

Transformational Principal Leadership and Teacher Performance in Elementary Schools

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Suggested Citation:

Sariningsih, Nur Endah; Rostini, Deti. (2025). Transformational Principal Leadership and Teacher Performance in Elementary Schools. *Jurnal Iman dan Spiritualitas*. Volume 5, Number 4: 863–876. <https://doi.org/10.15575/jis.v5i4.58600>

Article's History:

Received July 2025; Revised November 2025; Accepted November 2025.
2025. journal.uinsgd.ac.id ©. All rights reserved.

Abstract:

This research is based on the urgency of the principal's role as a strategic leader in encouraging improved teacher performance amidst increasingly high demands for quality education. Transformational leadership is considered an appropriate approach because it is oriented towards positive changes in teacher attitudes, motivation, and performance on an ongoing basis. However, in practice, there is still a gap between the ideal concept of transformational leadership and its implementation in the school environment. This study aims to examine the application of transformational leadership by principals in an effort to improve teacher performance, which includes the dimensions of idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. Furthermore, this study also identifies various obstacles that arise and the solutions implemented to overcome them. The study used a qualitative approach with descriptive methods in two elementary schools with different characteristics as multi-site research locations. Data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation studies to obtain a comprehensive picture. The results show that principals apply transformational leadership contextually by maximizing its four dimensions, resulting in improved teacher performance and the formation of a conducive and collaborative work culture. However, its implementation still faces several obstacles, such as limited understanding of the concept of transformational leadership, high administrative burdens, varying levels of teacher motivation, and limited supporting facilities. To overcome these challenges, principals implement adaptive strategies through strengthening leadership competencies, effective time management, developing a culture of collaboration, and optimizing available resources. Thus, adaptive and contextual transformational leadership has been shown to contribute significantly to improving teacher performance.

Keywords: elementary school; principal; teacher performance; transformational leadership.

INTRODUCTION

The quality of learning in elementary schools plays a fundamental role in shaping students' cognitive, affective, and psychomotor competencies. Elementary education is the initial stage that determines the direction of children's long-term development of thinking skills, attitudes, and skills. In the 21st-century era

of education, schools are no longer solely focused on academic achievement but are also required to prepare students with critical, creative, communicative, and collaborative thinking skills. The challenges of globalization, the development of information technology, and ever-changing social dynamics require schools to transform the learning process. Therefore, improving the quality of learning is a priority agenda that cannot be separated from the quality of teacher performance as the primary implementers of educational activities in the classroom. Professional, reflective, and adaptive teacher performance is a key indicator of the successful implementation of education policies, including the Independent Curriculum, which emphasizes student-centered, flexible, and responsive learning (Supardi, 2016).

However, empirical conditions in the field indicate that teacher performance in a number of elementary schools still faces various challenges. Learning practices are often conventional, oriented toward delivering material, and do not fully develop students' overall potential. Learning innovation is uneven, technology utilization is still limited, and pedagogical reflection has not yet become a strong professional culture. This situation is inseparable from various factors, one of which is the principal's leadership, which is not fully capable of driving fundamental change. In practice, school leadership often focuses more on administrative aspects, document management, and meeting bureaucratic demands, thus providing less space for the development of inspirational dimensions, personal development, and continuous improvement of teacher competencies (Mulyasa, 2023; Yukl, 2013).

Conceptually, leadership has a significant influence on the dynamics of school organizations. As educational leaders, principals not only act as managers who manage administration but also as agents of change who determine the direction of school development. In this context, transformational leadership is seen as a relevant approach to addressing the need to improve teacher performance. The transformational leadership model emphasizes the leader's ability to build a shared vision, foster inspirational motivation, stimulate critical and innovative thinking through intellectual stimulation, and provide individual attention to the needs and potential of each teacher (Bass & Riggio, 2020). This approach places interpersonal relationships and individual capacity development at the core of leadership practice. Various studies have shown a positive relationship between transformational leadership and improved teacher performance. Leadership that inspires and empowers teachers has been shown to contribute to increased work motivation, organizational commitment, and the quality of classroom learning (Andriani et al., 2018; Leithwood et al., 2020; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005). Furthermore, principal leadership plays a crucial role in fostering teacher professional learning through collaboration, academic supervision, and collaborative reflection (Li, 2022; Liu & Hallinger, 2020). Thus, transformational leadership impacts not only the structural aspects of the organization but also the learning culture and pedagogical practices of teachers.

