss instructional difficulties. Across the six cases, principals described deliberate changes in how supervision was conducted, particularly through pre- and post-observation dialogue, contextual problem solving, constructive feedback, and a shift from evaluator to mentor.

Endah S. (Principal, SDN 1 Selo) described this shift as a move away from formalistic supervision toward a more diagnostic and conversational process:

"In the past, I viewed supervision mainly as checking the completeness of lesson plans and assigning scores. However, I realized that this approach made teachers feel judged and anxious. Now I position myself as a professional partner. Before entering the classroom, we have an informal conversation about teaching goals and the children's difficulties. Supervision is no longer a surprise examination but a joint diagnostic session."

This account illustrates a change not only in supervisory procedure but also in the principal's

understanding of the supervisory relationship. Rather than beginning with compliance checking, the process begins with dialogue about instructional goals and classroom conditions.

Sri Hartati (Principal, SDN 2 Wirosari) similarly emphasized the importance of reducing the evaluative pressure surrounding supervision:

“If the principal comes with a testing mentality, teachers will close themselves off and pretend that everything is perfect. I changed this approach by positioning supervision as support. I tell teachers, ‘I am here not to look for administrative faults, but to see what we can improve together for the children.’”

This approach immediately reduces the tension.

Her account indicates that the reconstruction of supervision involved an intentional reduction of perceived evaluative threat. The principal’s role was reframed as assisting rather than searching for deficiencies.

Ana Riyanti, S.Pd. (Principal, SDN 3 Tahunan) described a corresponding change in feedback practices. Rather than providing corrective marks without follow-up, she discussed instructional difficulties directly with teachers and worked with them to develop practical solutions:

“I stopped the habit of putting crosses or red corrections on teachers’ documents without offering solutions. When I identify weaknesses in classroom management or the use of instructional media, we discuss them privately in my office. We redesign simple teaching aids together. Supervision should produce solutions, not produce guilt.”

This practice shifts feedback from correction toward problem-solving. The emphasis is therefore placed on what teachers can develop rather than on documenting what they have done incorrectly.

Ambarwati, S.Pd. (Principal, SDN 3 Wirosari) further reconstructed supervision through peer coaching. She explained:

“The reconstruction of supervision that I have undertaken is to democratize the process. Supervision is no longer a one-way process from me to teachers. I encourage senior and junior teachers to observe one another’s classes. I position myself as a facilitator who appreciates every small step toward pedagogical change in the classroom.”

Here, reconstruction extends beyond the principal–teacher dyad. Supervision becomes a shared professional learning process in which teachers can also learn from one another. The principal consequently assumes a facilitating rather than exclusively evaluative role.

Sutinah (Principal, SD 3 Belor) highlighted the importance of contextual sensitivity in rural schools, particularly where teachers face multigrade classrooms and limited instructional resources:

“In rural schools, teachers face multigrade classrooms and limited teaching aids. If I come only with a rigid assessment rubric, I simply add to their emotional burden. My task is to provide mentoring. If classroom instruction does not run smoothly, we sit together, have tea, analyze the obstacles, and I ask, ‘What can the school do to help make this material easier for the children to understand?’”

This account shows how supervisory practice adapts to local working conditions. Rather than treating contextual constraints as deficiencies to be recorded, the principal incorporates them into the supervisory conversation and seeks feasible solutions with teachers.

Rofiq Tri Paryanto, S.Pd.SD (Principal, SDN 1 Godan), who emphasized an open-door

approach and a shift from fault-focused observation toward recognition and development:

“A principal in a rural school must break down bureaucratic barriers. I tell teachers that my office door is always open for discussion at any time. When observing a class, I do not focus on marking the assessment sheet in red ink; instead, I record good practices. The feedback I provide focuses on appreciation and the next steps for development.”

Across the six principals, these accounts reveal a consistent reconstruction of supervision around four interconnected practices: dialogic mentoring, constructive feedback, contextual adaptation, and collaborative problem solving. Although the specific practices varied across schools, the principals consistently described supervision as a developmental process rather than an exercise in fault-finding.

Teachers’ accounts corroborated the principals’ descriptions of this reconstructed supervisory practice. Atik Susanti, S.Pd.SD, reported:

“Throughout the supervision process, I felt that I received very clear and constructive guidance. The principal provided feedback that helped me understand my strengths and the areas that needed improvement. The discussion was open, so I felt comfortable asking questions and expressing the difficulties I faced.”

