

DRIVING TEACHER PERFORMANCE: THE INFLUENCE OF PRINCIPALS' TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND TEACHERS' WORK DISCIPLINE THROUGH WORK MOTIVATION IN PULAU LAUT UTARA DISTRICT

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Abstract

Teacher performance is one of the primary determinants of educational quality and school effectiveness. However, teacher performance is influenced by various organizational and individual factors. This study aims to analyze the effects of principals' transformational leadership and work discipline on teacher performance through work motivation as an intervening variable in public junior high schools in Pulau Laut Utara District. This research employed a quantitative approach using a survey method. The population consisted of 137 teachers from all public junior high schools in Pulau Laut Utara District, and all participants were included using a saturated sampling technique. Data were collected through Likert-scale questionnaires and analyzed using path analysis, supported by classical assumption tests and the Sobel mediation test with IBM SPSS Statistics. The findings indicate that transformational leadership, work discipline, work motivation, and teacher performance were generally classified as high. Transformational leadership had a positive and significant effect on teacher performance ($R^2 = 0.145$) and work motivation ($R^2 = 0.105$). Work discipline exerted a positive and significant effect on teacher performance ($R^2 = 0.863$) and work motivation ($R^2 = 0.807$). Furthermore, work motivation positively and significantly influenced teacher performance ($R^2 = 0.758$). Path analysis and the Sobel test confirmed that work motivation significantly mediated the relationship between transformational leadership and teacher performance ($Z = 3.88 > 1.96$), as well as the relationship between work discipline and teacher performance ($Z = 2.60 > 1.96$). These findings demonstrate that, although transformational leadership and work discipline directly improve teacher performance, their influence is strengthened through enhanced teacher work motivation. In conclusion, principals' transformational leadership, work discipline, and work motivation are significant determinants of teacher performance in public junior high schools in North Pulau Laut District. Work motivation functions as a significant mediating variable, highlighting the importance of fostering teachers' intrinsic motivation alongside strengthening transformational leadership practices and cultivating a strong culture of work discipline to improve educational quality.

Keywords: Transformational leadership; work discipline; work motivation; teacher performance.

A. Introduction

Education is a fundamental instrument for human resource development and plays a pivotal role in enhancing individual quality, societal productivity, and national competitiveness. Through high-quality education, students not only acquire knowledge and skills but also develop character, creativity, critical thinking abilities, and the capacity to adapt to the dynamic changes occurring in society (Wibowo, 2023). Therefore,

improving educational quality has become a strategic priority that requires the commitment and collaboration of all educational stakeholders, particularly teachers as the primary agents of the teaching and learning process.

Teachers occupy a strategic position in determining the success of educational implementation, as they are responsible for planning, delivering, and evaluating instruction. Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 14 of 2005 concerning Teachers and Lecturers defines teachers as professional educators whose responsibilities include educating, teaching, guiding, directing, training, assessing, and evaluating students. The successful execution of these responsibilities is reflected in teacher performance, which constitutes one of the key indicators of educational effectiveness within schools. Teacher performance encompasses the ability to design instructional plans, implement effective learning activities, conduct assessments, and fulfill professional responsibilities in an optimal manner (Bernardin & Russell, 1993; Syam, 2022).

High teacher performance contributes significantly to improving the quality of instruction and achieving educational objectives. Nevertheless, various issues related to teacher performance continue to emerge in educational practice. Preliminary observations conducted by the researcher in public junior high schools across Pulau Laut Utara District revealed that several teachers had not completed instructional planning documents on schedule, maintained incomplete instructional administration, and had yet to optimize the use of instructional media. Furthermore, findings from academic supervision indicated that some teachers still required professional guidance in preparing teaching materials and implementing effective classroom instruction. These findings suggest that continuous efforts to enhance teacher performance remain essential.

Within the field of educational administration, teacher performance is influenced by a combination of organizational and individual factors. Organizational factors include principals' leadership, organizational culture, professional development systems, and the work environment, whereas individual factors comprise work motivation, work discipline, competence, and organizational commitment. Among these determinants, transformational leadership exercised by school principals, teachers' work discipline, and work motivation are considered to have particularly strong relationships with teacher performance.

Transformational leadership is a leadership approach that emphasizes a leader's ability to inspire, motivate, and develop subordinates' potential in achieving organizational goals (Bass & Avolio, 1994). In the school context, principals who practice transformational leadership are expected to foster a positive organizational climate, strengthen teachers' commitment, and encourage innovation in instructional practices. Likewise, work discipline constitutes an essential determinant of teacher performance, as it reflects teachers' compliance with organizational regulations, punctuality, responsibility, and consistency in fulfilling their professional duties (Davis & Newstrom, 1989). Teachers

with high levels of work discipline are generally more likely to demonstrate superior performance than those with lower levels of discipline.

In addition to leadership and work discipline, work motivation represents an important internal factor influencing teacher performance. Herzberg, Mausner, and Snyderman (1959) argue that work motivation is shaped by both intrinsic and extrinsic factors that encourage individuals to perform optimally. Teachers with strong work motivation tend to exhibit greater enthusiasm in carrying out their professional responsibilities, demonstrate higher levels of creativity in instructional practices, and show stronger commitment to achieving educational goals. Consequently, work motivation is expected not only to exert a direct influence on teacher performance but also to function as an intervening variable that explains the relationship between transformational leadership, work discipline, and teacher performance.

