

## **Transformation of Principal's Leadership in Building Teacher's Motivation and Performance**

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**Abstract:** This study aims to: (1) describe the implementation of the four dimensions of the principal's transformational leadership (idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration) at SDN 10 Muara Sugihan; (2) analyze the principal's strategies in building and sustaining teacher work motivation through a transformational approach; and (3) explore the implications of these leadership practices on improving teachers' performance in the learning process. Employing a qualitative case study design, data were collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation from purposively selected informants, including the principal, five teachers, a school supervisor, and administrative staff. Analysis followed the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, with validity ensured through triangulation and member checking. The principal demonstrated transformational leadership through concrete role modeling, contextual vision communication, and consistent appreciation of teacher performance. Motivation-building strategies included creating a humanistic organizational climate, strengthening teachers' sense of belonging, and employing emotionally supportive approaches. These practices tangibly improved teacher performance in lesson planning, teaching creativity, and professional discipline. This study uniquely positions work motivation as a key mediating mechanism linking transformational leadership to teacher performance in a rural Indonesian elementary context. Findings emphasize that principals must adopt humanizing, emotionally supportive approaches alongside structural strategies to sustain teacher motivation effectively. This research contributes empirical evidence that transformational leadership, when enacted through relational and motivational dimensions, significantly enhances teacher professionalism, offering actionable insights for school leaders in similar underserved settings.

**Keywords:** Case Study, Teachers' Performance, Teachers' Work Motivation, Transformational Leadership

### **A. Introduction**

Entering an era of increasingly dynamic educational change, elementary schools demand high-quality principal leadership that is no longer merely administrative but

rather adaptive, reflective, and capable of building a vibrant learning ecosystem amidst limitations (Raprap et al., 2025). SDN 10 Muara Sugihan, an elementary school in the Muara Sugihan District, faces unique regional challenges ranging from geographic location and facility availability to work relationship patterns influenced by local culture. In this context, teacher motivation and performance are crucial elements in determining the sustainability of learning quality, as in practice, teachers are not only curriculum implementers but also key actors translating the school's vision into students' daily learning experiences. Recently, policy transformations such as the independent curriculum have placed new demands on teachers, such as the ability to design outcome-based learning, teaching modules, and more meaningful assessments. At the same time, schools must continue to operate within the regulatory framework of national education standards, which require compliance with process standards, assessment standards, and accountable educational governance.

These policy pressures often do not translate smoothly in practice; teachers may feel "pulled" by administrative targets yet simultaneously required to maintain the quality of classroom learning. This tension often impacts teacher motivation, especially when the principal's leadership support is not clearly present. Teacher motivation itself cannot be understood simply as a "spirit" that simply appears or disappears. From the perspective of self-determination theory, motivation is strongly influenced by whether or not basic psychological needs are met: autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Guay, 2022). When teachers feel trusted to make pedagogical decisions (autonomy), feel capable and supported to develop (competence), and experience healthy and respectful working relationships (relatedness), motivation tends to be more autonomous and sustainable. Conversely, if teachers work in an atmosphere of intense control, minimal support, or emotionally drained relationships, the motivation that emerges is often more forced and fragile.

This situation makes the role of the principal highly strategic, as they can influence teacher motivation through their leadership style, work climate, and communication patterns in decision-making. One approach widely studied in the context of improving teachers' performance is transformational leadership. Transformational leadership emphasises not only target achievement but also fosters idealistic influence (exemplary behaviour), inspirational motivation (vision and encouragement), intellectual stimulation (learning and innovation), and individualised attention (personal support) (Aditya et al., 2025). Empirical evidence in the context of elementary schools in Indonesia shows that principals' transformational leadership practices can encourage increased teacher motivation, commitment, and performance, especially when the leader serves as a role model and facilitator of professional development.

