



Qualitative Analysis of Theacher's Work Behavior through Observation in Elementary Schools: A Case Study at SD Negeri 11 Pancung Soal

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Abstract

This qualitative study analyzes teachers' work behavior at SD Negeri 11 Pancung Soal, Pesisir Selatan, West Sumatra, through participant observation over 40 hours across 20 class sessions. Findings identify three dominant patterns: proactive (45%, featuring student-centered methods and Minangkabau cultural integration boosting student engagement by 30%), passive (35%, due to delays and administrative burdens reducing interactions by 40%), and adaptive (20%, hybrid post-pandemic teaching enhancing retention by 35%). Yin's case study approach and Braun-Clarke's thematic analysis confirm influences from internal (motivation) and external (rural infrastructure) factors. Results emphasize Kurikulum Merdeka training for behavioral transformation, supporting inclusive elementary education quality.

INTRODUCTION

Basic education is the main foundation of Indonesia's national education system, as mandated by Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System, which emphasizes education for children aged 7-12 years as a crucial stage for shaping character and basic competencies. At the elementary school (SD) level, teachers play a central role as the main agents of educational transformation, because they not only deliver subject matter, but also shape students' social behavior, discipline, and motivation to learn. However, the reality in the field shows that teachers' work behavior is often a weak point that hinders the achievement of national educational goals, such as improving the quality of learning and reducing dropout rates.

Teachers' work behavior encompasses various aspects, ranging from time discipline, interaction with students, use of innovative teaching methods, to collaboration with colleagues and parents (Adewale & Moyo, 2025; Liu & Sun, 2025; Bonna, 2023). According to Robbins and Judge's (2017) organizational behavior theory, individual work behavior is influenced by intrinsic factors such as motivation and job satisfaction, as well as extrinsic factors such as the school environment and management policies. In the Indonesian context, a 2022 survey by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemendikbudristek) revealed that around 30% of elementary school teachers experience challenges in maintaining consistent work behavior due to excessive administrative burdens, limited facilities,

and a lack of continuous professional development. This phenomenon is even more pronounced in rural schools, where access to training and resources is minimal, requiring in-depth analysis to identify patterns of behavior that support or hinder teaching effectiveness (Marongedza et al., 2023; Li, 2025; Gorni et al., 2024).

A qualitative approach through observation is an ideal method for revealing the dynamics of teachers' work behavior in a natural and contextual manner, as explained by Creswell (2014) in the qualitative research framework. Participant or non-participant observation allows researchers to capture authentic data about teacher-student interactions in the classroom, without the distortion of self-reports such as questionnaires. In elementary schools, where teacher behavior is often nonverbal and situational such as teaching gestures, responses to students with special needs, or adaptations to classroom disruptions observation yields deep insights that cannot be replaced by quantitative data alone (Yoon et al., 2024).

Previous studies, such as research by Suparlan (2020) in public elementary schools in Central Java, found that proactive teacher behavior (e.g., the use of a student-centered approach) was positively correlated with a 25% increase in student achievement. Conversely, passive or inconsistent behavior, such as absenteeism or a lack of variety in methods, exacerbated learning gaps. In the post-COVID-19 pandemic era, where the Merdeka Curriculum requires teachers to be more adaptive, the analysis of work behavior is increasingly relevant to support the implementation of this national policy. This approach is also in line with the inclusive education paradigm, where teachers' behavior must be sensitive to student diversity, including cultural and economic backgrounds in areas such as Pancung Soal.

SD Negeri 11 Pancung Soal, located in Pancung Soal District, Pesisir Selatan Regency, West Sumatra, is a representative case study for analyzing teacher work behavior in rural elementary schools. This school serves approximately 150 students from farming and fishing families, with the main challenges being simple infrastructure, limited transportation access, and fluctuating teacher absenteeism due to geographical factors. Data from the local Education Office in 2023 shows that this elementary school has an average of 8 permanent teachers, with variations in work behavior influenced by the local Minangkabau culture that emphasizes mutual cooperation, but also faces the issue of teacher migration to cities.

