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Dynamics of Teacher Professionalism and Performance in Makassar City

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ABSTRACT

Teacher professionalism and performance are essential factors in determining the quality of education. In the context of educational transformation, teachers are increasingly expected to demonstrate professional competence, pedagogical skills, ethical responsibility, adaptability, and a commitment to continuous professional development. This study aims to explore the dynamics of teacher professionalism and performance in Makassar City, Indonesia, focusing on professional competencies, instructional practices, institutional support, professional development, and challenges encountered in educational settings. This research employs a qualitative descriptive approach. Data are designed to be collected through in-depth interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis involving teachers and school principals from selected educational institutions in Makassar City. The data analysis follows the thematic analysis framework developed by Braun and Clarke, involving familiarization, coding, theme development, theme review, theme definition, and reporting. The proposed analytical framework focuses on five dimensions: teacher professionalism as a combination of competence and responsibility, variations in instructional performance, continuous professional development, institutional leadership and organizational support, and challenges in maintaining professional standards. This study is expected to provide a contextual understanding of how individual competencies and institutional environments interact in shaping teacher professionalism and performance. The findings are expected to contribute to educational management and policy development, particularly in strengthening teacher development programs, improving instructional supervision, and establishing supportive professional learning environments in Makassar City.

INTRODUCTION

Teachers play a fundamental role in determining the quality of education and the development of human resources. As the primary agents of learning, teachers are responsible not only for transferring knowledge but also for developing students' competencies, character, critical thinking, and social awareness. In contemporary educational environments, the demands placed on teachers have become increasingly complex due to curriculum changes, technological developments, educational policy reforms, and the growing diversity of students' learning needs. Consequently, teacher professionalism has become an essential component of educational quality and institutional effectiveness.

Teacher professionalism is a multidimensional concept encompassing professional knowledge, pedagogical competence, ethical responsibility, professional identity, and commitment to continuous improvement. Professionalism should not be understood merely through formal academic qualifications or professional certification, but also through the ability to translate professional knowledge into effective educational practices. Beijaard et al. (2004) explain that teacher professional identity is closely associated with teachers' professional knowledge, personal experiences, and interpretations of their roles and responsibilities. Similarly, Akkerman and Meijer (2011) conceptualize teacher identity

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as a dynamic process shaped by the interaction between individual and social dimensions of professional life.

The relationship between professionalism and teacher performance is particularly important because professional competence provides the foundation for effective instructional practices. Teachers are expected to demonstrate the ability to design learning activities, manage classrooms, evaluate student achievement, and adapt instructional strategies to different learning needs. Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2001) emphasize that teacher self-efficacy is associated with persistence, enthusiasm, professional commitment, and instructional behavior. Furthermore, Klassen and Tze (2014) demonstrate that teachers' self-efficacy is significantly associated with observed teaching effectiveness. These perspectives suggest that professional performance is influenced not only by technical competence but also by teachers' confidence, motivation, and professional commitment.

In Indonesia, improving teacher professionalism remains an important educational priority. The development of professional teachers requires an integrated approach involving competency improvement, professional development, institutional support, and educational policy implementation. Research conducted by Tanang and Abu (2014) in South Sulawesi highlights the importance of pedagogical skills, professional attitudes, continuous learning activities, and institutional support in strengthening teacher professionalism. Their findings also identify policy, infrastructure, financial resources, and moral support as important factors in professional development. This regional evidence provides a relevant foundation for investigating the dynamics of teacher professionalism in Makassar City.

Makassar City represents an important educational setting in South Sulawesi, characterized by diverse educational institutions, school environments, student backgrounds, and institutional management practices. Such diversity creates different professional experiences and working conditions for teachers. The challenges of maintaining professional standards may vary according to teaching experience, institutional resources, leadership practices, technological facilities, and opportunities for professional development. Tanang et al. (2014), in their research on teaching professionalism in Makassar, also draw attention to the challenges associated with developing teachers' professional capacities within local educational settings.

