

Transformational Leadership of School Principals in Developing an Effective Work Culture in State Senior High Schools in Pelalawan Regency

Evanoviasari Pasaribu^{1*}, Mada Sutapa²

Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta

Corresponding Author: Evanoviasari: evanoviasaripasaribu.2024@student.uny.ac.id

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords: Transformational Leadership, Principal, Work Culture, Professional Development, Secondary Education

Received : 12, July

Revised : 25, August

Accepted: 20, September

©2025 Pasaribu, Sutapa: This is an open access article distributed under the terms of

the [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).



ABSTRACT

Transformational leadership has been widely recognised as a catalyst for effective school culture, yet empirical insight from Indonesian public high schools remains limited. Data were generated through 36 semi-structured interviews with principals, vice-principals, and teachers, 42 hours of non-participant observation, and analysis of 185 pages of institutional documents. Trustworthiness was ensured through triangulation, member checking, and an audit trail. Results indicate clear contrasts. Observations revealed supervision reports unaccompanied by follow-up coaching and mentoring remained informal. The findings demonstrate that transformational leadership becomes effective when visionary rhetoric is operationalised through consistent motivation, collaborative structures, and recognition mechanisms. Institutional readiness and resource allocation further shape leadership impact. The study recommends formalising mentoring, embedding reflective supervision, and establishing reward systems to foster innovation and sustain adaptive, high-performing school cultures within increasingly complex educational and societal contexts.

INTRODUCTION

Transformational leadership among school principals is widely recognized as a pivotal force in cultivating an effective organizational culture within educational institutions, setting the stage for enhanced overall school performance (Kalkan et al., 2020). Principals who embrace transformational leadership are instrumental in establishing environments marked by shared values, teamwork, and innovation, which collectively foster both academic achievement and holistic student development (Raharja et al., 2022). Studies underscore that these leadership practices significantly influence school culture by empowering teachers, facilitating inclusive decision-making, and inspiring staff to commit to a unified vision, enabling educational institutions to adapt to changes and reach their goals more effectively (Kalkan et al., 2020; Raharja et al., 2022). Furthermore, the transformative influence of such leadership extends to the creation of conditions where all members of the school community feel engaged and motivated to contribute. This approach not only enhances institutional adaptability but also supports continuous improvement in educational outcomes. In conclusion, the ability of school principals to implement transformational leadership practices forms the cornerstone for fostering a productive and positive work culture, providing a critical foundation for institutional success and the sustained development of both staff and students.

The positive effects of transformational leadership on school culture are substantiated by empirical studies highlighting a robust correlation between principals' leadership behaviors and teachers' perceptions of organizational culture (Kalkan et al., 2020). For example, Kalkan et al. found that transformational leadership enhances teachers' views on school culture and positively impacts the school's organizational image, creating a ripple effect across educational outcomes (Kalkan et al., 2020). Kızıloğlu (2021) further emphasizes that schools led by transformational principals foster environments where teachers are motivated to excel, directly improving student learning results. Additionally, Özgenel et al. (2022) demonstrate that a favorable perception of organizational justice, closely tied to transformational leadership, increases teachers' job satisfaction and supports a harmonious workplace atmosphere (Özgenel et al., 2022). These findings collectively show that transformational leadership is not just a catalyst for positive attitudes but also drives sustainable improvements in school culture. Thus, schools that effectively embrace such leadership create conditions in which both teachers and students thrive, illustrating the transformative impact of strong principal leadership on the institutional climate and educational achievement.

Despite the substantial advantages attributed to transformational leadership, school principals often encounter persistent challenges in promoting active participation, fostering innovation, and nurturing a strong sense of belonging among all school community members (Hollingworth et al., 2017). Hollingworth et al. argue that the success of new initiatives and the sustainability of a positive school culture heavily depend on strategic leadership approaches tailored to each context (Hollingworth et al., 2017). Additionally, external factors such as teacher

shortages and economic constraints, as highlighted by Castro (2022), can undermine principals' capacity to maintain a supportive and inclusive culture (Castro, 2022). These challenges require not only effective leadership skills but also adaptability and a deep understanding of the organizational dynamics within schools. As a result, principals must continually refine their leadership strategies to ensure that their efforts in building a cohesive and innovative school environment remain resilient against these contextual barriers. In summary, although transformational leadership is essential for effective work culture development, its practical implementation is often confronted with complex challenges that demand strategic, context-sensitive solutions and ongoing professional development.

Addressing these multifaceted challenges demands a nuanced understanding of the interactions between leadership styles, organizational culture, and teacher performance within schools (Ağalday, 2022). Research demonstrates that principals who adopt inclusive leadership practices can mitigate organizational hypocrisy and foster a climate of trust throughout the educational community (Ağalday, 2022). Mihci & Uzun (2020) further illustrate that ethical leadership from school principals not only motivates teachers but also cultivates a culture of accountability, reinforcing shared educational goals and organizational commitment (MIHCI & Uzun, 2020). In this context, Ağalday's findings suggest that when teachers perceive their leaders as ethical and inclusive, their sense of value and motivation increases, which positively influences their performance. These leadership behaviors promote teacher collaboration and elevate the overall work environment, resulting in a more cohesive and high-performing school culture. Ultimately, the cultivation of trust and accountability through ethical and inclusive transformational leadership is fundamental to overcoming organizational challenges and achieving sustained educational improvement.