Elysa Hariyani similarly characterized the relationship as: *“A collaborative partnership. The principal acts as a supervisor, mentor, and counselor, not merely as an overseer looking for administrative mistakes.”*

These accounts suggest that teachers experienced the changes described by principals as changes in the character of supervision itself.

Supervision was perceived less as an evaluative event and more as an opportunity to discuss practice, receive guidance, and identify areas for development.

Pipit Linda Saputri, S.Pd., and Muhamad Khiarun Ni’am, S.Pd., likewise described principals as open and communicative rather than judgmental. Sukron and Budi Ari Widodo further indicated that problem-solving-centered supervision encouraged them to consider more active instructional approaches. These accounts provide supporting evidence that the principals’ reconstructed practices were visible in teachers’ everyday supervisory experiences.

Field observations and school documents further supported the interview accounts. Across the six schools, the researchers observed pre-observation interactions that were generally informal and respectful. During classroom observations, principals remained in the background rather than interrupting instruction. Post-observation conversations emphasized teachers’ reflections on their instructional experiences and the challenges encountered during teaching.

Document analysis showed a similar orientation. Current supervision records and feedback sheets contained greater emphasis on teachers’ strengths, identified classroom challenges, and agreed follow-up actions rather than solely corrective comments or numerical evaluation. These documentary patterns aligned with the principals’ accounts of shifting supervision toward professional guidance and development.

The perspective of school supervisor Joni Cahyono provided additional corroboration. He observed that dialogic and clinical approaches to supervision were increasingly visible in rural schools in Grobogan and were associated with greater openness in teachers’ professional learning.

Taken together, the evidence from principals, teachers, observations, and school

documents indicates a shift in the relational logic of supervision. The transformation was not simply a change in supervisory terminology or documentation. It changed how principals initiated supervisory conversations, delivered feedback, responded to instructional difficulties, and positioned teachers within the process.

The six principals increasingly enacted supervision as professional mentoring rather than administrative inspection. Dialogic communication created space for teachers to articulate instructional concerns; constructive feedback connected evaluation with development; contextual adaptation acknowledged the realities of rural schooling; and collaborative problem solving positioned teachers as active participants in improving practice.

Thus, the first finding indicates that supervision was reconstructed primarily through changes in leadership interaction and supervisory relationships. The principal remained responsible for supervision and accountability, but the supervisory relationship increasingly centered on professional learning, dialogue, and developmental support rather than fault-finding alone. This transformation provides the empirical foundation for the subsequent finding concerning teachers' psychological safety.

Building Teacher Psychological Safety in Rural Elementary Schools

The second finding indicates that teachers' psychological safety was fostered through everyday supervisory relationships characterized by openness, supportive communication, constructive feedback, and freedom to discuss professional difficulties. Rather than emerging as an isolated psychological condition, psychological safety developed through repeated interactions in which teachers experienced supervision as supportive rather than threatening. In these circumstances, teachers became more willing to express concerns, acknowledge difficulties, and

consider alternative approaches to classroom instruction.

Atik Susanti, S.Pd.SD, described the openness created through supervisory interactions:

"Yes, I feel comfortable sharing the challenges I face in teaching. The principal and my colleagues provide support and constructive feedback, which helps me find solutions and improve the quality of learning."

Her account indicates that the opportunity to communicate difficulties was closely linked to the support she received from the principal and colleagues. Difficulties were not treated as evidence of professional inadequacy but as matters to discuss and address collaboratively.

Muhamad Khiaun Ni'am, S.Pd., similarly emphasized the importance of the principal's openness: *"Yes, I feel safe because the principal is always open to teachers' feedback and concerns."*

This account illustrates how openness in leadership can reduce the interpersonal threat associated with expressing concerns. The teacher's sense of safety was linked not simply to the absence of criticism, but to the perception that professional concerns could be communicated without negative consequences.

Pipit Linda Saputri, S.Pd., provided a particularly clear indication of how mistakes were understood within this supervisory environment: *"Safe. If you make a mistake, just learn from it."* This brief account captures an important dimension of psychological safety: mistakes can be acknowledged and used for learning rather than concealed because of fear of judgment. In supervision, this orientation allows teachers to treat professional difficulties as part of an ongoing learning process.