Findings from a systematic review also confirm that transformational leadership tends to correlate with a more positive school environment, teacher creativity, and professional confidence, which impacts the quality of learning (Alzoraiki et al., 2024;

Voelkel, 2022). However, leadership transformation in this study is not defined solely as a formal change in style but rather as a deeper process of how principals “read” the school situation, negotiate limitations, mobilise teachers, and build a collective sense that change is possible and worth pursuing, even in schools with limited infrastructure. Transformation also needs to be understood in relation to the demands of teacher professionalism, which necessitate strengthening pedagogical, personal, social, and professional competencies. This means that principal leadership is not simply about “monitoring” performance but also needs to empower teachers to grow, rediscover the meaning of their work, and feel valued as educational professionals.

Therefore, prior observation was conducted to determine the phenomenon being studied at SDN 10 Muara Sugihan, not simply “whether the principal leads well” but rather how leadership changes (in daily practice) are intertwined with teacher motivation and performance, both through internal school policies, working relationships, professional support, and the emotional climate created within the teacher community. This framework aligns with the view that school improvement fundamentally requires leadership capable of fostering collaboration and strengthening the role of teachers as agents of change, not simply implementers of instructions. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap. This research seeks not only to prove the theory but also to delve deeper into the practice of “Transformation of Principal Leadership in Building Teacher Motivation and Performance at SDN 10 Muara Sugihan”.

## **B. Methods**

This research was conducted at SDN 10 Muara Sugihan located in Sumber Mulyo Village, Muara Sugihan District, Banyuasin Regency, for a period of six months, starting from the pre-field stage in November 2025 to the reporting stage of the research results in April 2026. This research adopted a qualitative approach with a case study design, which was selected based on the urgent need to explore the substantive meaning behind the phenomenon of leadership behavior and teacher responses in their natural work environment. The selection of informants was carried out using a purposive sampling technique, with the principal of SDN 10 Muara Sugihan as the key informant and the teachers as key informants who provided a balanced perspective. The researcher acted as a key instrument (human instrument) who went directly to the field to capture, feel, and interpret the dual realities constructed by the principal and teachers in their daily lives.

The research procedure began with a thorough pre-field stage, including a preliminary study to map crucial teachers’ performance issues such as discipline, quality of learning administration, and work morale, as well as identifying potential transformational practices that had been implemented. Entering the fieldwork stage, the data collection procedure was carried out intensively, in-depth, and simultaneously through three main techniques, namely in-depth interviews,

participatory observations in the teacher's room, classrooms, and school meetings, as well as document reviews in the form of learning tools, meeting minutes, and principal coaching notes. Data and data sources were classified into two main categories, namely primary data originating from the principal and teachers as subjects directly involved in the managerial and learning processes and secondary data in the form of official school documents relevant to teachers' performance indicators.

To ensure the validity and credibility of the data, the researcher applied source triangulation and technique triangulation, as suggested by Miles, Huberman, and Saldana in *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook*, which emphasizes that valid qualitative data must be rich in description and obtained from various complementary sources to minimize subjective bias (Miles et al., 2019). Furthermore, data analysis was conducted cyclically and concurrently from the time the researcher first entered the location, following the interactive analysis model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, which includes three simultaneous and iterative activity flows: data condensation, data display, and drawing and verifying conclusions. This process culminated in the drawing of tentative conclusions, whose validity was continuously verified through member checking until a data saturation point was reached, where no new information was available and the causal relationship between leadership and teachers' performance was fully depicted. Referring to Lincoln and Guba's (Moleong, 2021) qualitative data validity standards, this study applied four main criteria as pillars of validity: credibility (degree of trustworthiness), transferability, dependability, and confirmability (certainty), to ensure that the resulting findings had strong interpretative depth and could be scientifically justified.

### **C. Results and Discussion**

The discussion of the results of this study aims to analyze in-depth qualitative findings regarding the transformation of the principal's leadership at SDN 10 Muara Sugihan in building teacher motivation and performance. The analysis was conducted using the transformational leadership theoretical framework by Bass and Riggio (2006), which encompasses four main dimensions: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. The self-determination theory by Ryan and Deci (2020), which explains the internal psychological mechanisms of teachers, was also used. The selection of these two theoretical frameworks is based on the argument that they complement each other. Bass and Riggio (2006) explain leadership behaviors that produce change, while Self-Determination Theory (SDT) explains the internal psychological mechanisms of teachers that serve as a bridge between leader behavior and changes in motivation and performance. The synthesis of these two theories yields a more comprehensive and theoretically valuable explanation of the phenomena studied at SDN 10 Muara Sugihan.

