



## Teachers' Perceptions of Motivating Principals' Leadership in Public Junior High Schools

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.61987/jemr.v4i4.1134>

### ABSTRACT

**Keywords:**  
Perception,  
Leadership, Principal,  
Motivator

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This study aims to gather data and information regarding teachers' perceptions of the leadership of the driving principal in State Junior High Schools, focusing on various key aspects. The leadership of the principal is evaluated in terms of teacher development and the improvement of learning quality, effective school management, the creation of a positive school culture, and continuous monitoring and evaluation. Understanding how teachers perceive their principal's leadership is crucial for identifying areas of strength and potential improvement in school management practices. This research is quantitative descriptive in nature, with a population of 270 teachers. The sample size was determined using the Slovin formula, employing the Proportionate Random Sampling technique, resulting in a sample of 76 teachers. The research instrument used was validated and proven reliable. The results showed that teacher development and the improvement of learning quality were well-implemented, as were effective school management and the creation of a positive school culture. Continuous monitoring and evaluation were also found to be effectively implemented. The overall results indicate that teachers have a positive perception of the leadership of the driving principal, with an average score of 4.3, suggesting that the leadership approach is being carried out effectively across all evaluated areas.

### Article History:

Received: May 2025; Revised: June 2025; Accepted: July 2025

### Please cite this article in APA style as:

Sukraini, A., Ermita, Susanti, L., Widiawati. (2025). Teachers' Perceptions of Motivating Principals' Leadership in Public Junior High Schools. *Journal of Educational Management Research*, 4(4), 1480-1492.

## INTRODUCTION

Education is a key factor in shaping the quality of human resources in a country. In the era of globalization, competition among countries has intensified, and a nation's ability to compete heavily depends on the quality. Quality education produces intelligent, innovative, and character-driven generations (Chang et al., 2021; Tsemach et al, 2021; Werang et al., 2023). However, despite growing awareness of the importance of education, the quality of education in Indonesia still falls short of expectations, particularly in the areas of primary and secondary education. Many schools, especially in suburban and rural areas, face significant challenges related to school leadership and teaching quality (Chang et al., 2022). Therefore, this research is crucial in enhancing the understanding of how school leadership can play a pivotal role in improving education quality, particularly by motivating and enhancing teacher performance.

One of the major challenges in Indonesian education is the lack of effective leadership in schools, especially at the junior high school level. The principal, as the primary leader of the school, plays a key role in shaping the school culture, teacher motivation, and performance (Cheng & Wang, 2023). However, many school principals have yet to provide adequate motivation to enhance teacher performance and innovation in teaching (Yohannes & Wasonga, 2023). For instance, in Pamulang District, many teachers feel that the principal does not offer sufficient encouragement to improve their teaching and performance. This results in a decline in teacher motivation and satisfaction, which ultimately impacts the overall quality of education in these schools.

On the ground, there is a noticeable phenomenon where many school principals lack the necessary leadership skills to support the improvement of education quality in schools. At public junior high schools in Pamulang District, principals with a background as high-performing teachers often struggle to adapt to their leadership roles. They tend to lack effective approaches to motivate teachers, manage change, and foster teacher participation in decision-making. Additionally, some schools face difficulties in creating a positive and collaborative school culture. The lack of effective communication between principals and teachers has resulted in low engagement and participation in educational improvement programs, further hindering educational progress.

Previous studies have highlighted the importance of school leadership in improving educational quality through effective leadership. Herman et al. (2023) suggests that an ideal school principal should be able to mobilize all school elements to achieve quality education goals. Burgess et al. (2023) also explains that principals with teaching backgrounds tend to have a better understanding of the challenges faced by teachers, which enables them to offer more relevant solutions. However, while many studies emphasize the importance of school leadership, few focus on how principals can directly motivate teachers or how teachers' perceptions of leadership affect their performance. This research aims to address these gaps by focusing on the direct relationship between teacher motivation, school leadership, and educational outcomes.

