

# Transformative Supervision and Teacher Agency: How Integrated Supervision Reshapes Teachers' Professional Identity and Performance

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## Abstract:

This study explores the meaning of integrated supervision for teachers as a form of control or empowerment, and its impact on their agency and professional identity. Using a mixed methods design with a predominantly qualitative approach, the study was conducted in secondary schools in Indonesia. In the first phase, a survey of 80 teachers mapped their perceptions of supervision and their levels of agency. The next phase, in-depth interviews with 10 teachers, explored their experiences in supervisory practice. Findings indicate that control-based supervision tends to suppress teacher agency, shape a defensive professional identity, and reduce pedagogical initiative. Conversely, dialogic and trust-based supervision strengthens teacher agency, shapes a reflective professional identity, and encourages pedagogical courage. This study contributes in three aspects: first, it proposes the Transformative Supervision-Agency Loop model to explain the interaction of supervision, agency, and professional identity; second, the model builds on teachers' narrative experiences; and third, it demonstrates the value of a mixed methods approach in capturing the relational and emotional dimensions of supervision. By shifting the analytical focus from managerial effectiveness to teacher subjectivity, this study offers a humanistic framework for reimagining supervisory practice in secondary education.

**Keywords:** *Transformative Supervision, Teacher Agency, Professional Identity, Integrated Supervision*

## Abstrak:

Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi makna supervisi terintegrasi bagi guru sebagai bentuk kontrol atau pemberdayaan, serta dampaknya terhadap agency dan identitas profesional mereka. Menggunakan desain mixed methods dengan pendekatan kualitatif dominan, penelitian ini dilakukan di sekolah menengah di Indonesia. Pada tahap pertama, survei terhadap 80 guru memetakan persepsi mereka terhadap

supervisi dan tingkat agency. Tahap selanjutnya, wawancara mendalam dengan 10 guru menggali pengalaman mereka dalam praktik supervisi. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa supervisi berbasis kontrol cenderung menekan agency guru, membentuk identitas profesional yang defensif, serta mengurangi inisiatif pedagogis. Sebaliknya, supervisi yang dialogis dan berbasis kepercayaan memperkuat agency guru, membentuk identitas profesional reflektif, dan mendorong keberanian pedagogis. Penelitian ini berkontribusi dalam tiga aspek: pertama, mengajukan model *Transformative Supervision–Agency Loop* untuk menjelaskan interaksi supervisi, agency, dan identitas profesional; kedua, model tersebut dibangun berdasarkan narasi pengalaman guru; dan ketiga, menunjukkan nilai pendekatan mixed methods dalam menangkap dimensi relasional dan emosional supervisi. Dengan mengalihkan fokus analisis dari efektivitas manajerial ke subjektivitas guru, penelitian ini menawarkan kerangka humanistik untuk menata ulang praktik supervisi dalam pendidikan menengah.

**Kata Kunci:** *Supervisi Transformatif, Agency Guru, Identitas Profesional, Supervisi Terintegrasi*

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## INTRODUCTION

Educational supervision has long been recognised as a key instrument for improving learning quality and enhancing teacher effectiveness (Siagian et al., 2025). Across diverse education systems, supervision is commonly understood as a strategic mechanism to ensure that teaching practices align with curriculum standards, institutional policies, and public accountability demands (Miller et al., 2025). International scholarship consistently associates supervision with classroom observation, performance assessment, and structured feedback processes aimed at improving instructional effectiveness (Baecher & Akcan, 2025). Within this dominant framework, supervision is valued for its presumed direct link to teacher quality, which is widely regarded as a crucial determinant of student learning outcomes and overall school success (Kellermann et al., 2023; López-Martín et al., 2023).

