

The Role of Principal's Leadership Style and Motivation in Improving Superior Teacher Performance at SMA Negeri 7 Cirebon City

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to determine the role of leadership style and motivation in improving teacher performance at SMA Negeri 7 Cirebon City. High-quality teacher performance is essential for achieving educational goals, yet many schools face challenges in optimizing teacher effectiveness due to inadequate leadership approaches and low motivation levels. This study employed a quantitative approach, with a research population of 98 teachers. The sampling technique was the saturated sample method, with all teachers as respondents, ensuring comprehensive representation of the teaching staff. Data were collected through a Likert scale questionnaire (1-5), developed based on established leadership and motivation theories and validated through pilot testing. The questionnaire was analyzed using SPSS version 26. The results show that: (1) leadership style has a negative and insignificant effect on teacher performance ($\beta = -0.036, p = 0.722 > 0.05$), suggesting that the current leadership approach may not align with teachers' professional needs or that other contextual factors mediate this relationship; (2) motivation has a positive and significant effect on teacher performance ($\beta = 0.288, p = 0.001 < 0.05$), indicating that motivated teachers demonstrate higher levels of commitment, creativity, and effectiveness in their teaching duties. The study contributes to educational management literature by providing empirical evidence on the differential impacts of leadership and motivation on teacher performance in the Indonesian secondary education context.

KEYWORDS Leadership, Work Motivation, Teacher Performance



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INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary global education landscape, the quality of teaching has emerged as a critical determinant of student achievement and national competitiveness. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) reports consistently demonstrate that high-performing education systems are characterized by effective teacher performance, which is significantly influenced by school leadership and teacher motivation (Anderson, 2017). Indonesia, as a developing nation striving to improve its education quality rankings, faces ongoing challenges in optimizing teacher performance across its diverse school contexts. The 2018 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) results placed Indonesia in the lower tier of participating countries, highlighting the urgent need to address factors affecting teaching quality, including leadership effectiveness and teacher motivation (Febrina & Susanti, 2024). Within this broader context, understanding how leadership styles and motivational factors interact to influence teacher performance has become increasingly important for educational reform efforts.

Leadership held by the principal is that of a leader who has great duties and responsibilities in all aspects of secondary education. Education plays a very important role in creating competent human resources, and it is an effort to form knowledgeable individuals, both inside and outside the school environment (Febrina & Susanti, 2024). School principals

are responsible for supporting teachers in developing their skills and competencies, fostering students' potential, and involving guardians in the educational process (Tazkiya, 2024). School principals, as policymakers, must adopt a situational leadership style that depends on the situation and conditions faced by the school and pay more attention to providing motivation to the school community, especially in relation to teacher performance. Understanding leadership as an attempt to use influence is not to coerce but to motivate individuals to achieve certain goals (Suhardi, 2020).

Good teacher performance is the expectation of all parties, but in reality, the learning process by teachers at SMA Negeri 7 Cirebon City has not been maximized as expected. This refers to the results of the investigation that has been carried out, where phenomena were found, among others, in learning planning, in the implementation of learning, and in learning assessment or evaluation. In learning planning—namely, the creation of teacher administration—teachers only copy or paste from previous years or from others. Teachers make administration not as a reference to carry out learning in the classroom, so the implementation of learning in the classroom is relatively unplanned, as a result of which the learning results achieved by students have not been encouraging.

Based on the existing phenomenon, poor learning planning has an impact on exam result scores, one of which is the score of the Final Semester Exam (UAS), which is held every year. The UAS results, attended by 415 students, showed the following average scores for each subject: English, 58.0; Indonesian, 68.2; Natural Sciences, 55.7; Mathematics, 54.6. Referring to the Minimum Completeness Criteria, which sets a minimum graduation score of 75.0 per subject, 79% or 327 students of SMA Negeri 7 Cirebon City did not pass, and only 21% or 88 students graduated. The phenomenon of UAS results is a problem for both SMA Negeri 7 Cirebon City and the performance of its teachers.

Low teacher performance, from the perspective of symptoms, includes teachers who are often absent from teaching, teachers who enter the class late, and teachers who deliver learning materials in the classroom without adequate preparation or with incomplete preparation. Based on interviews with students at SMA Negeri 7 Cirebon City, most teachers considered teaching to be just a routine without further development or innovations. Some new teaching method concepts, such as lesson study, are still rarely applied because these methods are considered less attractive to teachers. Then, the principle of some teachers is that fulfilling teaching and learning activities according to the job and the allocated hours is enough.

