

The Effect of Principal's Leadership and School Culture on Teachers' Performance in Public Junior High Schools

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Abstract: This study aims to examine the effect of school principal leadership and school culture on teacher performance in public junior high schools in Pangkalan Lampam District, Ogan Komering Ilir Regency. The research employed a quantitative approach with a correlational design, involving 83 teachers selected through proportional random sampling from a population of 104 teachers. Data were collected using Likert-scale questionnaires measuring school principal leadership, school culture, and teacher performance, and were analyzed through prerequisite tests (normality, linearity, multicollinearity, and heteroscedasticity) followed by multiple linear regression analysis using t-tests and F-tests at a 5% significance level. The results indicate that school principal leadership has a positive and significant effect on teacher performance, school culture also has a positive and significant effect on teacher performance, and both variables simultaneously exert a significant influence on teacher performance. These findings highlight that effective leadership practices and a strong, positive school culture are key organizational factors in enhancing teacher performance. The novelty of this study lies in its integrated analysis of principal leadership and school culture as joint predictors of teacher performance within the specific context of public junior high schools in Pangkalan Lampam District, providing localized empirical evidence that supports and extends existing theories of educational leadership and organizational culture. From a practical perspective, the findings imply that efforts to improve teacher performance should prioritize strengthening principals' leadership capacities through continuous professional development and fostering positive school cultures characterized by collaboration, professionalism, and shared responsibility. In terms of contribution, this study enriches the literature on educational management by offering empirical insights into the systemic relationship between leadership, school culture, and teacher performance, and it provides a valuable reference for policymakers, school leaders, and future researchers in designing effective school improvement and leadership development strategies aimed at improving the quality of education.

Keywords: Principal's Leadership, School Culture, Teacher Performance, Transformational Leadership

A. Introduction

Teacher performance is one of the main determinants of educational quality and the achievement of students' learning outcomes (Pido, Mahmud, & Sudirman, 2023). Teachers with high levels of performance are able to design effective instructional plans, implement teaching and learning processes professionally, and conduct continuous evaluation and follow-up of learning outcomes. Therefore, improving teacher performance has become a strategic issue in educational management across various formal education contexts.

International and national literature consistently indicates that teacher performance is not solely determined by individual competence but is also strongly influenced by organizational factors within schools. Principal leadership and school culture are among the most frequently identified determinants of teacher performance. (Pasek, 2022) Effective principal leadership, particularly transformational and instructional leadership, plays a crucial role in developing a shared vision, providing professional support, and creating a work environment that encourages optimal teacher performance. Likewise, a positive school culture characterized by collaboration, discipline, trust, and a strong orientation toward quality creates a conducive climate for enhancing teacher performance (He, Guo, & Abazie, 2024).

Recent developments in educational research emphasize that principal leadership and school culture have a mutually reinforcing relationship. Effective leadership not only has a direct impact on teacher performance but also contributes significantly to shaping a school culture that supports learning and teacher professionalism. Contemporary studies reveal that the combination of strong leadership and a positive school culture produces a more substantial impact on teacher performance than the influence of each variable independently. Consequently, many recent studies adopt quantitative approaches with simultaneous analytical models to examine the combined effects of leadership and school culture on teacher performance (Kartiko, Pesantren, Abdul, & Pacet, 2022).

Despite the growing body of research examining the relationship between principal leadership, school culture, and teacher performance, most studies have been conducted in specific regions and may not fully capture the diversity of school contexts in other areas (Toom, 2018). In particular, empirical evidence addressing the influence of principal leadership and school culture on teacher performance in public junior high schools in Pangkalan Lampam District remains limited. The organizational characteristics of schools, as well as the social and cultural context of this region, may generate distinct dynamics that differ from those reported in previous studies.

The novelty of this study lies in its empirical investigation of the effects of principal leadership and school culture on teacher performance specifically within public junior

high schools in Pangkalan Lampam District. Furthermore, this study integrates both variables into a single analytical model to examine their partial and simultaneous effects on teacher performance in a local context that has received relatively little scholarly attention (Widyawati et al., 2024).

