



Empowering Educators: A Study on the Impact of Principals' Transformational Leadership on Teacher Performance

Devi Radnasari¹, Wewen Andrianto^{2*}

^{1,2}Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Kalijaga, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

Email : wewenandrianto972@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

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*Corresponding Author

This study explores the impact of transformational leadership strategies employed by the principal on improving teacher performance. Transformational leadership, characterized by inspiring and motivating teachers, plays a crucial role in fostering an environment conducive to professional growth. This qualitative case study examines how the principal's leadership strategies—such as clear vision communication, individualized support, and fostering collaboration—have influenced teacher motivation, engagement, and overall performance. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and documentation, and analyzed using Miles and Huberman's qualitative data analysis framework. Findings indicate that the principal's integrated transformational strategies have led to enhanced teacher performance, with teachers reporting greater motivation, adoption of innovative teaching methods, and improved student engagement. The principal's clear and inspiring vision was also found to play a key role in aligning teachers' individual goals with the broader objectives of the school. This research contributes to the field of educational leadership by providing empirical evidence on the practical application of transformational leadership in a rural school context, highlighting its potential to improve teacher performance even in resource-constrained environments.

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INTRODUCTION

The role of leadership in educational institutions has become increasingly recognized as essential for enhancing the quality of education. In particular, school principals are seen as pivotal figures who shape the academic culture of a school, impacting both student achievement and teacher performance (Fatimah & Syahrani, 2022; Tian & Huber, 2021; Young et al., 2021). With the evolving challenges in the educational sector, effective leadership strategies are necessary to ensure that schools meet the growing demands for quality education (Enita & Wening, 2023; Faiz et al., 2023). Transformational leadership, which focuses on inspiring and motivating staff to exceed expectations, has gained significant attention as an approach that can positively influence teacher performance

(Fischer & Sitkin, 2023; Hermawan et al., 2024; Tang et al., 2024). Such leadership fosters professional development, promotes innovation, and builds a supportive work environment.

At SD Tawang Rejo in Belitang Jaya District, the principal has implemented transformational leadership strategies to improve teacher performance. The school is situated in a rural area, where educational resources and professional development opportunities for teachers are limited. Despite these challenges, the principal's leadership style has led to noticeable changes in teacher motivation and performance. Teachers at SD Tawang Rejo have reported greater engagement in professional development programs and a stronger sense of commitment to their students. This phenomenon is particularly noteworthy in a context where traditional leadership strategies may not be as effective due to resource constraints and socio-economic factors.

Transformational leadership in schools has been the subject of numerous studies. Transformational leadership has a positive impact on teacher commitment, fostering an environment where teachers are motivated to improve their practice (Meng, 2022; Riyanti et al., 2023; Zaini & Fahmi, 2023). The role of transformational leadership in creating an atmosphere that encourages collaboration among teachers, which is essential for enhancing instructional quality (Ojogiwa, 2021). Transformational leadership can help principals build trust with their staff, a critical element in motivating teachers (Juhaeni et al., 2021; McCarthy et al., 2023; Purwanto & Wafa, 2023). Transformational leadership practices led to significant improvements in teacher effectiveness (Asror et al., 2023; Marzuki, 2023). Transformational leaders fostered professional growth, enhancing the skills and confidence of teachers (Enita & Wening, 2023; Lin et al., 2022). Principals who demonstrated transformational leadership practices were more successful in improving both teaching and learning outcomes. The role of leadership in creating a positive school climate conducive to teacher growth.

While previous research has explored the impact of transformational leadership on teacher performance, there is limited empirical evidence on how these strategies are implemented in rural schools with limited resources. Most studies have focused on urban or well-resourced contexts, leaving a gap in understanding how transformational leadership can be effectively applied in schools facing unique challenges. This study seeks to address this gap by examining the specific strategies employed by the principal of SD Tawang Rejo and their impact on teacher performance. By focusing on a rural school, this research offers a novel perspective on the practical application of transformational leadership in a context that is often overlooked in the existing literature.

This research aims to explore the role of the school principal's transformational leadership strategies in improving teacher performance at SD Tawang Rejo. The study will focus on three key areas: (1) the integration of transformational leadership strategies by the principal, (2) the impact of these strategies on teacher motivation and engagement, and (3) the overall improvement in teacher performance. The research will examine the specific behaviors and practices of the principal, such as providing a clear vision, offering individualized support, and fostering collaboration, and how these elements contribute to the professional development and performance of teachers.