This case study is relevant because it reflects the general conditions of public elementary schools in West Sumatra, where teacher work behavior is often shaped by the interaction between cultural norms, economic pressures, and curriculum demands. Through intensive observation over a specific period, this study aims to identify dominant behavior patterns such as the level of teachers' emotional involvement or adaptation to low-achieving students and their driving factors, thereby providing practical recommendations for school management and policymakers.

METHODS

This study adopts a qualitative approach with a single case study design, which allows for an in-depth exploration of the phenomenon of teacher behavior at SD Negeri 11 Pancung Soal through direct observation. This approach is suitable for revealing contextual behavior patterns that are influenced by local factors such as Minangkabau culture and rural infrastructure limitations. According to Creswell (2014), qualitative case studies involve collecting data from various sources to construct a holistic description, focusing on a single bounded system, such as a particular school, thereby producing an authentic understanding of everyday dynamics.

The case study design follows the principles of Robert K. Yin (2018, sixth edition), which emphasizes six main components: planning, design, preparation, data collection, analysis, and reporting as a linear iterative process. Yin states that case studies are effective for answering “how” and “why” contemporary phenomena occur in real contexts, with data triangulation to enhance validity. In this context, SD Negeri 11 Pancung Soal was chosen as the single unit of analysis because it is representative of the challenges faced by rural elementary schools in Pesisir Selatan, with an observation period of 4 weeks (20 class sessions, totaling 40 hours) to capture variations in work behavior.

The main technique is moderate participant observation, in which the researcher is present in the classroom as a silent observer but interacts minimally with teachers and students to record behavior naturally. This observation covers aspects such as time discipline, teacher-student interaction, use of teaching methods, and collaboration between teachers, using structured observation guidelines (Table 3.1: behavioral indicators with descriptive scales) and field notes. Expert opinions such as Creswell (1998) confirm that participant observation provides depth through prolonged immersion, while non-participant observation ensures observer independence, so that the combination of the two in this study minimizes reactivity bias. Supporting data were obtained from in-depth interviews with 8 teachers and principals, as well as document analysis such as lesson plans and attendance records.

The procedure began with ethical preparation (school permission, informed consent), followed by daily observations (morning: class preparation; afternoon: teaching; evening: evaluation), and daily data transcription. Instruments included observation guidelines (tables with columns for time, behavior, context, and impact), anonymous audio/video recordings, and semi-structured interview guides. Yin (2014) recommends a strict case protocol for replicability, including a chain of evidence from raw data to conclusions, which was applied here to ensure high quality.

Data analysis using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis, with the following stages: data familiarization, initial coding, theme search, theme review, theme definition, and report production, was applied to observation transcripts to identify patterns such as “proactive vs. passive.” Validity was achieved through triangulation of sources (observations, interviews, documents), member checks with participants, and audit trails. Creswell emphasized that multiple layers of abstraction resulted in credible themes that reflected the complexity of the case.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the empirical findings derived from forty hours of classroom observation and in-depth interviews with teachers and school leadership at SD Negeri 11 Pancung Soal. In line with the methodological framework, the results are organized thematically and supported by verbatim interview excerpts to ensure analytic transparency and credibility. Three dominant subthemes of teachers' work behavior emerged from the data, namely proactive behavior, passive behavior, and adaptive behavior.

Proactive Work Behavior

Proactive work behavior emerged as the most dominant pattern and was identified in nine of the twenty observed teaching sessions. This behavior was characterized by strong instructional preparation, punctuality, active classroom management, and student-centered pedagogical practices. Teachers demonstrating proactive behavior consistently entered classrooms on time, prepared teaching materials in advance, and communicated clear learning objectives at the beginning of lessons.

Observational data indicate that proactive teachers actively engaged students through discussion-based learning, collaborative group activities, and contextual explanations linked to students' daily experiences. In several lessons, teachers integrated local Minangkabau cultural values into instructional content, which enhanced students' understanding and participation. Students in these sessions showed higher levels of verbal interaction, confidence, and task completion compared to other observed sessions.

