



Transformational and Democratic Leadership Effects on Teachers' Performance in Secondary Education

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ABSTRACT

Leadership effectiveness remains a critical determinant of teacher performance and organizational quality in secondary education. Grounded in leadership and educational management theory, this study investigates the extent to which transformational and democratic leadership styles contribute to teacher performance. A quantitative correlational design was employed, involving data collected from 56 junior high school teachers through validated questionnaires and documentation. Multiple linear regression analysis was applied to examine both the individual and combined effects of the two leadership styles. The findings reveal that transformational and democratic leadership exert significant and positive influences on teacher performance ($p < 0.05$), with transformational leadership demonstrating a comparatively stronger effect. Transformational leadership enhances performance by fostering vision, motivation, and intellectual stimulation, whereas democratic leadership strengthens performance through participatory decision-making, shared responsibility, and collaborative school governance. The results support the theoretical proposition that effective educational leadership is multidimensional and integrative rather than singularly directive. This study contributes to the educational leadership literature by providing empirical evidence on the complementary roles of transformational and democratic leadership in shaping teacher performance and organizational climate. Despite its contributions, the study is limited by a restricted sample scope and the exclusion of mediating variables such as job satisfaction, professional development, and organizational support. Future research is encouraged to adopt broader samples, longitudinal designs, and expanded models to further explain the mechanisms linking leadership styles and teacher performance. Overall, the findings emphasize the strategic importance of balanced leadership practices in improving educational effectiveness and sustaining school performance.

Keywords: *transformational leadership; democratic leadership; teacher performance; educational leadership; school effectiveness*



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INTRODUCTION

The improvement of education quality in schools is strongly influenced by the leadership of principals and the performance of teachers (Nasir & Suyatno, 2020). Effective leadership, especially transformational leadership style, plays a vital role in fostering an environment that supports the professional development of teachers and the achievement of educational goals. Principals who are able to apply democratic and transformational leadership can motivate, inspire, and foster innovation among teachers (Jannah et al., 2023; Nurhadi et al., 2022).

Teacher performance is not only assessed through teaching abilities but also includes mentoring, serving as role models, and carrying out administrative and community service tasks within the school environment (Astuti & Handayani, 2021). This performance is the result of synergy between an understanding of the school's vision set by the principal, individual competencies, and the work spirit built through effective communication between principals and teachers (Rahmadani & Yusuf, 2018).

Transformational leadership is recognized as capable of creating positive change by strengthening the school vision, empowering staff, and cultivating a collaborative work climate (Hidayatullah, 2022; Pratiwi & Mulyati, 2021). Principals with this leadership style tend to exhibit inspirational behavior, provide intellectual stimulation, and show individualized consideration for teachers. These practices contribute directly to increasing motivation and the quality of teachers' work in schools.

On the other hand, the era of decentralization and educational policy reforms demands principals continuously develop managerial capacities and apply adaptive, participatory leadership styles (Syamsuddin & Ramli, 2024). The implementation of democratic leadership can increase teacher participation in decision-making, strengthen the sense of belonging to the school, and improve overall organizational performance (Aditya & Sumarsono, 2023).

Recent studies emphasize that principals' success in managing change and improving teacher performance is largely determined by their ability to combine transformational and democratic leadership styles (Mahendra & Setiawan, 2020; Wulandari & Wiyono, 2019). The impact of such leadership is not limited to teacher performance but extends to organizational culture and student learning outcomes (Utami & Sari, 2021).

Therefore, it is crucial to further examine the influence of principals' leadership styles, especially transformational and democratic, on teacher performance as part of efforts to enhance the quality of education in secondary schools.

METHODS

This study employed a quantitative research approach to investigate the relationship between transformational and democratic leadership styles and teacher performance in junior high schools. The research design was correlational, aiming to examine how the selected leadership styles influence teachers' work outcomes (Yuliana & Suryadi, 2018).



A probability sampling method, specifically simple random sampling, was used to select participants, ensuring that each member of the population had an equal chance of being chosen (Utami & Sari, 2019). The study sample comprised 56 teachers from junior high schools in Tanggamus Regency, representing a diverse range of educational backgrounds and professional experiences.

Data were collected through validated and reliable questionnaires as well as documentation techniques (Dewi & Setiawan, 2018). The questionnaire was developed based on previously established instruments and subjected to validity and reliability testing to ensure accurate measurement (Putri & Syamsuddin, 2022). Documentation served to complement the questionnaire data and provided additional context regarding school and teacher characteristics (Sofyan & Maulana, 2017).

