

The Influence of Principal Leadership Style and Work Motivation on Teacher Performance at Senior High Schools in Lais District

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui pengaruh gaya kepemimpinan kepala sekolah dan motivasi kerja terhadap kinerja guru pada Sekolah Menengah Atas (SMA) di Kecamatan Lais. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif dengan metode survei. Populasi penelitian berjumlah 89 guru, dengan sampel sebanyak 50 responden yang dipilih menggunakan teknik purposive sampling. Pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui kuesioner dan dokumentasi, kemudian dianalisis menggunakan teknik statistik deskriptif dan inferensial dengan uji regresi linier berganda. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa secara parsial, gaya kepemimpinan kepala sekolah (X1) berpengaruh positif dan signifikan terhadap kinerja guru (Y). Demikian pula, motivasi kerja (X2) berpengaruh positif dan signifikan terhadap kinerja guru (Y). Secara simultan, kedua variabel independen tersebut berpengaruh signifikan terhadap kinerja guru di SMA se-Kecamatan Lais. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa kepemimpinan yang efektif yang dipadukan dengan motivasi kerja guru yang tinggi memiliki peran penting dalam meningkatkan profesionalisme dan kinerja guru.

Kata kunci: gaya kepemimpinan, motivasi kerja, kinerja guru.

Abstract

This study aims to determine the influence of principal leadership style and work motivation on teacher performance at Senior High Schools (SMA) in Lais District. This research employed a quantitative approach with a survey method. The population consisted of 89 teachers, and a sample of 50 respondents was selected using purposive sampling. Data were collected through questionnaires and documentation, and analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques with multiple linear regression tests. The results showed that, partially, the principal's leadership style (X1) had a positive and significant effect on teacher performance (Y). Likewise, work motivation (X2) had a positive and significant influence on teacher performance (Y). Simultaneously, both independent variables significantly affected teacher performance in SMA throughout Lais District. These findings indicate that effective leadership combined with strong teacher motivation plays a crucial role in improving teacher professionalism and performance.

Keywords: leadership style, work motivation, teacher performance

1. INTRODUCTION

Education constitutes a fundamental pillar in the construction of a progressive and prosperous nation, serving as the primary instrument for cultivating high-quality human resources. Within the broader educational framework, schools occupy a strategic position as formal institutions responsible for organizing and sustaining the teaching learning process (Suryati et al., 2023). Education plays a decisive role in shaping individuals' character, intellectual capacity, and practical competencies. As a deliberate and systematically planned endeavor, it seeks to nurture students' potential so that they grow into individuals who are faithful, morally grounded, intellectually capable, and resilient in responding to the dynamic challenges of an evolving era (Firmansyah, 2025).

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This mandate is explicitly articulated in Law Number 20 of 2003 on the National Education System, which defines education as a conscious and planned effort to create a learning environment and process through which learners actively develop their inherent potential. Article 3 of the same law further stipulates that national education functions to develop capabilities and shape the character and civilization of a dignified nation, aiming to produce citizens who are faithful to God Almighty, noble in character, knowledgeable, competent, creative, independent, democratic, and responsible (Sugeng & Suryani, 2020).

Despite these normative aspirations, Indonesia's education sector continues to confront persistent challenges. Issues concerning equitable access, teacher quality, infrastructural adequacy, and effective school leadership remain critical areas requiring sustained improvement (Sidik & Fahmi, 2021). In this regard, educational advancement necessitates the collaborative engagement of multiple stakeholders including government authorities, school institutions, principals, teachers, parents, and the wider community to ensure that educational processes are effective, inclusive, and sustainable (Endeshaw, 2023).

High-quality education is instrumental in generating a generation capable of competing globally while maintaining a strong sense of social responsibility. Consequently, education should not be perceived solely as the obligation of formal schooling institutions; rather, it represents a collective societal responsibility. Investment in education is, fundamentally, a long-term strategic commitment that shapes the trajectory and future resilience of a nation (Gabriel et al., 2020).