Previous empirical studies have consistently reported that transformational leadership, work discipline, and work motivation positively influence teacher performance (Handini et al., 2021; Mariatie, 2022; Musyarofah et al., 2021; Lestari & Hidayat, 2020). However, most existing studies have primarily examined the direct relationships among these variables, while relatively few have investigated the mediating role of work motivation. Moreover, research focusing on public junior high schools in Pulau Laut Utara District remains limited, despite the region's unique geographical characteristics and educational conditions that differ considerably from those of urban areas. Accordingly, this study aims to examine the influence of principals' transformational leadership and teachers' work discipline on teacher performance, with work motivation serving as an intervening variable. The findings are expected to contribute both theoretically and practically to the development of strategies for improving teacher performance and enhancing the overall quality of education.

B. Metod

The study employed a quantitative approach using an explanatory survey design to examine the relationships among principals' transformational leadership, teachers' work discipline, work motivation, and teacher performance based on the proposed theoretical framework and research hypotheses. A quantitative approach was selected because the study focused on measuring research variables objectively through numerical data analyzed using statistical techniques. According to Sugiyono (2019), quantitative research is grounded in the positivist paradigm and aims to investigate relationships among variables using research instruments and statistical analysis to test predetermined hypotheses. Specifically, this study adopted a correlational survey with an ex post facto design, in which no manipulation or experimental treatment was applied to any research variable. Instead, data were collected from naturally occurring conditions through structured questionnaires administered to teachers. Accordingly, the findings should be interpreted as statistical associations rather than evidence of causal relationships.

The research was conducted in all public junior high schools (Sekolah Menengah Pertama Negeri) in Pulau Laut Utara District, Kotabaru Regency, during the 2025/2026 academic year. The research setting was selected because previous school reports

indicated variation in teacher performance, work discipline, and work motivation across schools in the district. In addition, empirical evidence examining the relationships among principals' transformational leadership, teachers' work discipline, work motivation, and teacher performance in this context remains limited. Therefore, the study contributes empirical evidence from a regional educational setting.

The study population comprised all teachers employed in public junior high schools in Pulau Laut Utara District, totaling 137 teachers. Given the relatively small population size, a saturated sampling (total sampling) technique was employed, whereby every teacher in the population was invited to participate. This approach ensured complete representation of the target population within the study setting (Sugiyono, 2019). The respondents included civil servant teachers, Government Employees with Work Agreements (PPPK), and locally contracted teachers.

The study examined four variables: principals' transformational leadership (X_1), teachers' work discipline (X_2), work motivation (M), and teacher performance (Y). Transformational leadership was operationalized using the dimensions proposed by Bass and Avolio (1994), namely idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. Teachers' work discipline was measured based on Davis and Newstrom's (1989) framework, including punctuality, compliance with organizational regulations, adherence to work standards, and responsibility. Work motivation was measured using Herzberg, Mausner, and Snyderman's (1959) Two-Factor Theory, comprising motivational and hygiene factors. Teacher performance was assessed using the performance dimensions proposed by Bernardin and Russell (1993), including instructional planning, instructional implementation, learning evaluation, and professional responsibility.

Data were collected through closed-ended questionnaires and school documentation. The questionnaires were completed by teachers and included self-reported measures of transformational leadership, work discipline, work motivation, and teacher performance. Because teacher performance was measured through self-assessment, the findings may be subject to common method variance and self-report bias. To reduce this potential bias, respondents were assured that their responses would remain anonymous and confidential, participation was voluntary, and no identifying information was collected. In addition, questionnaire items included both positively worded and negatively worded statements to minimize acquiescence bias and encourage more careful responses (Podsakoff et al., 2003; Sugiyono, 2019). Documentation was used to obtain supplementary information, including school profiles, teacher demographics, and administrative records.

The questionnaire was developed based on established theoretical constructs proposed by Bass and Avolio (1994), Davis and Newstrom (1989), Herzberg et al. (1959), and Bernardin and Russell (1993). Instrument development involved identifying construct indicators, preparing an instrument blueprint, drafting questionnaire items, conducting expert review, performing readability testing, and administering a pilot test before the main survey. The final instrument consisted of 70 items representing all study variables.

Prior to the main data collection, the instrument was evaluated for validity and reliability. Construct validity was examined using Pearson's Product-Moment correlation analysis, with items considered valid when the item-total correlation exceeded the critical value. Internal consistency reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha, with coefficients of 0.70 or higher indicating acceptable reliability (Hair et al., 2022).

Before testing the proposed hypotheses, several statistical assumption tests were performed, including tests of normality, linearity, multicollinearity, and heteroscedasticity, to ensure that the data satisfied the assumptions required for regression-based path analysis.

Data were analyzed using IBM SPSS. Descriptive statistics were first computed to summarize respondents' characteristics and the distribution of each research variable. Subsequently, path analysis was employed to examine the direct relationships among the study variables and the indirect relationships involving work motivation as a mediating variable. Hypothesis testing was conducted using regression coefficients with a significance level of 0.05. The structural model was further evaluated using the F-test and the coefficient of determination (R^2) to assess the proportion of variance explained by the proposed model. Given the correlational ex post facto design, the results are interpreted as evidence of statistical relationships rather than causal effects.

C. Finding and Discussion

Finding

Descriptive statistical analysis was performed to characterize the distribution of the research variables, namely principals' transformational leadership (X_1), work discipline (X_2), teachers' work motivation (Z), and teacher performance (Y). The study involved 137 teachers from public junior high schools in Pulau Laut Utara District as respondents. This analysis was conducted to examine respondents' perceptions of each construct prior to hypothesis testing through path analysis. To facilitate interpretation, the data were classified using the Ideal Mean (M_i) and Ideal Standard Deviation (SD_i), resulting in five categories: very high, high, moderate, low, and very low.