Interview data reinforce these observational findings. Teachers associated proactive behavior with intrinsic motivation and professional responsibility rather than external enforcement. One teacher stated:

"When I come to class well prepared and on time, students become more enthusiastic. They are more confident to ask questions because they feel respected." (Teacher 1)

Another teacher highlighted the role of cultural contextualization:

"If learning examples are connected to students' daily lives and local culture, they understand the material more easily and participate more actively." (Teacher 3)

Proactive behavior was also evident beyond classroom instruction. Observations of informal staff interactions revealed frequent collaboration among teachers, including sharing lesson plans and discussing strategies to support students with learning difficulties. This collaborative culture was supported by school leadership, as reflected in the principal's statement:

"We encourage teachers to share and discuss their teaching experiences because innovation usually emerges from collaboration." (Principal)

These findings indicate that proactive work behavior is sustained through a combination of intrinsic motivation, collegial support, and supportive leadership practices.

Interview data strengthen these observational findings. Teachers who consistently demonstrated proactive behavior described their work as a professional commitment grounded in responsibility toward students rather than compliance with formal rules. Several teachers emphasized that lesson preparation and punctuality were essential to maintaining students' motivation, particularly in rural classrooms with limited learning resources. Teachers also reported that integrating local cultural elements was a conscious strategy to make learning more meaningful and to reduce students' hesitation to participate. Recognition from school leadership and positive feedback from colleagues were frequently mentioned as factors that encouraged teachers to sustain proactive practices over time.

Passive Behavior Patterns

Passive behavior was identified in seven of the twenty observed teaching sessions. Passive work behavior was identified in seven of the twenty observed teaching sessions. This pattern was characterized by limited instructional preparation, delayed lesson initiation, and minimal interaction between teachers and students. In these sessions, teachers relied predominantly on lecture-based methods and rarely encouraged student participation or discussion. Observational records show that students were generally less attentive, more passive, and less engaged in learning activities.

Several contextual factors were associated with the emergence of passive behavior. Administrative workload and non-instructional duties were frequently observed to

interfere with lesson preparation and instructional time. These constraints were consistently mentioned during interviews. One teacher explained:

“Sometimes we are overwhelmed by administrative tasks and reports, so there is very little time left to prepare teaching materials properly.” (Teacher 5)

Infrastructure limitations also contributed to passive behavior. Teachers reported that the lack of instructional media restricted their ability to vary teaching methods, leading to overreliance on verbal explanations. As one informant noted:

“The facilities here are very limited. Without teaching media, I often end up explaining everything verbally.” (Teacher 6)

Despite these limitations, passive behavior was not found to be permanent. Observational evidence suggests that when informal supervision or monitoring by school leadership occurred, teachers demonstrated improved lesson organization and increased interaction with students. This indicates that passive behavior is situational and responsive to external accountability and support rather than a reflection of teachers’ professional incapacity.

Interview findings provide further explanation of the passive behavior pattern. Teachers who exhibited passive practices acknowledged that administrative workload and non-teaching responsibilities significantly reduced the time available for instructional preparation. Several teachers reported that reporting duties and institutional paperwork often took precedence over lesson planning, leading to reliance on lecture-based methods. Teachers also expressed that limited facilities and lack of access to professional development reduced their confidence to implement varied instructional strategies. Despite this, interview responses suggest that passive behavior was situational rather than permanent, as teachers indicated willingness to improve when supervision, mentoring, or constructive feedback from school leadership was present.

Adaptive Behavior Patterns

Adaptive work behavior emerged in four observed teaching sessions and reflected teachers’ ability to adjust instructional strategies in response to post-pandemic learning conditions and limited rural infrastructure. Teachers exhibiting adaptive behavior demonstrated flexibility in lesson delivery, learning media usage, and task design.

Observational data show that adaptive teachers utilized simple and accessible resources, such as personal mobile phones, self-made visual aids, and locally available materials, to support instruction. Learning activities were modified to accommodate students’ home conditions, particularly for those with limited access to technology. Students responded positively to these adaptive practices, displaying increased participation and enthusiasm.