Most existing studies have focused on the theoretical aspects of leadership and its impact on academic outcomes. However, there is a lack of research that specifically addresses how leadership can motivate teachers and build a positive school culture. Some studies examine academic performance or student outcomes as a measure of leadership effectiveness, but few explore the direct connection between teachers' perceptions of leadership and their willingness to innovate in teaching (Larsen et al., 2023; McNamara et al., 2023; Tamar et al., 2023). This study fills that gap by investigating how leadership motivation from school principals influences teachers' performance and innovation at public junior high schools in Pamulang District. This is crucial in understanding how principals can drive educational change through motivational leadership and effective communication with teachers.

The main issue addressed in this study is how teachers perceive the leadership of principals in motivating and improving their performance at public junior high schools in Pamulang. The study seeks to understand the extent to which school principals can motivate teachers through collaborative and innovative leadership, and how these perceptions influence their engagement in teaching methods and learning innovations. While principals play a strategic role in creating a positive school culture and supporting teacher professional development, there is often a mismatch between the principal's leadership approach and the needs of teachers. This research aims to provide insights into how leadership styles can be aligned with teachers' needs to enhance the overall quality of education.

In conclusion, this study is essential for understanding the leadership dynamics in Indonesian education, particularly in suburban areas like Pamulang. It aims to provide valuable insights into the relationship between principal leadership and teachers' perceptions, and how these affect the overall quality of education. By understanding how effective leadership can motivate teachers, improve their performance, and foster a positive school culture, this research can inform educational policies and leadership development programs. Ultimately, the findings of this study could contribute to improving the quality of education in Indonesia by focusing on enhancing leadership practices that directly impact teachers and student outcomes.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This research adopts a quantitative descriptive design. The choice of this design is based on the need to describe and analyze the perceptions of teachers regarding the leadership of principals in public junior high schools in Pamulang District, South Tangerang City. By using a descriptive approach, this study aims to provide a detailed and systematic account of how principals' leadership motivates teachers, and how such leadership affects teacher performance and school culture (Siregar, 2021). Quantitative research is chosen because it allows for objective measurement through numerical data, which can be analyzed statistically to assess patterns and trends in teachers' perceptions.

The research was conducted in public junior high schools in Pamulang District, South Tangerang City, a region that has been selected due to its diverse educational landscape. Pamulang is an area experiencing rapid urbanization, which brings both opportunities and challenges for education. The location was chosen because many schools in this district are facing leadership issues, particularly with principals' ability to motivate teachers and improve teaching quality. Studying this area provides valuable insights into the leadership challenges within suburban public schools, which can have broader implications for similar regions across Indonesia.

Data was collected using questionnaires as the primary instrument, which was distributed to a sample of teachers in the selected schools (Waruwu et al., 2025). The questionnaire utilized a Likert scale model to measure teachers' perceptions of principal leadership. This scale allows for the measurement of attitudes, perceptions, and opinions on a range of issues related to school leadership, from motivation to decision-making and communication. The questionnaire consisted of 40 items and was designed to assess various aspects of leadership, including teacher development, school management, school culture, and continuous evaluation.

The collected data was analyzed through several key stages to ensure clarity and accuracy in interpreting the teachers' perceptions of principal leadership (Afif et al., 2023). The first step, Data Condensation, involved summarizing the raw data to make it more manageable and to highlight relevant information, particularly responses linked to specific leadership traits such as motivation and decision-making. Next, Data Reduction was employed to categorize the responses into meaningful themes, such as motivation, school management, and leadership effectiveness. This allowed for a more organized approach to analyzing the data. After that, Data Display was used, with the results being presented through descriptive statistics, primarily using the mean score for each item on the Likert scale. This facilitated a clear and concise presentation of the teachers' perceptions. Finally, Data Verification was performed with the help of SPSS version 26, which ensured that the data was accurate and free from inconsistencies.

To ensure the integrity of the data, the validity of the research instrument was tested using the Rit (item correlation) and Rtab (critical value) method. The findings showed that all 40 items in the questionnaire were valid, as the Rit values exceeded the critical Rtab value of 0.444 at a 5% significance level with  $N = 20$ . This affirmed that the questionnaire accurately measured the constructs it was designed to assess. In terms of reliability, the instrument was evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha, which resulted in a value of 0.755, indicating a high level of internal consistency. Since the Cronbach's Alpha value is above the acceptable threshold of 0.7, it confirmed that the instrument was reliable. Thus, the data collected using this questionnaire was both valid and reliable, providing a solid foundation for analyzing teachers' perceptions of principal leadership.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **Result**

#### **Teacher Development and Improvement of Learning Quality**

Research results regarding teachers' perceptions of the leadership of the driving principal in Public Middle Schools in Pamulang District, South Tangerang City as seen from: teacher development and improving the quality of learning, effective school management, positive school culture, continuous evaluation and monitoring. The results of data processing from teachers' perceptions of the leadership of the driving principal in Public Middle Schools in Pamulang District, South Tangerang City can be seen in table 1 below.

