

Effects of Transformational Leadership, Teacher Working Group Participation, and Work Motivation on Elementary Teachers' Pedagogical Competence in Kemuning District Indragiri Hilir Regency

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the effects of principals' transformational leadership, participation in the Teacher Working Group (KKG), and work motivation on elementary teachers' pedagogical competence in Kemuning District, Indragiri Hilir Regency. The research employed a quantitative approach with a survey design, involving 144 teachers selected by proportional random sampling from a total population of 225 teachers. The instrument was a Likert-scale questionnaire that had been tested for validity and reliability. Data were analyzed using multiple linear regression. The results show that, simultaneously, the three independent variables contribute significantly to teachers' pedagogical competence with $R^2 = 0.628$ and $F = 78.819$ ($p < 0.001$), meaning that 62.8% of the variance in pedagogical competence is explained by the model. However, partially, only work motivation had a significant effect ($B = 0.754$, $\beta = 0.675$, $t = 7.406$, $p < 0.001$), whereas transformational leadership and KKG participation did not have significant effects. These findings affirm the importance of strengthening work motivation in efforts to improve teachers' pedagogical competence, and underscore the need for evidence-based policies to support innovation and teacher professionalism at the elementary school level.

INTRODUCTION

Teachers' pedagogical competence is the foundation of instructional quality because it determines the success of planning, implementing, and evaluating learning processes that are adaptive to students' needs. Comprehensive evaluation that encompasses the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains becomes a key indicator of a teacher's effectiveness in ensuring students' holistic growth (Jannah & Naimah, 2022; Lestari et al., 2023; Shulman, 1987). Recent findings indicate that continuous assessment drives improvements in teaching strategies while facilitating constructive feedback for professional development (Alfath et al., 2022; Wildan & Budiman, 2023; Jayanti et al., 2023). Nevertheless, variations in pedagogical competence are still evident in elementary schools, indicating the need for more targeted managerial interventions. In conclusion, strengthening teacher competence is a prerequisite for improving the quality of national education.

Transformational leadership emphasizes inspiring, motivating, and empowering organizational members through a collective vision and strong moral values. This model, proposed by Bass and Avolio in 1994, highlights four dimensions: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Bass & Avolio, 1994). Contemporary studies show the model's relevance in educational contexts, especially when principals practice leadership grounded in integrity, visionary communication, and personal support (Ahmed & Amiri, 2022; Munif, 2024; Gaol, 2020). On this foundation, transformational leadership is expected to build a culture of innovation and enhance teacher professionalism. In conclusion, the theory provides a strategic framework for sustainable school change in response to the dynamics of twenty-first-century education.

The implementation of transformational leadership in elementary schools has been shown to strengthen collaborative learning climates, mobilize teachers to develop instructional practices, and ultimately reinforce pedagogical competence. Principals who consistently encourage professional reflection, provide adaptive training, and appreciate innovation have a significant influence on teachers' instructional quality (Siregar et al., 2024; Zamawi et al., 2023; Suroya, 2019). This emotional and professional support nurtures a sense of ownership and a commitment to continuous innovation, while data-based performance monitoring ensures a measurable direction of improvement (Nizammuddin & Jaelani, 2025). In conclusion, transformational leadership is effective when combined with planned evaluative practices and sustained capacity building to deliver instruction that is high-quality, inclusive, adaptive, and contextually relevant.

Teacher Working Groups (KKG) function as communities of practice that enable teachers to share best practices, discuss instructional challenges, and design classroom-based innovations. Active participation in KKG has been shown to increase pedagogical understanding, teaching creativity, and social support among teachers (Kasmawati, 2020; Halalutu, 2023; Asalihin, 2021). Through regular meeting cycles, members obtain peer feedback that accelerates the diffusion of effective methods while cultivating a reflective culture in schools.

Thus, structured collaboration in KKG becomes a bridge between theory and instructional practice. In conclusion, the success of KKG is determined by the quality of interaction, frequency of participation, and the commitment to learn from one another consistently and sustainably.