In the context of education in Indonesia, the role of the principal is increasingly strategic in line with the policy of educational decentralization and demands for improving school quality. Principals are expected to be able to carry out both managerial functions and effective instructional leadership. As instructional leaders, principals are responsible for mobilizing all school resources, including teachers, educational staff, facilities, and community support, to optimally achieve educational goals (Mulyasa, 2023). Effective leadership is also reflected in their ability to build a collaborative, participatory, and quality-oriented work culture (Komara & Mulyanto, 2010). This shows that school success is determined not only by organizational systems and structures, but also by the culture built through leadership practices. Educational leadership cannot be separated from the value dimension that serves as the foundation for every decision-making. From the perspective of the six value systems, leadership must reflect ethical values, rationality, and moral responsibility as the basis for building integrity and trust within educational organizations (Sanusi, 2017). These values serve as the foundation for creating leadership that is not only managerially effective but also pedagogically and ethically meaningful. Integration between the principles of transformational leadership and a strong foundation of values is important so that leadership practices are not merely oriented towards achieving administrative targets, but also towards the formation of character and a school culture with integrity.

Studies on transformational leadership in education have largely used quantitative approaches that focus on the relationships between variables. While this approach provides a picture of the correlation between leadership and teacher performance, it fails to fully explain how transformational leadership practices are implemented in the real-world context of schools. The processes, dynamics, and adaptive strategies employed by principals are often not comprehensively described. Furthermore, multisite research

at the elementary school level comparing the implementation of transformational leadership in different school contexts remains relatively limited. Many studies focus more on the final outcome than on the process of leadership implementation itself (Hallinger, 2011). This situation indicates a research gap that requires a more contextual and in-depth approach. Based on this description, research is needed that can comprehensively explore transformational leadership practices in the real-world context of elementary schools. A qualitative descriptive approach is relevant because it allows researchers to explore the experiences, perceptions, and strategies implemented by principals in improving teacher performance. With this approach, leadership is understood not only as a theoretical concept but also as a dynamic and contextual practice. Multisite research in two schools with different characteristics provides an opportunity to compare and understand variations in the implementation of transformational leadership in diverse situations (Ratnawati, 2025).

This study has the novelty of examining the implementation of transformational leadership by principals through a qualitative descriptive approach in two elementary schools with different backgrounds and characteristics. This approach allows for a more in-depth exploration of leadership practices, both from the process and outcome aspects. This study not only comprehensively analyzes the four main dimensions of transformational leadership: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration, but also identifies various obstacles encountered and solutions developed in practice in the field. In line with this objective, this study focuses on analyzing the implementation of transformational leadership by principals in improving elementary school teacher performance through a qualitative descriptive study in two different school contexts, namely SDN Pameungpeuk 03, Bandung Regency, and SDN 083 Babakan Surabaya, Bandung City. The analysis is conducted by examining how the principals apply the four dimensions of transformational leadership in daily practice, how teachers respond to such leadership, and what obstacles and adaptive strategies arise during the implementation process. Through this study, it is hoped that a comprehensive understanding of contextual, adaptive, and value-based transformational leadership practices in improving teacher performance will be obtained. The results of this study are expected to provide theoretical contributions in the development of educational leadership studies as well as practical contributions to improving the quality of principal leadership at the elementary school level.

Transformational leadership was first developed by Bernard M. Bass based on the theories of transactional leadership and charismatic leadership. This model emphasizes a strong relationship between leaders and followers based on trust, respect, and shared motivation to achieve higher organizational goals. As educational leaders, principals not only perform administrative functions but also act as agents of change to improve the quality of learning through teacher empowerment. This approach is considered relevant in the elementary school context because the learning characteristics demand creativity, cooperation, and adaptation to student dynamics. Transformational leadership has four main dimensions: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. This model serves as an important theoretical framework for understanding how principals can motivate teachers to achieve higher levels of achievement in carrying out their teaching and professional duties (Harsoyo, 2022).

Various empirical studies have shown that transformational leadership has a positive effect on teacher performance in elementary schools. Rona Elviliza et al. (2025) stated that the transformational leadership of principals significantly influences teachers' work behavior by increasing motivation, engagement, and commitment in carrying out their professional duties. The results of this literature review indicate that leadership with four transformational dimensions is consistently associated with improving teachers' abilities in managing classes, developing pedagogical innovations, and creating a supportive work climate for teachers. Habibie, Rosyidi, & Munawwaroh (2025) also found that principals who implement transformational leadership can transform teacher potential into productive energy that encourages improvements in the quality of learning. In this study, transformational is understood as a style that motivates, increases self-confidence, and facilitates teacher innovation and collaboration in elementary schools (Rosyid Maulana Habibie et al., 2025). These findings indicate that transformational principals play a role not only as administrative organizers but also as inspirations capable of igniting teachers' professional enthusiasm. This type of leadership has been proven to contribute to improving the quality of teacher performance, both in terms of work behavior and learning outcomes.