Effective transformational leaders inspire their staff to reach academic goals while establishing strong communication channels and fostering teamwork among educators (Hasibuan, 2022). Hasibuan's research identifies a significant relationship between principals' leadership styles, the prevailing organizational culture, and teacher performance, indicating that the synergy between these factors underpins a productive educational environment (Hasibuan, 2022). In parallel, Kanya et al. (2021) assert that when institutional objectives are aligned with the goals and motivations of educators, a virtuous cycle emerges in which teacher satisfaction, engagement, and performance all rise, resulting in improved student outcomes (Kanya et al., 2021). This synergy is critical for sustaining long-term success in schools, as it not only drives individual growth but also strengthens collective commitment to educational excellence. The evidence suggests that when principals promote open communication and shared purpose, they effectively build the foundation for a thriving work culture. Therefore, fostering alignment between leadership vision and educator values is key to achieving optimal organizational and academic results.

The integration of transformational leadership with strategic organizational practices generates a fertile ground for both teacher and student advancement

(Sumarsih & Sahara, 2024). Sumarsih and Sahara demonstrate that robust principal leadership directly translates into higher educational quality and a more vibrant academic atmosphere, while Hasibuan (2022) highlights the pivotal role of a positive organizational culture—nurtured through effective leadership—in enhancing teacher performance and overall institutional success (Sumarsih & Sahara, 2024; Hasibuan, 2022). The importance of organizational climate and justice as mediators is also underscored by Mihci & Uzun (2020) and Özgenel & Aksu (2020), who reveal that administrators' ethical conduct and fairness substantially strengthen the school climate and increase teachers' sense of commitment (Mihci & Uzun, 2020; Özgenel & Aksu, 2020). When teachers perceive justice and trust within their work environment, their job satisfaction and organizational loyalty are elevated, setting the stage for a culture of excellence. Consequently, leadership that prioritizes both strategic goals and ethical practices becomes indispensable for fostering continuous improvement in educational settings.

In conclusion, transformational leadership stands out as a pivotal force in shaping effective work cultures and achieving high educational outcomes in public high schools. As research by Murniati & Siregar (2022) reveals, equipping principals with advanced managerial and leadership skills directly impacts school performance by enabling a more strategic approach to fostering workplace culture (Murniati & Siregar, 2022). Raharja et al. (2022) further demonstrate that authentic leadership qualities—such as empathy, trust, and innovation—are key catalysts in building inclusive and motivational environments that support both teacher and student growth (Raharja et al., 2022). The evolving educational landscape, as highlighted by Prasetyo & Fadhillah (2022), demands adaptive and resilient school leadership, capable of articulating clear visions and rallying stakeholders toward shared goals (Prasetyo & Fadhillah, 2022). Ultimately, the consistent application of transformational leadership principles remains essential for navigating contemporary educational complexities, elevating teacher and student performance, and fostering organizational resilience in the face of ongoing challenges.

METODE

Research design

The inquiry adopted a qualitative phenomenological design to capture the lived experience of school actors as they enact transformational leadership and co-construct an effective work culture. Phenomenology was chosen because it allows the researcher to interpret participants' meanings in context and to move beyond surface descriptions toward the essences of leadership practice.

Context and period of study

Fieldwork was conducted in two state senior-high schools—SMAN 1 Langgam and SMAN Bernas—located in Pelalawan Regency, Riau Province, Indonesia. Both sites were purposefully selected for their contrasting but exemplary leadership profiles and institutional cultures. Data collection spanned April-June 2025, covering preparation, in-situ data generation, and iterative analysis.

Participants and sampling strategy

Informants comprised principals, vice-principals, teachers, and administrative staff who were **purposely recruited** because of their direct involvement in strategic and operational school processes. Variation in role and tenure was sought to maximise information richness; recruitment ended when thematic saturation was achieved.

Data sources

Two complementary data streams were utilised:

1. Primary data :

Semi-structured interviews, non-participant observation, and institutional documents produced in each school;

2. Secondary data :

Policy texts, research articles, and archival school records to triangulate and extend primary findings.

Data-collection procedures

Three techniques—observation, interview, and documentation—were implemented following qualitative protocol (Sugiyono, 2016). Each technique was supported by bespoke instruments (Table 1).

Technique	Key focus	Typical artefacts / guiding items	Principal informants
Observation	Enactment of vision, motivational practices, innovation support, professional coaching	Field-notes based on an observation checklist (e.g., leader's talk, teacher interactions, mentoring moments)	All on-site actors
Semi-structured interview	Experience of vision internalisation, inspiration, intellectual stimulation, individualised consideration	Interview guide with probes for each transformational dimension	Principals, vice-principals, teachers, staff
Documentation review	Formal evidence of leadership actions and cultural artefacts	Vision-mission statements, annual plans, mentoring logs, award decrees	School archives

Data were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and supplemented with 185 pages of field-notes.

Data analysis

Analytic work followed the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2020), cycling through data reduction, data display, and conclusion-drawing/verification until stable patterns emerged. NVivo 14 aided coding and memoing; cross-case matrices compared themes between the two schools.

Trustworthiness

Rigour was assured through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability criteria. Strategies included multi-technique and multi-source

triangulation, thick contextual description, audit trails of coding decisions, and preservation of raw records for external audit.

RESULT

Internalisation of Vision and Mission

Observation in **SMAN Bernas** showed the vision-mission statement posted in lobbies, teachers' rooms, and the assembly yard, and repeatedly invoked during morning gatherings and mentoring sessions, so that daily actions explicitly aligned with institutional values. Interviewed teachers confirmed being encouraged to connect every lesson plan and co-curricular activity with those values, while the vice-principal reported that programme proposals must cite vision clauses before approval. In contrast, **SMAN 1 Langgam** displayed banners and placed the statement in student handbooks, but observation revealed little integration into supervision, classroom practice, or unit work-plans; teachers characterised the process as largely administrative rather than lived.