Elysa Hariyani likewise described the principal-teacher relationship as: *"A collaborative partnership, in which the*

principal serves as a supervisor, mentor, and counselor; not merely an overseer looking for mistakes." Her account reinforces the relational dimension of psychological safety. The principal's role as mentor and counselor creates a supervisory relationship in which professional evaluation is accompanied by interpersonal support.

Another teacher emphasized the freedom to experiment with instructional practices: *"Teachers are given the freedom to innovate and try new teaching methods as long as they align with learning objectives and students' needs."* This evidence connects psychological safety with teachers' willingness to exercise professional agency. When experimentation is permitted within clear pedagogical boundaries, teachers have greater room to adapt their instructional practices to students' needs.

The interview findings were corroborated by field observations of supervisory interactions. Teachers actively participated in discussions with principals, expressed their views, and reflected on their teaching after supervision. Principals generally provided opportunities for teachers to explain their instructional experiences before offering feedback. The interactions were therefore characterized by listening, dialogue, and reflection rather than one-sided evaluation.

The observations also indicated that supervisory encounters were generally non-intimidating. Principals listened to teachers' concerns, encouraged reflection, and responded to instructional difficulties through discussion and guidance. These interactions were consistent with teachers' descriptions of supervision as a supportive professional process.

School documents provided additional contextual evidence. Supervision records contained feedback, reflective notes, and follow-up actions rather than relying exclusively on corrective evaluation. This pattern aligned with the interview and observation evidence,

suggesting that institutional supervisory practices supported psychological safety by emphasizing development and follow-up.

Taken together, the evidence indicates that teacher psychological safety was fostered through open communication, supportive leadership, constructive feedback, recognition of professional agency, and opportunities for instructional experimentation. These practices reduced the perceived interpersonal risk associated with discussing difficulties and acknowledging mistakes.

The findings are consistent with Edmondson's conceptualization of psychological safety as a condition in which individuals can take interpersonal risks without anticipating detrimental interpersonal consequences. In this study, such risks included expressing instructional difficulties, asking for assistance, discussing mistakes, and proposing alternative teaching practices.

However, the findings also suggest that psychological safety in rural Indonesian elementary schools is embedded in everyday professional relationships. It is not produced by a formal supervisory instrument alone. Rather, it develops through repeated interactions in which principals listen to teachers, respond constructively to difficulties, and frame supervision as a learning and development process.

This relational dimension is particularly important in the rural school context, where close professional relationships coexist with hierarchical structures. The evidence suggests that when principals establish respectful, open communication, hierarchical supervision can feel less threatening without eliminating the principal's supervisory responsibility. Psychological safety therefore emerges through a balance between professional accountability and relational support.

Accordingly, the second finding extends the first: reconstructing supervision from administrative inspection to professional mentoring provides the relational conditions through which teachers

experience greater psychological safety. When supervision becomes a space where teachers can speak, reflect, make mistakes, and seek solutions, psychological safety becomes part of everyday professional learning rather than merely an individual perception.

Evolution toward Humanistic and Adaptive Supervision

The third finding indicates that supervisory practices across the six rural elementary schools were evolving toward a more humanistic and adaptive orientation. This evolution was reflected in three interconnected practices: emotional and relational support, administrative flexibility, and collaborative problem solving. Rather than functioning as a separate supervisory procedure, these practices were embedded in the everyday interactions between principals and teachers.

The principals' accounts indicate that emotional support was an important part of their reconstructed supervisory role. Atik Susanti, S.Pd.SD, described the principal's role as providing guidance, helping teachers identify solutions, and delivering constructive feedback to improve instruction. Muhamad Khiarun Ni'am, S.Pd., similarly characterized supervision as communicative and constructive, emphasizing that its purpose was to improve learning rather than to identify faults.

Elysa Hariyani further described the principal as a supervisor, mentor, and counselor within a collaborative partnership. These accounts suggest that supervisory support extended beyond classroom observation and included attention to teachers' professional and emotional circumstances. In this orientation, the principal maintained authority, but exercised it through listening, guidance, and interpersonal support.