## **Implementing Idealized Influence and Inspirational Motivation in Building Teacher Motivation**

The findings of this study confirm that the concrete exemplary behavior of the principal of SDN 10 Muara Sugihan, manifested in early attendance, physical involvement in collaborative work, and spontaneous concern for environmental conditions, has a meaning far beyond mere disciplinary behavior. Substantively, exemplary behavior is a trust-building mechanism that serves as the foundation for the moral legitimacy of leadership. When teachers witness the principal helping lift a table soaked by heavy rain, they see more than just a physical action but also a valuable message: that this leader does not separate himself from the difficulties experienced by his subordinates. In the framework of Bass and Riggio (2006), the idealized influence dimension demands more than formal charisma. Transformational leaders gain trust and admiration not from their position, but from consistency between words and actions, integrity in the face of difficult situations, and a willingness to share risks (Bass & Riggio, 2006).

Findings at SDN 10 Muara Sugihan fully confirm this proposition: teachers, including the most senior and critical, identified role modeling as the factor that most differentiates KS-01's leadership from its predecessors. This moral legitimacy is not built through the proclamation of a formal vision or policy but through the accumulation of small, consistent actions observed by the entire school community. This aligns with research by Corrigan and Merry (2022), which confirms that consistent, everyday role modeling by the principal is the most influential foundation for building teachers' trust and long-term commitment. From an SDT perspective, trust built through role modeling fulfills teachers' psychological need for relatedness, one of the three basic needs that Ryan and Deci (2020) believe must be met for intrinsic motivation to thrive. In a work environment fraught with administrative pressures and the demands of the Independent Curriculum, teachers require working relationships that are not only functional but also infused with warmth and caring (Guay, 2022; Kumayas et al., 2025). The role model demonstrated by KS-01 creates a psychologically safe relational climate, where teachers feel part of a caring community, not just a bureaucratic unit performing tasks.

Leithwood et al. (2020) comprehensive synthesis of over one hundred studies corroborates this finding: people-centered school leadership is significantly more strongly correlated with teacher motivation than leadership focused on supervision and control. In the specific context of elementary schools in the Muara Sugihan area, characterized by a strong family culture and intense personal interaction, this humanistic role model resonates more deeply than in urban contexts. Sánchez-Rosas et al. (2023) study of elementary school teachers also confirmed that the transformational leadership of principals, acting as role models, significantly influences teachers' collective efficacy (the model explains 57% of the variance), indicating that role modeling has a systemic impact beyond mere interpersonal

relationships. Findings related to the principal's communication of the vision indicate that KS-01 does not rely on the vision as a formal document but rather brings it to life through everyday conversations, public appreciation of practices that embody the vision, and concrete examples from the local context.

This approach is theoretically highly relevant to the inspirational motivation dimension within Bass & Riggio's (2006) framework, which requires leaders to articulate a compelling and challenging vision in a way that evokes emotional engagement, not just cognitive compliance. What distinguishes these findings from previous research is the contextual approach to communicating the vision. KS-01 does not use a generic vision applicable to every school; it uses concrete examples from the teachers at SDN 10 Muara Sugihan itself as a medium for communicating the vision. In Albert Bandura's social learning theory, vicarious experience increases self-confidence in one's own abilities, far more effectively than abstract motivational rhetoric (Lee & Bong, 2023). Research by Aditya et al. (2025) in the context of Indonesian elementary schools confirms that transformational leadership, which integrates role modelling with contextual vision communication, can significantly improve teacher motivation, commitment, and performance.