Principals' Transformational Leadership

The descriptive statistics indicated that the principals' transformational leadership variable had a minimum score of 63 and a maximum score of 78, with a mean of 66.95 and a standard deviation of 2.803. The mean score demonstrates that teachers generally perceived their principals' transformational leadership to be at a high level. Furthermore, the relatively small standard deviation indicates a high degree of consistency in respondents' perceptions. The categorization results revealed that 34 respondents (24.8%) were classified in the very high category, while 103 respondents (75.2%) were categorized as high. No respondents were classified into the moderate, low, or very low categories. These findings indicate that principals in public junior high schools throughout Pulau Laut Utara District exhibit a high level of transformational leadership. Specifically, the principals were perceived as effectively inspiring teachers, demonstrating exemplary

leadership, providing individualized consideration, and encouraging innovation in the implementation of teachers' professional duties.

Work Discipline

The work discipline variable recorded a minimum score of 61 and a maximum score of 80, with a mean score of 67.33 and a standard deviation of 5.977. These descriptive statistics indicate that teachers' work discipline was generally at a high level, although respondents' scores exhibited slightly greater variability than those observed for transformational leadership. The score categorization showed that 61 respondents (44.5%) were classified in the very high category, whereas 76 respondents (55.5%) were categorized as high. None of the respondents fell within the moderate, low, or very low categories. Therefore, teachers' work discipline in public junior high schools across Pulau Laut Utara District can be considered high. This finding suggests that teachers consistently comply with working hours, institutional regulations, professional standards, and occupational responsibilities, reflecting the development of a positive disciplinary culture within the participating schools.

Teachers' Work Motivation

The descriptive analysis showed that teachers' work motivation had a minimum score of 102 and a maximum score of 129, with a mean score of 109.23 and a standard deviation of 6.835. The average score indicates that teachers' work motivation was generally at a high level. Based on the categorization results, 63 respondents (46.0%) were classified as having very high work motivation, while 74 respondents (54.0%) were categorized as high. No respondents were classified into the moderate, low, or very low categories. These findings suggest that teachers possess strong intrinsic and extrinsic motivation to achieve professional success, continuously enhance their competencies, obtain recognition for their performance, and fulfill their professional responsibilities effectively. Furthermore, a supportive school environment and effective leadership from principals appear to strengthen teachers' work motivation.

Teacher Performance

The teacher performance variable had a minimum score of 45 and a maximum score of 60, with a mean score of 51.41 and a standard deviation of 3.491. These descriptive statistics indicate that teacher performance was generally at a high level, while the relatively low standard deviation reflects substantial consistency in respondents' perceptions. The categorization results demonstrated that 82 respondents (59.9%) were classified in the very high category, whereas 55 respondents (40.1%) were categorized as high. None of the respondents were classified into the moderate, low, or very low categories. Accordingly, teacher performance in public junior high schools throughout Pulau Laut Utara District can be categorized as very high. These findings indicate that most teachers effectively performed their professional responsibilities, including lesson planning, instructional implementation, student assessment, and the fulfillment of

professional obligations. Such results reflect an excellent level of teacher performance, which constitutes an essential foundation for improving the overall quality of education.

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis testing was conducted using multiple regression and path analysis to examine the direct effects of principals' transformational leadership (X_1), work discipline (X_2), and teachers' work motivation (Z) on teacher performance (Y), as well as the structural relationships among the variables specified in the proposed research model.

Effect of Principals' Transformational Leadership on Teacher Performance

The regression analysis generated the following equation: $Y = 19.717 + 0.473X_1$. The positive regression coefficient indicates that an increase in principals' transformational leadership is associated with an improvement in teacher performance. The correlation coefficient ($R = 0.380$) indicates a positive but relatively weak association, whereas the coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.145$) demonstrates that transformational leadership accounts for 14.5% of the variance in teacher performance. The partial t -test yielded $t = 4.775$ with $p < 0.001$, indicating that the first hypothesis was supported. Therefore, principals' transformational leadership exerts a positive and statistically significant effect on teacher performance.

Effect of Work Discipline on Teacher Performance

The regression analysis produced the following equation: $Y = 14.869 + 0.543X_2$. The positive regression coefficient indicates that improvements in teachers' work discipline are accompanied by increases in teacher performance. The correlation coefficient ($R = 0.929$) demonstrates a very strong positive relationship, while the coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.863$) indicates that work discipline explains 86.3% of the variance in teacher performance. The partial t -test yielded $t = 29.223$ with $p < 0.001$, providing support for the second hypothesis. These findings demonstrate that work discipline is the strongest predictor of teacher performance among the variables examined in this study.

Effect of Principals' Transformational Leadership on Teachers' Work Motivation

The regression analysis resulted in the following equation: $Z = 56.440 + 0.788X_1$. The correlation coefficient ($R = 0.323$) indicates a positive but relatively weak relationship, whereas the coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.105$) suggests that principals' transformational leadership explains 10.5% of the variance in teachers' work motivation. The partial t -test produced $t = 3.970$ with $p < 0.001$, confirming support for the third hypothesis. Accordingly, principals' transformational leadership has a positive and statistically significant influence on teachers' work motivation.

Effect of Work Discipline on Teachers' Work Motivation

The regression analysis generated the following equation: $Z = 40.046 + 1.027X_2$. The correlation coefficient ($R = 0.898$) indicates a very strong positive relationship between work discipline and teachers' work motivation. Moreover, the coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.807$) demonstrates that work discipline explains 80.7% of the variance in teachers' work motivation. The partial t -test yielded $t = 23.776$ with $p < 0.001$, supporting the fourth

hypothesis. Therefore, work discipline has a positive and statistically significant effect on teachers' work motivation.

