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Effects of Principals' Transformational Leadership and Work Motivation on Teacher Performance in Barumun Junior High Schools

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Abstract

This study aimed to analyze the influence of principals' transformational leadership and work motivation on teacher performance at public junior high schools in Barumun District, Padang Lawas Regency. The research was conducted because teacher performance plays an important role in improving the quality of education, and it is influenced by leadership and motivational factors within schools. This study employed a quantitative approach using an ex-post facto method. The population consisted of 52 teachers from SMP Negeri 1 Barumun, SMP Negeri 2 Barumun Satu Atap, and SMP Negeri 3 Barumun, with total sampling technique applied. Data were collected using a Likert-scale questionnaire that had passed validity and reliability testing. The data were analyzed through prerequisite tests, multiple linear regression, t-test, F-test, and coefficient of determination analysis. The findings revealed that principals' transformational leadership had a positive and significant effect on teacher performance with a t-value of 4.999 and significance value below 0.001. Work motivation also showed a positive and significant effect with a t-value of 8.221 and significance below 0.001. Simultaneously, both variables significantly influenced teacher performance with an F-value of 150.374 and significance below 0.001. The adjusted R square value of 0.860 indicated that 86.0% of teacher performance was explained by transformational leadership and work motivation. Work motivation was found to be the most dominant factor affecting teacher performance.

Keywords: Transformational Leadership, Work Motivation, Teacher Performance, Principal Leadership, Education Management

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Introduction

Entering the globalization era, Indonesia faces increasingly complex challenges, particularly in the field of education. The rapid development of science, technology, and information requires countries to prepare qualified human resources capable of competing internationally. Education therefore becomes one of the most strategic sectors in developing national competitiveness. High-quality education is strongly influenced by the quality of teachers as the main actors in the learning process. Teachers are expected not only to transfer knowledge but also to shape students' character, creativity, and critical thinking skills. Consequently, improving teacher performance has become an important concern for educational institutions and policymakers.

Teacher performance is closely related to various internal and external factors, including leadership and work motivation. In the school environment, the principal plays a central role in

directing, motivating, and creating a conducive atmosphere for teachers to perform effectively. According to (Joen et al., 2022), transformational leadership implemented by school principals can improve teacher performance through increased motivation and professional commitment. Transformational leadership encourages teachers to work more creatively, responsibly, and collaboratively in achieving educational goals. This leadership style emphasizes inspiration, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, and idealized influence in managing educational organizations.

In addition, work motivation is considered an important factor affecting teacher effectiveness and productivity. Motivated teachers tend to demonstrate higher responsibility, discipline, and enthusiasm in carrying out teaching activities. (Dahliah & Sakka, 2021) explained that motivation contributes significantly to employee performance because motivated individuals are more willing to achieve organizational objectives. Similarly, (Mulyani & Wiarta, 2021) reported that transformational leadership and work motivation jointly contributed to improving teacher performance in schools. This indicates that leadership and motivation are interconnected variables that influence teachers' professional achievements.

The importance of transformational leadership in educational institutions has been highlighted in many previous studies. (Hermansah et al., 2025) found that transformational leadership positively influenced teacher performance and educational quality in elementary schools. Likewise (Nawawi & Wasliman, 2025) stated that principals with transformational leadership characteristics were able to encourage teachers to improve their competencies and instructional performance. Furthermore, (Permatasari et al., 2023) through a meta-analysis study, concluded that transformational leadership consistently contributed to the enhancement of teacher performance across different educational settings.

Teacher performance is also associated with organizational culture, job satisfaction, and professional commitment. (Suastini & Manuaba, 2021) explained that transformational leadership and organizational commitment simultaneously contributed to improving teacher performance. In addition, (Wijayanto et al., 2021) found that transformational leadership, work motivation, and job satisfaction significantly affected elementary school teachers' performance. These findings suggest that effective leadership practices create a positive organizational climate that supports teachers in performing their duties professionally.

Despite the importance of leadership and motivation, several educational institutions still experience problems related to teacher performance. Based on preliminary observations conducted in SMP Negeri Kecamatan Barumun, some teachers were found to have low discipline, lack of creativity in teaching, and insufficient preparation before conducting classroom instruction. Several teachers still applied monotonous teaching methods, resulting in low student engagement during learning activities. These conditions indicate that teacher performance improvement remains a challenge requiring serious attention from school principals and educational stakeholders.