The literature shows that the four dimensions of transformational leadership have distinct yet complementary roles in improving teacher performance. A meta-analysis by Permatasari et al. (2023) found that idealized influence can build teachers' trust and respect for the principal, thereby fostering long-term

commitment to the school's goals. Inspirational motivation helps teachers clarify their learning vision and feel engaged in institutional change. Intellectual stimulation fosters teacher creativity in delivering learning innovations, and individualized consideration provides personal support for teachers' ongoing professional development. These dimensions guide more humane and pedagogical leadership practices. The principal becomes a figure who not only provides instruction but also facilitates teachers' learning and professional growth based on their individual needs (Permatasari et al., 2023).

Several national studies highlight the importance of the school's cultural context in the implementation of transformational leadership in Indonesia. Transformational implementation must consider local values, collaboration, and a positive work culture within the school. Principals who are able to integrate cultural values with transformational practices have been shown to create a work climate that consistently supports teacher performance. In this context, the intellectual stimulation dimension not only encourages general innovation but also leverages the potential of local culture as a basis for learning. Individual considerations help teachers adapt their pedagogical practices to the sociocultural context of their students. This enriches the study of transformational leadership in elementary education (Suryaningsih et al., 2025).

While ample evidence demonstrates the benefits of transformational leadership, the literature also notes significant challenges in its practice. Waruwu (2024) found that not all schools are ready to fully implement transformational leadership due to differences in organizational culture, limited resources, and structural challenges within the school environment (Waruwu, 2024). Other studies also suggest that barriers such as a lack of understanding of transformational concepts, the principal's administrative burden, and variations in teacher motivation can impact the effectiveness of transformational leadership. This suggests that transformational leadership cannot be implemented mechanically but requires adaptive strategies tailored to the school context. A qualitative case study by Aditya, Novianto, & Prasajo (2025) in elementary schools in Yogyakarta showed that principals who implemented transformational principles successfully encouraged teachers to develop reflective and collaborative learning practices. Principals who were directly involved in the learning process provided constructive feedback to teachers and guided them to innovate in their learning methods, which led to improved teacher professional performance in the medium term (Aditya et al., 2025). Another quantitative study showed that transformational leadership was significantly related to teacher work motivation, which then impacted the performance and quality of learning in elementary schools (Wote & Patalatu, 2019).

The literature reviewed above provides a strong theoretical basis for demonstrating that transformational leadership is an effective approach to improving elementary school teacher performance. In the context of research at SDN Pameungpeuk 03 in Bandung Regency and SDN 083 Babakan Surabaya in Bandung City, this framework can be used to analyze how the four transformational dimensions are applied in practice. The study focuses not only on teacher performance outcomes but also on the process of transforming school culture, interpersonal relationships, and the adaptive strategies developed by principals to address contextual constraints. This literature review provides a foundation for qualitative descriptive research to provide an in-depth and meaningful description of transformational practices.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative, descriptive approach to gain a deeper understanding of principals' transformational leadership practices in improving teacher performance in real-world situations. The qualitative approach was chosen because it allows for a holistic, contextual, and naturalistic examination of phenomena, allowing for a comprehensive depiction of the leadership dynamics that occur in everyday school settings. Through this approach, researchers attempted to capture the meanings, perceptions, and experiences of educational practitioners directly, without separating them from the social and organizational contexts in which these practices occur. The study was conducted in two public elementary schools: SDN Pameungpeuk 03, Bandung Regency, and SDN 083 Babakan Surabaya, Bandung City, West Java Province. The locations were selected purposively, considering the distinct characteristics of each school and their suitability to the focus of the study. The differences in the backgrounds and conditions of the two schools provided an opportunity for multisite research to provide a richer perspective through contextual comparison. With a multisite design, researchers were able to identify both general patterns and the specificities of transformational leadership implementation in each school (Creswell, 2016).

The research subjects included principals and teachers, purposively selected based on their direct involvement in leadership practices and the learning process. Principals were positioned as key informants due to their central role in policy formulation and leadership implementation in schools. Meanwhile, teachers served as supporting informants, providing information regarding the experiences, perceptions, and impact of principal leadership on their professional performance. This purposive subject selection was intended to ensure the data obtained were truly relevant and supported the achievement of the research objectives. Data collection techniques were carried out through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation studies. In-depth interviews were used to obtain information regarding the implementation of transformational leadership dimensions, various obstacles faced, and strategies employed by principals to improve teacher performance. Direct observations were conducted to observe leadership activities, interactions between principals and teachers, and the classroom learning process. Documentation studies were conducted by reviewing various relevant documents, such as learning tools, school work programs, activity reports, and other supporting documents as additional data sources (Sugiyono, 2020).