Furthermore, the dynamics of teacher professionalism cannot be separated from the broader organizational environment. School leadership, collegial relationships, institutional culture, and organizational support influence teachers' professional motivation and performance. Robinson et al. (2008) demonstrate the importance of instructional leadership in improving educational outcomes, particularly through leadership practices directly connected to teaching and learning. Leithwood et al. (2008) similarly identify school leadership as an important factor in establishing conditions that support educational improvement. More recently, Li et al. (2025) demonstrate the relationship between perceived organizational support, self-efficacy, job satisfaction, and teacher job performance.

Another important dimension concerns professional development. Teachers are required to continuously update their knowledge, instructional strategies, and technological competencies in response to educational changes. Desimone (2009) emphasizes the importance of developing a conceptual framework for understanding the impact of professional development on teachers and students. Opfer and Pedder (2011) further explain that teacher professional learning is shaped by the interaction between teachers, schools, and learning activities. In addition, Sims and Fletcher-Wood (2021) identify sustained, collaborative, subject-specific, and practice-oriented activities as important characteristics of effective teacher professional development.

Despite growing attention to teacher professionalism and performance, further qualitative investigation is necessary to understand how teachers experience professional expectations in their everyday educational practices. Quantitative approaches can identify relationships among variables, but qualitative inquiry provides opportunities to explore professional meanings, institutional experiences, workplace challenges, and adaptation processes in greater depth. Rushton (2023), through a systematic review of teacher identity research, highlights the importance of examining teachers' professional lives through their experiences, institutional contexts, professional communities, and processes of change.

Therefore, this study investigates the dynamics of teacher professionalism and performance in Makassar City through a qualitative descriptive approach. It explores teachers' understanding of professionalism, the relationship between professional competence and instructional performance, the influence of institutional leadership, professional development experiences, and the challenges encountered in maintaining professional standards.

The study is guided by the following research questions:

1. How do teachers understand and implement professionalism in their daily educational practices?

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2. What individual and institutional factors influence teacher performance in Makassar City?
3. What challenges do teachers experience in maintaining and improving their professionalism?
4. How do institutional leadership and professional development contribute to improving teacher performance?

This research is expected to contribute to the understanding of teacher professionalism as a dynamic process involving individual competencies, professional identity, organizational support, and continuous learning. It also seeks to provide practical insights for educational institutions and policymakers in developing sustainable strategies to improve teacher performance and educational quality in Makassar City.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptualizing Political Literacy

Political literacy is a multidimensional concept that extends beyond the acquisition of factual knowledge about political institutions, electoral procedures, and political actors. It also involves the ability to understand political issues, interpret competing claims, evaluate information critically, and make informed judgments about public affairs. Dudley and Gitelson (2002) situated political literacy within the broader discussions of political socialization, civic education, and civic engagement. Their work emphasizes that understanding young people's political development requires attention to the agents, activities, and interactions through which individuals acquire political knowledge and develop their perspectives on the political world.

A useful distinction can be made between political knowledge, political literacy, and political participation. Political knowledge refers primarily to what individuals know about political institutions, processes, and issues. Political literacy encompasses a broader set of interpretive and evaluative competencies through which individuals understand and critically engage with political information. Political participation, in contrast, concerns the activities through which individuals express political preferences or engage in political processes, including voting, campaigning, and public discussion. Although these concepts are related, they are not interchangeable. Individuals may participate in elections without demonstrating a strong capacity to evaluate political information, while others may possess substantial political understanding without engaging in conventional political activities.

Koren (2025) provides a contemporary conceptualization through the related concept of political information literacy (PIL). Based on a systematized review of 99 journal articles and conference papers, Koren identifies the importance of understanding, analyzing, criticizing, and making informed decisions about political information. The review also highlights the roles of political knowledge, information-evaluation skills, and political self-efficacy in shaping how young people navigate complex information environments. This perspective is particularly relevant to the present study because young voters increasingly encounter political information through multiple sources that differ in credibility, purpose, and ideological orientation.

For the purposes of this research, political literacy is understood as a developing capacity through which young citizens acquire political knowledge, interpret political issues, critically evaluate political claims, and form informed judgments about democratic institutions and citizenship. This working definition does not assume that political literacy is a fixed attribute or that it necessarily produces a particular political preference. Instead, it treats political literacy as a process that develops through experience, interaction, and reflection.