The issue of teacher absenteeism also reflects the need for better management and leadership practices in schools. High absenteeism rates may negatively affect the learning process and educational quality because students lose valuable instructional time. According to (Suprayetno & Pohan, 2022), transformational leadership integrated into classroom and school management can reduce resistance among teachers and improve work performance. Therefore, principals are expected to strengthen supervision, communication, and motivation to ensure teachers perform their responsibilities effectively.

Transformational leadership is considered relevant in modern educational management because it emphasizes change, innovation, and collaborative relationships within organizations. (Jumniartini, 2021) stated that transformational leadership and school culture management significantly influenced teacher performance in junior high schools. Principals who apply transformational leadership tend to encourage teachers to participate actively in decision-making

processes and professional development activities. This leadership style also supports the creation of a positive school climate that fosters teacher commitment and accountability.

Based on the explanations above, it can be understood that transformational leadership and work motivation are important determinants of teacher performance. School principals need to implement effective leadership strategies that inspire teachers and strengthen their professional motivation. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the influence of transformational leadership and work motivation on teacher performance at SMP Negeri Kecamatan Barumun. The findings of this study are expected to contribute theoretically to educational management studies and practically to improving teacher performance and educational quality in schools.

Methods

This study employed a quantitative research approach using an ex-post facto design to analyze the influence of principals' transformational leadership and work motivation on teacher performance at public junior high schools in Barumun District. The ex-post facto design was selected because the study examined variables that had already occurred naturally without manipulation by the researcher. The research was designed to identify the relationships and causal influence between the independent variables and the dependent variable through statistical analysis. The independent variables in this study were principals' transformational leadership (X1) and teachers' work motivation (X2), while the dependent variable was teacher performance (Y).

The research was conducted at three public junior high schools in Barumun District, Padang Lawas Regency, namely SMP Negeri 1 Barumun, SMP Negeri 2 Barumun Satu Atap, and SMP Negeri 3 Barumun during the 2025/2026 academic year. The research activities included title submission, proposal preparation, proposal seminar, instrument revision, data collection, data analysis, thesis writing, thesis examination, and revision. The data collection process was conducted after obtaining research permission from the schools and educational authorities.

The population of this study consisted of all teachers from the three schools with a total population of 52 teachers. Because the number of respondents was fewer than 100 individuals, this study applied a total sampling technique in which all population members were selected as research respondents. This technique was chosen to obtain comprehensive and representative data from all teachers in the research locations.

This study involved three research instruments in the form of structured questionnaires developed based on theoretical indicators from previous studies and educational regulations. The transformational leadership questionnaire was developed based on Bass and Avolio's transformational leadership theory, consisting of four dimensions: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. The work motivation questionnaire was adapted from Ryan and Deci's Self-Determination Theory, including intrinsic and extrinsic motivation dimensions. Meanwhile, the teacher performance questionnaire was developed based on the Indonesian Ministry of Education Regulation Number 16 of 2007 concerning teacher competency standards, covering lesson planning, learning implementation, learning evaluation, and professional development.

The transformational leadership instrument consisted of 36 statement items, the work motivation instrument consisted of 30 items, and the teacher performance instrument also consisted of 30 items. All questionnaires used a five-point Likert scale consisting of Strongly Agree (5), Agree (4), Neutral (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly Disagree (1). The instruments used in this research were developed and owned by the researcher based on theoretical studies and previous empirical findings.

Before conducting the main research, the instruments were tested for validity and reliability through a pilot test involving 30 teachers from public junior high schools in another district, namely SMP Negeri Kecamatan Sosa. Instrument validity was analyzed using Pearson Product Moment correlation analysis to determine whether each item measured the intended variable accurately. Items were considered valid when the correlation coefficient exceeded the r-table value of 0.361 at a

significance level of 0.05. Reliability testing was conducted using Cronbach's Alpha analysis. Instruments were considered reliable if the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was greater than 0.60.

The data collection process was conducted directly by the researcher through questionnaire distribution to all respondents in the three schools. The researcher coordinated with school principals to determine appropriate schedules for distributing and collecting the questionnaires. Respondents completed the questionnaires independently based on their perceptions and experiences related to school leadership, work motivation, and teacher performance. The researcher also provided explanations regarding the objectives and procedures of the research before distributing the questionnaires to ensure that respondents understood the instructions clearly.

