

THE INFLUENCE OF PRINCIPAL LEADERSHIP STYLE ON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHER PERFORMANCE

Andik Hariyanto^{*}, Ahmad Thohirin & A. Faizin

UPT SD Negeri 113 Gresik, Indonesia

Email: andikhariyanto99@gmail.com

Article History

Received: 20 May 2026

Accepted: 18 July 2026

Published: 02 August 2026

Abstract

Teacher performance is a strategic factor in improving the quality of elementary education. In the context of the *Merdeka Belajar* policy, principals are required to act as instructional leaders who are able to influence teachers' professional performance in a sustainable manner. This study aims to analyze the effect of the principal's leadership style on the performance of elementary school teachers in School Cluster 2, Benjeng District, Gresik Regency. This study employed a quantitative approach with a correlational design. The population consisted of all elementary school teachers from five elementary schools in School Cluster 2, Benjeng District, Gresik Regency, totaling 43 teachers. The sampling technique used was saturated sampling, meaning that the entire population was included as research respondents. Data were collected using a five-point Likert scale questionnaire that had met validity and reliability testing requirements. Data analysis was conducted using simple linear regression. The results show that the principal's leadership style has a positive and significant effect on teacher performance ($\beta = 0.691$; $p < 0.05$), with a contribution of 47.8%. The effect size value ($f^2 = 0.91$) indicates a strong practical effect. The study concludes that transformational and participative principal leadership plays an important role in improving the performance of elementary school teachers.

Keywords: Elementary School, Leadership Style, Principal, Teacher Performance.

A. INTRODUCTION

Elementary education serves as the main foundation for shaping students' character, basic literacy, and twenty-first-century competencies. At this level, schools do not merely function as spaces for knowledge transfer, but also as arenas for value internalization, attitude formation, and the continuous development of social and cognitive skills. Therefore, the successful implementation of elementary education is strongly determined by the quality of teacher performance as the main driver of the classroom learning process.

Teacher performance reflects professional competence in planning, implementing, and evaluating learning effectively while remaining oriented toward students' needs. Teachers do not only serve as instructors, but also as educators who shape students' values, attitudes, and skills through role modelling, pedagogical interaction, and meaningful classroom

<http://jurnaldialektika.com/>

Publisher: Perkumpulan Ilmuwan Administrasi Negara Indonesia

P-ISSN: 1412-9736

E-ISSN: 2828-545X

management. Optimal teacher performance has direct implications for improving the quality of learning and students' learning outcomes.

In practice, teacher performance is influenced by various factors, both individual and organizational. One organizational factor that plays a strategic role is the principal's leadership. The principal is responsible for directing the school's vision and mission, fostering teacher professionalism, and creating a conducive, supportive, and collaborative work climate. Effective leadership encourages the development of a school culture oriented toward quality improvement and learning innovation.

Various empirical studies have shown that transformational and participative leadership styles have a significant influence on improving teacher performance (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Goleman, 2000). Transformational leadership emphasizes the leader's ability to inspire, motivate, and empower teachers to achieve their best performance, while participative leadership encourages teachers' involvement in decision-making and school management. Principals who are able to provide role modelling, emotional support, and professional development facilitation can encourage teachers to work optimally, creatively, and responsibly.

In the context of national education policy, which emphasizes the strengthening of learning quality and teacher professional development, the role of principal leadership has become increasingly crucial. Principals are expected not only to act as administrators, but also as instructional leaders who are able to manage human resources effectively and sustainably. Adaptive and humanistic leadership is believed to enhance teachers' work motivation, job satisfaction, and overall performance.

School Cluster 2 in Benjeng District, Gresik Regency, provides a relevant research context because it consists of elementary schools with diverse characteristics and different dynamics of principal leadership. This condition offers an opportunity to empirically examine the relationship between the principal's leadership style and teacher performance at the elementary education level. Therefore, this study focuses on the influence of the principal's leadership style on elementary school teacher performance as an effort to provide scientific and practical contributions to the development of educational management at the elementary school level.