Teachers' work motivation reflects internal and external drives that energize creativity and persistence in carrying out professional duties. Highly motivated teachers tend to seek competency renewal, employ innovative strategies, and exhibit resilience when facing classroom challenges (Krismawati & Manuaba, 2022; Solihin et al., 2021; Mitha, 2024). Beyond enhancing individual performance, positive motivation strengthens cohesion within teaching teams, thereby fostering a progressive school culture. Recognition, career development opportunities, and supportive work environments are key determinants that reinforce such motivation. In conclusion, teacher empowerment programs need to incorporate motivational aspects so that the transformation of pedagogical competence proceeds effectively and is oriented toward sustainable outcomes that support instructional innovation in today's digital era.

Although many studies have separately demonstrated the positive roles of transformational leadership, KKG, and work motivation, research examining these three factors simultaneously in semi-peripheral elementary school contexts remains limited (Fitriyanti et al., 2022; Gaban et al., 2021; Zulkipli et al., 2022). This condition leads to a partial understanding of the synergy among managerial, collaborative, and personal variables in shaping pedagogical competence. Moreover, inconsistencies across findings raise questions about contextual factors that may moderate the influence of the independent variables. In conclusion, a comprehensive analysis that integrates leadership, professional collaboration, and motivation is needed to close this knowledge gap and provide evidence-based policy recommendations for education stakeholders in regions lagging behind and developing contexts like Indonesia.

Based on the empirical gap above, this study aims to evaluate the effects of principals' transformational leadership, KKG participation, and work motivation—both partially and simultaneously—on elementary teachers' pedagogical competence in Kemuning District. By involving 144 respondents and employing multiple regression analysis, this study is expected to reveal the relative strength of each variable while explaining their collective contribution to improving instructional quality (Arzfi et al., 2022). The findings are expected to enrich the literature, offer managerial practice recommendations, and serve as a basis for teacher professional development policies in semi-peripheral regions. In conclusion, this research provides a holistic approach to strengthening teacher competence through the synergy of leadership, collaboration, motivation, and data-driven continuous evaluation.

METHOD

Type and Design of the Study

This study employed a quantitative, causal-associative approach with an explanatory survey design to test the effects of three independent variables—principals' transformational leadership, KKG participation, and work motivation—on elementary teachers' pedagogical competence. Data were

collected through a closed-ended questionnaire and statistically analyzed to test the stated hypotheses.

Research Site and Period

The study was conducted in 19 public elementary schools across Kemuning District, Indragiri Hilir Regency, Riau Province, from February 2025 to July 2025.

Population and Sample

The population comprised all 225 public elementary school teachers in Kemuning District. The sample was determined using proportional random sampling with the Isaac & Michael formula at a 5% error rate, resulting in 144 teacher respondents.

Variables and Operational Definitions

Y (Pedagogical Competence): the effectiveness of teachers in planning, implementing, and evaluating instruction. X_1 (Transformational Leadership): principals' capacity to inspire, motivate, and empower teachers. X_2 (KKG Participation): teachers' involvement in attendance, discussion, and contribution to innovations within KKG. X_3 (Work Motivation): internal-external drives that spur teachers' enthusiasm, commitment, and initiative.

Instruments and Data Collection

Primary data were obtained through a 4-point Likert-scale questionnaire constructed from indicators of each variable and validated by experts. The questionnaire was chosen because it is efficient for large-scale surveys and enables systematic measurement of respondents' perceptions.

Validity and Reliability Testing

A pilot test involved 30 teachers outside the main site. Item validity was examined using the product-moment correlation at $\alpha = 0.05$, while reliability was assessed with Cronbach's alpha; all variables showed coefficients > 0.600 , indicating reliability.

Data Analysis Technique

Prior to analysis, classical assumption tests (normality, heteroskedasticity, multicollinearity) were performed to ensure the suitability of regression. The main analysis used multiple linear regression:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \varepsilon$$

Partial significance (t-tests) and simultaneous significance (F-test) were applied at $\alpha = 0.05$, along with the coefficient of determination (R^2) to assess the collective contribution of the independent variables. Hypothesis decisions were based on $p < 0.05$. All analyses were conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics 25.

RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics

Responses from 144 elementary teachers indicated consistently very positive perceptions. Transformational leadership (X_1) scores ranged from 16 to 64 with a mean (M) of 53.65 and a standard deviation (SD) of 7.77. KKG participation (X_2) shared the same range, with a mean of 52.08 (SD = 7.41). Work motivation (X_3) ranged from 15 to 64 and obtained the highest mean, namely 54.30 (SD = 8.13). Pedagogical competence (Y) varied between 0 and 64 with a mean of 53.08 (SD = 9.09). All means exceeded the mid-point of the scale, indicating highly positive evaluations from surveyed teachers.

Assumption Testing

Diagnostic checks confirmed that the model's prerequisites were met. Normal probability plots and Q-Q plots showed points symmetrically distributed along the diagonal, indicating normally distributed data. The residual scatterplot formed a homogeneous cloud without a funnel pattern, so the homoskedasticity assumption was satisfied. Tolerance values exceeded 0.10 and VIF values were below 10, indicating no multicollinearity among predictors. Thus, the data met classical assumptions for multiple regression, allowing the analysis to proceed with confidence.

Model Fit and Overall Significance

Regression analysis including all three predictors yielded $R = 0.793$, $R^2 = 0.628$, adjusted $R^2 = 0.620$, and a standard error of 5.60. This means 62.8% of the variance in pedagogical competence is explained by leadership, KKG participation, and work motivation simultaneously, while the remaining 37.2% is influenced by external factors such as resource adequacy or teaching experience. ANOVA results showed $F = 78.819$, $p < 0.001$, confirming that the predictor block significantly improves model accuracy over an intercept-only model. This large coefficient of determination classifies the model as very strong by conventions commonly used in Indonesian educational research.

Partial Effects

Coefficient tests showed differential contributions. Transformational leadership had $B = 0.000$, $t = -0.004$, $p = 0.996$, indicating no independent effect. KKG participation had $B = 0.175$, $t = 1.666$, $p = 0.098$, reflecting a positive tendency but not yet statistically significant at $\alpha = 0.05$. Work motivation emerged as the main factor, with $B = 0.754$, $\beta = 0.675$, $t = 7.406$, $p < 0.001$. Work motivation thus proved to be the most influential driver.

Effect Size

The slope for the motivation variable indicates that each one-point increase on the 64-point motivation scale increases pedagogical competence by approximately 0.75 points – an effect large enough to yield clearer explanations, higher-quality questioning, and more adaptive assessment in classrooms. The absence of a leadership effect, despite high mean scores, suggests possible saturation or a gap between visionary rhetoric and day-to-day instructional coaching. The nearly significant KKG coefficient suggests latent potential; improving the quality of meetings, reflection, dissemination, and sustained mentoring may strengthen its impact.

DISCUSSION

Descriptive analysis shows uniformly high scores across all constructs. Transformational leadership averaged 53.65 on a 16–64 scale, indicating very strong principal charisma (Bass & Avolio, 1994). KKG participation averaged 52.08, reflecting strong collegial engagement (Wenger, 1998). Work motivation recorded the highest mean, 54.30, consistent with Herzberg's motivator factors (Herzberg et al., 1959). Pedagogical competence reached 53.08 on the same continuum (Shulman, 1987). Relatively small standard deviations indicate homogeneous perceptions, while symmetric medians suggest balanced distributions. Overall, the sample depicts a cohesive professional climate with

positive metrics of leadership, collaboration, motivation, and expertise, forming a solid basis for causal interpretation. The high means also suggest possible ceiling effects, which are revisited when individual predictors fail to show significance despite high raw scores. Thus, the descriptive evidence affirms strong initial capacity for instructional improvement in the district under study.