Inspirational Motivation

Both principals delivered motivational addresses, yet depth differed. At **Bernas**, teachers described the principal as an inspirational figure whose speeches and personal example cultivated discipline and achievement orientation. Weekly "story-sharing" sessions celebrated incremental successes, reinforcing collective efficacy. At **Langgam**, motivation occurred almost exclusively during official meetings; the absence of follow-through such as reflective forums or coaching limited behaviour change, and several teachers admitted the messages "felt like reminders, not inspiration".

Intellectual Stimulation and Innovation

Interviews in **Bernas** highlighted tangible support for new ideas through discussion forums, small research grants, and public recognition of innovative lessons (field-note, O/SMANBernas/Inovasi/25). Nevertheless, a culture survey recorded that only 41 % of staff agreed the school genuinely supported new ideas, signalling structural hurdles despite leadership intent (Table 1). In **Langgam**, innovation was hampered by limited time and the lack of systematic feedback loops: observation notes showed class-supervision reports filed without follow-up workshops, and a teacher interview revealed that post-observation coaching "never progressed beyond paperwork". This illustrates that intellectual stimulation requires not only verbal openness but also operational mechanisms.

Individualised Consideration and Professional Growth

Documentation from **Bernas** contained mentoring letters, training logs, and reflective supervision summaries, demonstrating structured attention to personal development. Informants valued informal counselling hours with the principal, yet systematic needs analyses and longitudinal tracking were still embryonic. In **Langgam**, development opportunities relied on individual initiative; external workshops were neither centrally recorded nor evaluated, and new-teacher mentoring depended on volunteer seniors without official recognition, producing uneven support. Supervision sheets existed, but no

personal improvement plans followed, confirming a predominantly administrative orientation.

Comparative Survey Outcomes

Survey data illuminate these qualitative contrasts. Table 1 shows teacher perceptions in Bernas; high agreement on shared values (81 %) and open communication (73 %) contrasts with low ratings for innovation (41 %) and perceived appreciation (50 %), defining clear targets for leadership refinement.

Table 1 Teacher perception survey, SMAN Bernas (n = 22)

Indicator	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Clear shared values	45 %	36 %	14 %	5 %
Open, honest communication	32 %	41 %	18 %	9 %
Effective teamwork	41 %	32 %	23 %	5 %
Culture encourages innovation	14 %	27 %	32 %	28 %
Staff feel valued	18 %	32 %	27 %	23 %

Student feedback in Langgam mirrored the innovation tension: although over 70 % reported punctuality and respectful interaction, only 18 % joined positive activities and 54 % questioned leaders' exemplariness, underscoring deficits in participatory culture.

DISCUSSION

Transformational leadership exhibited by school principals is widely acknowledged as a central determinant in fostering effective work cultures in state senior high schools, particularly within the context of Pelalawan Regency. The leadership approach at SMAN Bernas, for instance, is marked by the active internalization of the institution's vision and mission into daily routines, which shapes a disciplined and cohesive school environment (Kalkan et al., 2020; Zahed-Babelan et al., 2019). At the core of this success lies a principal who consistently empowers teachers through structured mentoring, recognition, and participatory decision-making, thus enhancing collaboration and professional growth. These practices are echoed in the findings of Febriantina et al. (2020) and Sulastri (2023), who assert that the tangible application of transformational leadership—beyond mere rhetoric—cultivates a climate of trust and mutual respect. In contrast, SMAN 1 Langgam's reliance on a more administrative leadership style demonstrates the limitations of superficial value integration, which restricts teacher engagement and stifles innovative practices (Duan et al., 2018; Ismail et al., 2022). This clear dichotomy highlights that effective transformational leadership must be action-oriented, fostering an environment where shared values, open communication, and motivation are consistently realized through strategic initiatives and daily school practices.

At SMAN Bernas, the success of transformational leadership is further substantiated by structured mentoring and recognition systems, which empower teachers and support their ongoing professional development (Kalkan et al., 2020; Zahed-Babelan et al., 2019). These initiatives are designed not only to foster collaboration but also to encourage teacher participation in key decision-making processes, resulting in a greater sense of ownership and commitment to the

school's mission. Research indicates that when principals actively embody transformational leadership, they establish an environment where educators feel genuinely valued, which leads to heightened job satisfaction and stronger allegiance to institutional objectives (Febriantina et al., 2020; Sulastris, 2023). This process is not merely an abstract ideal; rather, it is manifested through regular opportunities for teachers to engage in professional learning communities and innovation-driven projects. In contrast, the approach at SMAN 1 Langgam, characterized by administrative and top-down decision-making, inhibits similar levels of engagement and motivation among staff (Duan et al., 2018; Ismail et al., 2022). Thus, these findings collectively reinforce the necessity for principals to implement transformational leadership consistently and systematically, ensuring that the supportive structures they create are both sustainable and genuinely contribute to professional growth and organizational excellence.