2.2. Political Socialization and the Development of Political Literacy

Political socialization provides a theoretical foundation for understanding how individuals acquire political orientations, knowledge, and practices through interactions with their social environments. Dudley and Gitelson (2002) argue that the study of political literacy among young people requires closer attention to the learning processes and social agents that shape their understanding of politics. Political socialization is therefore useful for examining how young citizens encounter political ideas, develop political identities, and learn to interpret public affairs.

Family, schools, peer groups, and community institutions are important settings in which political socialization may occur. Family conversations can introduce young people to political values, public issues, and electoral choices. Schools may provide formal instruction about government, citizenship, democracy, and electoral institutions. Peer interactions can expose young people to alternative perspectives and encourage them to discuss political issues. These environments may reinforce one another, but they may also provide conflicting interpretations of political events and political actors.

In Makassar, Yunus et al. (2021) examined how educational policy, schools, parents, and social media contributed to the

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formation of political preferences among first-time voters. Their study demonstrates the relevance of multiple socialization environments in understanding young people's political orientations. However, the development of political preferences is not identical to the development of political literacy. Preferences indicate orientations toward political alternatives, whereas literacy concerns the capacities through which individuals understand and evaluate political information. The present study consequently uses political socialization as a framework for investigating the experiences and interactions through which political literacy may develop.

A political socialization perspective also encourages attention to the ways young voters interpret, negotiate, or reject political messages rather than assuming that they passively adopt the views of their parents, teachers, or peers. The central analytical question is not simply which source influences a young person most strongly, but how political learning occurs across different environments and how individuals construct their own understanding of political issues.

2.3. Digital Media and Political Information Literacy

Digital media have expanded the range of political information available to young citizens. Social networking platforms, video-sharing services, online news, and messaging applications allow young people to encounter political information outside formal educational settings. These platforms can provide access to political debates, campaign messages, public policy discussions, and diverse viewpoints. At the same time, digital environments expose users to misleading claims, selective representations, and information that may be difficult to verify.

Koren (2025) emphasizes the importance of political information literacy in navigating information environments characterized by misinformation, disinformation, and competing political narratives. The distinction between information exposure and information evaluation is particularly important. Encountering political content does not necessarily mean that a person understands its context, recognizes its limitations, or can assess its credibility. Political literacy therefore requires examining how young people determine whether information is trustworthy, compare claims across sources, recognize possible bias, and interpret political messages in relation to broader institutional and social contexts.

Research in Makassar has already established the significance of digital media in first-time voters' political learning. Ekawati (2021) investigated social media as a source of political understanding among first-time voters in Makassar and identified its importance within their political information environments. Yunus et al. (2021) likewise examined social media alongside schools and parents in the formation of first-time voters' political preferences. These studies provide a local empirical foundation for the present research.

Nevertheless, the importance of social media should not be interpreted as evidence that digital access automatically strengthens political literacy. The educational value of digital information depends partly on how individuals engage with it. Some young people may compare multiple sources and question political claims, while others may rely heavily on familiar accounts, peer recommendations, or content that confirms existing assumptions. The present study therefore focuses on the practices and interpretations through which young voters engage with political information, rather than treating social media exposure itself as a direct indicator of political literacy.

2.4. First-Time Voters, Political Learning, and Democratic Citizenship

First-time voters occupy an important position in the study of political learning because their initial electoral experiences take place while they are developing their understanding of political institutions and citizenship. Their engagement with elections may involve learning about candidates, political parties, public policies, electoral procedures, and the significance of voting. These experiences can provide opportunities to develop political knowledge, but they can also expose inexperienced voters to conflicting claims and persuasive political messages.

The Makassar-based study by Yunus et al. (2021) demonstrates that the political preferences of first-time voters are shaped within interactions among schools, parents, and social media. Ekawati (2021) similarly identifies social media as an important setting for the political understanding of first-time voters. In a related study, Yunus et al. (2023) examined parental roles in the formation of political ethics among first-time voters in Makassar, highlighting concerns about political information and ethical judgment in the social media environment.

These studies indicate that political learning is embedded in everyday social relationships rather than restricted to formal civic education. However, political literacy requires a more specific analytical focus on how young people understand political institutions, assess political claims, and develop the capacity to make informed judgments. A young person may learn which candidate is supported by family members without necessarily understanding the policy differences between candidates. Similarly, following political content online does not necessarily indicate an ability to distinguish factual claims from unsupported assertions.