Effect of Teachers' Work Motivation on Teacher Performance

The regression analysis produced the following equation: $Y = 2.858 + 0.444Z$. The correlation coefficient ($R = 0.870$) indicates a very strong positive relationship between teachers' work motivation and teacher performance. Furthermore, the coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.758$) demonstrates that teachers' work motivation explains 75.8% of the variance in teacher performance. The partial t -test yielded $t = 20.540$ with $p < 0.001$, indicating that the fifth hypothesis was supported. Therefore, teachers' work motivation has a positive and statistically significant effect on teacher performance.

Summary of Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis	Relationship Between Variables	t-value	R^2	Decision
H ₁	Principals' Transformational Leadership → Teacher Performance	4.775	0.145	Supported
H ₂	Work Discipline → Teacher Performance	29.223	0.863	Supported
H ₃	Principals' Transformational Leadership → Teachers' Work Motivation	3.970	0.105	Supported
H ₄	Work Discipline → Teachers' Work Motivation	23.776	0.807	Supported
H ₅	Teachers' Work Motivation → Teacher Performance	20.540	0.758	Supported

Overall, all research hypotheses were supported. Work discipline demonstrated the strongest influence on both teachers' work motivation and teacher performance, whereas principals' transformational leadership also exerted a positive and statistically significant influence, although with a relatively smaller explanatory contribution. These findings suggest that improvements in teacher performance are facilitated by the combined influence of principals' transformational leadership, teachers' work discipline, and work motivation, all of which constitute essential determinants of teachers' professional effectiveness.

Path Analysis Results

Path analysis was conducted to examine both the direct and indirect relationships among the research variables. The findings indicate that teachers' work motivation functions as a mediating variable in the relationship between principals' transformational leadership and teacher performance, as well as in the relationship between work discipline and teacher performance. The indirect effect of principals' transformational leadership on teacher performance through teachers' work motivation was greater than its direct effect, indicating that enhanced work motivation strengthens the influence of transformational leadership on teacher performance. In contrast, although teachers' work motivation also mediated the relationship between work discipline and teacher performance, the direct

effect of work discipline remained the dominant pathway. These results suggest that work motivation partially mediates the relationships among the study variables while reinforcing the positive effects of transformational leadership and work discipline on teacher performance.

Joint Effect of Principals' Transformational Leadership and Teachers' Work Motivation on Teacher Performance

The sixth hypothesis was tested using multiple linear regression to examine the simultaneous effects of principals' transformational leadership (X_1) and teachers' work motivation (Z) on teacher performance (Y). The regression analysis produced the following equation: $Y = -4.343 + 0.137X_1 + 0.426Z$. Both regression coefficients are positive, indicating that improvements in principals' transformational leadership and teachers' work motivation are associated with corresponding increases in teacher performance.

The correlation coefficient ($R = 0.877$) indicates a very strong positive relationship, while the coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.768$) demonstrates that these two variables jointly explain 76.8% of the variance in teacher performance. The partial t -tests further revealed that principals' transformational leadership had a positive and statistically significant effect on teacher performance ($t = 2.509, p = 0.013$). Likewise, teachers' work motivation exerted a positive and statistically significant effect on teacher performance ($t = 19.003, p < 0.001$). Accordingly, the sixth hypothesis was supported.

Joint Effect of Work Discipline and Teachers' Work Motivation on Teacher Performance

The seventh hypothesis was examined using multiple linear regression to determine the combined effects of work discipline (X_2) and teachers' work motivation (Z) on teacher performance (Y). The resulting regression equation was: $Y = 11.102 + 0.446X_2 + 0.094Z$. The regression coefficients indicate that both work discipline and teachers' work motivation positively contribute to teacher performance. The correlation coefficient ($R = 0.933$) demonstrates a very strong positive relationship, whereas the coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.870$) indicates that work discipline and teachers' work motivation collectively explain 87.0% of the variance in teacher performance. The partial t -tests showed that work discipline had a positive and statistically significant effect on teacher performance ($t = 10.768, p < 0.001$). Similarly, teachers' work motivation also had a positive and statistically significant effect on teacher performance ($t = 2.597, p = 0.010$). Therefore, the seventh hypothesis was supported.

Mediation Analysis (Sobel Test)

The mediation analysis was performed using the Sobel Test to examine the mediating role of teachers' work motivation in the relationships between principals' transformational leadership, work discipline, and teacher performance. The results indicated that the indirect path. Principals' Transformational Leadership $\rightarrow$ Teachers' Work Motivation $\rightarrow$ Teacher Performance produced a Sobel test statistic of $Z = 3.88$, which exceeded the critical value of $Z = 1.96$. Therefore, the indirect effect was statistically

significant, confirming that teachers' work motivation significantly mediates the relationship between principals' transformational leadership and teacher performance.

Similarly, for the indirect path Work Discipline → Teachers' Work Motivation → Teacher Performance, the Sobel test yielded $Z = 2.60$, which was also greater than the critical value of 1.96. This finding demonstrates that teachers' work motivation significantly mediates the relationship between work discipline and teacher performance.