**Table 1. Data Recapitulation Teachers' Perceptions of Leadership Principal of the Driving School in Public Junior High Schools**

| No             | Indicator                                                 | Average Score Total | Criteria    |
|----------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|-------------|
| 1              | Teacher development and improving the quality of learning | 4.34                | Good        |
| 2              | Effective school management                               | 4.29                | Good        |
| 3              | Positive school culture                                   | 4.27                | Good        |
| 4              | Continuous monitoring and evaluation                      | 4.30                | Good        |
| <b>Average</b> |                                                           | <b>4.3</b>          | <b>Good</b> |

Teachers' perceptions of the leadership of the driving principal in public middle schools in Pamulang District, South Tangerang City, indicate positive evaluations across various aspects. In terms of teacher development and improving the quality of learning, the leadership received a strong average score of 4.34, categorized as good. Similarly, effective school management scored 4.29, also categorized as good, showing that teachers feel well-supported in the operational aspects of the school. Furthermore, the positive school culture was rated at 4.27, indicating that teachers appreciate the collaborative and respectful environment fostered by the principal. Lastly, continuous monitoring and evaluation received an average score of 4.30, highlighting the effectiveness of ongoing assessments in improving school performance.

Overall, the leadership of the driving principal in these public middle schools is seen as effective, with an average score of 4.3, categorized as good. This indicates that teachers perceive the principal's leadership to be well-executed across all evaluated aspects. The high scores reflect the principal's success in implementing strategies that support both academic and extracurricular activities, maintain a positive school climate, and continuously monitor progress. These results suggest that the leadership approach in these schools is having a positive impact on teacher engagement and the overall school environment, contributing to the achievement of school goals.

### **Effective School Management**

The aspect of effective school management in public junior high schools in Pamulang District, South Tangerang City, received a favorable evaluation with an average score of 4.29, categorized as good. This suggests that teachers generally view their principals' management efforts as positive, especially when it comes to encouraging involvement in school activities. The item "the principal invites teachers to be actively involved in school activities" scored the highest, with a mean of 4.41, demonstrating that the principals have been successful in fostering an inclusive school culture where teachers feel valued and involved. This high score highlights that teachers appreciate the principal's role in motivating them to contribute to various aspects of school life, enhancing the sense of community and shared responsibility within the school.

Despite the positive feedback on overall school management, there was one key area of concern related to teachers' involvement in extracurricular activities. The item "the principal encourages teachers to play a role in extracurricular activities" received the lowest score of 4.16, which suggests that there is room for improvement in motivating teachers to participate in non-academic aspects of school life. The low score indicates that many teachers feel insufficiently encouraged or supported by their principals to get involved in extracurricular activities, which are vital for students' holistic development. This can be attributed to several factors, including teachers' heavy workloads and a lack of clear incentives for participation in extracurricular activities, which might be viewed as additional duties outside of their main responsibilities.

The low score for extracurricular involvement points to the need for a shift in how school principals approach non-academic activities. To improve teacher participation, principals should consider adopting a more participatory leadership approach, where teachers are involved in the planning and execution of extracurricular programs. This could help teachers feel a greater sense of ownership over these activities, reducing their workload pressures by delegating tasks that align with their interests and skills. By empowering teachers to take the lead in extracurricular activities, principals can foster a stronger sense of responsibility among the staff, resulting in greater engagement and improved participation. Moreover, providing incentives, whether in the form of material rewards or social recognition, could further encourage teachers to participate in extracurricular activities. Recognition for their contributions, whether through awards, public acknowledgment, or certificates, can serve as a powerful motivator, helping teachers feel appreciated for their work outside the classroom and reinforcing the importance of extracurricular involvement in student development.