Comparing first-time voters with young voters who have previous electoral experience may help illuminate how political learning changes over time. Previous voting experience may provide opportunities to reflect on campaign promises, electoral procedures, or public policy developments. However, prior participation should not automatically be interpreted

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as evidence of higher political literacy. The present study therefore treats electoral experience as a basis for qualitative comparison rather than as a predetermined measure of political competence.
Democratic citizenship provides a broader context for interpreting these experiences. Political literacy may enable citizens to understand democratic institutions, assess public decisions, recognize political accountability, and engage with disagreements in an informed manner. These capacities do not require citizens to hold identical political preferences. Rather, they concern the ability to form and revise judgments through engagement with political information and democratic principles.

Research Gap and Analytical Contribution
The literature reviewed above establishes three relevant foundations. First, political literacy is a multidimensional capacity that involves political knowledge and the ability to interpret and evaluate political information (Dudley & Gitelson, 2002; Koren, 2025). Second, political socialization provides a framework for examining the roles of families, schools, peers, and other environments in political learning. Third, empirical research in Makassar has already explored social media, education, parental influence, and political preferences among first-time voters (Ekawati, 2021; Yunus et al., 2021, 2023).
The key analytical opportunity is to examine how these processes come together in young voters' own accounts of political learning. Research on political preferences provides insights into the formation of political orientations, but preference formation alone cannot fully explain how individuals assess political information, understand democratic institutions, or develop confidence in their political judgments. The distinction is important because political literacy concerns not only what young people believe but also how they arrive at, evaluate, and potentially revise those beliefs.
Accordingly, this study examines the development of political literacy through the interaction of political learning environments, information interpretation, and critical evaluation. It also compares the accounts of first-time voters with those of young voters who have previously voted, without presuming that electoral experience necessarily produces greater literacy. The proposed contribution is a context-sensitive qualitative explanation of how young citizens in Makassar describe their political learning processes and how those processes shape their understanding of politics and democratic citizenship.
The study is guided by the following analytical questions:

1. How do young and first-time voters develop political literacy through formal and informal learning environments in Makassar City, Indonesia?

2. How do young voters interpret and critically evaluate political information encountered through digital media and interpersonal networks?

3. How do political learning experiences shape young voters' understanding of democratic institutions, citizenship, and their capacity to make informed political judgments?

Together, these questions connect political socialization with political information literacy while maintaining a clear distinction between political knowledge, critical evaluation, political preference, and electoral participation.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative descriptive research design to explore the dynamics of teacher professionalism and performance in Makassar City. A qualitative approach is considered appropriate because the research focuses on understanding teachers' experiences, perceptions, professional practices, and challenges within their educational environments.
Qualitative research enables researchers to investigate social phenomena in their natural settings and interpret the meanings participants attach to their experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018).
The study focuses on identifying patterns, understanding contextual differences, and examining the relationship between professional expectations and actual teaching practices.

The research is situated in Makassar City, South Sulawesi, Indonesia. The proposed research participants consist of teachers from selected educational institutions representing different school levels and institutional characteristics.
Participants will be selected through purposive sampling based on their relevance to the research objectives.

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The proposed participants include:

1. Teachers with different years of professional experience.
2. Teachers who have obtained professional certification and those who have not.
3. School principals or educational administrators.
4. Teachers involved in professional development activities.

The final number of participants will be determined based on the depth and adequacy of the information obtained during data collection.

Data Collection Techniques

Data will be collected through three primary techniques.

1. In-depth Interviews

Semi-structured interviews will be conducted to explore participants' experiences, perceptions, and perspectives regarding teacher professionalism and performance.

Interview questions will address professional responsibilities, instructional practices, professional development, institutional support, and challenges in educational settings.

2. Observation

Classroom and school observations will be conducted to examine teachers' instructional practices, classroom management, interactions with students, professional discipline, and implementation of educational responsibilities.

Observations will help compare participants' reported experiences with their actual professional practices.