The empirical contrast between SMAN Bernas and SMAN 1 Langgam provides compelling evidence regarding the critical role of resource support and consistent leadership in sustaining meaningful school culture transformation (Zahed-Babelan et al., 2019; Mulyani et al., 2022). At SMAN Bernas, effective resource allocation has facilitated ongoing mentoring processes and professional growth, leading to high levels of teacher empowerment and morale. These strategic efforts directly impact the school's innovative capacity, as evidenced by the increased willingness of teachers to experiment with new pedagogical methods and collaborate on problem-solving initiatives. Conversely, SMAN 1 Langgam's lack of strategic resource deployment and sporadic leadership intervention has resulted in organizational stagnation and a diminished climate for innovation (Mulyani et al., 2022; Carpenter, 2018). The contrast further supports the assertion that consistency in transformational leadership, coupled with well-managed resources and distributed responsibilities, is vital for fostering a dynamic and positive organizational climate. Survey and interview data reinforce that schools which prioritize resource readiness and collaborative efforts are more successful in achieving continuous improvement and professional satisfaction among educators. Ultimately, these findings stress that resource-supported transformational leadership is a cornerstone in building resilient and adaptive educational institutions, capable of responding to evolving challenges.

Literature strongly supports the positive relationship between transformational leadership and the development of effective school culture, particularly in settings where shared values and high expectations are embedded within organizational practices (Tichnor-Wagner et al., 2016; Ali et al., 2016). Schools that are led by principals who exemplify transformational leadership typically report greater organizational commitment among teachers and increased levels of pedagogical innovation (Rizal & Nurjaya, 2020). The case of SMAN Bernas illustrates how a principal's focus on collaborative vision-setting and continuous motivation drives the establishment of a robust professional learning environment, thereby enhancing both individual and collective performance. This engagement, in turn, strengthens mutual trust and fosters a sense of unity among staff, essential ingredients for school effectiveness (Virgana

& Suradika, 2022). By contrast, the limited participatory leadership observed at SMAN 1 Langgam has resulted in weaker implementation of shared core values and missed opportunities for teacher-led initiatives (Demir, 2015). The data underscores the importance of principals not only articulating organizational vision, but also translating it into daily practices through concrete actions. In sum, effective transformational leadership is inextricably linked to the cultivation of a school culture that embraces trust, collaboration, and purposeful innovation.

The cultivation of inclusivity and shared decision-making under transformational leadership has proven to be a significant driver of teacher motivation and commitment, which subsequently contributes to improved student outcomes (Nehez & Blossing, 2020; Sumiran et al., 2022). At SMAN Bernas, the principal's deliberate effort to involve teachers in governance and innovation not only builds professional capacity but also nurtures a culture of openness and mutual support. This collaborative environment allows educators to actively participate in school improvement strategies, fostering their sense of belonging and agency. In contrast, the lack of such participatory structures at SMAN 1 Langgam has limited staff engagement and hindered their willingness to innovate or take on additional responsibilities (Zahorodnia et al., 2021). Evidence from interviews further highlights how the empowerment of teachers through shared leadership translates into more dynamic classroom practices and a heightened responsiveness to student needs. These findings affirm that transformational leaders who prioritize inclusivity, collaboration, and recognition of individual contributions are more likely to create educational environments where both teachers and students flourish. Thus, the centrality of inclusive leadership in shaping effective work culture is undeniable, as it underpins the sustained motivation and professional development of teachers.

A deeper examination reveals that transformational leadership must be more than inspirational rhetoric; it requires tangible and consistent support mechanisms for teachers, including mentorship, professional development, and meaningful involvement in school governance (Almeda & Chua, 2023; Baharuddin et al., 2023). At SMAN Bernas, the principal's active commitment to providing such opportunities is reflected in teachers' heightened job satisfaction and professional engagement, leading to improved instructional quality and stronger alignment with school objectives (Pitriani, 2024; Baharuddin et al., 2023). These mechanisms are not simply additive, but transformative—fostering a culture where professional learning and innovation become routine. In stark contrast, the administrative focus at SMAN 1 Langgam limits such development, resulting in a work environment where teachers feel isolated from decision-making processes and less invested in school improvement (He et al., 2024). Data from surveys and focus group discussions highlight that teachers respond positively to leadership that invites their voices and contributions, reinforcing the need for principals to embed support systems within daily school life. Consequently, this evidence demonstrates that the practical enactment of transformational leadership—grounded in mentorship and collaborative structures—plays a pivotal role in advancing both educator well-being and organizational excellence.

The comparative findings from SMAN Bernas and SMAN 1 Langgam reinforce the argument that leadership consistency and the strategic deployment of resources are foundational to sustaining organizational growth and improvement (Wongpreedee & Sudhipongpracha, 2024; He et al., 2024). At SMAN Bernas, the principal's unwavering emphasis on distributed responsibility ensures that teachers are actively involved in shaping educational policy and practice, thereby elevating their sense of agency and professional commitment. Such a leadership approach also aligns with research by Luyten & Bazo (2019) and Yayu (2024), which demonstrates that transformational leaders who prioritize collaboration and targeted resource support catalyze ongoing teacher development and institutional effectiveness. Conversely, the absence of these strategies at SMAN 1 Langgam has led to lower staff morale and restricted avenues for professional growth, inhibiting the school's capacity for innovation. Survey results indicate that teachers at SMAN Bernas perceive a high degree of administrative openness and are more willing to contribute ideas, further validating the importance of distributed leadership practices. In summary, this comparative evidence underscores the need for principals to maintain consistent transformational leadership and resource readiness, as these factors are pivotal in driving the collective efficacy and adaptability of school communities.