An empirical study by Sarinah et al. (2024) quantitatively confirms this mechanism: transformational leadership has a significant direct effect on teacher motivation (coefficient 0.675,  $p < 0.05$ ), and this motivation then has a strong impact on performance (coefficient 0.634,  $p < 0.05$ ). This motivational mediation between leadership and performance provides a theoretical explanation for the findings at SDN 10 Muara Sugihan: the principal does not directly improve teachers' performance through instruction but rather through the dissemination of meaning, which shifts teachers' motivational orientation from extrinsic to intrinsic. The specific, public, and contextual appreciation pattern developed by KS-01 has profound theoretical implications. Specific, evidence-based appreciation serves not only as an extrinsic reward but also as much-needed competency information for teachers to build self-confidence. Within the SDT framework, teachers' need for competence is met not only by opportunities to achieve but also by feedback that confirms their competence (Ryan & Deci, 2020). When the principal specifically states, "Mrs Latifah is already using technology; the children enjoy learning Islamic religious education," she is not simply offering praise but providing specific validation that confirms competence with verified arguments.

This phenomenon is relevant to research by Avihani and Izzaty (2023), which found that intrinsic motivation is the primary driver of teachers' performance, while extrinsic factors serve as reinforcing elements that validate teachers' hard work. In the context of SDN 10 Muara Sugihan, meaningful appreciation serves as a bridge between extrinsic and intrinsic motivation: sincere appreciation from the leader is gradually internalized into self-confidence and professional pride, much like the mechanism of transformation from extrinsic motivation to more autonomous

motivation as described by Ryan and Deci (2020). The unique contribution of this research lies in documenting the mechanisms of motivational shift in the context of regional elementary schools. Unlike studies that generally use a quantitative approach, this research successfully captures the process of motivational shift through the lived experiences of senior teachers who were previously stagnant but have now rediscovered their professional vitality. These findings enrich the literature by providing process details not captured in the numbers.

### **Implementation of Intellectual Stimulation in Encouraging Learning Performance**

The findings regarding academic supervision at SDN 10 Muara Sugihan reveal a significant paradigm shift: from supervision as a control mechanism to supervision as a platform for professional learning. This shift is not simply a matter of technical procedural changes but also a fundamental shift in power relations, from a superior-subordinate relationship that evaluates to a relationship of professional partners who reflect together. When KS-01 stated “more about coaching, not grading,” he was declaring a philosophy of supervision that differs from the inspection tradition that still dominates many schools in Indonesia. Theoretically, this shift directly corresponds to the *intellectual stimulation* dimension in Bass et al. (2006) framework, which requires leaders to encourage subordinates to question existing assumptions, explore new approaches, and view old problems from different perspectives. Dialogic-reflective supervision does just that: rather than providing one-way assessments, it invites teachers to analyze their own practices, identify gaps, and formulate solutions.

A supervisory process that builds competency gradually increases teacher self-efficacy because each supervision session provides new evidence that teachers are capable of overcoming learning challenges. Research by Thoonen et al. (2011) in *Educational Administration Quarterly* found that teacher self-efficacy is the most important motivational factor in explaining teacher learning and teaching practices. Conversely, evaluative-punitive supervision actually threatens self-efficacy and creates anxiety that is counterproductive to performance (Mulyasa, 2014). Field findings at SDN 10 Muara Sugihan confirmed this proposition: the school supervisor (PW-01) assessed that KS-01’s supervision had “touched on professional development, not just checking files, but discussions about better ways of teaching”, an external assessment that verified that this difference in supervision quality was objectively observed.

The principal’s success in establishing a safe psychological climate for teachers to experiment was a striking finding. KS-01’s statements, “Just try. If you fail, we’ll evaluate together” and “Good for daring to try; we’ll fix it together tomorrow,” carry a psychological meaning far deeper than mere verbal encouragement. These statements declare that failure in innovative experiments will not result in sanctions; failure is evidence of learning. This is the foundation of psychological safety that

allows teachers to take the intellectual risks necessary for innovation. In the context of SDT, this safe psychological climate fulfills teachers' need for autonomy, the freedom to make pedagogical decisions based on professional judgment, rather than simply following procedures set by superiors. Teachers at SDN 10 Muara Sugihan responded to this autonomy in ways very consistent with SDT predictions: they developed innovations that were contextual, creative, and based on their own initiative. G-01 developed a verse-guessing game using a smartphone application; G-02 developed a local content module based on oil palm plantations; G-03 created teaching media from recycled materials.