3. Documentation

Relevant documents will be examined to complement interview and observation findings. These may include instructional plans, teaching materials, professional development records, school policies, assessment documents, and other relevant institutional records.

3.4. Data Analysis

The collected data will be analyzed using thematic analysis based on the approach developed by Braun and Clarke (2006). The analysis will involve six stages:

1. Familiarization with the data: Reading interview transcripts, observation notes, and relevant documents repeatedly.
2. Generating initial codes: Identifying meaningful statements, experiences, and patterns related to teacher professionalism and performance.
3. Searching for themes: Organizing related codes into broader thematic categories.
4. Reviewing themes: Examining whether the identified themes accurately represent the collected data.
5. Defining and naming themes: Developing clear descriptions of the major findings.
6. Producing the report: Presenting the findings through analytical descriptions supported by empirical evidence.

Data Validity and Trustworthiness

To strengthen research credibility, the study will employ methodological triangulation by comparing interview, observation, and documentation findings.

Member checking will also be conducted by allowing selected participants to review relevant interpretations of their statements. Furthermore, an audit trail will be maintained to document the research process and analytical decisions.

These procedures are intended to improve the credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability of the research findings.

Research Ethics

The research will prioritize informed consent, confidentiality, voluntary participation, and the protection of participants'

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identities. Participants will be informed about the research objectives and their right to withdraw from the study. Personal information and institutional identities will be protected unless explicit permission has been obtained.

RESULT

Provisional thematic structure for empirical validation

The following themes provide an analytical structure for organizing the research findings. They should be finalized only after interviews, observations, and document analysis have been completed.

4.1. Teacher Professionalism as a Combination of Competence and Responsibility

The first analytical theme concerns the understanding of professionalism as a combination of professional competence and responsibility.

Teacher professionalism involves the ability to master subject matter, design effective learning activities, maintain professional discipline, and demonstrate ethical responsibility toward students and educational institutions.

The analysis should examine whether teachers perceive professionalism primarily as compliance with formal requirements or as a broader commitment to improving educational quality.

Particular attention should be given to the relationship between professional certification, actual classroom competencies, and teachers' commitment to continuous improvement.

4.2. Variations in Teacher Performance and Instructional Practices

The second theme concerns differences in teaching performance across educational institutions and individual teachers.

Teacher performance may vary according to teaching experience, academic background, professional motivation, availability of learning resources, and institutional expectations.

The empirical analysis should explore how these factors influence lesson preparation, instructional implementation, classroom management, student engagement, and learning assessment.

This theme also examines the possible gap between administrative performance indicators and the quality of actual classroom interactions.

4.3. Professional Development as a Continuous Process

The third theme focuses on professional development as an ongoing process rather than a series of isolated training activities.

Relevant aspects include teachers' participation in professional training, collaboration with colleagues, participation in teacher working groups, independent learning, and adaptation to technological developments.

The research should investigate whether professional development opportunities are equally accessible and whether the knowledge obtained through training is effectively implemented in classroom practices.

4.4. Institutional Leadership and the Working Environment

The fourth theme examines the influence of school leadership and organizational culture on teacher professionalism.

Important dimensions include instructional supervision, communication between school principals and teachers, institutional support, recognition of professional achievements, and opportunities for collaborative learning.

A supportive working environment may encourage teachers to develop their competencies and improve instructional quality. In contrast, organizational constraints and excessive administrative responsibilities may limit opportunities for professional learning.

4.5. Challenges in Maintaining Professional Performance

The fifth theme concerns the challenges associated with maintaining professional standards in changing educational environments.

Potential areas of investigation include:

- Administrative workloads that reduce instructional preparation time.
- Differences in access to educational technology and learning facilities.
- Limited opportunities for relevant professional development.

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- Challenges in adapting to curriculum changes.
- Differences in professional motivation and institutional support.
- Balancing administrative responsibilities with student-centered learning.

These issues should be examined through participants' actual experiences rather than assumed to represent all teachers in Makassar City.

DISCUSSION

5.1. The Relationship Between Professionalism and Teacher Performance

Teacher professionalism and performance are closely interconnected. Professionalism provides the foundation for effective educational practices, while performance reflects how professional competencies and responsibilities are translated into everyday teaching activities.