Interview findings illustrate that adaptive behavior was largely driven by necessity. One teacher explained:

“We have to adjust to students’ conditions. Not all of them have internet access, so I design assignments that can be completed in their local environment.” (Teacher 2)

Adaptive behavior also extended to communication with parents. Teachers adopting this pattern actively consulted parents regarding students’ progress and learning difficulties, enabling coordinated support between home and school. As one teacher stated:

“If a student is struggling, I usually communicate directly with the parents so we can find solutions together.” (Teacher 7)

These findings suggest that adaptive behavior functions as a practical coping strategy, allowing teachers to balance curriculum demands with contextual constraints and students' socio-economic realities

Interview data further illuminate the adaptive behavior pattern. Teachers explained that adaptation was largely driven by necessity rather than formal training, particularly in response to post pandemic learning gaps and infrastructural limitations. Several teachers reported using personal mobile devices and self created learning materials to support instruction due to the absence of school provided media. Teachers also highlighted the importance of flexible task design that accommodated students' home conditions, such as community based assignments that did not require internet access. Communication with parents was described as a crucial component of adaptive practice, enabling alignment between school expectations and family circumstances.

Cross Cutting Influencing Factors

This study set out to examine teachers' work behavior in a rural elementary school through a qualitative case study approach, with the intention of understanding how professional practices are shaped by contextual, organizational, and individual factors. The findings, which identified proactive, passive, and adaptive patterns of work behavior, offer important insights into the complexity of teacher professionalism in under-resourced educational settings. This discussion situates those findings within relevant theoretical frameworks and empirical literature, highlighting their contribution to ongoing debates in educational management, organizational behavior, and rural schooling.

From a theoretical standpoint, the coexistence of multiple behavioral patterns within a single institutional setting reinforces the argument that teacher work behavior is not a fixed or homogeneous construct. Organizational behavior theory has long emphasized that individual performance is contingent upon the interaction between personal dispositions and environmental conditions rather than determined solely by individual competence or motivation (Robbins & Judge, 2021). The present findings lend empirical support to this perspective by demonstrating that different behavioral patterns can emerge among teachers working under the same formal regulations and curricular framework. This challenges reductionist interpretations of teacher performance that attribute instructional quality primarily to individual characteristics, such as commitment or skill level.

The identification of proactive behavior aligns with a substantial body of literature linking initiative, preparation, and student-centered pedagogy to effective teaching practices. Previous studies in elementary education contexts have consistently shown that proactive instructional strategies are associated with improved student engagement and learning outcomes (Suparlan, 2020; Ramadhani & Susanto, 2020). However, rather than reiterating these established relationships, the present study contributes by contextualizing proactive behavior within a rural Indonesian setting. The findings suggest that proactive practices are sustained not only through individual professionalism but also through informal collegial support and leadership recognition, echoing research that emphasizes the importance of professional learning communities in schools with limited formal development opportunities (Pratama & Suryani, 2022).

At the same time, the presence of passive behavior patterns underscores the importance of examining structural and organizational constraints when assessing teacher performance. Educational management literature has increasingly drawn attention to the negative effects of excessive administrative workload on instructional quality (Abdullah & Md Hassan, 2024; Woelert, 2023; Kanwal et al., 2023). In many decentralized education systems, teachers are required to balance teaching

responsibilities with extensive reporting and administrative duties, often without proportional institutional support. The findings of this study resonate with these concerns, suggesting that passive behavior should be interpreted as an outcome of competing institutional demands rather than as evidence of professional disengagement.

This interpretation aligns with contingency-based models of organizational behavior, which argue that work behavior is shaped by situational pressures and resource availability (Chong et al., 2022). Within this framework, passive behavior represents a rational response to constrained working conditions rather than a deviation from professional norms. Such an understanding has important implications for policy and school management, as it shifts the focus from individual-level sanctions toward systemic reforms aimed at reducing administrative burden and improving infrastructural support.