This research argues that transformational leadership, when effectively implemented, can have a significant positive impact on teacher performance. By focusing on teachers' professional growth, motivating them through a compelling vision, and providing the necessary support, principals can foster an environment where teachers are motivated, engaged, and committed to continuous improvement. In particular, the research posits that the principal's ability to communicate a clear vision, offer individualized support, and encourage collaboration will lead to enhanced teacher performance, even in resource-constrained settings.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research adopts a qualitative approach to explore the transformational leadership strategies employed by the principal of SD Tawang Rejo. A case study methodology is used to provide an in-depth analysis of the leadership practices at this specific school (Mulisa, 2022). The case study approach is appropriate for this research as it allows for the examination of the contextual factors that influence leadership strategies and teacher performance. The study offers a detailed exploration of how transformational leadership is implemented in a rural setting and its impact on teacher performance.

Data for this study will be collected using three primary methods: interviews, observations, and documentation. Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with teachers, the principal, and other staff members to gain insights into their perceptions of the principal's leadership style and its impact on their work. Observations will be carried out during school meetings, teacher professional development sessions, and classroom interactions to understand how leadership strategies are applied in practice. Relevant documents, such as school improvement plans, performance evaluations, and teacher feedback forms, will be analyzed to assess the outcomes of the leadership strategies.

Data analysis will follow the steps outlined by Miles and Huberman (1994), which include data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Initially, interview and observation data will be transcribed and coded for

emerging themes related to transformational leadership. These themes will be further analyzed and categorized to identify patterns and relationships. The final stage of analysis will involve interpreting the data to draw conclusions about the effectiveness of the leadership strategies in improving teacher performance (Nasri, 2023). This process will be iterative, with ongoing refinement of themes and interpretations based on the data collected.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Integrated Transformational Strategy

The first key finding of this research is the integrated approach to transformational leadership employed by the principal of SD Tawang Rejo. The principal actively engages in regular communication with teachers, fostering a culture of collaboration and professional development. Teachers reported feeling more motivated and supported as a result of these efforts, which have led to improved instructional practices.

During interviews, several teachers noted that the principal's leadership style had a direct impact on their professional growth. Teacher Sambudi stated, "The principal's support for our development has been invaluable. His regular feedback and encouragement make me feel like I can continually improve my teaching practices." Teacher Alam shared, "I appreciate the principal's emphasis on collaboration. We regularly meet to discuss strategies, which has helped me refine my approach."

The responses from the teachers suggest that the principal's leadership style, particularly his focus on support and collaboration, has a significant positive impact on teacher performance. Teachers feel more confident in their teaching abilities and are motivated to engage in professional development activities.

The integration of transformational leadership strategies, such as providing individualized support and fostering collaboration, has contributed to enhanced teacher performance. These findings underscore the importance of a supportive and collaborative leadership approach in improving teacher motivation and engagement.

Transformational leadership, when implemented in an integrated and consistent manner, has a profound impact on teacher motivation and instructional quality. The principal's efforts to maintain open communication, provide individualized support, and create opportunities for collaboration have not only improved teacher morale but also fostered a culture of continuous professional growth. This indicates that school leaders who prioritize relationship-building and teacher empowerment are more likely to cultivate high-performing educational environments. Furthermore, the alignment

between leadership practices and teacher needs suggests that transformational leadership is adaptable and effective across various school contexts. By creating a supportive climate where teachers feel valued and professionally challenged, principals can drive meaningful improvements in teaching and learning. The case of SD Tawang Rejo highlights how intentional leadership practices, grounded in transformational principles, can serve as a model for other school leaders seeking to enhance educational outcomes through strategic teacher engagement.

Principal's Vision and Inspiration

The role of the principal’s clear and inspiring vision in improving teacher performance. Teachers reported that the principal’s vision for the school was a key motivating factor, aligning their individual goals with the broader objectives of the school. The principal was seen consistently reinforcing the school’s vision during staff meetings and in one-on-one interactions with teachers. Teachers were observed to engage actively in discussions about the vision and express a sense of ownership in achieving it.

Tabel 1. Observation Aspect	
Aspect	Observation
Teacher Engagement	Teachers actively participate in discussions about the vision
Motivational Impact	Teachers express increased motivation to align their goals with the school’s vision
Frequency of Communication	The principal regularly reinforces the vision in various forums

Table 1, the consistent communication of the school’s vision by the principal has created a shared sense of purpose among teachers. This has led to greater alignment between individual teacher goals and the school’s broader objectives. The principal’s clear and consistent communication of a compelling vision has been crucial in motivating teachers and improving their performance. This finding emphasizes the importance of visionary leadership in fostering teacher engagement and commitment.