Within the school context, the principal assumes a pivotal leadership role. Beyond administrative management, the principal functions as an instructional leader who determines policy direction, institutional culture, and the overall quality of educational processes and outcomes. The attainment of school objectives is therefore profoundly influenced by the leadership style adopted by the principal (Ardliana et al., 2021).

Equally significant is teachers' work motivation, which directly affects teacher performance. Teachers who exhibit strong motivation typically demonstrate sustained enthusiasm for professional growth and a commitment to delivering optimal learning experiences for their students (Erlangga et al., 2024). Work motivation encompasses both intrinsic and extrinsic drivers that encourage diligence, consistency, and accountability in fulfilling professional responsibilities. Highly motivated teachers are more inclined to innovate pedagogically, engage actively in instructional improvement, and cultivate constructive relationships within the school community (Jaja, 2024). Conversely, diminished motivation may result in minimal initiative, reduced engagement, and ultimately a decline in instructional quality (Telaumbanua, 2020).

Empirical findings and field observations consistently indicate that motivated teachers tend to display higher productivity, discipline, and professional performance. Robust motivation fosters continuous competence development and instructional creativity. In contrast, low motivation can negatively influence both individual performance and the broader learning environment (Suprayogi et al., 2024).

The interplay between principal leadership style and teacher work motivation exerts a substantial impact on teacher performance. Principals who implement transformational, democratic, or situational leadership approaches are more likely to foster collaborative cultures, enhance teacher morale, and strengthen professional commitment. Conversely,

authoritarian or non-communicative leadership patterns often generate limited participation, weakened interpersonal relationships, and declining staff morale (Arbain et al., 2020).

Preliminary observations conducted in several public senior high schools (SMA) in Lais District reveal variations in organizational climate and teacher performance that appear closely associated with differences in leadership style. Certain schools demonstrate participatory, innovative, and supportive atmospheres, whereas others reflect rigidity and stagnation in instructional development. These contrasts underscore the critical role of leadership in shaping school effectiveness (Arif, 2023).

Accordingly, a comprehensive investigation into principal leadership style and teacher work motivation at the senior high school level is warranted, particularly in relation to teacher performance outcomes (Aleksius et al., 2022). This study is expected to yield empirical insights into how leadership practices function as strategic determinants in enhancing educational quality at the upper secondary level. On this basis, the researcher is motivated to undertake a study entitled: “The Influence of Principal Leadership Style and Work Motivation on Teacher Performance at Senior High Schools in Lais District.”

2. METHOD

This study employed a quantitative research design utilizing a survey approach to examine the relationships among the research variables. The investigation was conducted in public senior high schools (SMA) located in Lais District. Data were collected through the distribution of structured questionnaires comprising a series of statements designed to measure the variables of Principal Leadership (X₁), Work Motivation (X₂), and Teacher Performance (Y) (Pertiwi & Arianto, 2023; Surniyati & Rezeki, 2024).

The population of the study consisted of 89 teachers, from which a sample of 50 teachers was selected as respondents for data collection. The sampling process was undertaken to ensure that the selected participants adequately represented the characteristics of the population under investigation (Guigue, 2020 ; Smith et al., 2024).

Data collection techniques included the administration of questionnaires as the primary instrument and documentation to support and validate the research data. Subsequently, the collected data were analyzed using both descriptive statistical techniques to describe the distribution and tendencies of each variable and inferential statistical analysis, aimed at testing the proposed hypotheses and determining the magnitude of the relationships and influences among the variables studied (Loewen et al., 2020; Nada et al., 2021).

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

This study investigated the influence of principal leadership style and teachers’ work motivation on teacher performance at public Senior High Schools (SMA) in Lais District. Data were collected from 50 teacher respondents using structured questionnaires measuring Principal Leadership Style (X₁), Work Motivation (X₂), and Teacher Performance (Y).