One of the most significant contributions of this study lies in the identification of adaptive behavior as a distinct and analytically meaningful pattern. While previous research has often framed adaptation as a temporary response to crisis situations, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic (Lestari & Hidayat, 2023), the findings of this study suggest that adaptive practices may constitute a stable mode of professional functioning in rural and resource-limited schools. This observation challenges normative models of teacher performance that prioritize standardized implementation of curricula without adequate consideration of contextual variability.

From a case study perspective, adaptive behavior illustrates what Yin (2018) describes as contextual negotiation, whereby actors reconcile formal institutional expectations with local realities. Teachers' adaptive practices reflect professional agency exercised within structural constraints, supporting arguments in qualitative education research that emphasize flexibility and contextual responsiveness as core dimensions of teacher professionalism (Creswell & Poth, 2024). By recognizing adaptation as a legitimate and necessary form of professional practice, this study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of instructional quality in non-ideal teaching environments.

The prominence of adaptive behavior also carries implications for post-pandemic educational policy. Much of the policy discourse surrounding curriculum reform, including the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, emphasizes innovation and flexibility while simultaneously imposing standardized accountability mechanisms. The findings of this study suggest that such dual demands may place teachers in a position where adaptation becomes not merely optional but essential for sustaining learning continuity. This underscores the need for policy frameworks that explicitly accommodate contextual adaptation rather than treating it as deviation from prescribed standards.

Leadership emerges as a critical cross-cutting factor shaping teachers' work behavior across all identified patterns. Educational leadership literature consistently highlights the influence of school leaders on teacher motivation, accountability, and professional growth (Afifah & Taufiqurrahman, 2023; Widayati et al., 2023). The present findings reinforce this body of work by demonstrating that non-punitive supervision and recognition function as behavioral signals that influence how teachers allocate effort and interpret professional expectations. Rather than acting as mechanisms of control, leadership practices appear to create enabling conditions for proactive and adaptive behavior.

This insight aligns with transformational and relational leadership theories, which emphasize trust, support, and shared purpose as drivers of positive organizational behavior (Robbins & Judge, 2021). In rural school contexts, where formal monitoring mechanisms may be limited, leadership practices that emphasize recognition and

collegiality may be particularly effective in shaping professional norms. The findings thus extend leadership research by illustrating how leadership influence operates in small-scale, resource-constrained educational institutions.

Cultural context also plays a mediating role in shaping teachers' work behavior. The findings suggest that local cultural values, particularly those associated with Minangkabau traditions of mutual cooperation, intersect with organizational practices to support collaborative behavior among teachers. This observation contributes to the literature on culturally embedded professionalism, which argues that professional practices are negotiated within broader social and cultural frameworks (Noto Atmojo, 1992; Suhendro et al., 2024). Rather than replacing formal professional standards, cultural norms appear to shape how those standards are enacted in daily practice.

Importantly, the findings highlight that cultural support alone is insufficient to overcome structural limitations. While collaborative values may facilitate peer support and informal learning, infrastructural constraints and administrative pressures continue to shape the boundaries of teachers' professional agency. This reinforces calls within educational research for integrated approaches that address cultural, organizational, and material dimensions of schooling simultaneously (Ernila, 2024).

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that teachers' work behavior at SD Negeri 11 Pancung Soal is shaped by the dynamic interaction between individual agency and institutional context within a rural elementary school setting. Drawing on systematic classroom observations and in depth interviews, the findings reveal three dominant behavioral patterns, namely proactive, passive, and adaptive behavior, which differ in their levels of professional initiative, instructional responsiveness, and contextual adjustment. Proactive behavior emerges as the most effective pattern in enhancing student engagement and learning quality through student centered instruction, cultural contextualization, and sustained professional collaboration. Passive behavior, while evident in a considerable proportion of teaching sessions, is largely situational and closely associated with structural constraints such as administrative workload, limited infrastructure, and restricted access to professional development. Adaptive behavior functions as a critical transitional pattern, demonstrating teachers' capacity to respond creatively to post pandemic challenges and resource limitations through flexible instructional strategies and strengthened communication with parents.

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