B. LITERATURE REVIEW

Transformational Leadership Theory

Transformational leadership is a leadership approach that emphasizes a leader's ability to drive change through a clear vision, role modelling, motivation, and the empowerment of organizational members. In the school context, principals who apply transformational leadership do not merely perform administrative functions but also act as change agents who are able to strengthen teachers' professional spirit in improving the quality of learning. It should be noted that this type of leadership works not only through formal instructions, but also through the principal's ability to build trust, provide inspiration, and create a work environment that encourages teachers to develop. The relevance of this theory is particularly strong because this study seeks to explain how the principal's leadership style can have a real

effect on the performance of elementary school teachers. Transformational leadership consists of four main dimensions, namely idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Bass & Avolio, 1994).

Indicators:

- Idealized influence or the principal's role modelling.
- Inspirational motivation for teachers.
- Intellectual stimulation to encourage innovation.
- Individualized consideration of teachers' needs.
- Teacher empowerment in professional development.

Participative Leadership Theory

Participative leadership is a leadership theory that places the involvement of organizational members as an important element in the decision-making process. In the school environment, principals who apply a participative leadership style provide opportunities for teachers to express ideas, participate in program planning, and contribute to determining the direction of school development. Interestingly, this leadership style not only strengthens communication between principals and teachers but also fosters a sense of ownership toward decisions and programs implemented collectively. Therefore, this theory is relevant to the study because teacher performance can improve when teachers feel valued, trusted, and involved in the school's managerial processes. Participative leadership positions the leader as a facilitator who promotes collaboration, builds trust, and strengthens work commitment within educational organizations (Yukl, 2013).

Indicators:

- Teacher involvement in decision-making.
- Open communication between the principal and teachers.
- Opportunities for teachers to express opinions.
- Collaboration in school program planning.
- The principal's trust in teachers' abilities.

Teacher Performance Theory

Teacher performance can be understood as the implementation of teachers' professional duties, as reflected in their ability to plan, implement, evaluate, and continuously develop the learning process. In the context of elementary education, teacher performance is not only related to teaching ability in the classroom but also includes pedagogical responsibility, discipline, classroom management, and commitment to supporting students' development. However, good teacher performance does not emerge automatically, as it is strongly influenced by the support of the school environment, principal leadership, and the work culture developed within the organization. Therefore, teacher performance theory is important in this study because the main variable to be explained is the extent to which the principal's leadership style can encourage improvement in teacher performance. Fundamentally, performance refers to work behavior that contributes to the achievement of organizational goals, including schools as educational organizations (Campbell et al., 1993).

Indicators:

- Lesson planning.

- Implementation of learning.
- Evaluation of learning outcomes.
- Classroom management.
- Teacher professional development.
- Work responsibility and discipline.

C. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed a quantitative approach with a correlational design, aiming to examine the relationship and influence between principal leadership style and teacher performance. The quantitative approach was chosen because it allows researchers to objectively measure variables, present data numerically, and test hypotheses based on empirical findings obtained from respondents. In educational research, a correlational design is relevant when researchers want to determine the direction and strength of the relationship between variables without directly treating respondents. This design also aligns with the research objective, which focuses on examining the contribution of principal leadership style to variations in teacher performance. Therefore, a quantitative correlational approach is deemed appropriate for explaining the relationship between variables systematically and measurably (Creswell & Creswell, 2023; Cohen et al., 2018).

The study population consisted of all 43 elementary school teachers at five elementary schools in School Cluster 2, Benjeng District, Gresik Regency. The five elementary schools comprised public elementary schools within the same cluster and had relatively similar educational organizational characteristics. Given that the population size was still within reach, the sampling technique used was saturated sampling. Saturated sampling techniques are used when the entire population is used as research respondents, especially when the population is relatively small and allows for comprehensive research. Therefore, all teachers in this study population were selected as respondents to ensure the data obtained more closely represents the actual conditions in the research area (Sugiyono, 2022; Cohen et al., 2018).