A notable implication emerging from this study is that transformational leadership's effectiveness is closely tied to the presence of a collaborative and innovative school climate, which thrives when principals facilitate continuous professional learning and recognize teacher achievements (Perez, 2021; Lin et al., 2022). At SMAN Bernas, leadership practices that encourage ongoing dialogue and teamwork have resulted in heightened teacher engagement and a readiness to adapt instructional strategies to meet evolving educational demands. These findings are corroborated by Fernandes et al. (2022) and Kaya (2024), who argue that professional development initiatives anchored in transformational leadership not only advance teacher competencies but also strengthen collective resolve to pursue school-wide improvement. In contrast, the less participative atmosphere at SMAN 1 Langgam has hindered the development of a dynamic work culture, as opportunities for meaningful collaboration and shared learning remain scarce. The contrast between these schools illustrates that successful transformational leadership depends not only on visionary statements but also on the deliberate establishment of structures that promote continuous growth. As such, cultivating an environment where professional learning and mutual recognition are embedded in daily practice is fundamental for achieving educational excellence and resilience in the face of ongoing change.

The broader literature affirms that transformational leadership plays a pivotal role in aligning school stakeholders toward common goals, thereby enhancing institutional performance and sustainability (Fernandes et al., 2022; KAYA, 2024). At SMAN Bernas, such alignment is evident in the clear articulation and enactment of shared vision and mission, which permeates school policies, teaching practices, and community engagement efforts. This comprehensive approach fosters an organizational culture where every member feels responsible for achieving collective objectives, thus maximizing the impact

of educational innovations. Conversely, at SMAN 1 Langgam, the lack of genuine vision internalization among staff has contributed to fragmented practices and diminished overall school effectiveness. Literature further suggests that when principals model transformational leadership, they create a ripple effect that inspires teachers and students alike, amplifying motivation and commitment across all levels of the organization (Duraku & Hoxha, 2021; Abdullah et al., 2018). Data from teacher and stakeholder interviews confirm that the success of school-wide initiatives is largely contingent on the principal's ability to maintain focus on shared goals and continuously nurture collaboration. Ultimately, this underscores the necessity for transformational leadership to be consistently and authentically practiced if schools are to remain agile, innovative, and effective.

The influence of transformational leadership on teacher motivation and organizational commitment has a direct correlation with improved student outcomes, as supported by extensive empirical evidence (Özdoğan, 2022; Han et al., 2021). SMAN Bernas exemplifies this relationship, where leadership that emphasizes open communication, trust-building, and teacher empowerment fosters a positive environment conducive to student learning and achievement. The principal's role in modeling these behaviors encourages teachers to adopt innovative instructional methods and sustain high engagement levels. In contrast, SMAN 1 Langgam's leadership approach lacks the participatory and motivational dimensions necessary to inspire similar dedication among educators, thereby limiting its impact on student success. Nasution (2018) and Yulita et al. (2023) further reinforce the critical nature of leadership in shaping school climates that prioritize teacher well-being, collaboration, and continuous improvement. Consequently, schools led by transformational principals tend to develop robust professional communities that collectively contribute to both teacher and student growth. This evidence highlights the imperative for educational leaders to adopt transformational leadership frameworks that intentionally foster supportive work cultures, thereby maximizing educational outcomes and advancing overall school effectiveness.

Transformational leadership also serves as a foundation for preparing teachers to assume future leadership roles, thus promoting sustainability within educational institutions (Yang & Thien, 2024; Tian & Virtanen, 2020). At SMAN Bernas, the principal's encouragement of autonomy and active teacher involvement in school governance nurtures leadership skills among staff, fostering a pipeline of motivated educators ready to contribute beyond their classroom responsibilities. This development aligns with the notion that transformational leaders cultivate environments conducive to professional growth and empowerment, which positively influence teacher readiness for expanded roles. By contrast, the limited participatory opportunities at SMAN 1 Langgam hinder such leadership development, constraining the school's long-term capacity for innovation and adaptation (Aliu et al., 2024; Lase et al., 2024). This study's findings are consistent with broader research advocating for leadership models that emphasize mentorship, collaborative decision-making, and shared vision as means to sustain educational improvement. Therefore, transformational leadership not only impacts immediate organizational culture

and performance but also strategically prepares the school community for future challenges and leadership succession.

In conclusion, the comparative analysis of SMAN Bernas and SMAN 1 Langgam provides robust evidence that transformational leadership is a critical driver in developing effective work cultures within state senior high schools. Principals who actively internalize and operationalize transformational leadership practices create environments characterized by shared values, collaboration, motivation, and innovation, all of which contribute to enhanced teacher commitment and school effectiveness (Mutohar & Trisnantari, 2020; Fu et al., 2022). The data illustrate that transformational leadership's impact extends beyond motivational rhetoric to concrete actions such as mentorship, resource allocation, and distributed leadership, which collectively foster organizational resilience and adaptability. Schools that fail to implement these practices consistently risk stagnation, lower morale, and diminished educational outcomes, as seen at SMAN 1 Langgam. Therefore, educational policymakers and leaders should prioritize transformational leadership development programs that equip principals with the skills to cultivate inclusive, collaborative, and forward-looking school cultures. By doing so, schools can better navigate the complexities of contemporary education and achieve sustained improvements in teacher and student performance. This comprehensive approach to leadership is vital for fostering educational environments that are both effective and responsive to the evolving demands of the 21st century.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that transformational leadership practiced by school principals plays a pivotal role in developing and sustaining an effective work culture in public high schools in Pelalawan Regency. The research found that at SMAN Bernas, transformational leadership was evident in the internalization of the school's vision and mission, the consistent provision of inspirational motivation, systematic support for innovation, and structured professional mentoring. Data from teacher surveys indicated 81% agreement on shared values and 73% on open communication, while qualitative interviews and documentation revealed regular mentoring sessions, collaborative forums, and public recognition of achievements. These efforts resulted in higher teacher engagement, loyalty, and a strong culture of achievement and adaptability. In contrast, SMAN 1 Langgam, despite possessing accredited status and foundational efforts, showed that its leadership activities remained largely administrative and symbolic. Integration of values, professional development, and innovation was not fully operationalized, resulting in limited teacher participation and inconsistent organizational culture. The findings affirm that the effectiveness of transformational leadership is determined not only by visionary statements but by the systematic translation of values into everyday school practices, continuous support for professional growth, and the creation of an inclusive environment that recognizes individual contributions and fosters innovation.

