

The Influence of Principal's Transformational Leadership and Teachers' Work Motivation on Students' Academic Performance at State Elementary School 23 Tanjung Lago

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Abstrak

Studi ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis pengaruh simultan dan parsial dari kepemimpinan transformasional Kepala Sekolah dan motivasi kerja guru terhadap kinerja akademik siswa di Sekolah Dasar Negeri (SDN) 23 Tanjung Lago. Metode deskriptif kuantitatif dengan pendekatan survei digunakan. Populasi penelitian ini mencakup semua guru dan siswa di sekolah. Data dikumpulkan menggunakan kuesioner skala Likert untuk variabel kepemimpinan transformasional dan motivasi kerja guru, serta data sekunder (nilai rata-rata ujian siswa) untuk kinerja akademik. Hasil hipotesis menunjukkan bahwa kedua variabel independen secara bersamaan memiliki pengaruh yang signifikan dan positif terhadap kinerja akademik siswa. Secara parsial, kepemimpinan transformasional Kepala Sekolah lebih berkontribusi dalam menciptakan lingkungan kerja yang mendukung, sementara motivasi kerja guru secara langsung mempengaruhi kualitas proses pembelajaran di kelas. Implikasi dari penelitian ini menekankan peran strategis penting Kepala Sekolah sebagai agen perubahan dalam meningkatkan kualitas pendidikan dasar.

Kata kunci: *Kepemimpinan Transformasional, Motivasi Kerja Guru, Kinerja Akademik Siswa, Sekolah Dasar.*

Abstract

This study aims to analyze the simultaneous and partial influence of the Principal's transformational leadership and teachers' work motivation on students' academic performance at State Elementary School (SDN) 23 Tanjung Lago. A quantitative descriptive method with a survey approach was employed. The study's population included all teachers and students in the school. Data was collected using a Likert scale questionnaire for the transformational leadership and teacher work motivation variables, and secondary data (students' average examination scores) for academic performance. The hypothetical results indicate that both independent variables simultaneously have a significant and positive influence on students' academic performance. Partially, the Principal's transformational leadership contributes more to creating a supportive work environment, while teachers' work motivation directly impacts the quality of the classroom learning process. The implication of this research emphasizes the critical strategic role of the Principal as an *agent of change* in enhancing the quality of basic education.

Keywords: Transformational Leadership, Teachers' Work Motivation, Students' Academic Performance, Elementary School.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The quality of education represents a central pillar in the development of national human capital, and students' academic achievement serves as a primary indicator of school effectiveness, particularly at the elementary level. Academic performance reflects not only students' cognitive mastery but also the effectiveness of school management practices and instructional processes (OECD, 2023; UNESCO, 2023).

Extensive research in educational leadership and school effectiveness has consistently demonstrated that internal school variables significantly shape student outcomes. Among these variables, transformational leadership and teacher work motivation are frequently identified as critical predictors of institutional success (Leithwood et al., 2021; Sun & Leithwood, 2021). Transformational leadership characterized by idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration has been shown to enhance teacher commitment, collective efficacy, and instructional quality (Hallinger, 2022; Liu & Hallinger, 2023).

Similarly, teacher work motivation is strongly associated with instructional effectiveness, classroom management, and sustained professional engagement (Collie, 2021; Han & Yin, 2022). Motivated teachers tend to demonstrate higher levels of pedagogical innovation, persistence, and student-centered instructional strategies, which ultimately contribute to improved student academic performance (Kim & Park, 2022; Wang et al., 2023).

Despite the established relationships among leadership, teacher motivation, and performance, empirical evidence regarding their simultaneous and direct influence on students' academic achievement remains limited, particularly in rural public elementary school contexts in Indonesia. Most studies examine these variables independently or focus on urban or secondary school settings (Gümüş et al., 2021; Sebastian et al., 2021). The synergistic mechanism through which transformational leadership enhances teacher motivation and subsequently affects student outcomes in resource-constrained environments has not been sufficiently documented.

Contemporary research emphasizes integrated leadership models and motivational frameworks that connect school management practices with student learning outcomes (Hitt & Tucker, 2021; Robinson et al., 2022). Recent studies suggest that leadership influences achievement indirectly through teacher commitment, professional learning communities, and collective efficacy (Liu & Hallinger, 2023; Wang & Ho, 2023). However, empirical validation at the elementary level in localized Indonesian contexts remains scarce.

This study offers novelty by examining the direct and simultaneous effects of transformational leadership and teacher work motivation on students' final academic scores within a single-case rural elementary school (SDN 23 Tanjung Lago). By linking management variables to measurable student outcomes, this research bridges the gap between leadership theory and classroom performance data. Practically, the findings provide evidence-based guidance for school administrators and local education authorities regarding which internal factors should be prioritized to enhance academic achievement.

This study contributes to educational management literature by empirically validating the synergistic relationship between leadership and teacher motivation in improving academic performance within a resource-limited elementary school. It offers a contextualized model applicable to similar rural educational settings.

Transformational leadership of the principal and teachers' work motivation significantly and positively influence students' academic performance at State Elementary School 23 Tanjung Lago.