Summary of Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Relationship Between Variables	Results	Decision
H ₁	Principals' Transformational Leadership → Teacher Performance	Positive and significant ($t = 4.775, p < 0.001$)	Supported
H ₂	Work Discipline → Teacher Performance	Positive and significant ($t = 29.223, p < 0.001$)	Supported
H ₃	Principals' Transformational Leadership → Teachers' Work Motivation	Positive and significant ($t = 3.970, p < 0.001$)	Supported
H ₄	Work Discipline → Teachers' Work Motivation	Positive and significant ($t = 23.776, p < 0.001$)	Supported
H ₅	Teachers' Work Motivation → Teacher Performance	Positive and significant ($t = 20.540, p < 0.001$)	Supported
H ₆	Principals' Transformational Leadership → Teachers' Work Motivation → Teacher Performance	Significant mediation ($Z = 3.88$)	Supported
H ₇	Work Discipline → Teachers' Work Motivation → Teacher Performance	Significant mediation ($Z = 2.60$)	Supported

Overall, all research hypotheses were supported. Among the variables examined, work discipline exerted the strongest direct influence on teacher performance. Meanwhile, teachers' work motivation was confirmed to function as a significant mediating variable, strengthening the effects of both principals' transformational leadership and work discipline on teacher performance. These findings suggest that efforts to improve school leadership and strengthen teachers' work discipline are likely to be more effective in enhancing teacher performance when accompanied by initiatives aimed at increasing teachers' work motivation.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that principals' transformational leadership, work discipline, and teachers' work motivation are interrelated determinants of teacher performance. Work discipline emerged as the most influential predictor, whereas teachers' work motivation served as an important psychological mechanism through which transformational leadership and work discipline enhanced teacher performance. These

results imply that improving educational quality in public junior high schools in Pulau Laut Utara District requires an integrated strategy that simultaneously strengthens principals' transformational leadership, fosters a sustainable culture of work discipline, and continuously enhances teachers' work motivation. Such a comprehensive approach is expected to promote higher levels of teacher professionalism and contribute to improved educational outcomes.

Discussion

Overview of the Effects of Principals' Transformational Leadership, Work Discipline, Teachers' Work Motivation, and Teacher Performance in Public Junior High Schools in Pulau Laut Utara District

Principals' Transformational Leadership

The descriptive findings indicate that principals' transformational leadership in public junior high schools in Pulau Laut Utara District was categorized as high. The mean score of 66.95, with 97.8% of respondents classified within the high and very high categories, demonstrates that principals have effectively implemented transformational leadership practices. These findings suggest that principals are perceived as serving as exemplary role models, inspiring teachers, encouraging instructional innovation, and providing individualized support for teachers' professional development.

These findings are consistent with the transformational leadership theory proposed by Bass and Avolio (1994), which identifies four fundamental dimensions of transformational leadership: *idealized influence*, *inspirational motivation*, *intellectual stimulation*, and *individualized consideration*. Together, these dimensions enhance organizational members' commitment, trust, and motivation to achieve shared institutional goals. Within the educational context, principals who consistently demonstrate transformational leadership foster a positive organizational climate that supports teachers' professional growth and instructional effectiveness.

The inferential analysis further revealed that principals' transformational leadership exerted a positive and statistically significant influence on both teacher performance ($R^2 = 0.145$) and teachers' work motivation ($R^2 = 0.105$). Although its explanatory power was lower than that of work discipline, transformational leadership remains an important organizational factor in cultivating a supportive school environment that promotes instructional quality. Consequently, strengthening principals' leadership competencies through continuous leadership development programs, communication skills enhancement, and organizational culture improvement should remain a strategic priority for improving educational quality.

Teachers' Work Discipline

The results demonstrate that teachers' work discipline was also classified as high, with a mean score of 67.33, while 97.8% of respondents were categorized as having high or very high levels of work discipline. These findings indicate that the majority of teachers consistently fulfilled their professional responsibilities, including punctual attendance,

compliance with school regulations, adherence to professional standards, and timely completion of assigned duties.

According to Davis and Newstrom (1989), work discipline represents employees' adherence to organizational rules and standards, serving as a fundamental prerequisite for organizational effectiveness. Within educational institutions, teachers' work discipline reflects professional commitment because it directly influences instructional consistency and the quality of educational services provided to students.

The inferential findings further indicate that work discipline was the strongest predictor of teacher performance, explaining 86.3% of its variance, while also exerting a substantial influence on teachers' work motivation ($R^2 = 0.807$). These results suggest that a strong disciplinary culture constitutes the primary foundation for enhancing teacher performance. Accordingly, schools should maintain and strengthen disciplinary practices through systematic supervision, continuous professional guidance, exemplary leadership by school principals, and the consistent enforcement of institutional regulations.

Teachers' Work Motivation

Teachers' work motivation in public junior high schools throughout Pulau Laut Utara District was likewise categorized as high, with a mean score of 69.05, and all respondents falling within either the high or very high categories. These findings indicate that teachers possess strong internal motivation to perform their professional duties effectively while continuously striving to improve instructional quality. These findings support Herzberg, Mausner, and Snyderman's (1959) Two-Factor Theory, which explains that employees' work motivation is influenced by intrinsic factors such as achievement, recognition, responsibility, meaningful work, and opportunities for professional growth. Teachers with higher levels of motivation are generally more committed to their profession and demonstrate greater willingness to achieve superior instructional outcomes. The inferential analysis revealed that teachers' work motivation had a positive and statistically significant effect on teacher performance, accounting for 75.8% of the observed variance. Furthermore, the path analysis and Sobel test confirmed that teachers' work motivation significantly mediated the relationships between principals' transformational leadership and teacher performance, as well as between work discipline and teacher performance. These findings indicate that work motivation serves as an important psychological mechanism through which organizational factors translate into improved teacher performance.

Teacher Performance

The findings indicate that teacher performance was categorized as high, with a mean score of 51.41, while the majority of respondents were classified within the high and very high performance categories. These results demonstrate that teachers effectively fulfilled their professional responsibilities, including instructional planning, classroom implementation, student assessment, and other professional duties.