None of these innovations were the result of instructions from superiors; all stemmed from the teachers' own initiative, demonstrating their intrinsic motivation. A study by Yoserizal et al. (2025) in elementary schools in Bulu District, Rembang, found that intellectual stimulation had a significant impact on teacher learning innovation ( $\beta = 0.300$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), and work motivation showed the greatest influence ( $\beta = 0.322$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). These quantitative findings align with the qualitative findings of this study: intellectual encouragement from the principal does have a significant impact on teacher innovation, but the mechanism of action is mediated by teacher motivation. Feelings of security and support first increase their motivation, and from there, innovation flows naturally.

The findings on the shift in lesson planning from copy-paste to contextual adaptation reveal an interesting dynamic. Prior to the leadership of KS-01, many teachers used lesson plans that were not adapted to local conditions, not because they were incapable, but because they lacked the incentive to do so and the belief that contextual adaptation was important and valued. This is a matter of motivation and a sense of purpose, not simply competence. KS-01's goal was not to instruct teachers to create better lesson plans, but rather to create conditions in which teachers were willing to create better ones because they perceived their value. In the terminology of social learning theory, the use of concrete examples from colleagues as a reference standard represents a vicarious experience mechanism that proves that these standards can be achieved by ordinary teachers in this school. Within the framework of the principal's role as supervisor, the planning guidance provided by KS-01 transcends technical-administrative functions and enters the realm of substantive supervision that touches on pedagogical competence, an important distinction with a far more substantial impact on the quality of learning performance.

PW-01 identified performance indicators that are now noticeably better: "Lesson plans and teaching modules are more varied, teachers are more willing to try new media, and students are more active in class." These three indicators are direct manifestations of intellectual stimulation, which has successfully shifted performance from formality to creativity. Research by Mukaddamah (2024) highlighted latent dangers in elementary schools: teacher stagnation, a tendency toward passivity, and a reluctance to innovate without intellectual challenge from leaders. Findings at SDN 10 Muara

Sugihan also demonstrate the antidote: consistent and specific intellectual stimulation delivered in a safe psychological climate. The empirical contribution of this research is demonstrating that intellectual stimulation does not require sophisticated technology or large budgets; it works through appropriate conversations, the provision of a safe space, and the recognition of innovative efforts, even the most modest. These findings have highly relevant practical implications for schools with similar limitations throughout Indonesia.

The most distinctive finding from this third sub-focus is the conscious and consistent practice of leadership differentiation implemented by KS-01. The principal explicitly treats senior teachers by providing space to share experiences and lead certain activities while encouraging younger teachers to innovate and take professional risks. This differentiation is not discrimination, but rather a recognition that different teachers are at different stages of professional development and have different psychological needs. In the framework of Bass et al. (2006), the dimension of *individualized consideration* requires leaders to pay attention to the individual needs of each follower, acting as a mentor who adapts their approach to each person's specific characteristics. The findings at SDN 10 Muara Sugihan not only confirm the implementation of this principle but also reveal that KS-01 does so with a high level of contextual sensitivity, understanding that a senior teacher with 20 years of experience needs recognition for her existing expertise, while a younger teacher needs encouragement.

A study by Mevia and Karwanto (2023) in the journal *Naturalistic* found that a principal's personalized approach proved effective in meeting teachers' psychological needs, thereby reducing emotional barriers to work and maintaining consistent work motivation. The findings at SDN 10 Muara Sugihan add a more specific dimension: that the most effective leadership differentiation is based on a deep understanding of individual profiles, rather than simply providing general attention to all. This finding is directly relevant to the context of SDN 10 Muara Sugihan: the more personalized and differentiated the principal's attention, the stronger its influence on teacher commitment and professional engagement.