The data analysis process in this study refers to the interactive analysis model developed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña. This model includes three main stages: data reduction, data presentation, and drawing and verifying conclusions. Data reduction is carried out by selecting, focusing, and simplifying information obtained from the field to align with the research objectives. Next, the reduced data is presented systematically in narrative form, matrices, or tables to facilitate researchers in understanding patterns and relationships between categories. The final stage is drawing conclusions accompanied by a continuous verification process to ensure the accuracy and validity of the findings. Data analysis was carried out simultaneously from the data collection process. This allows researchers to reflect, clarify the research focus, and continuously test the consistency of the findings until in-depth and valid results are obtained. To maintain data validity, this study applies source triangulation and technical triangulation to compare the various pieces of information obtained. Furthermore, member checking is conducted with informants to ensure that the researchers' interpretations align with the reality they intended. Data consistency checks are also conducted systematically to increase the credibility and trustworthiness of the research results (Miles et al., 2014).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the study indicate that the implementation of transformational leadership by the principal in an effort to improve teacher performance at SDN Pameungpeuk 03, Bandung Regency, and SDN 083 Babakan Surabaya, Bandung City, is reflected through four main dimensions: idealization of influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration. In the dimension of idealization of influence, the principal displays exemplary attitudes, integrity, and commitment to the school's vision, thereby building trust and respect from teachers. Through inspirational motivation, the principal encourages the growth of work enthusiasm and professional commitment of teachers by communicating a clear vision and providing continuous positive encouragement. In the aspect of intellectual stimulation, the principal strives to stimulate teacher creativity and innovation in designing and implementing learning, including encouraging reflection and collaborative problem-solving. Meanwhile, in the dimension of individual consideration, the principal pays attention to the needs, potential, and professional development of each teacher through personal coaching and support. However, this study also reveals several obstacles in the implementation of transformational leadership, such as time constraints, administrative burdens, and variations in the level of teacher readiness and motivation. To overcome these obstacles, school principals develop various adaptive strategies, including strengthening communication, increasing collaboration, and optimizing available resources to ensure sustainable improvements in teacher performance (Wardani, 2022).

Idealization of Influence

In terms of the idealization of influence dimension, the principals at both schools demonstrated strong exemplary behavior both morally and professionally. Discipline, responsibility, and active participation in various school activities exemplified the leadership commitment demonstrated. The principals arrived on time, engaged in learning activities, and demonstrated a commitment to improving the quality of education. Consistency between the stated vision and the policies and actions taken was also evident, providing teachers with clear direction in carrying out their duties and responsibilities. Furthermore, the principals were able to

build relationships based on trust through open and transparent communication. Teachers felt valued for their involvement in decision-making processes and received support when facing challenges in their work. This integrity and exemplary behavior indirectly created a conducive work culture, strengthened a sense of community, and enhanced teachers' professional commitment to the school's goals. Although both schools implemented inspirational motivation practices, there were differences in their approaches. One principal prioritized formal communication through meetings and official forums, while the other tended to use a personal approach in daily interactions. Differences are also seen in the emphasis on exemplary behavior, where one principal emphasizes discipline, while another emphasizes direct involvement in the learning process (Ashlan et al., 2022).

Inspirational Motivation

In the inspirational motivation dimension, the principal demonstrates a strong capacity to convey the school's vision and goals in a coherent, clear, and continuous manner. This vision is not only communicated in formal forums such as meetings or formal gatherings, but is also reaffirmed through various school activities and daily interactions. Thus, the school's vision is not merely a normative statement but becomes a living guideline in teachers' daily practices. The principal also provides constructive encouragement to teachers, both through motivational words and through a non-blaming coaching approach. Rather than emphasizing mistakes, the principal focuses on improvement, reflection, and professional capacity development. This approach creates a supportive work environment and encourages teachers to continuously develop without feeling pressured. Furthermore, forms of appreciation given to teachers, such as verbal recognition or being entrusted with certain responsibilities, also strengthen intrinsic motivation. Teachers feel valued for their contributions and play a vital role in achieving school goals. Consequently, a stronger sense of self-confidence and professional pride grows. This condition is reflected in the increased work enthusiasm and more active and productive teacher participation in the learning process (Rahmat, 2021).

Intellectual Stimulation

In the intellectual stimulation dimension, the principal strives to foster critical and innovative thinking among teachers in implementing learning. This effort is realized through providing reflective questions that encourage analysis, holding professional discussions, and facilitating Teacher Working Group (KKG) activities as a space to share ideas and experiences. The principal creates an atmosphere that encourages the exploration of new ideas by providing teachers with the freedom to implement a variety of learning methods and strategies without undue pressure. Furthermore, teachers are encouraged to participate in various competency development activities, such as training and workshops, and are given the opportunity to present good practices in discussion forums. This support creates a work environment conducive to the growth of creativity and improved learning quality. Teachers become more responsive to change, open to new approaches, and actively develop more effective strategies tailored to student needs (Marselus, 2026). However, there is variation in the implementation of intellectual stimulation across the two schools. One school emphasizes collective discussions through structured professional forums, while the other emphasizes individual reflection integrated into daily learning practices.