According to Bernardin and Russell (1993), performance refers to the outcomes achieved by individuals based on predetermined job standards. Within the educational

context, high teacher performance reflects teachers' effectiveness in fulfilling their multiple professional roles as educators, instructors, mentors, and evaluators of student learning.

The findings further demonstrate that teacher performance is jointly influenced by principals' transformational leadership, teachers' work discipline, and teachers' work motivation. Among these determinants, work discipline exerted the strongest direct influence on teacher performance, whereas teachers' work motivation functioned as a mediating variable that strengthened the effects of transformational leadership and work discipline. These findings underscore that improving educational quality depends not only on teachers' individual competencies but also on effective school leadership, a strong organizational culture of discipline, and teachers' psychological readiness to perform their professional responsibilities.

Therefore, initiatives aimed at improving teacher performance should adopt a comprehensive and integrated approach by strengthening principals' transformational leadership, reinforcing teachers' work discipline, and continuously enhancing teachers' work motivation. Such an integrated strategy is expected to promote sustainable professional development and contribute to the continuous improvement of educational quality in public junior high schools throughout Pulau Laut Utara District.

Discussion of the Direct Effects Among Variables

Effect of Principals' Transformational Leadership on Teacher Performance

The findings of this study demonstrate that principals' transformational leadership has a positive and statistically significant effect on teacher performance in public junior high schools in Pulau Laut Utara District ($R = 0.380$; $R^2 = 0.145$; $p < 0.001$). These results indicate that improvements in principals' transformational leadership practices are associated with higher levels of teacher performance in carrying out professional responsibilities. Although the explanatory power of transformational leadership accounts for 14.5% of the variance in teacher performance, its contribution remains meaningful, highlighting the strategic role of school leadership in fostering a productive educational environment. These findings are consistent with the transformational leadership theory proposed by Bass and Avolio (1994), which posits that transformational leaders enhance followers' performance through four key dimensions: *idealized influence*, *inspirational motivation*, *intellectual stimulation*, and *individualized consideration*. Within the school context, principals who establish a shared vision, provide professional support, and encourage instructional innovation are more likely to strengthen teachers' organizational commitment and improve their professional performance.

The present findings also corroborate previous empirical studies demonstrating that transformational leadership contributes to improved teacher performance by fostering a supportive organizational climate, promoting effective communication, and empowering teachers in the instructional process. Therefore, strengthening principals' transformational leadership competencies through continuous professional development, leadership training, and organizational capacity-building should remain a central strategy for enhancing educational quality.

Effect of Work Discipline on Teacher Performance

The results further indicate that work discipline has a positive and statistically significant effect on teacher performance, explaining 86.3% of the observed variance ($R = 0.929$; $R^2 = 0.863$; $p < 0.001$). Among all variables examined in this study, work discipline emerged as the strongest predictor of teacher performance. From a theoretical perspective, these findings support the proposition of Davis and Newstrom (1989), who argued that discipline constitutes a fundamental prerequisite for organizational effectiveness. In educational settings, teachers' work discipline is reflected in punctuality, compliance with institutional regulations, adherence to instructional schedules, timely completion of administrative responsibilities, and accountability for professional duties. The substantial contribution of work discipline suggests that orderly, consistent, and responsible work behavior is a critical determinant of effective teaching performance. Teachers with high levels of discipline are generally more systematic in lesson planning, classroom instruction, student assessment, and the execution of other professional responsibilities, resulting in superior performance outcomes.

These findings imply that efforts to improve educational quality should extend beyond strengthening school leadership by cultivating a strong culture of work discipline through continuous supervision, professional guidance, exemplary leadership, and the consistent implementation of institutional policies.

Effect of Principals' Transformational Leadership on Teachers' Work Motivation

The findings reveal that principals' transformational leadership has a positive and statistically significant influence on teachers' work motivation ($R = 0.323$; $R^2 = 0.105$; $p < 0.001$). Although transformational leadership explains only 10.5% of the variance in teachers' work motivation, the results indicate that principals play an important role in enhancing teachers' enthusiasm, commitment, and willingness to perform their professional responsibilities effectively.

These findings are in accordance with the transformational leadership framework developed by Bass and Avolio (1994), which emphasizes that transformational leaders inspire followers by articulating a compelling vision, providing professional support, recognizing achievements, and facilitating opportunities for personal and professional development. Within educational institutions, principals function not only as administrators but also as motivational leaders who cultivate a positive organizational climate in which teachers feel valued, respected, and encouraged to achieve high levels of performance.

Although the magnitude of its influence is smaller than that of work discipline, transformational leadership remains an important organizational factor because it shapes teachers' psychological readiness and professional commitment. Principals who demonstrate effective communication, visionary leadership, and supportive behaviors are more likely to strengthen teachers' work engagement and organizational commitment.

Effect of Work Discipline on Teachers' Work Motivation

The study also demonstrates that work discipline exerts a positive and statistically significant influence on teachers' work motivation, explaining 80.7% of the variance in motivation ($R = 0.898$; $R^2 = 0.807$; $p < 0.001$). This substantial explanatory power indicates that work discipline is a highly influential determinant of teachers' motivational levels.

These findings support the theoretical perspective advanced by Davis and Newstrom (1989), who described discipline as an individual's commitment to organizational rules, responsibilities, and professional standards. Teachers who consistently demonstrate punctuality, responsibility, and compliance with institutional expectations are more likely to develop stronger self-confidence, greater job satisfaction, and higher achievement orientation, all of which contribute to increased work motivation.