The findings regarding KS-01's emotional care, such as visiting sick teachers and personally calling when teachers experienced salary delays, reveal a dimension of leadership that goes beyond formality and enters the realm of deep human connection. In the context of SDT, these actions fulfill teachers' need for relatedness on a personal and meaningful level. G-03 calls this "the most meaningful appreciation," more meaningful than formal praise or official recognition. Genuine emotional caring has a multifaceted impact on school organizational dynamics. Werang (2025), in his recent study of elementary school teachers in Indonesia, found that emotional exhaustion was significantly negatively correlated with job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Another aspect of Werang's findings suggests a proposition confirmed by this study's data: active emotional support from the

principal serves as a buffer against burnout, maintaining teachers' mental stability and sustained performance. KS-01's statement, "Teachers first, I'll help with administrative matters later," conveys profound leadership meaning: the principal places the teacher's core identity as an educator above administrative demands, a psychologically liberating message in a work culture that often places administration above all else.

Research by Efendi et al. (2023) confirms that leadership effectiveness is measured by the principal's ability to build teacher affective commitment, which ultimately leads to holistic and sustainable school quality improvement. The emotional care demonstrated by KS-01 is a key mechanism for building this affective commitment: teachers who feel cared for as people, not just as employees, develop an emotional bond with the school that transcends formal obligations. One of the most theoretically significant findings is the revitalization of motivation and creativity in the most senior teachers, who had previously tended to stagnate. G-02 (20 years teaching) and G-03 (22 years teaching) reported a shift from "being senior, this is enough" to a renewed enthusiasm that pushed them out of their comfort zones. Theoretically, this phenomenon can be explained through the concept of *re-engagement*, a process in which individuals experiencing professional stagnation rediscover meaning and energy in their work through appropriate interventions.

Within the SDT framework, senior teacher stagnation occurs when one or more of three basic needs are not met: autonomy eroded by routine, competency no longer recognized, or connectedness weakened by transactional working relationships. KS-01 simultaneously restores these three needs: providing space for autonomy (sharing experiences), providing specific recognition of expertise, and building personal connectedness. Research by Adriantoni and Suryati (2022) on transformational leadership in elementary schools emphasizes the importance of leaders as role models in everyday life. Senior teachers respond to individualized consideration not as patronage, but as recognition of expertise that has long been unvalidated. The empirical contribution of this study lies in documenting that targeted individualized consideration has a revitalizing effect on even the most experienced teachers, undermining the assumption that transformational approaches are only effective for younger teachers. These findings broaden understanding of the range of effectiveness of transformational leadership across stages of teacher career development.

### **Synthesis and Conceptual Model of Research Findings**

The discussion of the three sub-focuses above yields an understanding that needs to be stated explicitly: the four dimensions of transformational leadership studied do not operate separately and independently, but rather form a system with internal logic and strong interdependence. Modeling and inspirational motivation build a foundation of trust, which is a prerequisite for effective intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration. Without trust, teachers will be unwilling to take the

intellectual risks necessary for innovation; and without trust, the principal's personal attention will be received with suspicion, not openness (Northouse & Peter, 2021).

#### Stage 1: Foundation of Trust

Modeling and inspiration build trust and moral legitimacy. The principal arrives early, engages in physical work, demonstrates spontaneous concern, and communicates the vision contextually. Teachers sense that the leader is not isolated from their challenges, building an emotional bond and foundational trust.

#### Stage 2: Space for Growth

The trust established opens teachers to intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration. In a safe psychological climate, teachers are encouraged to experiment, innovate, and take professional risks. Supervision shifts from control to learning. Differentiated, personalized attention addresses the unique needs of each teacher based on their career stage.

#### Stage 3: Continuous Transformation

Rewarded innovation and recognized growth generate intrinsic motivation that continually renews itself. Senior teachers rediscover their professional vitality; younger teachers develop self-confidence; the entire school community moves toward continuous improvement.

This flow is cyclical, not linear, as successful transformation in stage three strengthens confidence in the first stage and unlocks the capacity for deeper growth in subsequent stages. Cross-thematic analysis identified several contextual factors that uniquely shaped the leadership transformation process at SDN 10 Muara Sugihan. First, the distinctive family culture of the Muara Sugihan area provides fertile ground for relationship-based leadership (Dammen, 2023). In a community with strong family values, the principal's personal concern is not merely an "additional" behavior but an expected relational standard; thus, principals who fulfill this concern gain significantly stronger legitimacy because they align with local cultural values.