Motivation, as a meaningful construct, is a key pillar in the workplace (Forson et al., 2021). Therefore, the principal must be able to encourage teachers to be motivated in teaching and learning activities at school. If teachers are motivated to work, it will create a very good learning situation, and teachers can use their creativity in learning methods so that they will be liked by students at school. Teacher motivation is greatly influenced by several factors that affect the overall school environment (Chia, Liu Woon, Keng, John Wang Chee, Ryan, 2016).

Research has established connections between leadership, motivation, and teacher performance, yet significant contextual gaps persist. Anderson's (2017) review linked transformational leadership to positive teacher outcomes but was based on Western contexts, overlooking situational models and cultural factors like those in Indonesia's hierarchical, collectivist school systems. Similarly, Forson et al. (2021) found intrinsic and extrinsic motivation crucial for teacher effectiveness in Ghanaian primary schools but did not explore The Role of Principal's Leadership Style and Motivation in Improving Superior Teacher Performance at SMA Negeri 7 Cirebon City

how leadership styles interact with this motivation. Meanwhile, studies by Ghazzawi et al. (2017) in Lebanese businesses and Kebede et al. (2023) in Ethiopian healthcare confirmed the impact of adaptive leadership styles on performance, yet neither focused on educational settings nor integrated motivation as a concurrent factor with leadership.

Collectively, these studies reveal a lack of integrated investigation into how situational leadership and work motivation simultaneously influence teacher performance, specifically in Indonesian secondary education where performance remains suboptimal. Furthermore, existing research fails to adequately explain why leadership styles might show weak effects on teacher performance while motivation remains a strong predictor—a discrepancy requiring contextual examination. This gap is critical given the urgent educational crisis at institutions like SMA Negeri 7 Cirebon City, where 79% of students fail to meet minimum competency standards, undermining national investments in educational quality and Sustainable Development Goal 4.

Therefore, this study's novelty lies in its comprehensive, census-based approach with all 98 teachers at one Indonesian secondary school, eliminating sampling error. It uniquely applies situational leadership theory within Indonesia's distinct cultural and organizational context while concurrently analyzing leadership and motivation via multiple regression to assess their relative contributions. By investigating why leadership may not significantly impact performance in certain settings, the research challenges conventional assumptions and provides evidence-based, practical insights for administrators and policymakers to prioritize interventions and optimize teacher effectiveness for national development.

METHOD

This research was quantitative, using a correlative descriptive design, in which relationships between variables were shown by correlation coefficient values. This type was chosen because the study aimed to reveal the extent of influence that the principal's leadership style and motivation had on teacher performance. The variables in this study consisted of one bound variable and two independent variables. The bound variable was teacher performance, expressed as Y. The independent variables consisted of leadership style, expressed as X_1 , and motivation, expressed as X_2 . This research was carried out at SMAN 7 Cirebon City.

The population was a generalized area consisting of objects or subjects with certain qualities and characteristics determined by the researcher to be studied and then drawn into conclusions (Scott, 2017). Arikunto (2016) stated that if the subject is less than 100 people, all of them should be taken; but if the subject is large or more than 100 people, 10–15%, 20–25%, or more can be taken. There were 98 teachers at SMAN 7 Cirebon City. Thus, the total population of this study was 98 teachers. The data collection technique in this study used questionnaires. To analyze the data, validity and reliability tests, classical assumption tests, and multiple linear regression analysis were conducted using a tool called SPSS.