The findings further suggest that teachers' motivation is not solely generated by external incentives such as rewards or financial compensation but can also emerge from disciplined work habits and professional responsibility. Consequently, establishing and maintaining a strong culture of discipline represents an effective strategy for fostering teachers' intrinsic motivation in a sustainable manner.

Effect of Teachers' Work Motivation on Teacher Performance

The findings confirm that teachers' work motivation has a positive and statistically significant effect on teacher performance ($R = 0.870$; $R^2 = 0.758$; $p < 0.001$). These results indicate that work motivation is one of the primary determinants of teachers' professional effectiveness.

This finding is consistent with Herzberg, Mausner, and Snyderman's (1959) Two-Factor Theory, which argues that intrinsic motivational factors including achievement, recognition, responsibility, meaningful work, and opportunities for professional growth serve as the principal drivers of individual performance. Teachers with higher levels of motivation are more likely to demonstrate greater enthusiasm in instructional planning, classroom implementation, student assessment, and continuous professional development.

Beyond its direct influence on teacher performance, work motivation also functions as a psychological mechanism through which principals' transformational leadership and teachers' work discipline influence performance outcomes. Accordingly, work motivation occupies a strategic position within the proposed research model by strengthening the relationships between organizational factors, work-related behaviors, and teacher performance.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that improvements in teacher performance are influenced not only by structural and organizational factors, such as principals' transformational leadership, but also by individual factors, particularly work discipline and work motivation. Therefore, strategies aimed at enhancing educational quality should adopt an integrated approach that simultaneously strengthens transformational leadership, fosters a sustainable culture of work discipline, and promotes teachers' work motivation. Such a comprehensive strategy is expected to enhance teacher

professionalism, improve instructional quality, and ultimately contribute to better educational outcomes.

Discussion of the Indirect Effects (Mediation)

Effect of Principals' Transformational Leadership on Teacher Performance Through Teachers' Work Motivation

The path analysis results demonstrate that teachers' work motivation serves as a significant mediating variable in the relationship between principals' transformational leadership and teacher performance in public junior high schools in Pulau Laut Utara District. The indirect effect was 0.270, obtained by multiplying the standardized path coefficient from principals' transformational leadership to teachers' work motivation ($\beta = 0.323$) by the standardized path coefficient from teachers' work motivation to teacher performance ($\beta = 0.835$). This indirect effect exceeded the direct effect of principals' transformational leadership on teacher performance ($\beta = 0.110$). Furthermore, the Sobel test produced a Z-value of 3.88, which exceeded the critical value of 1.96 at the 5% significance level, confirming that the mediation effect was statistically significant.

These findings indicate that principals' transformational leadership enhances teacher performance not only directly but also indirectly by strengthening teachers' work motivation. Consequently, the more effectively principals implement transformational leadership practices, the higher the level of teachers' work motivation, which subsequently contributes to improved professional performance.

From a theoretical perspective, these findings support the transformational leadership theory proposed by Bass and Avolio (1994), which argues that transformational leaders influence followers through idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. These leadership dimensions not only promote commitment to organizational goals but also foster intrinsic motivation, encouraging individuals to perform beyond expected standards.

Within the educational context, principals who clearly communicate the school's vision, recognize teachers' achievements, provide opportunities for professional development, and cultivate positive interpersonal relationships create a supportive organizational climate. Such an environment enhances teachers' sense of appreciation, organizational belonging, and professional commitment, thereby strengthening their work motivation and ultimately improving teacher performance.

The findings further revealed that principals' transformational leadership explained 10.5% of the variance in teachers' work motivation, whereas teachers' work motivation explained 75.8% of the variance in teacher performance. These results indicate that although the direct contribution of transformational leadership to teacher performance is relatively modest, its strategic value lies in its ability to strengthen teachers' work motivation, which subsequently exerts a substantial influence on performance outcomes. From the perspective of organizational behavior, transformational leadership operates through teachers' psychological processes rather than solely through supervision or formal authority. Instead, teachers' improved performance is driven by enhanced intrinsic

motivation, commitment, confidence, and enthusiasm fostered by inspirational leadership practices. Consequently, teachers' work motivation represents an essential mechanism explaining how transformational leadership contributes to improved teacher performance.

The practical implications of these findings suggest that leadership development programs for school principals should extend beyond administrative and managerial competencies to include strategies for strengthening teachers' motivation. Such initiatives may include recognizing teachers' achievements, involving teachers in decision-making processes, expanding opportunities for continuous professional development, and fostering a collaborative and innovation-oriented school culture. Therefore, the findings confirm that teachers' work motivation significantly mediates the relationship between principals' transformational leadership and teacher performance, indicating that transformational leadership becomes more effective in improving teacher performance when accompanied by higher levels of teacher motivation.

Effect of Work Discipline on Teacher Performance Through Teachers' Work Motivation

The path analysis further indicates that teachers' work motivation significantly mediates the relationship between work discipline and teacher performance in public junior high schools in Pulau Laut Utara District. The indirect effect was 0.165, calculated by multiplying the standardized coefficient for the relationship between work discipline and teachers' work motivation ($\beta = 0.898$) by the standardized coefficient linking teachers' work motivation to teacher performance ($\beta = 0.184$). The Sobel test yielded a Z-value of 2.60, exceeding the critical value of 1.96, thereby confirming the statistical significance of the mediation effect.

These findings indicate that work discipline improves teacher performance not only through its direct influence but also by strengthening teachers' work motivation. Teachers who consistently demonstrate high levels of discipline tend to exhibit more systematic work habits, stronger professional responsibility, and greater organizational commitment. These characteristics foster intrinsic motivation, which subsequently contributes to improved teacher performance.