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Descriptive statistics were used to describe the characteristics of respondents and research variables. Inferential statistics were applied to test the research hypotheses and determine the influence among variables. Prior to hypothesis testing, prerequisite analyses were conducted, including normality testing using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov method, heteroscedasticity testing using the Glejser test, and multicollinearity testing to identify correlations among independent variables.

Hypothesis testing was conducted using multiple linear regression analysis to determine the effect of principals' transformational leadership and work motivation on teacher performance. Partial effects of each independent variable were analyzed using the t-test, while simultaneous effects were analyzed using the F-test (ANOVA). The coefficient of determination (Adjusted R Square) was also calculated to identify the contribution of independent variables to teacher performance.

All statistical analyses in this study were conducted using SPSS version 26 for Windows software. The software used for statistical analysis was owned under an institutional academic license available to the researcher. SPSS was utilized to perform validity testing, reliability testing, descriptive statistics, prerequisite analyses, regression analysis, t-tests, F-tests, and coefficient of determination analysis. The significance level used in this study was 0.05. Through these procedures, the research was designed to ensure that the findings were valid, reliable, and replicable for future studies related to educational leadership, work motivation, and teacher performance.

Results and Discussions

1. Results

The research was conducted in three public junior high schools located in Kecamatan Barumun, Kabupaten Padang Lawas, North Sumatra, namely SMP Negeri 1 Barumun, SMP Negeri 2 Barumun Satu Atap, and SMP Negeri 3 Barumun. These schools were selected because they represent different school characteristics in terms of accreditation, school age, and number of teachers. The study involved 52 teachers as respondents using a total sampling technique. The respondents consisted of 76.92% female teachers and 23.08% male teachers. Most respondents had undergraduate qualifications (S1) amounting to 96.15%, while 3.85% had postgraduate qualifications (S2). In terms of work experience, the majority of respondents had worked between 11–15 years (38.46%), indicating that most teachers had considerable teaching experience.

Table 1.
Characteristics of Respondents

No.	Column 1	Type	Description	Percentage	Analysis
1	Gender	Female	Majority of respondents were female teachers	76.92%	Female teachers dominated the teaching profession in the schools studied
2	Education Level	S1	Teachers with undergraduate qualifications	96.15%	Most teachers fulfilled the minimum academic qualification
3	Work Experience	11–15 years	Teachers with medium to high experience	38.46%	Respondents were generally experienced educators
4	School Type	Public Junior High School	Three SMP Negeri in Kecamatan Barumun	100%	Schools represented different accreditation categories

Note: additional notes based on primary data processing (2026).

Before hypothesis testing, validity and reliability tests were conducted on all research instruments. The transformational leadership variable (X1) consisted of 36 statement items, work motivation (X2) consisted of 25 items, and teacher performance (Y) consisted of 30 items. The validity test showed that all statement items had correlation coefficients above the r-table value of 0.361 with significance values below 0.05, indicating that all items were valid. Reliability testing using Cronbach's Alpha also showed excellent internal consistency.

Table 2.
Summary of Validity and Reliability Test Results

Variable	Number of Items	Lowest r-value	Highest r-value	Cronbach's Alpha	Category
Transformational Leadership (X1)	36	0.432	0.928	0.982	Very Reliable
Work Motivation (X2)	25	0.502	0.895	0.963	Very Reliable
Teacher Performance (Y)	30	0.380	0.971	0.980	Very Reliable

Note: all items were declared valid and reliable.

The classical assumption tests included normality, heteroscedasticity, and multicollinearity tests. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov normality test produced a significance value of 0.200 (>0.05), indicating that the residuals were normally distributed. The heteroscedasticity test using the Glejser method showed significance values of 0.218 for X1 and 0.146 for X2, both above 0.05, meaning there was no heteroscedasticity problem. Furthermore, the multicollinearity test showed tolerance values of 0.501 and VIF values of 1.996 for both independent variables, indicating no multicollinearity issue in the regression model.