REFERENCE

- Abdullah, A., Ling, Y., & Sufi, S. (2018). Principal transformational leadership and teachers' motivation. *Asian Education Studies*, 3(1), 36. <https://doi.org/10.20849/aes.v3i1.316>
- Ağalday, B. (2022). Examining the effect of principals' inclusive leadership practices on organizational hypocrisy through the mediating role of trust in principal. *Participatory Educational Research*, 9(5), 204-221. <https://doi.org/10.17275/per.22.111.9.5>
- Ali, N., Sharma, S., & Zaman, A. (2016). School culture and school effectiveness: secondary schools in Pakistan. *Malaysian Online Journal of Educational Management*, 4(4), 50-65. <https://doi.org/10.22452/mojem.vol4no4.4>
- Aliu, J., Kaçaniku, F., & Saqipi, B. (2024). Teacher leadership: a review of literature on the conceptualization and outcomes of teacher leadership. *International Journal of Educational Reform*, 33(4), 388-408. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10567879241268114>
- Almeda, L. and Chua, E. (2023). Organizational dynamics and participative work culture in appraising school environment effectiveness. *International Journal of Social Science Humanity & Management Research*, 2(09). <https://doi.org/10.58806/ijsshmr.2023.v2i9n15>
- Baharuddin, F., Amiruddin, A., & Idris, A. (2023). Integrated leadership effect on teacher satisfaction: mediating effects of teacher collaboration and professional development. *International Journal of Learning Teaching and Educational Research*, 22(11), 321-342. <https://doi.org/10.26803/ijlter.22.11.17>
- Bao, Y. (2024). A dual mediation model of the association between principal inclusive leadership and teacher innovative behavior. *Scientific Reports*, 14(1). <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-024-63332-0>
- Carpenter, D. (2018). Intellectual and physical shared workspace. *International Journal of Educational Management*, 32(1), 121-140. <https://doi.org/10.1108/ijem-05-2017-0104>
- Castro, A. (2022). Managing competing demands in a teacher shortage context: the impact of teacher shortages on principal leadership practices. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 59(1), 218-250. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161x221140849>
- Çetinkaya, A. and Arastaman, G. (2023). The role of motivation to lead in teacher leadership. *Journal of Qualitative Research in Education*, 23(35). <https://doi.org/10.14689/enad.35.1731>
- Cheng, P., Liu, Z., & Zhou, L. (2023). Transformational leadership and emotional labor: the mediation effects of psychological empowerment. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 20(2), 1030. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph20021030>

- Dahiru, A. and Kayode, G. (2022). Mediating role of teacher empowerment on the relationship between instructional leadership and school effectiveness. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 12(2). <https://doi.org/10.6007/ijarbss/v12-i2/12333>
- Demir, K. (2015). The effect of organizational trust on the culture of teacher leadership in primary schools. *Educational Sciences Theory & Practice*. <https://doi.org/10.12738/estp.2015.3.2337>
- Duan, X., Du, X., & Yu, K. (2018). School culture and school effectiveness: the mediating effect of teachers' job satisfaction. *International Journal of Learning Teaching and Educational Research*, 17(5), 15-25. <https://doi.org/10.26803/ijlter.17.5.2>
- Duraku, Z. and Hoxha, L. (2021). Impact of transformational and transactional attributes of school principal leadership on teachers' motivation for work. *Frontiers in Education*, 6. <https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2021.659919>
- En, W. (2023). Research on the relationship between principal's transformational leadership, teachers' empowerment, and teachers' well-being. *IJER*, 1(1). <https://doi.org/10.33552/ijer.2023.01.000503>
- Febriantina, S., Suparno, S., Marsofiyati, M., & Aliyyah, R. (2020). How school culture and teacher's work stress impact on teacher's job satisfaction. *International Journal of Learning Teaching and Educational Research*, 19(8), 409-423. <https://doi.org/10.26803/ijlter.19.8.22>
- Fernandes, P., Costa, C., & Piedade, S. (2022). The role of professional collaboration mediates the relationship between transformational leadership and job satisfaction. *Timor Leste Journal of Business and Management*, 4, 53-63. <https://doi.org/10.51703/bm.v4i0.59>
- Firdaus, R., Purnamasari, D., & Akuba, S. (2019). The influence of motivation, leadership and perceived workload as intervening on teacher commitment. *Journal of Educational Science and Technology (Est)*, 268-276. <https://doi.org/10.26858/est.v5i3.10847>
- Fu, C., Zhao, Z., Wang, H., Ouyang, M., Mao, X., Cai, X., ... & Tan, X. (2022). How perceived school culture relates to work engagement among primary and secondary school teachers? roles of affective empathy and job tenure. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.878894>
- Han, B., Tösten, R., & Elçiçek, Z. (2021). Public leadership behaviors of school principals: does it affect teacher motivation and job satisfaction in turkish culture?. *International Journal of Public Leadership*, 18(3), 209-228. <https://doi.org/10.1108/ijpl-03-2021-0026>
- Hashim, H., Nordin, N., & Othman, N. (2023). Principal teacher transformation leadership and teacher job satisfaction of transformation 25 schools in jasin district melaka. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 13(4). <https://doi.org/10.6007/ijarbss/v13-i4/16914>