The data collection instrument consisted of a closed-ended questionnaire with a five-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The Likert scale was used because it can measure respondents' attitudes, perceptions, and assessments of constructs that cannot be directly observed, making it suitable for measuring principal leadership style and teacher performance. The use of a five-point scale is also commonly used in educational and social science research because it provides clear, balanced, and easily understood response options for respondents. The principal leadership style variable was measured based on transformational leadership indicators, including idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized attention (Bass & Avolio, 1994). Meanwhile, teacher performance variables were measured based on indicators of lesson planning, lesson implementation, evaluation of learning outcomes, and professional development (Campbell et al., 1993; Koo & Yang, 2025; Kusmaryono et al., 2022).

Instrument validity was tested using product-moment correlation to determine the degree of correlation between the score of each statement item and the total score of the variable. A statement item was declared valid if the correlation coefficient value was greater than the

table's r value at a significance level of 5%. Next, the instrument's reliability was tested using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient to ensure the internal consistency of each statement item in measuring the same construct. An instrument is considered reliable if the Alpha coefficient value is greater than 0.70, indicating adequate internal consistency. Therefore, validity and reliability tests are necessary to ensure the research instrument is truly suitable for collecting empirical data accurately and consistently (Hair et al., 2022; Izah et al., 2024).

Data analysis was conducted using simple linear regression to determine the effect of the principal's leadership style on teacher performance. This technique was used because the study involved only one independent variable, namely the principal's leadership style, and one dependent variable, namely teacher performance. Hypothesis testing was conducted at a significance level of 0.05 using statistical software to obtain systematic and objective analysis results. The results of the regression analysis were used to determine the direction of influence, the magnitude of the regression coefficient, the significance value, and the contribution of the independent variables to the dependent variable through the coefficient of determination. Thus, simple linear regression is an appropriate analysis technique to explain how much the principal's leadership style plays a role in improving teacher performance (Hair et al., 2022; Lee, 2022).

D. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Research Variables

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Deviasi	Category
Principal Leadership Style	43	4,27	0,36	High
Teacher Performance	43	4,22	0,39	High

Source: Processed by Researchers, 2026

Table 1 shows that the principal's leadership style variable obtained an average score of 4.27 with a standard deviation of 0.36, falling within the high category. This score indicates that the majority of teachers believe the principal has performed his leadership function well, particularly in providing direction, motivation, exemplary behavior, and support for teachers' performance at school. The relatively small standard deviation indicates that respondents' responses tended to be homogeneous, or not too dispersed from the average score. This means that teachers' perceptions of the principal's leadership style were relatively consistent, indicating that the principal in the study area demonstrated a strong leadership style that was positively received by teachers.

Meanwhile, the teacher performance variable obtained an average score of 4.22 with a standard deviation of 0.39, also falling within the high category. These findings indicate that elementary school teachers in School Cluster 2, Benjeng District, Gresik Regency, have generally demonstrated good performance in carrying out their professional duties, both in aspects of lesson planning, lesson implementation, evaluation of learning outcomes, and professional development. The low standard deviation indicates that teacher performance levels across respondents are relatively even and do not show significant differences. Therefore, these descriptive results provide an initial indication that high perceptions of the

principal's leadership style are associated with high teacher performance, making the relationship between the two variables worthy of further testing through regression analysis.

Table 2. Results of Simple Linear Regression Analysis

Variabel	β	t	Sig.
Principal Leadership Style	0,691	4,118	0,000

Source: Processed by Researchers, 2026

The results of the simple linear regression analysis in Table 2 show that the principal leadership style variable has a beta coefficient value of 0.691. This value indicates a positive direction of influence, meaning that the better the leadership style applied by the principal, the higher the performance of elementary school teachers. This finding indicates that principal leadership plays an important role in shaping teachers' work behavior, particularly through direction, motivation, role modeling, support, and involvement in professional development. Therefore, the principal's leadership style can be understood as one of the organizational factors that can substantially encourage improvements in teacher performance.