Data analysis was conducted using multiple linear regression analysis, allowing the researchers to determine the simultaneous and partial effects of transformational and democratic leadership styles on teacher performance (Mulyani & Wulandari, 2019). This statistical method is appropriate for assessing the relationship between one dependent variable and multiple independent variables (Handayani & Astuti, 2021). All statistical analyses were performed using standard statistical software, and results were interpreted at a 95% confidence level.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Centrality of Leadership in Educational Success

Leadership within educational institutions, particularly at the school principal level, is widely recognized as a determining factor in the advancement of teacher performance and, consequently, the overall quality of education (Sari & Yulianti, 2021; Utami & Sari, 2019). Leadership is not merely a process of administering policies, but encompasses the vision, strategy, and daily interaction that shape the culture of teaching and learning. In the context of SMPN 1 Talang Padang, the present research investigates how transformational and democratic leadership styles, as adopted by the school principal, significantly influence teacher performance. By utilizing quantitative analysis and focusing on these two leadership paradigms, the study offers insight into how participatory and visionary leadership can elevate the work environment and outcomes of educators.

The Relationship Between Leadership Styles and Teacher Performance

The core finding of this study is that both transformational and democratic leadership styles have a positive and significant impact on teacher performance. The regression analysis reveals that transformational leadership has a coefficient of 0.472 and democratic leadership a coefficient of 0.359, with both achieving statistical significance ($p < 0.05$). This means that, holding other variables constant, an increase in transformational leadership is associated with a more substantial improvement in teacher performance compared to democratic leadership. However, both are crucial elements for building an effective educational environment (Hidayatullah, 2022; Jannah et al., 2023).



Table 1. Regression Analysis Results

Predictor Variable	Coefficient	Significance (p-value)
Constant	4.243	-
Transformational Leadership	0.472	< 0.05
Democratic Leadership	0.359	< 0.05

The data demonstrates that leadership styles not only influence the technical aspects of teacher performance, such as lesson planning and instructional delivery, but also shape the psychological and emotional climate of the workplace. Teachers are more motivated, willing to innovate, and exhibit higher job satisfaction when leadership is supportive, collaborative, and future-oriented (Pratiwi & Mulyati, 2021).

Visualizing the Effect of Leadership Styles

The impact of the two leadership styles is illustrated in Figure 1, which displays the standardized regression coefficients. The chart below clearly indicates that while both leadership styles contribute positively to teacher performance, transformational leadership shows a slightly higher impact. This visual representation reinforces the regression findings and provides a clear, accessible understanding of the relative strength of each leadership style.

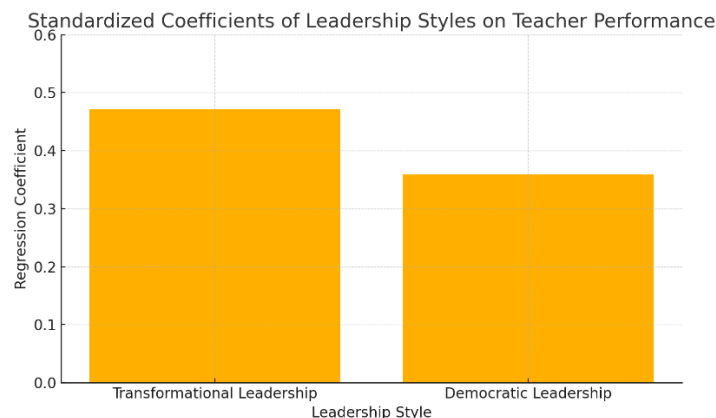


Figure 1. Standardized Coefficients of Leadership Styles on Teacher Performance

The visual evidence confirms that both leadership approaches should be integrated into school management practices to maximize teacher performance outcomes.

Discussion of Transformational Leadership and Its Mechanisms

Transformational leadership is characterized by the principal's ability to inspire and intellectually stimulate teachers, establish a shared vision, and demonstrate individualized consideration (Hidayatullah, 2022). In the context of SMPN 1 Talang Padang, such leadership fosters an atmosphere where teachers feel valued and are encouraged to pursue continuous professional growth. This leadership style often manifests in regular professional development sessions, transparent communication, and the delegation of meaningful responsibilities.