The second dimension concerned adapting administrative and pedagogical practices to local school conditions. The principals recognized that rural teachers often worked with limited

instructional resources, multigrade classrooms, and substantial administrative responsibilities. Instead of applying supervisory requirements rigidly, they described efforts to adjust administrative expectations and instructional support to the circumstances of individual teachers and classrooms.

Sutinah, for example, emphasized that imposing rigid assessment procedures in a context of limited resources could increase teachers' emotional burden. Her supervisory approach therefore involved discussing classroom obstacles with teachers and identifying school supports that could make instruction more manageable. This indicates that flexibility was not understood as abandoning accountability. Rather, it involved adapting supervisory support to how teachers actually worked.

The documentary evidence similarly indicated greater emphasis on instructional recommendations, teacher reflection, follow-up actions, and professional development. These records suggest that administrative processes were increasingly connected to professional learning rather than treated as ends in themselves.

The third dimension was collaborative problem solving. Across the cases, principals increasingly positioned teachers as participants in identifying instructional problems and developing feasible responses. Ana Riyanti, S.Pd., described discussing weaknesses in classroom management and instructional media with teachers and jointly developing simple teaching aids. Ambarwati, S.Pd., extended this collaborative orientation through peer coaching, encouraging senior and junior teachers to observe one another's classrooms and pedagogical practices.

Rofiq Tri Paryanto, S.Pd.SD, similarly described an open-door approach in which teachers could initiate professional discussions with the principal. During classroom observation, he emphasized documenting effective practices and using subsequent feedback to identify

possibilities for further development. These practices demonstrate that adaptation occurred through interaction rather than through unilateral decisions by school leaders.

As shown in Figure 1, the evidence indicates that emotional and relational support, administrative flexibility, and collaborative problem solving mutually reinforced one another.

Emotional support created a relational environment in which teachers could communicate difficulties. Administrative flexibility reduced unnecessary pressure and allowed supervisors to respond to local conditions. Collaborative problem solving then translated these relational conditions into concrete responses to instructional challenges.



Figure 1. Concept map: humanistic and adaptive supervision

These dimensions should not, however, be interpreted as a formally validated causal sequence. Rather, they represent an interpretive synthesis of recurring patterns across the qualitative data. The evidence shows that the practices frequently occurred together and collectively contributed to a supervisory environment oriented toward professional development and contextual adaptation.

Taken together, the third finding shows that the evolution of supervision involved more than replacing administrative procedures with informal interactions. It reflected a broader shift in how principals responded to teachers' professional needs and contextual challenges. Principals retained responsibility for supervision but exercised it through dialogue, emotional support, flexible responses, and collaborative problem-solving.

This pattern is consistent with the adaptive orientation of leadership described by Heifetz et al., in which leaders help organizational members

respond to complex challenges through learning, reflection, and collective engagement. In the present study, adaptation was visible in how principals responded to differences in classroom conditions, instructional difficulties, teacher needs, and resource limitations.

The findings therefore suggest that Humanistic Adaptive Supervision is best understood as an interpretive synthesis of the supervisory practices observed across the six schools. It does not constitute a newly validated theoretical model. Instead, the concept offers a concise way to integrate the empirical patterns identified across the cases: human-centered relationships provide the relational foundation, adaptive practices respond to contextual demands, and collaborative supervision connects the two through professional learning.

The findings indicate that transforming supervision in rural elementary schools is fundamentally a change in the relational character of supervisory practice, rather than merely a

modification of administrative procedures. Across the six schools, principals increasingly positioned supervision as a space for dialogue, professional mentoring, reflection, and collaborative problem-solving. This finding extends the instructional leadership literature by showing that principals' supervisory roles can combine instructional guidance with relational support, particularly in resource-constrained rural contexts (Hallinger, 2003; Hallinger & Kovačević, 2022).

The findings are also consistent with Edmondson's conceptualization of psychological safety, in which individuals are more willing to take interpersonal risks when they perceive that speaking up, acknowledging difficulties, or discussing mistakes will not result in interpersonal harm (A. Edmondson, 1999; A. C. Edmondson, 2004). In the present study, teachers described greater comfort in expressing instructional difficulties, receiving feedback, and discussing mistakes when principals adopted open and supportive supervisory practices. This suggests that teachers experienced psychological safety through everyday supervisory relationships, rather than through formal policies alone. This finding aligns with broader evidence that psychological safety is associated with learning, participation, and adaptive behavior in organizational settings (A. C. Edmondson et al., 2016; Frazier et al., 2017).