In conclusion, while effective school management has generally been well-received, the need for stronger encouragement and support for teachers' involvement in extracurricular activities is evident. Principals must recognize that extracurricular activities are not just supplementary, but integral to students' overall growth. By adopting a more inclusive and participatory leadership style, principals can enhance teacher engagement in non-academic activities, thereby creating a more balanced and holistic educational environment for students. Additionally, implementing systems of recognition and rewards will help reinforce the value of extracurricular contributions and motivate teachers to become more involved in shaping students' character development outside the classroom.

## **Positive School Culture**

Teachers' perceptions of the leadership in building a positive school culture in public junior high schools in Pamulang District, South Tangerang City, were generally positive, with an average score of 4.27, categorized as good. This indicates that teachers feel the school environment fosters collaboration, trust, and open communication. The highest-scoring item, "the principal builds open communication with all teachers," received an average score of 4.43, reflecting the effectiveness of the principal in maintaining a transparent and communicative relationship with the teaching staff. This score suggests that teachers appreciate the principal's efforts to engage in clear and open communication, which plays a significant role in establishing a positive and supportive school culture.

However, despite the high rating for open communication, there was a noticeable gap in the area of utilizing various media to facilitate internal communication, which scored the lowest at 4.13. This indicates that while communication is generally open, the strategies and tools used for communication within the school are still somewhat limited. Ineffective communication can lead to misunderstandings, lower teacher participation in school initiatives, and a lack of cohesion in the school environment. The low score may be attributed to the inadequate use of communication technologies or insufficient digital literacy among the school staff, which prevents the optimal use of digital tools such as emails, school management platforms, and messaging apps to enhance communication.

To improve internal communication and strengthen the school culture, principals must prioritize the development of a more efficient communication system. This can be achieved by implementing digital tools such as WhatsApp, email systems, or dedicated school management platforms that facilitate easy and real-time communication among teachers and staff. In addition, providing regular digital literacy training for both teachers and staff will help overcome the barriers to effective communication, ensuring that everyone is comfortable and proficient with the available technologies. Principals should also ensure that there are adequate technological resources, such as reliable internet access and devices, to support these communication tools. By fostering a more transparent, accessible, and two-way communication system, principals can build stronger relationships with teachers, increase engagement in school activities, and contribute to creating a more collaborative and positive school culture.

## **Continuous monitoring and evaluation**

Teachers' perceptions of the leadership of driving principals in public junior high schools in Pamulang sub-district, South Tangerang city, seen from

continuous monitoring and evaluation with an average score of 4.30 in the good category. The item with the lowest score was “the results of teacher performance appraisal are always delivered openly and transparently,” with an average score of 4.16, categorized as good. The factor causing the low average score can be caused by the lack of courage or skill of the principal in building a healthy evaluation culture in the school environment. The lack of transparency in delivering performance appraisal results can also be caused by the principal's concern about triggering conflict or offending teachers. Some principals choose to avoid confrontation or lack effective communication strategies in delivering criticism. To address this issue, principals need to establish an accountable performance appraisal system and deliver evaluation results openly using a professional and constructive approach. Good communication in the evaluation process should be accompanied by appreciation of teachers' achievements and open discussions about areas that need improvement. Principals also need to involve teachers in developing follow-up plans after the appraisal so that teachers feel valued and motivated to improve their performance. With a transparent system, teachers will have clarity in improving themselves and contribute more actively to the progress of the school.

## **Discussion**

Teachers' perceptions of the leadership of driving principals in public junior high schools indicate a generally positive view, particularly in the areas of teacher development and the improvement of learning quality. The highest-rated item was the principal's use of supervision results to enhance learning, which scored well. However, the lowest-rated item was the regular socialization of the school's vision to all school members, which suggests that the vision is not consistently used as a guiding reference in school planning, implementation, and evaluation. This gap reflects a lack of integration between the school's vision and the overall management of teaching, learning activities, and school operations. As stated by Sezer et al. (2023), and Umar et al. (2024) that say that a school's vision shouldn't just be communicated on banners or at year-end meetings, but should also be instilled through daily activities, decision-making, and program evaluation.