The t-value of 4.118 with a significance level of 0.000 indicates that the effect of the principal's leadership style on teacher performance is statistically significant. Since the significance value is lower than 0.05, the hypothesis stating that the principal's leadership style affects teacher performance can be accepted. This result shows that changes in the quality of principal leadership are not merely generally associated with teacher performance but also make a meaningful contribution within the context of this study. Therefore, principals need to apply an inspirational, communicative, participatory, and supportive leadership style so that teachers have stronger motivation to carry out teaching duties optimally.

Table 3. Coefficient of Determination and Effect Size

R ²	f ²	Category
0,478	0,91	Great effect

Source: Processed by Researchers, 2026

The coefficient of determination, or R² value of 0.478, indicates that the principal's leadership style explains 47.8% of the variation in teacher performance. This means that nearly half of the changes in teacher performance can be explained by the quality of the principal's leadership style implemented within the school environment. This finding shows that principal leadership has a fairly strong contribution to shaping teachers' work behavior, professional responsibility, and the quality of task implementation. Meanwhile, the remaining 52.2% is influenced by other factors outside the research model, such as work motivation, pedagogical competence, school organizational culture, work environment, teaching experience, and the availability of learning facilities.

The effect size f² value of 0.91 falls into the large effect category, indicating that the influence of the principal's leadership style on teacher performance is not only statistically significant but also practically meaningful. This result confirms that principal leadership is an important factor that needs to be considered in efforts to improve elementary school teacher

performance. Principals who are able to provide direction, exemplary behavior, motivation, professional support, and opportunities for teacher participation have the potential to create a more productive and collaborative work climate. Therefore, the findings in Table 3 strengthen the argument that improving the quality of principal leadership can serve as a relevant managerial strategy for sustainably enhancing teacher performance.

The analysis results show that the principal's leadership style has a positive and significant effect on the performance of elementary school teachers in School Cluster 2, Benjeng District, Gresik Regency. The contribution value of 47.8% indicates that the principal's leadership plays a substantive role in improving teacher performance.

This finding strengthens the transformational leadership theory proposed by Bass and Avolio (1994), which emphasizes that leaders who consistently provide inspirational motivation, role modeling, and individualized consideration can positively influence the performance of their subordinates. In the context of elementary school organizations in School Cluster 2, Benjeng District, Gresik Regency, principals who apply the principles of transformational leadership do not merely act as decision-makers, but also serve as agents of change who encourage teachers to develop professionally and remain committed to improving the quality of learning.

Furthermore, the implementation of participative and supportive leadership by principals has been shown to create a conducive, open, and collaborative work climate for teachers. Such a work climate enables two-way communication, teacher involvement in decision-making, and continuous support for professional development. This condition reinforces the finding that principal leadership has a direct influence on teachers' work attitudes, motivation, and performance in carrying out their pedagogical duties.

The findings of this study are also consistent with Goleman's (2000) view regarding the importance of emotional intelligence in leadership. Principals who are able to manage their own emotions, understand the emotions of others, and build positive interpersonal relationships are more effective in influencing teachers' work behavior. Leadership based on emotional intelligence encourages the development of mutual trust, psychological comfort, and work commitment, which ultimately contributes to the sustainable improvement of teacher performance.

In addition, the findings support the concept of leadership for learning proposed by Hallinger (2011), which positions the principal as a key actor in improving the quality of learning. Learning-oriented leadership requires principals to actively facilitate the development of teacher competence, monitor the learning process, and ensure that all school programs are aligned with the goal of improving students' learning outcomes.

E. CONCLUSION

The findings show that the principal's leadership style has a positive and significant effect on the performance of elementary school teachers in School Cluster 2, Benjeng District, Gresik Regency. This finding indicates that the quality of principal leadership plays a strategic role in shaping teachers' work behavior, professional responsibility, and commitment to carrying out instructional duties optimally.

Transformational and participative leadership has been proven to make a real and practically meaningful contribution to improving teacher performance. Principals who are able to provide role modelling, motivation, professional support, and opportunities for teachers to participate in decision-making can create a conducive and collaborative work climate.

Based on these findings, strengthening principals' leadership competence is an important strategy for improving the quality of elementary education. Leadership development that focuses on teacher empowerment, effective communication, and participative decision-making should become a key priority in the professional training and development of school principals.

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