The study findings are supported by Sari & Yulianti (2020), who emphasized that transformational leaders in education enhance teacher motivation and foster innovation, leading to improved student outcomes as well (Sari & Yulianti, 2021). Moreover,



transformational leaders tend to address not only the extrinsic aspects of teacher performance, such as recognition and reward, but also intrinsic factors like self-fulfillment, career aspiration, and collective efficacy.

Transformational leadership also contributes to the cultivation of organizational citizenship behaviors among teachers, such as voluntary collaboration, mentoring of peers, and proactive engagement in school improvement initiative. This cultural shift is vital in meeting the challenges of 21st-century education and adapting to rapid technological and policy changes.

The Role and Value of Democratic Leadership

While transformational leadership is critical for visionary change, democratic leadership provides the foundation for participatory decision-making and shared governance (Jannah et al., 2023). The findings reveal that when principals employ a democratic leadership style, teachers are more likely to feel a sense of ownership over school policies and initiatives. Democratic leadership encourages open dialogue, collaborative problem-solving, and mutual respect between administration and faculty.

Syamsuddin et al. (2022) found that democratic leadership enhances organizational commitment among teachers and leads to more effective implementation of school programs. By involving teachers in the decision-making process, school leaders tap into diverse perspectives and collective expertise, which are crucial for creative solutions and adaptive strategies (Syamsuddin et al., 2022).

At SMPN 1 Talang Padang, the adoption of democratic leadership has reportedly resulted in increased teacher initiative, better teamwork, and more effective responses to challenges such as curriculum changes and the integration of digital technologies in the classroom. These outcomes align with previous research emphasizing the importance of shared leadership in driving organizational resilience and adaptability (Putri & Syamsuddin, 2022).

Implications for School Management and Professional Practice

The research highlights several practical implications for school principals and educational policymakers. First, it underlines the need for leadership training programs that combine transformational and democratic elements. Such programs should focus on developing skills in inspirational communication, change management, conflict resolution, and participatory leadership.

Second, the study's results suggest that educational leaders should strive to create a balance between providing direction and inviting input from teachers. This balance promotes trust, enhances morale, and leads to more sustainable improvements in school performance (Pratiwi & Mulyati, 2021).

Third, the findings reinforce the value of fostering a school culture that rewards innovation, risk-taking, and continuous professional learning. Principals should serve as role models in embracing new teaching methodologies, integrating educational technology, and championing teacher-led initiatives for school improvement.

Comparison with Previous Studies and Alternative Factors



Consistent with the present study, previous research has shown that transformational and democratic leadership have a synergistic effect on improving teacher performance and organizational culture (Sari & Yulianti, 2021). However, it is important to recognize that teacher performance is multi-determined. Other contributing factors include the availability of professional development opportunities, teacher welfare, job satisfaction, and the adequacy of school facilities (Astuti & Handayani, 2021).

While this study focuses primarily on leadership styles, further research should explore these additional factors and how they interact with leadership to affect teacher outcomes. For example, Pratiwi & Mulyati (2021) found that schools with comprehensive professional support systems and positive leadership experienced higher teacher retention and student achievement (Pratiwi & Mulyati, 2021).

CONCLUSION

This study provides clear evidence that both transformational and democratic leadership styles exert a significant and positive influence on teacher performance at SMPN 1 Talang Padang. Through quantitative analysis, it was demonstrated that transformational leadership has a slightly stronger impact, yet the synergy between both leadership approaches is essential for fostering an educational environment where teachers can thrive professionally.

The findings highlight that principals who inspire, motivate, and involve teachers in decision-making processes are more likely to build a collaborative, innovative, and high-performing school culture. Transformational leadership contributes to increased teacher motivation, initiative, and professional growth, while democratic leadership enhances teachers' sense of belonging, autonomy, and active participation in school development.

These results reinforce the importance of leadership development programs that integrate both visionary and participatory dimensions for current and future school leaders. Furthermore, the study underscores that effective school leadership is a cornerstone for achieving educational quality and meeting the demands of dynamic educational landscapes.

However, the research is limited by its focus on a single region and does not incorporate other variables that may also affect teacher performance, such as job satisfaction, professional development, and work environment. Therefore, future studies are recommended to adopt broader samples and include additional factors to enrich the understanding of what drives teacher effectiveness.

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