The results are consistent with the theoretical perspective of Davis and Newstrom (1989), who conceptualized work discipline as individuals' willingness to comply voluntarily with organizational rules, standards, and responsibilities. Disciplined employees generally demonstrate stronger work orientation, more effective time management, and greater commitment to organizational objectives. These characteristics provide a solid foundation for developing sustainable work motivation.

Within the educational setting, teachers' work discipline is reflected in punctuality, adherence to instructional schedules, timely completion of educational administration, consistent implementation of student assessment, and responsibility for fulfilling professional obligations. Regular and disciplined work habits generate repeated experiences of successful task completion, thereby enhancing teachers' confidence, job satisfaction, and intrinsic motivation to maintain and improve their professional performance.

The study also found that work discipline exerted a very strong influence on teachers' work motivation, explaining 80.7% of its variance. These findings suggest that teachers' motivation is influenced more substantially by disciplined work habits than by external motivational factors. Teachers who consistently work in an organized, systematic, and responsible manner are more likely to sustain long-term enthusiasm and commitment toward their professional responsibilities.

Although the indirect effect (0.165) was smaller than the direct effect of work discipline on teacher performance (0.764), the Sobel test confirmed that the mediation pathway remained statistically significant. Accordingly, teachers' work motivation functions as a partial mediator, reinforcing the relationship between work discipline and teacher performance. In other words, work discipline enhances teacher performance both directly and indirectly through increased work motivation.

From the perspective of educational management, these findings suggest that fostering teachers' work discipline should not be viewed merely as enforcing organizational rules but rather as an effective strategy for strengthening teachers' motivation and professionalism. A strong culture of discipline contributes to a productive work environment, enhances job satisfaction, and reinforces teachers' commitment to achieving educational goals. Consequently, schools should cultivate a sustainable culture of discipline through exemplary leadership, effective supervision, continuous professional development, and the consistent and equitable implementation of institutional policies. Such initiatives are expected to strengthen teachers' work motivation and improve their professional performance over time.

Overall, the findings confirm that teachers' work motivation significantly mediates the relationship between work discipline and teacher performance, indicating that the positive effects of work discipline become even more substantial when accompanied by enhanced work motivation. Overall, the results of the path analysis and Sobel tests indicate that teachers' work motivation serves as a significant mediating variable in the relationships between principals' transformational leadership, teachers' work discipline, and teacher performance. For the transformational leadership pathway, the direct association with teacher performance was 0.110, whereas the indirect association through work motivation reached 0.270. Similarly, for the work discipline pathway, the direct association was 0.764, while the indirect association through work motivation was 0.165. All mediation pathways were statistically significant based on the Sobel test.

From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to the educational leadership and organizational behavior literature by providing empirical support for work motivation as a mediating mechanism linking organizational factors with teacher performance in the context of Indonesian public junior high schools. While previous studies have generally examined transformational leadership, work discipline, and teacher performance as direct relationships, this study extends existing knowledge by demonstrating that teachers' work motivation represents an important explanatory mechanism through which leadership and work discipline are associated with teacher performance. These findings reinforce motivational theories, particularly Herzberg's Two-

Factor Theory, by highlighting the importance of motivational processes in understanding how organizational conditions relate to teachers' professional performance. Furthermore, the findings enrich the literature on educational leadership by offering evidence from a regional educational context that has received limited scholarly attention.

From a practical perspective, the findings suggest that efforts to improve teacher performance should not focus solely on strengthening principals' transformational leadership or reinforcing teachers' work discipline. Instead, schools should also prioritize strategies that foster teachers' work motivation, such as providing professional recognition, meaningful opportunities for professional development, supportive leadership practices, and a positive organizational climate. By integrating these organizational and motivational approaches, schools may create conditions that are more conducive to enhancing teacher performance.

Although the magnitudes of the direct and indirect associations differed across the mediation pathways, these coefficients were estimated from separate regression models and therefore should not be interpreted as indicating the superiority of one pathway over another. Rather, the principal finding of this study is that teachers' work motivation consistently functions as a significant mediating variable in both relationships. Because this study employed a correlational *ex post facto* design, these findings should be interpreted as evidence of statistically significant associations rather than causal relationships. Future studies employing longitudinal or experimental designs are recommended to further examine the temporal and causal dynamics among transformational leadership, work discipline, work motivation, and teacher performance.

E. Conclusion

This study concludes that principals' transformational leadership, teachers' work discipline, work motivation, and teacher performance in public junior high schools in Pulau Laut Utara District were generally perceived to be at a high level. The findings indicate that principals' transformational leadership, teachers' work discipline, and work motivation are significantly associated with teacher performance. In addition, teachers' work motivation serves as a significant mediating variable in the relationships between transformational leadership and teacher performance, as well as between work discipline and teacher performance.

The study highlights the importance of work motivation as a key psychological mechanism through which organizational factors are related to teacher performance. These findings extend the existing literature by demonstrating that the relationship between transformational leadership, work discipline, and teacher performance is better understood when teachers' work motivation is considered. This provides additional empirical evidence supporting motivational perspectives in educational leadership and teacher performance research, particularly within the context of Indonesian public junior high schools.

From a practical perspective, the findings suggest that efforts to enhance teacher performance should adopt an integrated approach that combines effective

transformational leadership, consistent work discipline, and strategies to strengthen teachers' work motivation. Such an approach may contribute to creating a more supportive organizational environment for improving teacher performance. Given the correlational and ex post facto nature of this study, the findings should be interpreted as evidence of statistical associations rather than causal relationships. Future research employing longitudinal or experimental designs is recommended to further examine the dynamic relationships among these variables.

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