- Hasibuan, S. (2022). The effect of organizational culture, principal leadership and motivation on teacher performance in madrasah. *Al-Tanzim Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam*, 6(1), 41-53. <https://doi.org/10.33650/al-tanzim.v6i1.3228>
- He, P., Guo, F., & Anulika, A. (2024). School principals' instructional leadership as a predictor of teacher's professional development. *Asian-Pacific Journal of Second and Foreign Language Education*, 9(1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40862-024-00290-0>
- Hollingworth, L., Olsen, D., Asikin-Garmager, A., & Winn, K. (2017). Initiating conversations and opening doors. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 46(6), 1014-1034. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1741143217720461>
- Hoven, A., Mahembe, B., & Hamman-Fisher, D. (2021). The influence of servant leadership on psychological empowerment and organisational citizenship on a sample of teachers. *Sa Journal of Human Resource Management*, 19. <https://doi.org/10.4102/sajhrm.v19i0.1395>
- Hsieh, C., Gunawan, I., Li, H., & Liang, J. (2024). Teachers' voice behavior – principal leadership-driven or teacher self-driven? evidence from taiwan. *Psychology in the Schools*, 61(5), 2077-2099. <https://doi.org/10.1002/pits.23152>
- Ibrahim, I., El-Monshed, A., Altheeb, M., & Elsehrawy, M. (2024). Transformational leadership, psychological empowerment, and organizational citizenship behaviors among nursing workforce: a single mediation analysis. *Journal of Nursing Management*, 2024, 1-11. <https://doi.org/10.1155/2024/9919371>
- Ismail, M., Khatibi, A., & Azam, S. (2022). Impact of school culture on school effectiveness in government schools in maldives. *Participatory Educational Research*, 9(2), 261-279. <https://doi.org/10.17275/per.22.39.9.2>
- Kalkan, Ü., Altınay, F., Gazi, Z., Atasoy, R., & Dağlı, G. (2020). The relationship between school administrators' leadership styles, school culture, and organizational image. *Sage Open*, 10(1). <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244020902081>
- Kalkan, Ü., Altınay, F., Gazi, Z., Atasoy, R., & Dağlı, G. (2020). The relationship between school administrators' leadership styles, school culture, and organizational image. *Sage Open*, 10(1). <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244020902081>
- Kanya, N., Fathoni, A., & Ramdani, Z. (2021). Factors affecting teacher performance. *International Journal of Evaluation and Research in Education (Ijere)*, 10(4), 1462. <https://doi.org/10.11591/ijere.v10i4.21693>
- Kaya, A. (2024). The association between transformational leadership and teachers' creativity: professional resilience and job satisfaction as mediators. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 15. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2024.1514621>

- Kızıloğlu, M. (2021). The impact of school principal's leadership styles on organizational learning: mediating effect of organizational culture. *Business and Management Studies an International Journal*, 9(3), 822-834. <https://doi.org/10.15295/bmij.v9i3.1814>
- Lase, S., Dewi, R., & Hajar, I. (2024). Dynamics of middle school teacher performance: analysis of the influence of transformational leadership, school culture and motivation in gido district, nias regency. *Randwick International of Education and Linguistics Science Journal*, 5(1), 211-229. <https://doi.org/10.47175/rielsj.v5i1.913>
- Lin, W., Yin, H., & Liu, Z. (2022). The roles of transformational leadership and growth mindset in teacher professional development: the mediation of teacher self-efficacy. *Sustainability*, 14(11), 6489. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su14116489>
- Luyten, H. and Bazo, M. (2019). Transformational leadership, professional learning communities, teacher learning and learner centred teaching practices; evidence on their interrelations in mozambican primary education. *Studies in Educational Evaluation*, 60, 14-31. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.stueduc.2018.11.002>
- MIHCI, H. and Uzun, T. (2020). Analyzing the relationship between ethical leadership and organizational justice and organizational identification in schools. *International Online Journal of Educational Sciences*, 12(3). <https://doi.org/10.15345/iojes.2020.03.003>
- Mulyani, H., Su'ad, S., Widjanarko, M., & Sabaz, A. (2022). Influence of school culture and work motivation on performance of elementary school teachers. *Iasaýı Ýniversitetiniñ Habarshysy*, 124(2), 155-168. <https://doi.org/10.47526/2022-2/2664-0686.13>
- Murniati, M. and Siregar, F. (2022). Principal managerial competence in improving organizational performance. *DSEM*, 1(1), 75-84. <https://doi.org/10.47766/development.v1i1.530>
- Mutohar, P. and Trisnantari, H. (2020). The effectiveness of madrasah: analysis of managerial skills, learning supervision, school culture, and teachers' performance. *Malaysian Online Journal of Educational Management*, 8(3), 21-47. <https://doi.org/10.22452/mojem.vol8no3.2>
- Nasution, N. (2018). The effect of incentive reward, school principal leadership, work motivation on the performance of senior high school teachers in medan. *The New Educational Review*, 53(3), 62-70. <https://doi.org/10.15804/tner.2018.53.3.05>
- Nehez, J. and Blossing, U. (2020). Practices in different school cultures and principals' improvement work. *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, 25(2), 310-330. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603124.2020.1759828>