Individual Considerations

In the individualized consideration dimension, the principal demonstrates concern for the unique needs, potential, and characteristics of each teacher. This is reflected through empathetic communication, a personal approach to the coaching process, and flexibility in the division and management of tasks. The principal recognizes that each teacher has a different background, abilities, and challenges, so the treatment provided is tailored to each individual's circumstances. Furthermore, the principal provides specific mentoring to teachers who require additional support, both in the implementation of learning and in developing professional competencies. This mentoring is conducted in a dialogue and constructive manner, so that teachers feel guided, not judged. This open attitude and genuine concern create a more harmonious work environment and strengthen interpersonal relationships within the school environment. Consequently, teachers feel appreciated and supported in carrying out their duties. A sense of security and comfort in the work environment increases, thus encouraging motivation to continue developing. Varied approaches are also evident in the practice of individualized consideration, particularly in how the principal adapts coaching strategies to the characteristics, needs, and level of professional readiness of each teacher (Sofi'i, 2020).

Obstacles to Implementing Transformational Leadership

Although transformational leadership has been implemented, this study identified several obstacles faced by principals in its implementation. These obstacles include limited conceptual understanding of the essence and strategies of transformational leadership, resulting in practices that are not yet fully structured and systematic. Furthermore, the high administrative burden that principals must handle also reduces the intensity of attention given to ongoing teacher development and mentoring. Variations in teacher motivation, readiness, and openness to change also pose challenges. Not all teachers respond equally to innovations or new policies, so the transformation process requires varying time and approaches. Furthermore, limited learning facilities and infrastructure are external factors that influence the optimization of teacher performance and the development of innovative learning strategies. These various obstacles have resulted in the less than optimal implementation of several dimensions of transformational leadership, particularly in the aspects of ongoing development and strengthening learning innovation. This situation indicates that the success of transformational leadership is determined not only by the capacity of the individual leader, but also by systemic support and the readiness of the entire school community (Tahir et al., 2025).

Solution Transformational Leadership of School Principals in Improving Teacher Performance

In response to the various obstacles encountered, the principal formulated and implemented a number of solution-oriented and adaptive strategies. One step taken was to improve leadership capacity through continuous learning, both through reflection on practice and professional competency development. Furthermore, the principal managed his time more effectively by delegating some administrative tasks, thus maintaining attention to teacher development. Another effort was to build a collaborative and participatory school culture. The principal encouraged teacher involvement in various activities and decision-making, thus fostering a sense of ownership of the school program. Optimizing available resources was also a priority, including establishing partnerships with external parties to support learning development and school quality improvement. These strategies reflected the principal's ability to adapt leadership practices to real-world conditions. The study results showed that transformational leadership significantly contributed to improving teacher performance through a contextual and flexible approach in two elementary schools with different characteristics. The impact was not only seen in improving individual teacher performance, but also in the formation of a positive work culture, increased motivation, and the continuous development of teacher professional capacity (Raharjo, 2025).

Idealizing Influence in Building Trust and School Culture

Research findings indicate that the principal's exemplary behavior is a key factor in building teacher trust. This exemplary behavior is demonstrated not only through discipline and responsibility but also through consistency between vision, policies, and actions in daily leadership practices. Analytically, this condition indicates that the leader's influence is not only structural but also normative, where teachers internalize the values demonstrated by the principal. This strengthens professional relationships and creates a more positive, quality-oriented work culture. This finding aligns with the concept of idealized influence in transformational leadership, which emphasizes the importance of integrity and exemplary behavior as sources of influence (Bass & Riggio, 2020). In the educational context, the principal's ability to maintain alignment between values and actions is also an indicator of effective leadership in building a school organizational culture (Komara & Mulyanto, 2010). Furthermore, from a values perspective, this practice reflects the importance of ethical values and moral responsibility in educational leadership (Sanusi, 2017). Thus, idealized influence not only strengthens teacher trust but also shapes a values-based school culture.

Inspirational Motivation in Increasing Teachers' Professional Commitment

The research findings show that consistently communicating a vision, providing constructive encouragement, and rewarding teachers' performance play a significant role in increasing their motivation and engagement. Teachers who feel recognized for their contributions tend to demonstrate greater work enthusiasm and more active participation in the learning process. This confirms that moral and psychological reinforcement from leaders has a significant impact on work dynamics in schools. Conceptually, these findings suggest that motivation in the context of educational organizations is not solely influenced by external factors such as incentives or rules, but also by the meaning and values of work constructed through leadership. A clearly communicated vision serves as a shared guideline that unifies collective direction and goals.