However, recent literature has increasingly criticised technocratic and bureaucratic approaches to educational supervision. A growing body of studies demonstrates that control-oriented supervision generates resistance, anxiety, and emotional exhaustion among teachers (Alonso et al., 2022). Rather than supporting professional learning, supervision is frequently reduced to an administrative routine that reinforces hierarchical power relations within schools. In such contexts, teachers are positioned primarily as objects of evaluation rather than as subjects of reflective and autonomous professional practice. However, while the emotional consequences of control-based supervision have been widely documented, they are rarely examined in relation to how supervision shapes teachers' agency and the formation of their professional identity (Kelchtermans, 2016). As a result, existing research often isolates emotional responses from the deeper processes through which supervisory practices influence teachers' sense of self, professional autonomy, and capacity to act meaningfully within their instructional roles.

Beyond its immediate emotional effects, prolonged exposure to control-oriented supervision has more enduring consequences for teachers' agency.

When supervision consistently positions teachers as technical implementers of policy rather than as professional decision-makers, their capacity to exercise initiative, creativity, and pedagogical judgment gradually diminishes (Mejia-Tiamwatt, 2023; Skerritt, 2023). Over time, such conditions encourage risk-averse teaching practices and weaken teachers' sense of professional autonomy, limiting their ability to respond reflectively to students' diverse learning needs. Educational scholarship underscores that sustainable learning quality depends not only on compliance with standards but also on teachers' agency to adapt instruction, reflect on practice, and engage meaningfully with pedagogical challenges (Lourenço et al., 2025). From this perspective, the central concern is not merely how supervision is conducted, but how its long-term orientation either constrains or enables teachers' agency as a foundation for professional growth.

In response to these limitations, previous studies have proposed collaborative and clinical supervision as alternatives to traditional supervisory approaches. Collaborative supervision emphasises a professional partnership, with dialogue, reflection, and joint problem-solving central to the supervisory process (Asher et al., 2021). Clinical supervision, meanwhile, focuses on classroom observation, reflective analysis, and structured feedback to support teachers' understanding of their instructional practices (Carmo & Salis, 2024; Myrberg et al., 2025). These approaches are often portrayed as more humane, as they acknowledge teachers as adult learners with professional expertise. However, despite their normative appeal, such approaches frequently remain embedded within structurally hierarchical school systems. In practice, supervisory authority is seldom redistributed, and teachers' participation in dialogue and reflection often occurs within predefined institutional boundaries. As a result, collaborative and clinical supervision may soften the style of supervision without fundamentally altering the power relations that shape teachers' agency and professional identity (Molina-Pérez & Moreno-Medina, 2025).

The literature on educational leadership further highlights that the effectiveness of supervision is closely linked to the relational and emotional dimensions of school life (Drago-Severson & Blum-DeStefano, 2018; La Matta & Risoto, 2022). Research on leadership for learning and instructional leadership demonstrates that trust, care, and professional recognition are central to building school climates that support teacher learning and development (Bessong, 2024; Hosna et al., 2025; Hua et al., 2024). Within this strand of research, supervision is typically examined in terms of its contribution to improved teaching practices, professional learning, or student outcomes. However, studies on supervision, teacher agency, and professional identity have largely developed as parallel bodies of literature rather than as an integrated field of inquiry (Nazari & Kamali, 2025; Wichaidit, 2025). What remains underexplored is how supervision operates at the intersection of these three domains, simultaneously shaping teachers' agency and professional identity through everyday supervisory interactions.

Studies on teacher agency and professional identity offer important insights into dimensions that have often been marginalised in supervision

research. Teacher agency refers to teachers' capacity to act intentionally, make professional judgments, and influence instructional practice and workplace conditions (Nuryani et al., 2022; Wichaidit, 2025). Professional identity, in turn, concerns how teachers understand themselves as professionals, including their values, commitments, and roles within educational practice (Groenewald & Arnold, 2025). Existing research indicates that both agency and professional identity are dynamic and shaped through ongoing institutional interactions, including supervisory encounters (Cornett et al., 2023). However, the gap addressed in this study is not merely empirical but epistemological. Much of the existing literature conceptualises agency and identity as outcomes or variables influenced by organisational conditions, rather than as lived and processual experiences constituted through everyday supervisory interactions. Consequently, what remains insufficiently understood is the subjective, narrative, and relational knowledge of how teachers experience supervision and how these experiences mediate the formation of agency and professional identity over time. Teachers' own voices – particularly their accounts of empowering or constraining supervisory experiences – are rarely positioned as central sources of knowledge.