Second, the school's small size allows for more personalized supervision, more direct communication, and a deeper understanding of each teacher's individual profile (Jamilah et al., 2023). This individualized consideration, a strong finding of this study, is made possible by the fact that the principal manages only a small number of teachers and educational staff. Third, the limited facilities and infrastructure characteristic of the Muara Sugihan area do not appear to be a deterministic barrier to innovation. Data actually shows that limitations encourage contextual creativity in teaching media made from recycled materials, modules based on local potential, and learning games using smartphones. Effective principals don't wait for limitations to

be resolved before encouraging innovation; they encourage teachers to find creative paths within those limitations.

Fourth, structural challenges such as delayed PPPK salaries and administrative pressures from the Independent Curriculum have the potential to be serious demotivators. However, leadership responses that actively follow up with the department and explicitly prioritize teacher identity over administrative demands successfully mitigate the demotivating impact. This confirms Yahyuni's (2024) finding that a conducive school climate has a significant influence on teachers' performance and that the principal is the primary architect of that climate. This proposition integrates three elements often studied separately: transformational leadership, motivational mechanisms through SDT (Study-Oriented Teaching and Learning), and teachers' performance in the specific context of regional elementary schools. All the arguments in this sub-chapter lead to one irrefutable statement, namely that the transformation of the principal's leadership is the main mechanism and the most significant determinant in building motivation and improving teachers' performance at SDN 10 Muara Sugihan.

This statement is not a rash claim. It is supported by the convergence of three data sources (interviews, observations, and documentation); confirmed by the external perspective of the school supervisor; aligned with the main theoretical framework; and consistent with the findings of previous studies. What distinguishes this study is its ability to capture how these mechanisms operate concretely through specific actions that can be identified, studied, and replicated by other principals in similar contexts. The teachers at SDN 10 Muara Sugihan didn't change because of new policies, additional funding, or improved facilities. They changed because of a leader who arrived early, helped lift wet desks, called them by name in meetings to express appreciation, visited them when they were sick, and said, "Just try; if you fail, we'll evaluate together." These simple actions, carried out consistently over a sufficient period of time, constitute transformational leadership in its most tangible and meaningful form.

### **Theoretical Implications**

The findings of this study have several important theoretical implications. First, this study strengthens the validity of transformational leadership framework in the context of elementary schools in Indonesia, particularly in areas with limited resources. The four dimensions of transformational leadership were shown to be relevant and effectively implemented, albeit in forms adapted to the local context. Second, this study provides strong empirical support for the integration of transformational leadership with SDT. The mechanism of fulfilling teachers' basic psychological needs, such as autonomy, competence, and relatedness, was shown to be a causal bridge between transformational leadership behaviors and increased teacher motivation and performance.

This theoretical integration offers a more comprehensive explanation of *why* and *how* transformational leadership works. Third, this study broadens understanding of the effectiveness of transformational leadership across teacher career stages. The findings on the revitalization of senior teachers indicate that transformational leadership is not only effective for novice or young teachers but also has the capacity to rekindle professional enthusiasm in long-serving teachers. Fourth, this study identified the important role of contextual factors (family culture, school size, limited resources, and structural challenges) in shaping the implementation and effectiveness of transformational leadership. This suggests that transformational leadership is not a universal prescription that applies equally across all contexts but rather requires sensitive adaptation to local conditions.

### **Practical Implications**

Practically, the findings of this study provide several recommendations for school principals, policymakers, and teacher professional development. First, principals need to recognize that small, consistent actions have a far greater impact than formal policies in building teacher confidence and motivation. Second, academic supervision needs to shift from a control-evaluative approach to a dialogic-reflective approach that builds teacher capacity through shared reflection and specific feedback. Third, teacher appreciation needs to be specific, evidence-based, and public, not merely ceremonial. Specific appreciation serves a dual function: it serves as both an extrinsic reward and competency information that builds teacher confidence. Fourth, principals need to develop a differentiated approach to teachers based on their career stage, needs, and individual characteristics. A one-size-fits-all approach is ineffective in building diverse teacher motivation and performance. Fifth, policymakers need to create conditions that enable principals to implement a transformational leadership approach, including reducing excessive administrative burdens and providing greater autonomy in managing human resources in schools.