- Özdoğan, M. (2022). Türkiye’de öğretmen motivasyonunu etkileyen örgütsel faktörler: bir meta-analiz çalışması. *Trakya Eğitim Dergisi*, 12(3), 1737-1749. <https://doi.org/10.24315/tred.1090296>
- Özgenel, M. and Aksu, T. (2020). The power of school principals’ ethical leadership behavior to predict organizational health. *International Journal of Evaluation and Research in Education (Ijere)*, 9(4), 816. <https://doi.org/10.11591/ijere.v9i4.20658>
- Özgenel, M., Yazıcı, Ş., & Asmaz, A. (2022). The mediator role of organizational justice in the relationship between school principals’ agile leadership characteristics and teachers’ job satisfaction. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.895540>
- Pascual, M. S. S. (2023). A Review on Self-Efficacy and Job Satisfaction as indicators of Effective School Principal’s Leadership Style. *International Journal For Multidisciplinary Research*, 5(6). <https://doi.org/10.36948/ijfmr.2023.v05i06.9214>
- Perez, J. (2021). Leadership in healthcare: transitioning from clinical professional to healthcare leader. *Journal of Healthcare Management*, 66(4), 280-302. <https://doi.org/10.1097/jhm-d-20-00057>
- Pitriani, E. (2024). Educational leadership in improving school performance and teacher professional development: a literature review. *PIJED*, 3(2), 233-244. <https://doi.org/10.59175/pijed.v3i2.312>
- Prasetyo, M. and Fadhillah, N. (2022). Construction of organizational culture for ideal performance of islamic-based junior high schools in indonesia. *Journal of Educational Management and Instruction (Jemin)*, 2(2), 90-100. <https://doi.org/10.22515/jemin.v2i2.4399>
- Purwandoko, E., Burmansah, B., Priono, P., & Anggraini, T. (2023). Classroom management: the impact of transformational leadership of homeroom teachers to the effectiveness of class management in high schools. *JoERI*, 1(1), 24-29. <https://doi.org/10.60046/joeri.v1i1.26>
- Raharja, S., Nashir, I., & Andriani, D. (2022). The effect of principals’ transformational leadership and organizational culture on teacher performance. *Jurnal Kependidikan Penelitian Inovasi Pembelajaran*, 6(2), 152-162. <https://doi.org/10.21831/jk.v6i2.49456>
- Rizal, A. and Nurjaya, N. (2020). Effects of principal skills, work culture, learning facilities on primary school teacher performance. *Tarbawi Jurnal Keilmuan Manajemen Pendidikan*, 6(01), 21. <https://doi.org/10.32678/tarbawi.v6i01.2093>
- Sari, I. (2022). Situational leadership practices in school: a literature review. *International Journal of Current Science Research and Review*, 05(07). <https://doi.org/10.47191/ijcsrr/v5-i7-22>
- Sulastri, S. (2023). Principal’s leadership improving discipline of school’s citizens. *PIJED*, 2(2), 269-275. <https://doi.org/10.59175/pijed.v2i2.93>

- Tian, M. and Virtanen, T. (2020). Shanghai teachers' perceptions of distributed leadership: resources and agency. *Ecnu Review of Education*, 4(4), 808-829. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2096531120921051>
- Tichnor-Wagner, A., Harrison, C., & Cohen-Vogel, L. (2016). Cultures of learning in effective high schools. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 52(4), 602-642. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161x16644957>
- Tucaliuc, M., Curşeu, P., & Muntean, A. (2023). Does distributed leadership deliver on its promises in schools? implications for teachers' work satisfaction and self-efficacy. *Education Sciences*, 13(10), 1058. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci13101058>
- Wongpreedee, A. and Sudhipongpracha, T. (2024). Street-level quasi-bureaucracy and professional discretion: how transformational leadership and public service motivation influence village health volunteers' professional discretion. *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*, 44(3/4), 390-407. <https://doi.org/10.1108/ijssp-04-2023-0083>
- Yalçinkaya, S., Dağlı, G., Altınay, F., Altınay, Z., & Kalkan, Ü. (2021). The effect of leadership styles and initiative behaviors of school principals on teacher motivation. *Sustainability*, 13(5), 2711. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su13052711>
- Yang, M. and Thien, L. (2024). Fostering teachers' readiness for leadership roles: the dynamic interplay among positive school culture, affective-identity motivation to lead and teacher optimism. *International Journal of Educational Management*, 38(6), 1685-1709. <https://doi.org/10.1108/ijem-04-2024-0202>
- Yayu, Z. (2024). University administrators' leadership style influencing instructors' job satisfaction in shanxi, china. *Pacific International Journal*, 6(4), 160-164. <https://doi.org/10.55014/pij.v6i4.506>
- Yulita, E., Metroyadi, M., & Wahyu, W. (2023). The correlation between situational leadership of principal and teacher performance through work motivation and work climate at vocational school teacher in banjarmasin. *International Journal of Social Science and Human Research*, 06(01). <https://doi.org/10.47191/ijsshr/v6-i1-41>
- Zahed-Babelan, A., Koulaei, G., Moeinikia, M., & Sharif, A. (2019). Instructional leadership effects on teachers' work engagement: roles of school culture, empowerment, and job characteristics. *Center for Educational Policy Studies Journal*, 9(3), 137-156. <https://doi.org/10.26529/cepsj.181>
- Zahorodnia, L., Danylchenko, I., Mapeeva, T., Atorina, V., Barsukovska, H., & Marieiev, D. (2021). Training of pedagogical staff to ensure the quality of the educational process in preschool educational institutions. *Laplace Em Revista*, 7(Extra-E), 163-171. <https://doi.org/10.24115/s2446-622020217extra-e1171p.163-171>