Meanwhile, appreciation from the principal serves as a reinforcing factor in intrinsic motivation, encouraging teachers to work more optimally and responsibly. These findings align with the concept of inspirational motivation in transformational leadership, which emphasizes the leader's ability to foster enthusiasm, optimism, and shared commitment. Various studies have also shown that transformational leadership has a significant influence on increasing teacher motivation and performance. Therefore, consistent communication of vision and rewards is an important strategy for building professional commitment and sustainably improving teacher performance (Andriani et al., 2018). In the context of educational leadership, the principal, as a learning leader, plays a role in building meaningful work and professional enthusiasm among teachers. Therefore, inspirational motivation is a crucial factor in creating a productive work environment.

Intellectual Stimulation in Encouraging Innovation and Professional Learning

Research findings show that principals consciously create a conducive space for teachers to think critically, reflect, and develop various innovations in the learning process. A work climate open to dialogue, the exchange of ideas, and the experimentation of new methods provides opportunities for teachers to continuously improve their competencies. This condition marks a transformation from previously routine and procedural learning patterns to a more reflective, creative, and adaptive approach to student needs. In this context, the principal's role is no longer limited to that of a supervisor or instructor, but rather evolves into a facilitator of professional learning for teachers. Principals encourage discussion, ask reflective questions, and support the exploration of more effective learning strategies without creating undue pressure. This approach aligns with the intellectual stimulation dimension of transformational leadership, which emphasizes the importance of developing critical thinking and innovation. Various studies have shown that leadership that supports teacher professional learning significantly contributes to improving the quality of learning processes and outcomes. From a value perspective, this practice reflects a respect for rationality, systematic analysis, and reflection-based decision-making (Hendrawati, 2025). Thus, intellectual stimulation not only enriches the individual capacity of teachers, but also builds a school culture that is innovative, open to change, and oriented towards continuously improving the quality of education.

Individual Considerations in Improving Teacher Satisfaction and Performance

The research results show that the principal's attention to teachers' personal needs through empathetic communication and individual mentoring significantly contributes to increased job satisfaction and well-being. Teachers feel recognized, valued for their role, and supported in the process of developing professional competencies. This demonstrates that positive interpersonal relationships between principals and teachers are a crucial factor in creating a conducive work environment. Analytically, these findings confirm that effective leadership cannot be applied uniformly but rather requires consideration of the different characteristics, needs, and potential of each individual within the school organization. A personalized approach allows the principal to provide more targeted coaching tailored to each teacher's individual circumstances. Thus, the professional development process is not merely administrative but also addresses psychological and motivational aspects. This approach aligns with the concept of individualized consideration in transformational leadership, which emphasizes the importance of attention to individual needs as part of the empowerment process. When teachers receive appropriate support, they tend to demonstrate higher levels of engagement in their work, feel more satisfied with their work environment, and are motivated to improve the quality of their performance. Therefore, individualized attention is a strategic factor in continuously improving leadership effectiveness and teacher performance (Sun & Leithwood, 2015). Thus, individual consideration is an important factor in creating a humanistic work environment and supporting teacher professional development.

Obstacles in Implementing Transformational Leadership

Research findings reveal that the implementation of transformational leadership in schools is not entirely seamless, but is influenced by various conceptual and contextual constraints. One major challenge lies in principals' limited understanding of the concept of transformational leadership comprehensively. This situation results in the suboptimal application of all dimensions of leadership in daily practice. Furthermore, the high administrative burden that principals must handle also reduces the intensity and quality of professional development for teachers, as more time and energy is consumed by managerial and reporting matters. Furthermore, the diversity of teachers' motivation levels and readiness to accept change are factors that influence the effectiveness of transformational leadership implementation. Not all teachers respond equally to

innovation or policy updates, necessitating a different and more adaptive approach to the development process. This challenge is further complicated when combined with limited facilities and infrastructure that limit schools' freedom to support learning innovation and teacher professional development. Analytically, this situation demonstrates that leadership success is not solely determined by the leader's individual competence, but also by the support of the organizational system and work environment. Thus, the various obstacles that arise reflect the gap between the ideals of the transformational leadership concept and the reality of practice in the field, which is fraught with structural and cultural limitations (Tanjung et al., 2025).

Solution: Adaptive Strategies in Transformational Leadership

In response to the various challenges faced, the principal developed a number of adaptive strategies to ensure the sustainability of transformational leadership. These efforts began with strengthening leadership capacity through continuous learning, reflection on existing practices, and deepening understanding of the concepts and dimensions of transformational leadership. This step is crucial to enable the principal to apply leadership principles more consistently and contextually according to the school's needs. Furthermore, more effective time management and delegation of tasks to the school management team are crucial strategies for reducing administrative burdens. With a more proportional division of roles, the principal can focus on his primary function as a learning leader, particularly in providing professional guidance and mentoring to teachers. This strategy also encourages a growing sense of collective responsibility within the school organization. Developing a collaborative and participatory school culture is also a key focus. The principal strives to build open communication, strengthen teamwork, and create a space for dialogue that allows teachers to actively participate in decision-making. Furthermore, optimization of available resources and utilization of external partnership networks are being carried out to address limited facilities and infrastructure, ensuring that the process of improving the quality of learning continues to run sustainably and effectively (Aulia et al., 2026).