Building on this epistemological gap, this study aims to examine how teachers interpret integrated supervision as either a form of control or empowerment, and how these interpretations shape their agency and professional identity in everyday school practice. Specifically, the study addresses two research questions: (1) how do teachers make sense of integrated supervision in their daily professional experiences, and (2) how do supervisory experiences contribute to the ongoing formation of teachers' agency and professional identity? The central research argument advanced in this study is that supervision functions not merely as a managerial or technical mechanism, but as a formative social process through which teachers' professional subjectivity is continuously negotiated. Accordingly, the originality of this research lies in repositioning supervision from an instrument of accountability to a transformative process that operates through relational, emotional, and identity-based mechanisms. By integrating the perspectives of supervision, teacher agency, and professional identity within a single analytical framework, this study offers both conceptual and empirical contributions to the supervision literature. Ultimately, the study seeks to inform the development of more humane, reflective, and sustainable models of supervision in secondary education.

## RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a qualitative-dominant, sequential, explanatory, mixed-methods design (Creswell & Creswell, 2022). In this design, an initial quantitative phase is used to map general patterns of teachers' perceptions of integrated supervision and levels of agency. At the same time, the primary analytical emphasis is placed on qualitative inquiry. The qualitative phase serves to deepen, explain, and interpret the quantitative patterns by capturing teachers' meanings, emotions, and professional narratives related to supervision (Rogo,

2024). Conceptually, this study does not aim to test linear or causal relationships between variables. Instead, it examines supervision as a social and professional process through which teachers' agency and professional identity are formed and negotiated over time.

The research was conducted at three senior high schools in Rembang Regency, Central Java: SMA Negeri 1 Rembang, SMA Negeri 2 Rembang, and SMA Negeri Lasem. These schools represent diverse supervisory practices shaped by different institutional policies and leadership styles. Socioculturally, Rembang provides a relevant context that reflects the intersection of modern educational bureaucracy with local collegial values. This setting enabled the study to capture supervision as it occurs in everyday professional relationships rather than in artificially constructed research situations.

Research participants were secondary school teachers with varied subject backgrounds, service lengths, and supervisory experience. In the quantitative phase, 80 teachers participated as survey respondents. This number was not intended for statistical generalization or hypothesis testing, but rather to provide an initial descriptive mapping of prevailing perceptions of supervision and teacher agency. The quantitative data functioned as a contextual foundation for the subsequent qualitative phase.

In the qualitative phase, 10 teachers were purposively selected as information-rich cases to allow in-depth exploration of supervisory experiences. Selection criteria included: (1) the intensity and frequency of supervisory encounters, (2) variation in interpretations of supervision as empowering or constraining, and (3) willingness to reflect narratively on professional experiences. This purposive strategy aligns with qualitative research principles that prioritize depth, meaning, and experiential richness over numerical representation (Patton, 2014).

Data collection was conducted in two stages. The first stage employed a short questionnaire adapted from established literature on reflective supervision and teacher agency (Koo & Yang, 2025; Tenopir et al., 2016). The instrument was contextualized for secondary school settings and reviewed by two experts in educational supervision and qualitative methodology to ensure content validity and conceptual coherence. Prior to the main data collection, the questionnaire was piloted with teachers outside the research sites. Reliability analysis using Cronbach's alpha indicated acceptable internal consistency for both the supervision perception scale and the teacher agency scale ( $\alpha > 0.70$ ), which was considered sufficient for descriptive and exploratory purposes.

The second stage involved semi-structured in-depth interviews using a narrative approach (Knott et al., 2022). Interviews focused on teachers' most salient supervisory experiences, including those perceived as empowering as well as those experienced as constraining or emotionally challenging. Open-ended questions allowed participants to articulate their experiences in their own words and frames of meaning, consistent with principles of narrative inquiry in educational research (Connelly & Clandinin, 2012). All interviews were conducted with informed consent, audio-recorded, and transcribed verbatim to preserve narrative integrity.