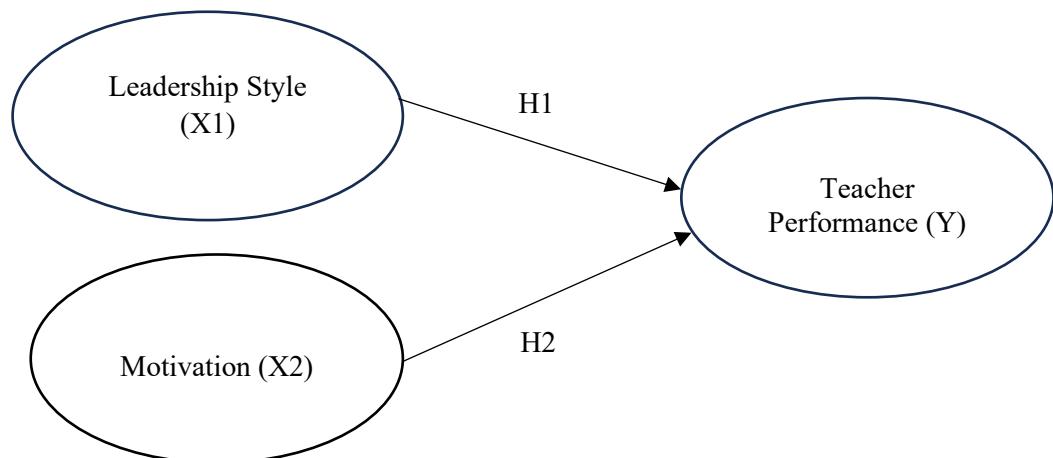


Figure 1. Research Model

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Validity Test

This study conducted a survey of 98 teachers to obtain a critical value of r by using the calculation of degrees of freedom ($df = n - 2 = 96$), with a significance level of 0.05. Based on the correlation coefficient table, a critical value (r table) of 0.1816 was obtained.

Table 1. Results of the Validity Test of Research Instruments

Statement points	Leadership	Motivation	Teacher Performance
1	0,310	0,433	0,657
2	0,415	0,462	0,616
3	0,437	0,491	0,534
4	0,489	0,484	0,592
5	0,313	0,512	0,671
6	0,364	0,564	0,752
7	0,424	0,477	0,714
8	0,496	0,454	0,727
9	0,409	0,438	0,612
10	0,444	0,463	0,623
11	0,363	0,479	0,618
12		0,495	0,643

Source : Data processing results, 2025

Based on the results of the validity test above, it shows that some research instruments obtain a calculated r value (r calculation) greater than the critical value (r table), some r calculation values are greater than 0.05.

Reliability Test

Knowing the degree of consistency of the research instrument, the researcher conducted a test of the instrument's realism, the results of which are shown in table 2 below:

Table 2. Reliability Test of Research Instruments

No	Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Description
1	Leadership Style	0,756	Reliable
2	Motivation	0,750	Reliable
3	Teacher Performance	0,869	Reliable

Source : Data Processing Results, 2025

Based on the results of the above reliability test, it is known that Cronbach's alpha value for the leadership style variable is 0.756, Cronbach's alpha value for the motivation variable is 0.750, and Cronbach's alpha value for the performance variable is 0.869. This shows that all variables are considered reliable because teachers have Cronbach's alpha values above 0.7.

Classic Assumption Test

a. Normality Test

The normality test was carried out using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov method by comparing the Asymp values. Sig. (2-tailed) against the significance limit of 5% (0.05). A value greater than 0.05 indicates that the information has a normal distribution, while a value less than 0.05 indicates that the information does not have a normal distribution. The results of the normality test are shown below.

Table 3. Normality Test Results

One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test	
Unstandardized Residual	
N	100
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	0.183c

Source : Data Processing Results, 2025

Based on table 3. displayed the normality test output based on the available information, in the table the Asymp number. Sig. (2-tailed) was recorded at 0.194. Since the significance level shows $0.183 > 0.05$, it can be stated that the data in this study is normally distributed.

b. Multicollinearity Test

Multicollinearity testing is used to test the optimal regression model if there is no relationship between free factors. If there is a relationship between independent factors, they do not have orthogonal properties, or the correlation between them is zero. Tolerance figures and inflation variation factors (VIFs) can be used to identify multicollinearity. If the tolerance value is more than 0.10 and the VIF is less than 10, the regression model is considered to have no multicollinearity. The following is the output of the multicollinearity test.

Table 4. Multicollinearity Test Results

Variable	Coefficient	
	Collinearity Statistics	
	Tolerance	VIF
Leadership Style	0,144	7,556
Motivation	0,135	7,772

Source : Data Processing Results, 2025

Based on table 4, all free variables have a tolerance number above 0.10 and a VIF below 10, so it can be stated that this regression model does not experience multicollinearity.

Multiple Regression Analysis

Knowing the magnitude of the influence of leadership style and motivation variables on teacher performance can be found by looking at table 5 below:

Table 5. Multiple Regression Results

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	66.288	6.534		10.144	0,001
Leadership Style	-.036	.101	-.037	-.356	0.722
Motivation	0.288	.109	-.494	-4.730	0.001
Adjusted R Square = .249					
F Statistics = 16.924 and sig. 0.001					

Source : Data Processing Results, 2025

Based on the data results in table 5, the independent variables of leadership style and motivation can explain 24.90% of the variation in teacher performance, with an adjusted R Square value of 0.249, or 24.90%. This shows that these factors contribute significantly to improving teacher performance. Meanwhile, additional factors that were not included in this study model had an impact on teacher performance by 75.10%.