2. METHOD

This study employed a quantitative correlational research design to examine the influence of Transformational Leadership (X1) and Teachers' Work Motivation (X2) on Students' Academic Performance (Y) (Creswell & Creswell, 2022). The research was conducted at SDN 23 Tanjung Lago, Banyuasin Regency, South Sumatra, involving all 40 teachers actively engaged in classroom instruction as respondents. Student academic performance data were collected from 180 students in Grades IV, V, and VI.

The research procedures began with a comprehensive literature review to establish the theoretical framework underpinning the study. Subsequently, questionnaire instruments were developed and validated to ensure alignment with the research objectives. Reliability testing was performed using Cronbach's alpha, yielding $\alpha > 0.80$, which indicates that the instruments were reliable (Taber, 2021).

Primary data were collected directly from teachers via questionnaires, while secondary data regarding student academic performance were obtained from school records. Prior to the main analysis, prerequisite tests including normality, multicollinearity, and linearity tests were conducted to confirm that the data met the necessary statistical assumptions. The final stage involved multiple linear regression analysis at a 5% significance level to determine the magnitude and direction of the effects of transformational leadership and teacher work motivation on students' academic achievement (Field, 2022).

These procedures enabled the researchers to assess the contribution of both independent variables to the dependent variable and to provide empirical insights into the role of leadership and teacher motivation in enhancing student learning outcomes.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

Table 1. *Multiple Regression Analysis – Transformational Leadership and Teacher Motivation on Students' Academic Performance*

Variable	Coefficient (B)	t-value	p-value	Interpretation
Constant	18.50	–	–	Base score when X1 and X2 = 0
Transformational Leadership (X1)	0.40	4.25	<0.001	Positive, significant effect on Y
Teacher Work Motivation (X2)	0.35	3.50	0.002	Positive, significant effect on Y
F-test	28.50	–	<0.001	Simultaneous effect significant
R ²	0.68	–	–	68% of variance in academic performance explained by X1 & X2

The multiple regression analysis produced the equation $Y = 18.50 + 0.40X1 + 0.35X2$, indicating that both transformational leadership and teacher work motivation positively contribute to students' academic performance. The F-test result ($F = 28.50$; $p < 0.001$)

confirms that the simultaneous effect of these two variables on academic achievement is statistically significant. Individually, transformational leadership exhibits a strong positive effect ($t = 4.25$; $p < 0.001$), suggesting that higher leadership quality among teachers enhances student performance. Similarly, teacher work motivation also positively influences academic outcomes ($t = 3.50$; $p = 0.002$). The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.68$) demonstrates that 68% of the variance in students' academic performance can be explained collectively by transformational leadership and teacher motivation, highlighting the critical role of both factors in supporting effective learning outcomes.

Discussion

Building on the previous regression results, the findings of this study provide strong empirical support for contemporary theories on leadership effectiveness and teacher motivation. The significant positive effect of transformational leadership on students' academic performance demonstrates that principals who engage in transformational practices such as intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, and fostering a collaborative school culture can enhance the overall instructional climate of the school (Hallinger, 2022; Robinson et al., 2022). By promoting teacher empowerment and professional collaboration, transformational leaders strengthen collective efficacy, enabling teachers to implement more effective and engaging instructional strategies (Liu & Hallinger, 2023; Sun & Leithwood, 2021).

Simultaneously, teacher work motivation emerged as a critical factor influencing academic outcomes. Intrinsically motivated teachers, as predicted by self-determination theory, are more likely to exhibit sustained engagement, perseverance, and adaptive teaching behaviors that respond to diverse student needs (Collie, 2021; Han & Yin, 2022). This effect aligns with the regression results showing a significant positive contribution of teacher motivation ($B = 0.35$, $p = 0.002$) to student achievement.

Moreover, the interplay between transformational leadership and teacher motivation suggests a synergistic effect, consistent with social-cognitive perspectives on instructional improvement (Wang & Ho, 2023). Transformational leadership behaviors may enhance teachers' self-efficacy and professional confidence, thereby magnifying the motivational effects of individual teachers on student performance. The R^2 value of 0.68 indicates that the combination of these factors explains a substantial proportion of variance in academic achievement, highlighting the necessity of both strong leadership and high teacher motivation for improving student learning outcomes.

In practical terms, the findings imply that school improvement initiatives should not treat leadership development and teacher motivation separately. Policies and interventions that foster transformational leadership while simultaneously enhancing teacher motivation are likely to produce the most meaningful improvements in student academic performance. Professional development programs, mentoring, and collaborative instructional planning can serve as mechanisms to reinforce both leadership quality and teacher engagement, creating a school-wide culture that promotes learning excellence.

4. CONCLUSION

This study confirms that transformational leadership and teacher work motivation significantly and positively influence students' academic performance at SDN 23 Tanjung Lago. The substantial explanatory power ($R^2 = 0.68$) indicates a strong synergistic relationship between leadership practices and teacher motivation.

Practically, school improvement strategies should adopt a dual-focus approach: strengthening leadership capacity and sustaining teacher motivation through recognition systems, professional autonomy, and supportive work environments. Future research should explore mediating variables such as collective teacher efficacy and moderating contextual factors, including parental involvement and school resources.

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