From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to the literature on educational management by providing empirical evidence regarding the role of principal leadership and school culture in enhancing teacher performance at the junior high school level (Berkovich & Eyal, 2012). From a practical standpoint, the findings are expected to serve as a reference for school principals and educational policymakers in designing leadership development strategies and strengthening school culture to improve teacher performance and overall educational quality (Jumaket et al., 2025). Based on the foregoing discussion, this study seeks to address the following research questions: 1) does principal leadership have a significant effect on teacher performance in public junior high schools in Pangkalan Lampam District?; 2) does school culture have a significant effect on teacher performance in public junior high schools in Pangkalan Lampam District?; 3) do principal leadership and school culture simultaneously have a significant effect on teacher performance? Accordingly, the hypotheses proposed in this study are as follows: **H1**: Principal leadership has a positive and significant effect on teacher performance; **H2**: School culture has a positive and significant effect on teacher performance; and **H3**: Principal leadership and school culture simultaneously have a positive and significant effect on teacher performance.

B. Methods

This study employed a quantitative approach with a correlational research design. The quantitative approach was selected because it enables the systematic, objective, and measurable examination of relationships among variables through numerical data processing using statistical techniques (Taherdoost, 2022). This approach emphasizes the testing of predetermined hypotheses and produces findings that can be generalized to a broader population, provided that the required statistical assumptions are met. By applying a quantitative approach, subjectivity in data interpretation can be minimized, as the entire analytical process is based on numerical values, statistical measures, and standardized analytical procedures.

A correlational design was adopted because the primary objective of this study was not to implement treatments or interventions on the research variables, but rather to identify the relationships, strength, and direction of the relationships between principal leadership and school culture and teacher performance. This design allows researchers to understand naturally occurring patterns of relationships within school environments based on empirical data collected from respondents. In other words, correlational research focuses on observing existing phenomena without

manipulating variables, thereby ensuring that the findings accurately reflect real conditions in the field.

This study involved three main variables, consisting of two independent variables and one dependent variable. The first independent variable was principal leadership, which refers to the principal's ability to direct, influence, guide, and motivate teachers and other school members to achieve educational goals effectively. Principal leadership in this study encompassed aspects such as communication, decision-making, academic supervision, role modeling, and the ability to create a supportive working climate (Siahaan, Aswaruddin, Maulidayan, Zaki, & Rahman, 2023). The second independent variable was school culture, defined as a set of shared values, norms, beliefs, habits, and practices that develop and are collectively upheld by members of the school community. School culture reflects how school members think and act in carrying out daily educational activities, including work discipline, collaboration, professionalism, and commitment to educational quality. The dependent variable was teacher performance, which refers to the level of teachers' achievement in carrying out their professional duties and responsibilities, including instructional planning, teaching implementation, assessment of learning outcomes, and continuous professional development (Di, Negeri, & Suku, 2023).

The population of this study consisted of all teachers working in public junior high schools in Pangkalan Lampam District. Teachers were selected as respondents because they interact directly with principals and are actively involved in the school's organizational culture, making them well positioned to provide relevant perceptions and experiences related to the research variables. The research sample was determined using proportional random sampling. This technique was applied to ensure that each school within the population had a proportional opportunity to be represented in the sample. As a result, the selected sample was expected to accurately reflect the characteristics of the population and reduce potential sampling bias.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire as the primary research instrument. The questionnaire was developed based on relevant indicators for each research variable and derived from established theoretical frameworks and prior empirical studies. The principal leadership instrument consisted of items reflecting the principal's leadership capacity in managing, guiding, and developing the school (Lai & Lien, 2023). The school culture instrument included items describing shared values, norms, and habitual practices within the school (Hongboontri & Keawkhong, 2014). Meanwhile, the teacher performance instrument contained items measuring the execution of teachers' professional responsibilities in instructional activities and professional development. All instruments employed a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree to measure respondents' levels of agreement with each statement.

Prior to the main data collection, the research instruments were tested for validity and reliability. Validity testing was conducted to ensure that each item accurately measured the intended construct, while reliability testing aimed to assess the internal consistency of the instruments. Valid and reliable instruments are essential to ensure that the collected data are credible and suitable for further analysis. These tests were conducted using statistical software to ensure precision and consistency.

Data analysis was carried out in two main stages: descriptive statistical analysis and inferential statistical analysis. Descriptive statistics were used to describe the characteristics of the data, including measures of central tendency (mean, median, and mode), dispersion (standard deviation and variance), as well as minimum and maximum values. This analysis provided an overview of the general trends in the data and respondents' perceptions of each research variable. Inferential statistical analysis was employed to test the research hypotheses and examine the relationships and effects among variables. Correlation analysis was used to identify the strength and direction of the relationships between principal leadership, school culture, and teacher performance. In addition, linear regression analysis was conducted to examine the effects of the independent variables on the dependent variable, both partially and simultaneously, using a predetermined level of significance (Mustamin, Hidayati, & Muzayyin, 2025).