The value of F calculated in table 5 with a sig. value of $0.001 < 0.05$, it can be concluded that the regression model is quite effective in explaining the variation in teacher performance. Referring to the results of multiple linear regression analysis in table 4, the regression equation can be formulated as follows: $Y = 66.288 - 0.036 X_1 + 0.288 X_2 + e$. The leadership style variable had a negative impact on teacher performance with an influence level of -0.036. Meanwhile, the motivation variable had a positive impact on teacher performance, with an influence level of 0.288.

The results of the first hypothesis test showed that the significance value was $0.722 > 0.05$. This indicates that the leadership style variable (X_1) does not have a significant influence on the performance of teachers (Y) of SMA Negeri 7 Cirebon City. The hypothesis states that the better the leadership style, the higher the teacher's performance is rejected.

The results of the second hypothesis test showed that the significance value was $0.001 < 0.05$. This indicates that the motivation variable (X_2) has a significant influence on teacher performance (Y). The motivation variable had a positive impact on teacher performance, with an influence level of 0.288. The hypothesis that states that the higher the motivation, the higher the teacher's performance is accepted.

The Influence of Leadership Style (X_1) on Teacher Performance (Y)

Based on the results of the study, it was found that there was a negative and insignificant influence between leadership styles on teacher performance at SMAN 7 Cirebon City. This suggests that while there are indications that improving leadership styles can improve teacher performance, the data obtained are not robust enough to confirm the relationship significantly. Although leadership styles can theoretically affect performance, not all lead teachers show a noticeable decline in performance. Some teachers develop effective mechanisms, or they remain committed to providing the best possible teaching even under inappropriate leadership. Therefore, even though there is no relationship between leadership style and performance, this is not always reflected in statistically insignificant data. These findings are in line with several previous studies. A study found that the leadership style variable was insignificant but there were several other variables (Sudarwan et al., 2025). Likewise, the results of research on

teachers of SMKN 1 Tangjungpandan show that leadership style does not have a significant effect on teacher performance (Martini & Bastaman, 2025). This research indicates that the role of the principal's leadership style, although structurally important, has not been able to directly encourage teacher performance improvement. Most likely, teacher performance is more influenced by other factors such as intrinsic motivation, workload, work environment, or the professionalism of the teacher himself. In addition, the leadership style applied may not be in accordance with the needs or expectations of the teacher in the learning process. In other words, although the principal has authority and responsibility in the management of the school, an unresponsive, non-communicative, or non-participatory leadership style can reduce its effectiveness in influencing teacher behavior and performance. Therefore, a more adaptive, collaborative, and professional development-oriented approach to teacher leadership styles is needed in order to have a real impact on their performance.

The Influence of Motivation (X2) on Teacher Performance (Y)

Based on the results of the study, it is shown that the motivation variable has a positive and significant effect on teacher performance. This means that the higher the motivation is possessed by the teacher, the higher the level of performance in carrying out educational and teaching tasks. High motivation makes teachers more enthusiastic in planning lessons, carrying out the teaching and learning process, and evaluating student learning outcomes. Motivated teachers tend to have a strong sense of responsibility, more initiative in improving their competence, and are more committed to achieving school goals.

These findings are in line with Herzberg's theory of motivation, which states that intrinsic motivations such as achievement, recognition, and responsibility are the main driving factors in improving a person's performance (Alshmemri et al., 2017). In addition, these results are also supported by various previous studies that show that motivation is one of the important factors that determine the effectiveness of teachers' work in schools. Therefore, it can be concluded that motivation plays an important role in improving teacher performance. Therefore, efforts to improve teacher performance should also be focused on strategies that can increase motivation, both intrinsic and extrinsic.

CONCLUSION

This research concluded that the principal's leadership at SMAN 7 Cirebon Kota had a negative and significant influence on teacher performance, indicating that, despite its structural importance, it failed to directly encourage improvements, with other factors likely playing a larger role; in contrast, work motivation exerted a positive and significant influence, underscoring the need to prioritize motivational strategies to enhance superior teacher performance. Implications include principals adopting situational leadership styles with effective strategies—such as tailored orders, encouragement, and participatory decision-making—and fulfilling teachers' needs through career advancement, welfare improvements, rewards for success, a family-like school atmosphere, and open communication. For future research, a suggestion is to conduct a mixed-methods study incorporating qualitative interviews with teachers and principals to explore mediating factors (e.g., organizational culture or external policies) that may explain the negative leadership effect and strengthen motivational interventions in similar Indonesian secondary school contexts.

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