Quantitative data were analyzed descriptively to identify general trends in teachers' perceptions of supervision and agency (Creswell & Creswell, 2022; Joseph et al., 2024). This analysis was not intended to test hypotheses but to inform the focus and sampling of the qualitative phase. Qualitative data were analyzed using a thematic-narrative analysis approach (Squires, 2023). Initial coding was conducted independently by two researchers with expertise in educational supervision and qualitative analysis. Coding focused on meaning units related to supervisory experiences, professional emotions, teacher agency, and professional identity. Codes were compared and refined through iterative analytic discussions to reach interpretive consensus, consistent with reflexive thematic analysis traditions (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Squires, 2023). Analytical rigour was enhanced through the maintenance of an audit trail documenting coding decisions, regular peer debriefing among the research team, and a reflexive stance acknowledging the researchers' positionality and its potential influence on interpretation.

This study adhered to established principles of educational research ethics (Hamilton et al., 2024). Participants were informed about the research objectives, procedures, and their right to withdraw at any time without consequences. Informed consent was obtained prior to data collection. The identities of schools and participants were anonymized to protect confidentiality, and all data were securely stored and used exclusively for academic purposes. This ethical approach was particularly important given the sensitive nature of supervisory relationships and power dynamics explored in the study.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Results

This chapter presents the research findings, which are systematically organised based on two main research questions, namely: (1) how teachers interpret integrated supervision as a form of control or empowerment, and (2) how the experience of supervision shapes teachers' agency and professional identity. The presentation of findings integrates quantitative results (survey of 80 teachers) and qualitative results (in-depth interviews with 10 teachers) in a complementary manner. Each subheading begins with an introduction to the findings, followed by two tables—a quantitative table and a qualitative table—and concludes with an explanation of the main findings.

### Teachers' View of Integrated Supervision: Control vs Empowerment

The findings in this subsection answer the first research question, namely, how teachers interpret integrated supervision in their daily practice. In general, the survey results show two main trends in the interpretation of supervision, namely as a practice of administrative control and as a space for professional assistance.

**Table 1. Teachers' Perceptions of Integrated Supervision (n = 80)**

Supervision Perception Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Supervision as administrative control	46	57.5
Supervision as professional guidance	34	42.5

Table 1 shows that most teachers still view supervision as a control practice, though a significant proportion also see it as professional guidance. This reflects a dual perspective, in which supervision is both a tool for compliance and a source of professional support, suggesting its potential to empower or constrain teachers, depending on its approach.

**Table 2. Interview Themes on Teachers' Interpretation of Supervision (n = 10)**

Main Theme	Key Informant Quotes	Frequency
Supervision is stressful and formal	"When supervised, it feels like being tested, not accompanied."	6
Focus on documents and administration	"What is seen more is the lesson plans and completeness, not the process."	5
Supervision as reflective dialogue	"During supervision, we are invited to discuss, not blamed."	4
Supervision as a learning space	"I feel like I learn from supervision, not fear it."	3

Table 2 shows that supervision is still predominantly interpreted as a stressful evaluative activity oriented towards administration. However, the experiences of some teachers show that there are more dialogical and reflective supervisory practices. This difference in interpretation is largely determined by the supervisor's style and the professional relationship built during the supervision process.

### **The Influence of Supervision on Teacher Agency in Professional Practice**

This subsection presents findings on the impact of supervision on teacher agency, particularly in terms of initiative, the courage to make pedagogical decisions, and professional involvement. Quantitative findings indicate that perceptions of supervision correlate with teacher agency.

**Table 3. Level of Teacher Agency Based on Perceptions of Supervision (n = 80)**

Level of Teacher Agency	Supervision as Control	Supervision as Empowerment
High	12	24
Medium	18	8
Low	16	2

Table 3 shows that teachers who interpret supervision as empowerment tend to have higher agency than teachers who interpret supervision as control. This suggests that when teachers perceive supervision as a supportive and developmental process, they are more likely to exhibit greater professional initiative, creativity, and engagement in their teaching practices. In contrast, those who view supervision primarily as a control mechanism may experience limitations in their autonomy, which can restrict their agency and professional growth.