Table 3.
Summary of Classical Assumption Tests

No.	Test Type	Result	Standard	Interpretation	Analysis
1	Normality Test	Sig. = 0.200	> 0.05	Normal Distribution	Assumption fulfilled
2	Heteroscedasticity Test	Sig. X1 = 0.218; X2 = 0.146	> 0.05	No heteroscedasticity	Model acceptable
3	Multicollinearity Test	VIF = 1.996	< 10	No multicollinearity	Independent variables not highly correlated
4	Regression Model	Significant	Sig. < 0.001	Strong regression model	Suitable for hypothesis testing

Note: data processed using SPSS 26.

The multiple linear regression analysis produced the equation:

$$Y = 8.921 + 0.327 X_1 + 0.653 X_2$$

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The regression equation indicates that transformational leadership and work motivation positively influence teacher performance. The regression coefficient of transformational leadership was 0.327, while work motivation had a coefficient of 0.653, indicating that work motivation had a stronger effect on teacher performance.

Table 4.
Results of Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

Variable	Regression Coefficient	t-value	Significance	Interpretation
Constant	8.921	1.256	0.215	Baseline teacher performance
Transformational Leadership (X1)	0.327	4.999	<0.001	Positive and significant effect
Work Motivation (X2)	0.653	8.221	<0.001	Positive and significant effect

Note: dependent variable = Teacher Performance (Y).

The coefficient of determination analysis showed an R Square value of 0.860, meaning that 86.0% of the variation in teacher performance could be explained by transformational leadership and work motivation simultaneously, while the remaining 14.0% was influenced by other factors outside the model.

2. Discussions

The findings revealed that transformational leadership had a positive and significant influence on teacher performance in SMP Negeri Kecamatan Barumun. The significance value below 0.05 confirmed that better transformational leadership practices by school principals were associated with higher teacher performance. This finding supports transformational leadership theory, which emphasizes inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, idealized influence, and individualized consideration as key dimensions that encourage employees to achieve higher performance levels.

Previous studies have also demonstrated that transformational leadership contributes positively to improving teacher performance and educational quality. Research conducted by Joen, (Joen et al., 2022) explained that transformational leadership indirectly strengthened teacher

performance through increased work motivation. In addition, (Hermansah et al., 2025) highlighted that effective transformational leadership practices were closely related to improved educational quality and teacher effectiveness in elementary schools. These findings indicate that school principals who are able to inspire, motivate, and support teachers can create a more productive educational environment.

The study also demonstrated that work motivation had a stronger effect on teacher performance compared to transformational leadership. Teachers with high motivation tended to show greater commitment, discipline, creativity, and responsibility in carrying out their professional duties. This finding is supported by the study of (Wijayanto et al., 2021) which found that work motivation significantly improved teacher performance and job satisfaction. Likewise, (Dahliah & Sakka, 2021) explained that motivation played an important role in improving teachers' productivity, professionalism, and work outcomes.

Furthermore, the simultaneous test confirmed that transformational leadership and work motivation together significantly influenced teacher performance. The F-test result of 150.374 with significance below 0.001 indicated that the regression model was statistically significant. The high R Square value (0.860) also demonstrated that the combination of both variables strongly explained teacher performance variation.

These results are consistent with the findings of (Mulyani & Wiarta, 2021) who reported that transformational leadership and work motivation simultaneously contributed to improving teacher performance. Similarly, (Suastini & Manuaba, 2021) emphasized that leadership quality and organizational commitment significantly strengthened teacher performance in schools. This suggests that the combination of supportive leadership and strong work motivation can encourage teachers to perform their professional responsibilities more effectively.

These findings imply that improving teacher performance requires a comprehensive approach involving both effective school leadership and enhanced teacher motivation. School principals should strengthen transformational leadership practices through communication, inspiration, and professional support, while educational institutions should also create conducive working environments and provide professional development opportunities to sustain teacher motivation.

Conclusion

The study concluded that transformational leadership and work motivation significantly influenced teacher performance in SMP Negeri Kecamatan Barumun. Transformational leadership positively improved teacher performance through inspiration, guidance, and support provided by school principals. Meanwhile, work motivation emerged as the dominant factor affecting teacher performance. Simultaneously, both variables contributed strongly to explaining teacher performance variation, with an R Square value of 86.0%.

These findings suggest that educational stakeholders should prioritize leadership development programs and strategies for enhancing teacher motivation in order to improve educational quality. Future research is recommended to include additional variables such as organizational culture, compensation, and work environment, as well as broader research populations to obtain more comprehensive findings.

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