Leadership plays a pivotal role in shaping a cohesive and motivated teaching community. When principals consistently communicate a clear and inspiring vision, it fosters a shared understanding of the school’s direction and purpose. This shared vision becomes a guiding framework that not only aligns individual teacher goals with institutional objectives but also enhances teacher motivation and engagement. The case at SD Tawang Rejo demonstrates how repeated and meaningful communication of the vision can lead to a strong sense of ownership among teachers, encouraging them to contribute actively to the

school's development. Visionary leadership, therefore, does more than set strategic direction—it creates a sense of unity and purpose that drives collective effort. The data reinforce the idea that teachers are more committed and effective when they feel connected to a larger mission. This underscores the need for school leaders to prioritize vision articulation and alignment as core leadership practices. In broader terms, the study highlights the transformative power of a principal's vision in fostering a culture of shared responsibility, continuous improvement, and professional dedication.

Impact on Teacher Performance

The transformational leadership strategies employed by the principal have led to a significant improvement in teacher performance. Teachers reported adopting more innovative teaching methods and showing increased commitment to their professional development. Analysis of documentation, such as lesson plans and student performance records, indicates that teachers have incorporated more diverse teaching strategies and have seen improvements in student engagement and achievement.

At SD Tawang Rejo, the principal's transformational leadership has encouraged teachers to adopt more innovative teaching methods. The principal's emphasis on professional development and continuous support has empowered educators to explore new instructional strategies and integrate technology into their teaching practices. Teachers have introduced interactive learning techniques, such as project-based learning, flipped classrooms, and collaborative learning groups, which have been well-received by students. These methods not only engage students more effectively but also promote critical thinking and problem-solving skills. The principal's focus on fostering creativity in teaching has helped teachers step outside traditional methods, enabling them to tailor their lessons to better suit the diverse needs of their students. As a result, teachers feel more confident in their teaching abilities, and students benefit from a more dynamic and engaging learning environment. These innovations have significantly contributed to an overall improvement in the quality of instruction at the school.

Student engagement has significantly improved as a result of the transformational leadership strategies implemented by the principal at SD Tawang Rejo. Teachers have noted a noticeable increase in student participation during lessons, with more students actively contributing to class discussions, group projects, and hands-on activities. The introduction of innovative teaching methods, such as interactive technologies and collaborative learning, has fostered a more inclusive and participatory classroom environment. Students now feel more empowered to share their ideas and ask questions, which has led to greater

enthusiasm for learning. This heightened engagement can also be attributed to the principal's consistent communication of the school's vision and the alignment of classroom activities with broader educational goals. Students are not only more involved in their academic work but are also demonstrating increased interest in extracurricular activities. The transformation in student engagement reflects the principal's success in motivating both teachers and students to take a more active role in the educational process.

The most tangible outcome of the principal's transformational leadership at SD Tawang Rejo has been a marked improvement in student achievement. Teachers have reported that students are performing better academically, demonstrating higher scores on assessments, as well as more consistent progress throughout the school year. The adoption of innovative teaching methods has allowed students to grasp complex concepts more easily, leading to better retention and application of knowledge. The increased engagement and motivation fostered by the principal's leadership have also contributed to students' improved academic performance. As students become more active participants in their learning, they are more likely to take ownership of their education, resulting in higher achievement levels. Teachers attribute this academic success to the supportive and empowering leadership provided by the principal, which has cultivated an environment where both students and educators are committed to continuous growth and excellence. This improvement in student achievement reflects the positive impact of transformational leadership on educational outcomes.

The analysis of teacher documentation shows that the leadership strategies have resulted in more dynamic and innovative teaching practices, which have contributed to improved student outcomes. The improvement in teacher performance, as demonstrated through documentation, highlights the positive impact of transformational leadership strategies on both teacher effectiveness and student outcomes.