**Table 4. Interview Themes on Teacher Agency (n = 10)**

Theme	Key Informant Quotes	Frequency
<b>Afraid to take initiative</b>	"Afraid to try new things because they will be judged wrong."	5
<b>Playing it safe when teaching</b>	"It's better to just follow the book."	4
<b>Daring to experiment</b>	"I became brave enough to try new methods."	4
<b>Feeling trusted</b>	"Because I am trusted, I am more confident."	3

These findings indicate that control-oriented supervision tends to weaken teachers' agency, characterised by defensive attitudes and a lack of innovation. Conversely, empowering supervision encourages teachers to be more reflective, take initiative, and actively engage in developing learning practices.

### **Supervision and the Formation of Teachers' Professional Identity**

This subsection addresses the second research question by highlighting how supervision experience shapes teachers' professional identity. The survey results show variations in the levels of comfort and professional meaning that teachers feel during supervision.

**Table 5. Impact of Supervision on Teachers' Professional Identity (n = 80)**

Perceived Impact	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Feeling valued as a professional</b>	32	40
<b>Feeling monitored and evaluated</b>	48	60

Table 5 shows that more than half of teachers still perceive supervision as a monitoring process that affects their comfort and professional confidence. This indicates that, for many teachers, supervision is experienced as a source of stress and insecurity, potentially undermining their sense of autonomy and professional identity. Such perceptions suggest that supervision, when perceived as evaluative rather than supportive, may hinder teachers' confidence and willingness to take risks in their practice.

**Table 6. Teacher Professional Identity Interview Themes (n = 10)**

Identity Theme	Key Informant Quotes	Frequency
<b>Defensive identity</b>	"The important thing is to be safe and not be blamed."	5
<b>Loss of professional meaning</b>	"Teaching has become just a routine."	4
<b>Reflective identity</b>	"I feel like I am growing as a teacher."	4
<b>Professional pride</b>	"I am proud of the way I teach."	3

Table 6 shows that supervisory experience directly affects the formation of teachers' professional identity. Authoritarian supervision fosters a defensive identity and an orientation toward compliance, whereas dialogical and supportive supervision strengthens reflective identity, self-confidence, and professional meaning in fulfilling the role of educator.



## Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that educational supervision cannot be treated as a neutral or purely technical practice. Rather, supervision operates as a socially embedded process that shapes how teachers interpret their roles, authority, and professional identity. Whether supervision is enacted as administrative control or professional mentoring fundamentally influences teachers' meaning-making processes and their professional positioning. This finding aligns with Ball's (2003) critique that managerial practices in education carry symbolic and emotional consequences that extend beyond procedural compliance (Molina-Pérez & Pulido-Montes, 2025). In this sense, supervision functions simultaneously at procedural, psychological, and identity levels, making it a powerful site of professional formation rather than a mere mechanism of quality assurance.

### Supervision, Power Relations, and Teacher Meaning-Making

The finding that most teachers continue to interpret supervision as administrative control reinforces Kelchtermans' (2016) argument concerning teachers' structural vulnerability within institutional power relations (Chaula, 2024). Assessment and compliance-oriented supervision reproduces asymmetrical power structures in which teachers prioritise professional safety over pedagogical exploration. This helps explain why teachers under such conditions tend to adopt defensive stances and minimise risk-taking in their instructional practices. Similar patterns have been identified by Johansson (2022) and Zhu and Zhai (2025), who show that sustained evaluative pressure weakens professional engagement and narrows teachers' interpretive space. Conversely, when supervision is experienced as dialogical mentoring, it functions as a relational space that redistributes power and enables trust-building. Consistent with scholarship on relational trust in educational leadership (Keravnos et al., 2025), such supervisory encounters allow teachers to reinterpret supervision as professional support rather than surveillance. Theoretically, this shift matters because it transforms supervision from a mechanism of control into a relational practice that legitimises teachers' voices and professional judgments.