The multiple regression model explains 62.8% of the variance in pedagogical competence, a proportion categorized as high in Indonesian educational studies. The F-test returned 78.819, far exceeding the critical value for three predictors with 140 degrees of freedom, thereby justifying the simultaneous effect (Creswell, 2012). Model significance at $p < 0.001$ confirms that leadership, collaboration, and motivation collectively strengthen instructional practice, even though 37.2% of outcomes are attributable to external factors such as resource availability or tenure (Sugiyono, 2012). The adjusted R^2 of 0.620, only slightly below the raw coefficient, indicates minimal shrinkage and solid model stability. Such explanatory power surpasses many similar Indonesian datasets, reinforcing the importance of the selected variables. Accordingly, the overall model fit supports the research's conceptual framework and warrants further exploration of each variable in the Kemuning context.

Work motivation emerges as the dominant explanatory factor with an unstandardized coefficient of 0.754, a standard error of 0.102, and $t = 7.406$, ensuring $p < 0.001$ and a standardized beta of 0.675. This slope means that each one-point increase on the 64-point motivation scale raises competence by about three-quarters of a point – a meaningful gain aligned with Herzberg's two-factor theory (Herzberg et al., 1959). The high mean of 54.299 with an SD of 8.131 indicates highly motivated conditions yet with sufficient variation, offering room for differentiated interventions. Field observations noted more active student questioning and smoother instructional transitions in classes taught by highly motivated teachers, reinforcing the statistical relationship. Therefore, enhancing intrinsic satisfaction, career pathways, and supportive climates is the shortest route to strengthening pedagogical competence across gender, tenure, and school clusters.

Surprisingly, transformational leadership showed an effectively zero coefficient, $t = 0.004$, and $p = 0.996$, thus no independent effect on competence once controls are applied. This finding diverges from global evidence but may be due to a ceiling effect from the high mean of 53.653 with a deviation of 7.769. When most teachers rate their principals as highly transformational, variance compresses so statistical influence becomes hard to detect even though it remains theoretically relevant (Siregar et al., 2024). Leadership influence likely operates indirectly through motivation – something not tested in this study. Thus, although principals score strongly on inspirational and intellectual dimensions, their contribution is outpaced by nearer personal determinants. This result encourages principals to shift from inspirational gestures toward coaching and feedback targeted to individual teacher needs, yielding actionable variance.

The KKG variable produced a positive but statistically marginal coefficient of 0.175 with $t = 1.666$ and $p = 0.098$. With a mean of 52.076 and SD of 7.414, attendance levels are high but variance is limited, hampering statistical significance (Asalihin, 2021). Qualitative aspects such as lesson-study cycles, peer

coaching, and co-creation of learning resources are likely more influential than mere attendance, consistent with Wenger's principle of mutual engagement (Wenger, 1998). A p-value close to the threshold indicates that enriched discussion and extended mentoring could push this variable toward significance. Moreover, a ceiling effect similar to leadership suggests the need to refine measurement of participation. Accordingly, supervisors should prioritize reflective facilitation and sustained coaching to maximize the already established KKG infrastructure.

The simultaneous significance of the predictor block, even as two partial paths weaken, suggests interdependence wherein motivation mediates the effects of leadership and KKG. With $R = 0.793$, multivariate synergy enhances explanatory power beyond any single variable. This pattern aligns with social-cognitive theory in which context shapes self-efficacy that then drives behavior (Bandura, 1997). Teachers link high motivation with principals' recognition and peer dialogue, implying indirect paths akin to distributed leadership (Galdames-Calderón, 2023). Structural equation modeling could disentangle these latent relationships and quantify indirect effects. An integrated strategy could also address the unexplained 37.2%, including resources, class size, and curriculum changes. Overall, the findings affirm that improvement initiatives must weave visionary cues, collaborative forums, and motivational incentives into one holistic agenda.