Unfortunately, some principals and school management have not yet used the vision as the basis for designing work or learning programs. This results in teachers and students not seeing the connection between the school's vision and their activities, leading to a diminished sense of ownership of the vision. To address this issue, according to Haxhihyseni et al. (2023). The principal should engage teachers and staff in reformulating the vision to ensure it is relevant and

aligned with the school's conditions. Regular outreach, both formal and informal, and through various media, can also increase awareness and shared responsibility for realizing the school's vision in concrete actions (Bali et al., 2024; Safitri et al., 2025). Furthermore, teachers' perceptions of the leadership of the driving principal in Public Junior High Schools in Pamulang District, South Tangerang City, are seen from the aspect of effective school management with an average score of 4.29, categorized as good.

The highest-rated item was the principal's invitation for teachers to be actively involved in school activities, with a score of 4.41, categorized as good (Jali, 2025; Nisa' & R, 2024). However, the lowest-rated item was the principal's encouragement for teachers to participate in extracurricular activities, which scored 4.16. This lower score suggests that many teachers feel insufficient support or encouragement from the principal in engaging with non-academic activities (Febriyanti et al., 2024; Putri, 2023). This gap indicates that extracurricular involvement is not strongly promoted, affecting teachers' willingness to contribute to students' holistic development outside the classroom.

To overcome the low involvement of teachers in extracurricular activities, principals need to implement participatory leadership by delegating tasks based on teachers' interests and competencies, and involving them in program planning to create a sense of ownership and shared responsibility (Hina, 2024; Sain, 2025). In addition, teacher workload management must also be considered so that involvement in extracurricular activities does not increase work pressure, but becomes a fun professional development space and can be used as evaluation material (Abdullah, 2024; Khoiroh et al., 2024). Providing incentives and awards, both in material and non-material forms such as social recognition and award certificates, is also very important to motivate teachers (Herlina, 2024). With this approach, teachers will be more encouraged to actively participate in extracurricular activities as part of the overall development of students' character.

Ineffective internal communication can reduce teacher participation in school programs, affect the work climate, and ultimately hinder the creation of a positive school culture. As a driving force, the principal needs to build a communication system that is open, responsive, and adaptive to the needs of all school members. According to Munawwaroh (2024), a positive school culture is characterized by harmonious relationships between school members, open communication, and a sense of ownership of the school's vision. Meanwhile, Aziz (2025) also emphasized that effective principals are those who are able to create a culture of two-way communication, build trust, and respect every voice from teachers, students, and staff. The solution to this problem is for principals to develop a technology-based internal communication system that is easily

accessible to all school members, such as the use of various media applications such as WhatsApp, email, or school management platforms. Furthermore, principals must improve digital literacy through regular training and provide supporting facilities such as adequate internet access and technological devices.

Finally, teachers' perceptions of the leadership of driving principals in public junior high schools in Pamulang District, South Tangerang City, were assessed based on ongoing monitoring and evaluation with an average score of 4.30, categorized as good. The low average achievement score for the item "teacher performance appraisal results are always conveyed openly and transparently" may be due to the principal's lack of courage or skill in building a healthy evaluation culture within the school environment. The low openness in conveying performance appraisal results may also be due to the principal's concern that it will cause conflict or offend teachers. When there is no transparency, teachers tend to be passive and unaware of expected performance standards, which can lead to stagnation in teacher professionalism. To address this issue, principals need to establish an accountable performance assessment system and communicate evaluation results openly with a professional and constructive approach.

## CONCLUSION

The main findings of this study indicate that the successful implementation of a principal's leadership style is highly dependent on the effectiveness of teacher development, school management, building a positive culture, and implementing ongoing evaluations. Principal support, which encourages innovation, fosters open communication, and involves teachers in decision-making processes, plays a crucial role in creating a productive and participatory work environment. These factors not only increase teacher professional engagement but also strengthen their sense of ownership and motivation in carrying out learning tasks.

In the context of public junior high schools in Pamulang District, leadership support is crucial for maintaining teacher morale amidst high workloads. The leadership of a driving principal who emphasizes collaboration, open evaluation, and facilitation of teacher professional development has proven effective in creating a school climate conducive to improving educational quality. For further researchers, it is hoped that they can expand the research area, conduct direct observations to obtain more in-depth and objective data, and follow up this research with different variables that can contribute to the leadership of the driving school principal.

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