The principal leveraged various collaborative opportunities to support teacher learning and professional development activities. Conceptually, this adaptive strategy demonstrates the dynamic and contextual nature of transformational leadership. The principal's ability to adapt the strategy to existing conditions is a critical factor in the successful implementation of this leadership. This aligns with the view that effective educational leadership requires flexibility and responsiveness to change (Hallinger, 2011). Thus, the solutions developed are not merely technical in nature but also reflect the leadership's adaptability in addressing the complexities of the school organization.

Table 1. Synthesis of Transformational Leadership in Improving Teacher Performance in Elementary Schools

Dimensions of Leadership	Key Research Findings	Analytical Meaning	Theoretical Support
Idealization of Influence	Exemplary behavior, integrity, consistency of vision and action	Building trust and a positive work culture	Bass & Riggio (2006); Komara & Mulyanto (2010)
Inspirational Motivation	Communication of vision, positive encouragement, teacher appreciation	Increase intrinsic motivation and commitment	Bass & Riggio (2006); Andriani et al. (2018)
Intellectual Stimulation	Professional discussion, reflection, learning innovation	Encourage critical thinking and adaptation of learning	Bass & Riggio (2006); Liu & Hallinger (2020)
Individual Considerations	Personal support, empathetic communication	Increase job satisfaction and individual development	Bass & Riggio (2006); Sun & Leithwood (2015)
Constraint	Administrative burden, limited facilities, variation in motivation	Inhibits leadership optimization	Leithwood & Sun (2012)
Solution	Adaptive strategies, collaboration, capacity building	Demonstrate contextual and dynamic leadership	Hallinger (2011)

Based on field findings and discussions, the transformational leadership of the principals at SDN Pameungpeuk 03, Bandung Regency, and SDN 083 Babakan Surabaya, Bandung City, demonstrated effective implementation in improving teacher performance through the application of four main dimensions: idealization of influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration. Leadership practices demonstrated through exemplary behavior, strengthening motivation, encouraging learning innovation, and paying attention to individual teacher needs contributed to building trust, increasing professional commitment, and creating a collaborative work culture. However, the implementation of this leadership was not fully optimal because it was still faced with conceptual and contextual obstacles, such as limited understanding, administrative burdens, variations in teacher motivation, and limited facilities and infrastructure. However, the principals at both schools demonstrated adaptive abilities in overcoming these obstacles by strengthening leadership capacity, managing time more effectively, developing a collaborative culture, and optimizing available resources (Kompri, 2017). Thus, the transformational leadership of the principal in the context of the two schools can be understood as a contextual and adaptive leadership practice, which not only plays a role in improving teacher performance, but also in creating a work environment that supports continuous improvement in the quality of learning.

The transformational leadership of the principals at SDN Pameungpeuk 03, Bandung Regency, and SDN 083 Babakan Surabaya, Bandung City, is not merely a normative concept, but is manifested in concrete practices that influence the dynamics of teacher work and school culture. The implementation of the four main dimensions of idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration shows that improved teacher performance is the result of a relational, contextual, and adaptive leadership process. Analytically, these findings confirm that the effectiveness of educational leadership is not solely determined by the formal structure of the organization, but by the quality of interactions, role models, and professional development strategies developed by the principal (Susanto, 2016). In the dimension of idealized influence, the principal's exemplary behavior is the main foundation in building teacher trust and commitment. The presence of a principal who is disciplined, responsible, and consistent between vision and action creates moral legitimacy that strengthens leadership influence. Theoretically, this is in line with the concept of idealized influence, which places integrity and consistency of values as sources of leadership strength. Teachers not only follow formal instructions but also internalize the values and commitments exemplified by the leader. In the context of both schools, these role models foster a positive work culture, where teachers feel they have a clear direction in carrying out their professional duties. The differences in approaches between formal and personal communication demonstrate that the idealization of influence can be realized through different interaction styles, as long as it remains grounded in consistent values and a commitment to educational quality (Sugiarto & Fawait, 2025).