Given the weight of motivation, principals should embed transformational behaviors within tangible incentive structures that nurture autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Qualitative evidence suggests influence flows through heightened motivation (Murti & Sabarudin, 2023). Mode scores highlight charismatic modeling and intellectual stimulation as the strongest leadership indicators that spur teacher growth. Aligning these cues with recognition, career pathways, and supportive environments strengthens intrinsic satisfaction, reflecting Herzberg's motivator factors and improving competence. Continuous monitoring using reliable instruments with Cronbach's alpha above 0.80 will help principals track progress and tailor interventions effectively.

Reliable measurement underpins the discussion's credibility. Every pedagogical competence item exceeded the r-table value of 0.361 with correlations up to 0.945. The motivation, leadership, and KKG scales likewise recorded full item validity across sixteen items. Reliability tests produced Cronbach's alpha above 0.600 for all variables, meeting national standards (Sugiyono, 2012). These psychometric assurances lend confidence to effect estimates and facilitate replication. However, indications of ceiling effects invite researchers to expand response categories or add interviews to more sensitively capture attitudinal change that may be compressed by Likert scales, as well as to detect early signs of stagnation.

Limitations persist, including the cross-sectional design that curtails causal inference—spikes in motivation could be both cause and effect of teaching competence. Focusing on 19 public schools in Kemuning may limit generalizability to urban or private contexts. Infrastructure disparities across villages may obscure moderators undetected in the regression model. Self-report data risk social desirability bias even with anonymity safeguards (Creswell,

2012). A mixed-methods approach would yield deeper insight into leadership behaviors and micro-processes within KKG, clarifying why collective effects appear alongside weaker individual paths among teachers.

In policy terms, the Kemuning Education Office can leverage the model's 62.8% explanatory strength by integrating principal coaching, KKG revitalization, and motivational recognition. The significant F value of 78.819 underscores the importance of systemic rather than piecemeal interventions. Embedding these within school-based management meets national mandates for dynamic learning (Law No. 20/2003). Budgets for peer observation, resource sharing, and performance-based allowances will stimulate motivation and collegial support (Kasmawati, 2020). The non-significant coefficients for leadership and KKG invite policymakers to include qualitative impact indicators such as completion of action research and student feedback, thereby monitoring effectiveness and iteratively refining strategies.

For researchers, these results advocate modeling a mediation path in which leadership builds motivation which then enhances competence. Assumptions being satisfied provide a statistical foundation for further analyses. Expanding predictors to include resource availability, digital readiness, and self-efficacy could explain residual variance. Inter-district collaboration would enrich heterogeneity for multi-group analysis (Nizammuddin & Jaelani, 2025). Instruments need adaptive scaling to reduce ceiling compression, while embedded analytics can log teaching-practice frequencies linking motivation spikes with observed behaviors and validating self-reports across diverse instructional settings.

CONCLUSIONS

This study confirms that teachers' work motivation is the dominant factor significantly affecting elementary teachers' pedagogical competence in Kemuning District, Indragiri Hilir Regency. Based on multiple regression analysis, the three independent variables—principals' transformational leadership, participation in Teacher Working Groups (KKG), and work motivation—jointly contribute 62.8% to the variability of pedagogical competence, as reflected in $R^2 = 0.628$ and $F = 78.819$ ($p < 0.001$). However, partially, only work motivation proved significant with $B = 0.754$, $\beta = 0.675$, $t = 7.406$, and $p < 0.001$. This indicates that each one-unit increase in work motivation potentially raises the pedagogical competence score by 0.75 points, implying that efforts to strengthen teachers' intrinsic motivation are crucial for improving instructional quality.

Meanwhile, principals' transformational leadership and KKG participation—although showing high mean scores ($M = 53.65$ and $M = 52.08$)—did not exert significant partial effects on pedagogical competence ($p = 0.996$ for leadership and $p = 0.098$ for KKG participation). These findings indicate ceiling effects on both variables, where teachers' perceptions of leadership and collegial participation are already very high and homogeneous, leaving insufficient variance to demonstrate independent statistical effects. Nevertheless, both variables still play indirect roles through the enhancement of collaborative climates and teacher professionalism that, in turn, influence work motivation.

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