The four dimensions of teacher competence established in Indonesian legislation provide an important framework for understanding this relationship. Pedagogical and professional competencies directly support instructional effectiveness, while personal and social competencies contribute to ethical conduct, classroom relationships, and institutional collaboration.

However, professional qualifications alone cannot guarantee high-quality teaching performance. Teachers also require motivation, institutional support, appropriate learning resources, and opportunities to develop their professional capacities.

This perspective is consistent with Tanang and Abu (2014), who emphasize the importance of integrating professional commitment, pedagogical skills, and institutional support in improving teacher professionalism.

5.2. The Dynamics of Professional Identity in Educational Change

Teacher professionalism is continuously shaped by changing educational expectations. Teachers must respond to curriculum developments, technological innovation, diverse student characteristics, and changing approaches to learning.

These developments require teachers to continuously negotiate their professional identities and responsibilities.

Rushton (2023) demonstrates that teacher professional identity is influenced by professional experiences, institutional contexts, communities, and processes of change. This suggests that teacher professionalism should be understood as a dynamic process rather than a fixed characteristic.

In the context of Makassar City, this perspective is particularly relevant for examining how teachers adapt their professional practices to different institutional conditions and educational expectations.

5.3. Institutional Support as a Determining Factor

Teacher performance cannot be separated from the organizational environment in which educational activities take place.

School principals and educational administrators have an important responsibility to facilitate professional learning, provide constructive supervision, and establish collaborative working environments.

Institutional support becomes particularly important when teachers face administrative demands, limited resources, and changes in educational policy.

Therefore, improving teacher performance requires more than individual training programs. It also requires institutional strategies that promote professional collaboration, instructional innovation, and continuous evaluation.

5.4. Professional Development and Educational Adaptation

Continuous professional development is essential for maintaining teacher competence in changing educational environments.

Professional development should not be limited to participation certificates or formal training activities. Its effectiveness should be assessed through improvements in teachers' knowledge, instructional strategies, classroom management, and student learning experiences.

Collaborative professional learning, mentoring, reflective teaching, and technology-based learning can provide opportunities for teachers to improve their professional capabilities.

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In this regard, educational institutions should design professional development programs based on actual classroom needs and differences in teachers' competencies.

5.5. Implications for Educational Policy in Makassar City

The dynamics of teacher professionalism and performance have important implications for educational management and policy development.

First, educational authorities should strengthen equitable access to professional development opportunities across educational institutions.

Second, school leadership should prioritize instructional supervision and professional collaboration rather than focusing exclusively on administrative compliance.

Third, teacher performance evaluation should consider classroom practices, professional commitment, student engagement, and continuous improvement.

Fourth, educational institutions should provide adequate technological infrastructure and learning resources to support innovative instructional practices.

Finally, teacher professional development should be integrated into long-term institutional planning to ensure that professional improvement becomes a sustainable process.

Overall, strengthening teacher professionalism requires a comprehensive approach involving teachers, school leaders, educational authorities, and the broader educational community.

CONCLUSION

Teacher professionalism and performance represent interconnected dimensions of educational quality. Professionalism encompasses pedagogical competence, professional knowledge, personal integrity, social responsibility, and continuous professional development. Meanwhile, teacher performance reflects the implementation of these professional capacities in instructional activities and institutional responsibilities.

This study proposes a qualitative examination of the dynamics of teacher professionalism and performance in Makassar City, focusing on individual competencies, professional identity, institutional leadership, professional development, and organizational challenges.

The study highlights the importance of understanding teacher performance within its broader institutional and social context. Improving educational quality requires more than establishing professional standards or implementing certification programs. It also requires sustainable professional development, supportive leadership, adequate educational resources, and an organizational culture that encourages continuous learning.

For educational institutions in Makassar City, strengthening teacher professionalism should become a collaborative responsibility involving teachers, school principals, educational administrators, and policymakers.

The final conclusions regarding the specific conditions and experiences of teachers in Makassar City must be established through systematic analysis of empirical interview, observation, and documentation data.

Future research may examine differences in professional experiences across school levels, institutional characteristics, and employment statuses to provide a more comprehensive understanding of teacher professionalism and performance in urban educational environments.

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