3.1 Descriptive Findings

The descriptive statistics indicate that the majority of teachers perceive their principals’ leadership style as democratic and transformational. Teachers reported that principals

actively involve them in decision-making, encourage instructional innovation, and maintain open communication.

Teachers' work motivation is classified in the high category. Respondents demonstrated strong enthusiasm for professional responsibilities, accountability in completing tasks, and sustained commitment to professional growth.

Teacher performance was generally categorized as good, reflecting teachers' ability to develop structured lesson plans, implement effective instructional strategies, and systematically evaluate student learning outcomes.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Research Variables (N = 50)

Variable	Mean	SD	Category
Principal Leadership Style (X ₁)	4.25	0.48	High
Work Motivation (X ₂)	4.32	0.51	High
Teacher Performance (Y)	4.18	0.55	Good

Note: Scale 1–5 (1 = very low, 5 = very high)

3.2 Inferential Findings

Multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine the partial and simultaneous effects of principal leadership style (X₁) and work motivation (X₂) on teacher performance (Y).

Table 2. Regression Analysis Results

Predictor Variable	β	t	p	Interpretation
Principal Leadership Style (X ₁)	0.45	4.12	<0.001	Significant positive effect
Work Motivation (X ₂)	0.38	3.57	0.001	Significant positive effect
R ²	0.56	F = 31.45	<0.001	Significant simultaneous effect

The results of the study demonstrate that principal leadership style and work motivation both have significant positive effects on teacher performance at public senior high schools in Lais District. Specifically, principal leadership style (X₁) was found to have a strong positive influence ($\beta = 0.45$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that principals who implement democratic and transformational leadership approaches such as involving teachers in decision-making, encouraging instructional innovation, and maintaining open communication significantly enhance teachers' professional performance. Similarly, work motivation (X₂) also exerts a positive and significant effect on teacher performance ($\beta = 0.38$, $p = 0.001$), suggesting that teachers who demonstrate high levels of motivation are more committed, disciplined, and productive in carrying out their professional responsibilities. Moreover, the simultaneous analysis reveals that both variables together explain 56% of the variance in teacher performance ($R^2 = 0.56$, $F = 31.45$, $p < 0.001$), highlighting that effective leadership combined with strong teacher motivation synergistically contributes to improved teacher performance. These findings underscore the importance of fostering both supportive leadership practices and intrinsic motivation to achieve optimal educational outcomes.

Discussion

The analysis confirms that both principal leadership style and teachers' work motivation are significant predictors of teacher performance. Principals who adopt participative, communicative, and motivational approaches cultivate a supportive organizational climate, which stimulates teachers to perform optimally.

The findings align with leadership theories proposed by Robbins and others (Vargas et al., 2020), which highlight the role of effective leadership in enhancing subordinate motivation and productivity. Additionally, previous empirical studies (Rama et al., 2023; Masril et al., 2020) also identified leadership style and work motivation as critical determinants of teacher performance in school settings.

In summary, the study demonstrates that the synergy between transformational leadership practices and strong teacher motivation is crucial for sustaining high levels of professional performance in public senior high schools in Lais District.

4. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study confirms that principal leadership style and teacher work motivation significantly influence teacher performance at senior high schools in Lais District, both individually and collectively. Principals who apply democratic and transformational leadership approaches foster a supportive and participative work environment that enhances teachers' professionalism, while highly motivated teachers demonstrate greater commitment, discipline, and productivity in their roles. The findings imply that school administrators and policymakers should prioritize leadership development programs that strengthen principals' capacity to lead effectively, alongside initiatives that cultivate and sustain teacher motivation, as both factors are critical to achieving high-quality educational outcomes. For future research, it is recommended to expand the study to include a larger and more diverse sample across multiple districts, investigate additional mediating or moderating variables such as school climate or teacher collaboration, and employ longitudinal designs to examine the long-term effects of leadership and motivation on teacher performance.

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