### Supervision and the Formation of Teacher Agency

The study further reveals that teachers' levels of agency differ markedly according to how they interpret supervision. Teachers who experience supervision as empowering exhibit stronger agency, reflected in pedagogical experimentation, reflective practice, and sustained professional engagement. This finding supports ecological theories of teacher agency, which conceptualise agency as emerging from the interaction between individual capacities and enabling or constraining structural conditions (Nazari & Kamali, 2025; Wichaidit, 2025). Supportive supervision creates structural conditions that legitimise teachers' decision-making and encourage reflective action. When trust and recognition are present, teachers are more willing to act as learning agents rather than compliance-oriented implementers.

In contrast, control-based supervision narrows teachers' scope of action and redirects their professional orientation toward procedural conformity. This

pattern reinforces earlier findings that repressive or performative leadership practices weaken both teacher agency and professional identity (Ball, 2003; Molina-Pérez & Moreno-Medina, 2025). The implication here is clear: without agency-supportive supervision, initiatives to improve teaching quality are likely to remain superficial and short-lived.

### **Supervision and the Dynamics of Teachers' Professional Identity**

This study also confirms that teachers' professional identity is shaped through repeated supervisory experiences. Teachers who consistently encounter supervision as pressure tend to develop defensive identities, prioritising administrative compliance over pedagogical meaning. This finding is consistent with research emphasising the contextual fragility of professional identity (Taufikin et al., 2025; Wang & Derakhshan, 2025). Over time, such identities erode teachers' sense of purpose and weaken their emotional commitment to teaching. By contrast, reflective and supportive supervision fosters empowered professional identities. Teachers begin to see themselves as reflective practitioners and moral agents in education, rather than as mere implementers of policy. This emotional and identity dimension resonates with Hargreaves' (1998) argument that emotions are integral to teachers' professional practice (Mosqueda, 2025). Thus, transformational supervision matters not only because it improves instructional practices but also because it sustains teachers' professional meaning and long-term commitment.

Synthesising empirical findings with the existing literature, this study proposes the Transformative Supervision–Agency Loop as a conceptual model that captures the dynamic, reciprocal relationship among supervision, teacher agency, and professional identity. This model extends supervision research beyond its traditional focus on effectiveness and performance by conceptualising supervision as a process of professional subject formation. The main theoretical contribution lies in positioning agency and professional identity not merely as outcomes of supervision, but as mediating processes through which supervision exerts its influence. Practically, the findings suggest that reorienting supervision toward dialogical, trust-based, and reflective practices is not optional but necessary. Supervisors who recognise supervision as a relational and formative space are more likely to foster sustainable professional growth among teachers. Without such a paradigm shift, efforts to improve educational quality risk remaining trapped in procedural compliance, producing technical efficiency without deep professional meaning.

### **CONCLUSION**

This study demonstrates that educational supervision cannot be understood merely as a technical instrument for monitoring and evaluating teacher performance. The findings show that the way supervision is enacted – whether oriented toward administrative control or professional support – has a decisive influence on teachers' agency and professional identity. Supervision that prioritises procedural compliance tends to suppress initiative, encourage defensive orientations, and produce fragile professional identities. In contrast, integrated, dialogical, reflective, and trust-based supervision strengthens teacher

agency, fosters pedagogical courage, and supports the development of a reflective, meaningful professional identity. These results underline a key lesson from this research: supervision operates through complex relational and emotional mechanisms rather than through a simple linear link between supervision and performance outcomes.

Scientifically, this study contributes to the supervision literature by reframing supervision as a formative social process that shapes teachers' professional subjectivity. By integrating perspectives on supervision, teacher agency, and professional identity, the study advances the Transformative Supervision–Agency Loop as a conceptual model that positions agency and identity not only as outcomes but also as mediating processes in supervision. Despite these contributions, the study has limitations. It was conducted in secondary schools within a single region, limiting the generalisability of the findings. In addition, the qualitative-dominant mixed-methods design prioritises interpretive depth over predictive explanation. Future research is therefore encouraged to test the proposed model in broader educational contexts, employ longitudinal designs, or incorporate larger-scale quantitative approaches to examine further how supervision, agency, and professional identity interact across diverse institutional settings.

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