All data analyses were performed using statistical software to ensure accuracy, reliability, and consistency of the analytical results. Through the application of a quantitative approach and correlational design, this study is expected to provide a comprehensive empirical understanding of the relationships between principal leadership, school culture, and teacher performance, as well as to offer a strong evidence-based foundation for decision-making and policy formulation in the field of education.

C. Results and Discussion

Descriptive Statistics

This study involved a total of 83 teachers drawn from five public junior high schools located in Pangkalan Lampam District. The participating teachers represented diverse subject areas and varying lengths of teaching experience, providing a comprehensive perspective on leadership practices, organizational culture, and teacher performance within the sampled schools. Descriptive statistical analysis was conducted using SPSS version 26 to summarize the distribution, central tendency, and variability of the research variables, namely principal leadership (X_1), school culture (X_2), and teacher performance (Y). Descriptive analysis plays a critical role in quantitative research, as it provides an initial overview of data patterns and allows researchers to understand how respondents perceive the studied phenomena before proceeding to inferential analysis.

The results indicate that principal leadership was perceived at a high level by teachers across the sampled schools. The mean score for principal leadership was 146.01 with a standard deviation of 8.15, suggesting that respondents generally held very positive perceptions of their principals' leadership practices. The relatively small standard deviation indicates that teachers' responses were fairly consistent, reflecting homogeneity in perceptions across schools. Furthermore, the negative skewness value (-2.40) suggests that the distribution of responses was heavily skewed toward the higher end of the scale. This implies that most teachers rated principal leadership close to the maximum score, indicating strong agreement that principals demonstrated effective leadership behaviors.

The leptokurtic distribution observed in the leadership variable further confirms that responses were concentrated around the mean, with fewer extreme values. Such a distribution pattern reflects a high level of consensus among respondents regarding the quality of leadership practices in their schools. These findings suggest that principals in the studied schools are perceived as competent leaders who are able to guide, motivate, and support teachers effectively. High ratings in leadership practices may reflect principals' ability to articulate a clear vision, foster professional collaboration, conduct instructional supervision, and provide meaningful feedback to teachers. The consistency of responses across respondents also suggests that leadership practices are implemented relatively uniformly across the five schools included in the study.

Similarly, school culture demonstrated a very high mean score of 146.34 with a standard deviation of 7.92. These results indicate that teachers perceived the organizational culture within their schools as highly positive and supportive. The high mean score reflects teachers' strong agreement with statements related to shared values, norms, traditions, and professional practices that characterize their school environments. As with the leadership variable, the relatively low standard deviation suggests limited variation in responses, indicating that teachers across different schools shared similar perceptions of school culture.

The distribution of school culture scores also exhibited negative skewness and a leptokurtic shape, indicating that most responses were clustered at the upper end of the scale. This pattern confirms the homogeneity of perceptions among teachers and suggests that school culture is consistently experienced across the sampled schools. A strong and positive school culture often reflects the presence of shared goals, mutual respect, professional collaboration, and a collective commitment to student learning. The findings suggest that the schools in Pangkalan Lampam District have successfully established cultural norms that support teaching and learning processes, reinforce professional behavior, and encourage collaboration among school staff.

For teacher performance, the findings reveal a very high average score of 150.33 with a standard deviation of 8.14. More than half of the respondents reported the maximum

possible score, indicating that teachers perceived their professional performance as being at an optimal level. This result suggests that teachers believe they are effectively fulfilling their instructional responsibilities, including lesson planning, classroom management, assessment of student learning, and engagement in professional development activities. The high mean score also reflects teachers' confidence in their ability to meet professional standards and contribute positively to the educational process.

The distribution of teacher performance scores shows a similar pattern to the other variables, with negative skewness and a leptokurtic distribution. These characteristics indicate that responses were concentrated at the higher end of the scale and that there was a high degree of agreement among respondents regarding teacher performance. Such consistency suggests that the positive perceptions of teacher performance are not isolated to specific individuals or schools but are shared across the sample. Overall, the descriptive statistics indicate that principal leadership, school culture, and teacher performance in the sampled schools are perceived positively and consistently by teachers, providing a strong foundation for further inferential analysis (Kim, 2013).