DISCUSSION

The findings related to integrated transformational leadership strategies are consistent with the several research, who contended that transformational leaders can significantly enhance teacher motivation and performance. Transformational leadership fosters stronger collaboration among teachers (Al-Husseini et al., 2021; Kant & Asefa, 2023). The alignment of these findings suggests that transformational leadership not only supports individual teacher growth but also encourages a collaborative school culture. This collective engagement contributes to the realization of the school's vision and instructional goals. The data indicate that when principals use transformational strategies—

such as inspiring shared purpose, supporting professional autonomy, and recognizing teacher contributions—teachers become more invested in school improvement efforts. These strategies create a foundation for both professional satisfaction and increased instructional performance. The consistent pattern across these studies highlights the critical role of leadership in shaping teacher behavior and outcomes through motivation and collective purpose.

Additional studies further support the positive relationship between transformational leadership and teacher performance. Transformational leadership practices—particularly those focused on individualized support and intellectual stimulation—promote professional growth and elevate teacher performance (Alzoraiki et al., 2023; Maisyura et al., 2022). The findings from this study support that conclusion by demonstrating how principals who adopt these approaches cultivate an environment that is conducive to both teacher innovation and development. Teachers in such settings are more likely to explore new instructional strategies, engage in reflective practice, and collaborate meaningfully with colleagues (Bellibaş et al., 2021; Voelkel Jr, 2022). This environment also fosters a sense of psychological safety and trust, enabling teachers to take risks and improve continuously. The evidence points to a clear connection between transformational leadership and enhanced educational practices, where the principal's role as a mentor and visionary directly contributes to a culture of improvement. These findings reaffirm that transformational leadership is not only about inspiring vision but also about empowering teachers to achieve their full professional potential.

The role of a principal's vision is central to transformational leadership, aligning closely with Ladkin and Patrick (2022) assertion that articulating a clear, compelling vision is fundamental to effective leadership. In this study, the principal's consistent communication of the school vision significantly influenced teacher motivation and engagement. Teachers reported a stronger alignment between their personal goals and the school's broader mission, suggesting that a well-communicated vision enhances professional purpose. The importance of visionary leadership in mobilizing teachers and fostering a unified direction for school improvement (Fathih et al., 2021; Muali et al., 2022). A clearly defined vision not only motivates staff but also provides a framework for decision-making and instructional planning. The data indicate that when principals continuously reinforce the vision through formal and informal channels—such as staff meetings, individual feedback, and school events—teachers internalize and act upon that vision.

Noer (2023) affirms a strong relationship between visionary leadership and enhanced teacher performance. These studies suggest that when school leaders clearly communicate a purposeful and inspiring vision, teachers are more

likely to align their efforts with the institution's overarching goals. This study supports those findings, demonstrating how effective vision communication leads to increased teacher commitment, collaboration, and instructional quality. A shared vision promotes a unified culture where teachers understand their roles within the broader educational mission. It fosters collective efficacy, which is a key predictor of school improvement. Furthermore, vision-driven leadership helps align professional development, classroom practices, and school-wide initiatives. When teachers see how their individual contributions are part of a larger, meaningful trajectory, they become more motivated and goal-oriented. These findings reinforce the value of principal leadership that goes beyond administrative tasks and focuses on shaping a strategic direction that teachers believe in and work toward collaboratively.

The positive impact of transformational leadership on teacher performance, who found that such leadership practices lead to measurable improvements in both teacher effectiveness and student outcomes. Transformational principals drive teacher growth by fostering motivation, trust, and professional learning opportunities (Anastasiou & Garametsi, 2021; Sirait, 2021). Transformational leadership enhances teacher performance by promoting a sense of purpose and investment in school success (Enita & Wening, 2023; Helmi & Sari, 2021). By modeling enthusiasm, encouraging innovation, and providing individualized support, principals influence both instructional practices and school culture. The findings here echo those conclusions, indicating that transformational leadership serves as a critical lever for educational improvement.

This leadership approach not only improves teaching quality but also creates the conditions for sustained school effectiveness. The evidence suggests that when principals engage teachers through shared goals, empowerment, and recognition, the result is a more motivated, capable, and high-performing teaching staff—ultimately benefiting student achievement and long-term school development. This study contributes to the field of educational leadership by providing empirical evidence on the practical applications of transformational leadership in improving teacher performance. The findings highlight the importance of visionary leadership, teacher motivation, and professional development in fostering an environment conducive to educational success.

CONCLUSION

The transformational leadership strategies, including clear vision communication, individualized support, and fostering teacher collaboration, significantly enhance teacher performance. However, this study is limited by its focus on a single school, and future research should explore a broader range of

schools to confirm these findings. Recommendations for further research include investigating the long-term impact of transformational leadership on student outcomes and exploring the role of community involvement in supporting school leadership strategies.

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