The rural Indonesian context adds an important relational dimension. The findings suggest that respectful communication is particularly important where hierarchical relationships may shape how teachers communicate with school leaders. Although participants did not explicitly identify *ewuh pakewuh* as a determinant of their experiences, the emphasis on respectful, informal, and supportive communication indicates that psychological safety should be understood within the local relational context. Supportive leadership may therefore create space for teachers to

express professional concerns while respecting existing hierarchical relationships.

The findings further show that administrative flexibility can function as part of supportive supervision. Previous research has associated administrative workload and workload-related stress with poorer teacher well-being and professional commitment (Belliba^o et al., 2024; Mota et al., 2023). In the present study, principals described efforts to streamline administrative demands and adjust supervisory expectations to teachers' contextual conditions. This flexibility should not be interpreted as a removal of accountability. Rather, it represents an effort to align administrative requirements with teachers' primary instructional responsibilities.

From the perspective of adaptive leadership, these practices reflect the leader's role in helping organizational members respond to contextual challenges through learning, reflection, and collective problem solving (Heifetz et al., 2009). The principals in this study enacted this orientation through mentoring, contextual adaptation, emotional support, and collaborative responses to instructional difficulties. Adaptive supervision therefore emerged not from abandoning supervisory responsibility, but from exercising it in ways that were responsive to teachers and local school conditions.

The integrated findings support interpreting Humanistic Adaptive Supervision as an interpretive synthesis of the observed practices, rather than a newly established theoretical model. The synthesis connects dialogic mentoring, emotional and relational support, administrative flexibility, and collaborative problem solving with teachers' psychological safety and professional learning. The study's contribution lies in showing how these dimensions become interconnected within everyday supervisory relationships in rural elementary schools.

These findings have practical implications for school leadership. Principals may strengthen

supervision by combining accountability with dialogue, constructive feedback, contextual flexibility, and opportunities for collaborative problem-solving. This approach can create more supportive conditions for teachers to discuss difficulties, reflect on practice, and adapt instruction while maintaining supervision's core purposes.

The study is limited by its qualitative design and its focus on six rural elementary schools within a single region. The findings are therefore contextually grounded rather than statistically generalizable. Future research could examine how humanistic and adaptive supervisory practices operate across different cultural, institutional, and geographic settings, particularly how local relational norms influence teachers' willingness to speak openly during supervision.

■ CONCLUSION

The transformation of supervision in rural elementary schools suggests that educational change does not always stem from new regulations, more detailed evaluation tools, or stronger bureaucracy. Rather, human-centered relationships between principals and teachers can serve as an important catalyst for change alongside infrastructure, institutional conditions, and local education policies. Supervision previously oriented toward administrative control is increasingly becoming a space for dialogue, mentoring, reflection, emotional support, and collaborative problem-solving. Humanistic Adaptive Supervision emerges as an interpretive synthesis of these practices, connecting professional dialogue, psychological safety, administrative flexibility, and pedagogical adaptation.

The findings indicate that teachers' psychological safety is shaped not only by organizational culture but also by sustained supervisory relationships in which teachers can express difficulties, discuss mistakes, and adapt

instructional practices without excessive evaluative pressure. The study therefore extends the discussion of psychological safety and adaptive leadership by showing how these perspectives intersect within everyday supervisory practice in rural elementary schools.

The practical implication is that school principals should foster supervision that balances accountability with dialogue, constructive feedback, contextual flexibility, and professional support. The study is limited by its qualitative design and its focus on six rural elementary schools in a single region. Future research could examine how these supervisory practices operate across different educational, cultural, and geographic contexts, particularly how local relational norms shape teachers' willingness to speak openly during supervision.

■ DECLARATION OF GENERATIVE AI USAGE IN THE WRITING PROCESS

Artificial intelligence tools, including ChatGPT, DeepL, and Grammarly Premium, were used solely to assist with translating the manuscript into English and improving language quality. These tools were also used to identify and reduce redundancy, grammatical errors, and stylistic inconsistencies to improve the manuscript's clarity and readability. The authors retain full responsibility for the manuscript's content, interpretation, analysis, arguments, and final version.

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