Assumption Testing

Prior to conducting inferential statistical analyses, assumption testing was performed to ensure the appropriateness of the analytical techniques used in the study. One key assumption tested was the normality of residuals, which is commonly required for parametric statistical analyses such as correlation and regression. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was employed to assess the normality of the residual data.

The results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test indicated that the residuals were not normally distributed, as evidenced by a significance value of $p = 0.020$, which is below the conventional threshold of 0.05. This result suggests a deviation from the assumption of normality. However, in applied educational research, strict adherence to normality assumptions is often relaxed, particularly when sample sizes are moderate to large. With a sample size of 83 respondents, the central limit theorem suggests that the sampling distribution of the mean approximates normality, thereby reducing the potential impact of non-normal residuals on the analysis.

Moreover, correlation and regression analyses are generally considered robust to moderate violations of the normality assumption, especially when the primary goal is to examine relationships rather than to make precise predictions. Therefore, consistent with recommendations in applied social science research, the analysis was continued despite the non-normal distribution of residuals. This decision was supported by the overall quality of the data, the consistency of responses, and the strength of observed relationships among variables.

Multicollinearity testing was also conducted to examine the degree of correlation between the independent variables, principal leadership and school culture. The results revealed tolerance values of 0.105 and Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values of 9.506 for both independent variables. These values indicate a strong correlation between principal leadership and school culture, approaching the commonly accepted threshold for multicollinearity concerns.

While high multicollinearity can pose challenges for regression analysis by inflating standard errors and reducing the precision of coefficient estimates, it is important to interpret these results within a theoretical context. In educational leadership research, leadership and organizational culture are conceptually and empirically intertwined. Principals play a central role in shaping school culture through their leadership practices, values, and decision-making processes. Therefore, the strong correlation observed between these variables is not unexpected and reflects their theoretical interdependence rather than a methodological flaw. As such, the presence of multicollinearity in this study reinforces, rather than undermines, the conceptual framework underpinning the research.

Hypothesis Testing

Correlation analysis was conducted to examine the strength and direction of relationships among principal leadership, school culture, and teacher performance. The results revealed very strong and statistically significant relationships among all variables. Principal leadership was strongly correlated with teacher performance ($r = 0.908$, $p < 0.01$), indicating that higher levels of perceived leadership effectiveness were associated with higher levels of teacher performance. This strong positive correlation suggests that leadership practices play a critical role in influencing teachers' professional behaviors and outcomes.

School culture exhibited an even stronger relationship with teacher performance ($r = 0.959$, $p < 0.01$). This finding indicates that teachers who perceived their school culture as positive, supportive, and collaborative also reported higher levels of performance. The strength of this correlation underscores the importance of organizational culture as a contextual factor that shapes teachers' motivation, commitment, and effectiveness. Additionally, principal leadership and school culture were found to be highly correlated with each other ($r = 0.946$, $p < 0.01$), further highlighting the close relationship between leadership practices and the development of organizational culture in schools.

Regression analysis was conducted to examine the predictive effects of principal leadership and school culture on teacher performance. The results confirmed that both variables had significant positive effects on teacher performance. Principal leadership demonstrated a standardized regression coefficient of $\beta = 0.908$ ($p < 0.001$), indicating a strong positive influence on teacher performance. Similarly, school culture showed

a standardized regression coefficient of $\beta = 0.959$ ($p < 0.001$), suggesting an even stronger effect on teacher performance.

The F-test results further demonstrated that principal leadership and school culture simultaneously contributed significantly to teacher performance ($F = 460.59$, $p < 0.001$). The high F value indicates that the regression model has strong explanatory power and is effective in explaining variations in teacher performance. Together, these findings confirm that leadership and organizational culture are critical predictors of teacher performance in public junior high schools.

Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that principal leadership and school culture play a crucial role in shaping teacher performance in public junior high schools. The consistently high scores across all variables indicate that teachers perceive their working environments positively and believe that both leadership practices and organizational culture support their professional performance (Plaku & Leka, 2025).