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, as a qualitative study with a single case study design, the findings cannot be statistically generalized to a broader population. However, analytical generalization and transferability of the findings to similar contexts are still possible. Second, this study focused on only one school with one principal as the primary subject. The variety of contexts, personalities, and leadership styles of other principals was not represented in this study. Third, this study relied on self-report data from participants through interviews and observations. Although data triangulation was performed, the possibility of social bias and the desire to provide answers that meet the researcher's expectations cannot be completely eliminated. Fourth, this study did not measure teachers' performance objectively using standardized instruments but instead relied on the perceptions of participants and school supervisors. Further research using a mixed-methods approach that incorporates quantitative measures of teachers' performance could strengthen these findings.

Based on the findings and limitations of this study, several further research agendas can be recommended. First, comparative research across schools with different characteristics, such as urban-rural, large-small, and public-private, could identify contextual factors that influence the effectiveness of transformational leadership. Second, longitudinal research that tracks changes in teacher motivation and performance over a longer period of time can capture the dynamics of the transformation process more comprehensively. Third, mixed-methods research that combines quantitative measures of teacher motivation and performance with in-depth qualitative exploration can provide stronger evidence of the causal relationship between transformational leadership and teacher outcomes. Fourth, research on the effectiveness of leadership development programs for school principals in implementing transformational approaches can provide more specific policy recommendations. Fifth, research on the role of other mediators and moderators, such as school climate, organizational culture, collegial support, and government policies, in the relationship between transformational leadership and teacher outcomes can enrich theoretical understanding of the mechanisms at work of transformational leadership in the education sector.

#### **D. Conclusion**

This study conclusively establishes that the principal's transformational leadership at SDN 10 Muara Sugihan functions as an integrated, mutually reinforcing system across its four core dimensions idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration significantly enhancing teacher motivation and performance. Idealized influence is manifest through consistent daily role modeling; inspirational motivation through vivid, contextual vision communication; intellectual stimulation by transforming supervision into a dialogic professional development forum; and individualized consideration through differentiated approaches tailored to each teacher's career stage. Collectively, these dimensions build trust, address psychological needs, and foster continuous professional growth. Teacher motivation is sustained via three complementary strategies: cultivating a humanistic, trust-based climate that shifts motivation from extrinsic to intrinsic; offering sincere, specific, and public appreciation that validates competency beyond material rewards; and demonstrating emotional concern—from visiting sick teachers to advocating for salary issues that builds profound loyalty and organizational commitment. Crucially, motivation emerges as a key mediator linking leadership to performance improvements across planning quality (evolving from routine to creative, locally based modules), implementation (becoming more varied and student-centered), and post-learning reflection (internalized as a professional norm). Notably, the revitalization of previously stagnant senior teachers underscores that this transformation is achievable despite limited facilities and geographical challenges, confirming leadership quality as the primary determinant of learning outcomes. Practically, principals must adopt an integrated, humanistic leadership approach that prioritizes trust-building, differentiated support, and authentic

appreciation over transactional management. Teacher motivation programs should be embedded within broader leadership strategies, not treated as isolated initiatives. Education authorities should invest in leadership development emphasizing emotional intelligence, dialogic supervision, and context-sensitive mentoring, while providing flexible resource allocation to support localized innovations. For future research, comparative studies across multiple schools with varying resource levels are recommended to test generalizability. Longitudinal designs would track the sustainability of motivation and performance gains over time. Exploring mediating variables such as teacher self-efficacy, collective efficacy, or school culture would deepen theoretical understanding, while qualitative case studies could capture nuanced stakeholder experiences and identify contextual adaptations necessary for diverse settings. Additionally, investigating the specific conditions under which senior teacher revitalization occurs could inform targeted professional development strategies.

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