The inspirational motivation dimension demonstrates that clear and ongoing communication of the vision plays a crucial role in enhancing teacher enthusiasm and engagement. The school vision, communicated not only in formal forums but also reinforced through daily interactions, creates a collective awareness of shared goals. Analytically, motivation in this context is not instructional but transformational, as it touches on the meaning of teachers' work and professional identity. The principal's appreciation, both in the form of verbal recognition and trust, strengthens teachers' intrinsic motivation. This demonstrates that inspirational motivation serves not only as a tool for driving performance but also as a mechanism for building long-term commitment. The variety of approaches across the two schools demonstrates that motivational strategies can be tailored to teacher characteristics and school culture, without compromising their transformational essence. In the intellectual stimulation dimension, the principal acts as a facilitator of teachers' professional learning. Reflective discussions, teacher workgroup activities, and providing space for innovation demonstrate a paradigm shift from controlling leadership to empowering leadership. Conceptually, intellectual stimulation encourages teachers to step out of their comfort zone of routine practice and boldly develop more effective learning strategies (Legi, 2024). An environment open to reflection and experimentation allows for organizational learning, where teachers share experiences and knowledge. The differences between the emphasis on collective discussion and individual reflection in the two schools demonstrate that intellectual stimulation can be realized through various mechanisms, as long as it continues to lead to strengthening critical and innovative thinking capacity. This situation indicates that transformational leadership is not uniform but develops according to the needs and characteristics of the institution (Sumiarni et al., 2025).

The individual consideration dimension demonstrates the importance of a humanistic approach in educational leadership. The principal's attention to teachers' needs, abilities, and personal circumstances

creates a sense of appreciation and support. Analytically, this approach demonstrates that improving teacher performance is inextricably linked to psychological and emotional aspects. Teachers who feel cared for tend to have higher levels of job satisfaction and are more open to coaching. Personal mentoring and empathetic communication enable the principal to more deeply understand the obstacles teachers face. The differences in coaching strategies in the two schools emphasize that individual consideration must be tailored to each teacher's characteristics. Thus, individualized consideration is a crucial instrument in building a supportive work environment oriented toward continuous professional development (Silalahi & Marpaung, 2025). Although the implementation of these four dimensions demonstrated positive results, this study also uncovered several obstacles that hinder the optimization of transformational leadership. Limited conceptual understanding of transformational leadership has resulted in some practices being incompletely systematic. High administrative burdens limit the principal's time to conduct intensive coaching. Furthermore, variations in teacher motivation and readiness to accept change pose challenges. Analytically, these findings demonstrate that transformational leadership cannot be separated from the structural and cultural context of the organization. External factors such as bureaucratic policies and limited infrastructure also influence implementation effectiveness. Thus, leadership success depends not only on the leader's personal capacity but also on systemic and environmental support (Lolowang, 2025).

The adaptive strategies developed by principals are important indicators of the contextual character of transformational leadership. Strengthening capacity through continuous learning demonstrates the leader's reflective awareness of the need for self-development. Time management and delegation of tasks are strategic steps to reduce the impact of administrative burdens. Developing a collaborative culture strengthens teacher participation and broadens collective responsibility for quality improvement. Optimizing resources and collaborating with external parties demonstrate that transformational leadership can synergize with managerial approaches to overcome structural limitations. Conceptually, these adaptive strategies emphasize that transformational leadership is dynamic and responsive to change. The synthesis of research findings shows that the four dimensions of transformational leadership interact to shape teacher performance improvement. Idealizing influence builds a foundation of trust, inspiring motivation strengthens commitment, intellectual stimulation fosters innovation, and individualized consideration ensures the sustainability of professional development. The challenges encountered do not eliminate leadership effectiveness but rather highlight the complexity of the primary education context. The solutions developed demonstrate that transformational leadership does not stop at the conceptual level but requires adaptation and continuous reflection. This discussion confirms that the transformational leadership of principals in both elementary schools functions as a mechanism for change oriented toward improving the quality of learning. Contextual and adaptive leadership practices impact not only individual teacher performance but also the formation of a collaborative, professional, and sustainable school culture (Suheri, 2025). Thus, transformational leadership can be understood as a dynamic process that integrates values, motivation, innovation, and personal attention in an effort to improve the quality of education in elementary schools.

CONCLUSION

The principal's transformational leadership plays a significant role in improving teacher performance in elementary schools through the application of four main dimensions: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. These four dimensions have been proven to be interrelated and contribute to creating a work environment conducive to teacher professional development. Improved teacher performance is not solely determined by structural or administrative policies, but is strongly influenced by the principal's ability to set a good example, instill a shared vision, and create interpersonal relationships based on trust and respect. Through inspirational motivation, the principal is able to foster teacher commitment and work enthusiasm. Meanwhile, intellectual stimulation encourages teachers to think critically, creatively, and innovatively in designing learning. Individualized consideration provides space for teachers to develop according to their individual needs and potential in two different school contexts. Furthermore, research findings indicate that the effectiveness of transformational leadership is strongly influenced by the school context. Leadership practices are not uniform but develop according to organizational characteristics, school culture, and teacher backgrounds. These differences in context give rise to varied strategies in implementing transformational leadership, while remaining oriented toward the same goal: improving teacher performance. Despite challenges related to conceptual understanding, administrative burdens, and limited resources, the principal was able to respond through adaptive and collaborative

strategies. Thus, contextual, flexible, and values-based transformational leadership has proven to be a relevant and effective approach to supporting sustainable improvement in the quality of education in elementary schools.

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