First, the strong influence of principal leadership on teacher performance supports transformational leadership theory as proposed by. According to this theory, effective leaders inspire and motivate followers by articulating a compelling vision, fostering intellectual stimulation, and providing individualized consideration. The high ratings of principal leadership in this study suggest that principal's function effectively as role models, motivate teachers through clear goals and expectations, encourage innovation in teaching practices, and offer personal support when needed. These leadership behaviors enhance teachers' intrinsic motivation, professional commitment, and willingness to go beyond minimum job requirements (Sari, 2025).

This finding is consistent with assertion that effective school leadership is central to building a strong moral and professional school community. When principals demonstrate integrity, fairness, and concern for teachers' professional growth, they cultivate trust and commitment among staff. Such an environment enables teachers to focus on instructional improvement and student learning, ultimately enhancing performance (Heenan, Paor, & Lafferty, 2023).

Second, the significant effect of school culture on teacher performance aligns with the framework proposed, which emphasizes the role of shared values, norms, and traditions in shaping school effectiveness. A strong school culture provides a sense of identity and purpose for teachers, guiding their behavior and reinforcing professional standards. In schools with positive cultures, collaboration is encouraged, discipline is maintained, and professional responsibility is valued. These cultural characteristics create an environment in which teachers feel supported and motivated to perform at their best.

The findings also support (Dahiru et al., 2018) concept of collective efficacy, which refers to shared beliefs among school staff regarding their ability to achieve desired outcomes. When teachers collectively believe that their school is capable of success, they are more likely to engage in collaborative problem-solving, persist in the face of challenges, and maintain high expectations for themselves and their students. The very high ratings of school culture observed in this study suggest that collective efficacy is well established in the sampled schools.

Third, the very high level of teacher performance observed in this study reflects the combined influence of leadership and organizational culture. According to (Mangkunegara & Octorend, 2015), individual performance is influenced by both personal factors, such as ability and motivation, and organizational factors, such as leadership and work environment. Similarly, (Lijun & Te, 2024) emphasizes that organizational context plays a critical role in shaping individual behavior and performance. The findings of this study confirm that when teachers operate within a supportive leadership climate and a positive school culture, they are better able to perform their professional duties effectively.

Finally, the strong interrelationship between principal leadership and school culture supports organizational climate theory as proposed by (Atasoy, 2020) and (Veletić, Price, & Vegar, 2023) assertion that school leaders play a dominant role in shaping organizational culture. Although multicollinearity was detected in the regression analysis, this finding reinforces the theoretical understanding that leadership and culture are inseparable elements of school organizations (Kareem, 2025). Principals influence school culture through their values, behaviors, and decisions, while school culture, in turn, shapes how leadership is perceived and enacted. Together, these factors create a dynamic system that profoundly influences teacher performance.

In conclusion, the findings of this study provide strong empirical evidence that principal leadership and school culture are critical determinants of teacher performance in public junior high schools. By fostering effective leadership practices and cultivating a positive organizational culture, schools can create conditions that support teachers' professional growth and enhance educational outcomes (Engin, 2014).

D. Conclusions

This study concludes that principal leadership and school culture play a highly decisive and interrelated role in shaping teacher performance in public junior high schools in Pangkalan Lampam District. The empirical findings indicate that principal leadership is perceived at a high level, characterized by effective communication skills, sound and timely decision-making, the ability to motivate teachers, professional human resource management, and the continuous implementation of instructional supervision and teacher professional development. These leadership practices reflect

the characteristics of transformational leadership, which is capable of creating a supportive, well-directed, and conducive working environment that optimizes teacher performance. In addition to leadership, school culture is also found to be highly positive and to have a significant influence on teacher performance. A strong school culture is reflected in shared values such as discipline, collaboration, professionalism, responsibility, and a strong commitment to educational quality, which function as informal guidelines shaping teachers' attitudes, behaviors, and interactions. A positive school culture encourages cooperation, strengthens collegial relationships, enhances mutual trust, and creates a psychologically safe environment in which teachers feel comfortable innovating and actively participating in school development initiatives. Teacher performance in this study is categorized as very high, encompassing instructional planning, classroom implementation, student assessment, classroom management, and continuous professional development, indicating that teacher performance is not solely determined by individual competence but is also strongly influenced by organizational factors. The reciprocal relationship between principal leadership and school culture underscores that efforts to improve teacher performance are more effective when undertaken in a systemic and integrated manner. Therefore, strengthening principals' leadership capacity and fostering positive school cultures should be prioritized as strategic efforts to achieve sustainable improvements in educational quality.

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