

The Transformational Leadership of School Principals in Improving Teacher Performance at SD Islam Mutiara and SD Negeri Gampong Gajah, Pidie District

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ABSTRACT

Teachers are key elements in education, and transformational leadership plays a crucial role in improving their performance. This study aims to analyze the implementation strategies of Idealized Influence, Inspirational Motivation, Intellectual Stimulation, and Individualized Consideration in transformational leadership at SD Islam Mutiara and SD Negeri Gampong Gajah, Pidie District.

Using a qualitative descriptive approach, data were collected through interviews, observations, and documentation involving two school principals and six teachers. The findings indicate that Idealized Influence at SD Islam Mutiara is implemented through exemplary leadership and innovative ideas, while at SD Negeri Gampong Gajah, it is reflected in an open and friendly approach. Inspirational Motivation at SD Islam Mutiara is provided through appreciation and motivational messages, whereas at SD Negeri Gampong Gajah, it is fostered through teacher learning communities. Intellectual Stimulation at SD Islam Mutiara is encouraged through collaborative decision-making and openness to feedback, while at SD Negeri Gampong Gajah, it is implemented by entrusting teachers with responsibilities based on their potential. Individualized Consideration at SD Islam Mutiara is applied through a reward system and social support, whereas at SD Negeri Gampong Gajah, it is executed by assigning tasks according to teachers' expertise.

Keywords: Transformational Leadership; Teacher Performance; Idealized Influence; Inspirational Motivation; Qualitative Descriptive Approach; Individualized Consideration; Intellectual Stimulation; Exemplary Leadership; Teacher Learning Communities; Educational Leadership Strategies.

1. Introduction

Teacher performance is a key factor in determining the quality of education, as teachers play a central role in developing high-quality human resources. According to Safitri et al. (2024), teacher performance reflects their level of success in carrying out educational duties based on established standards. However, variations in teacher performance still exist, including in SD Islam Mutiara and SD Negeri Gampong Gajah, Pidie District.

Based on Gibson's performance theory (in Ramli, 2019), three main factors influence teacher performance: individual factors, organizational factors, and psychological factors. One of the most significant organizational factors is school leadership. According to Ministerial Regulation No. 13 of 2007, school principals are responsible for managing educators effectively to create a conducive, productive, and innovative learning environment. Therefore, school principals must adopt appropriate leadership strategies to enhance teacher performance.

One leadership approach considered effective in improving teacher performance is transformational leadership. Northouse (in AR, Murniati, Istiwana & Usman, 2021) argues that transformational leadership can inspire and elevate individuals through motivation and moral influence, allowing each member of the organization to develop their potential and strengthen their commitment. This theory aligns with Weber's concept of charismatic leadership, which emphasizes that leaders with extraordinary influence can inspire and bring significant change to their followers (Roni Harsoyo, 2022).

Preliminary observations indicate that transformational leadership is one of the dominant leadership styles among school principals in Pidie District. The principals of SD Islam Mutiara and SD Negeri Gampong Gajah are among

those who frequently apply transformational leadership in managing schools and improving teacher performance. This has been confirmed through interviews with school supervisors and several teachers in the region.

1.1. Study Objectives

Given this background, this study aims to examine how school principals at SD Islam Mutiara and SD Negeri Gampong Gajah implement transformational leadership to enhance teacher performance. The research focuses on four key elements of transformational leadership: Idealized Influence, Inspirational Motivation, Intellectual Stimulation, and Individualized Consideration.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Research Approach

This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach to explore the implementation of transformational leadership by school principals in improving teacher performance at SD Islam Mutiara and SD Negeri Gampong Gajah. This method was chosen because it focuses on informants' opinions and perceptions regarding transformational leadership in education (Arikunto, 2021).

2.2. Research Location and Subjects

The study was conducted at two elementary schools in Pidie District, Aceh Province, namely SD Islam Mutiara and SD Negeri Gampong Gajah. The research subjects included two school principals and four teachers. In qualitative research, subjects are selected based on their relevance to the social context rather than through population sampling (Nadirah et al., 2022).

2.3. Research Instruments

The primary research instrument was a semi-structured interview guide, including question lists, schedules, and interview locations. Research instruments serve as essential tools for collecting and organizing data efficiently (Arifin, 2020).

2.4. Data Collection Techniques

Data were collected using three main techniques:

1. Observation – The researcher conducted direct observations of school principals' leadership activities at SD Islam Mutiara and SD Negeri Gampong Gajah (Sugiyono & Lestari, 2021).
2. Interviews – Interviews were conducted with school principals and teachers using a guided free interview approach, allowing flexibility while maintaining a structured question framework (Arikunto, 2023).
3. Documentation – Supporting data were gathered from school documents, including academic supervision policies, teacher performance reports, and school evaluation records (Sugiyono, 2021).

2.5. Data Credibility Testing

Data validity was ensured through source, method, and theory triangulation (Sugiyono, 2021). Source triangulation was conducted by comparing data from principals and teachers, method triangulation combined

interviews, observations, and document analysis, and theory triangulation was carried out by comparing findings with Bass and Avolio's transformational leadership framework (Supartiningsih et al., 2024).

2.6. Data Analysis Techniques

The research followed Miles & Huberman's data analysis model, which includes:

1. Data Collection – Gathering data through interviews, observations, and document analysis.
2. Data Reduction – Filtering and summarizing relevant information on transformational leadership practices (Rosmita, 2024).
3. Data Display – Presenting findings in narrative and tabular form for better interpretation.
4. Conclusion Drawing and Verification – Identifying patterns and relationships within the collected data (Mentari, 2025).

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Result

This study examines the implementation of transformational leadership by school principals in enhancing teacher performance at SD Islam Mutiara and SD Negeri Gampong Gajah. Data was collected through observations, interviews with school principals and teachers, and documentation analysis. The research findings are structured based on four key dimensions of transformational leadership: Idealized Influence, Inspirational Motivation, Intellectual Stimulation, and Individualized Consideration.

(1) Implementation of Idealized Influence in Transformational Leadership

At SD Islam Mutiara, the principal employed Idealized Influence by setting an example for discipline and professionalism. The principal arrived at school earlier than the teachers, demonstrating commitment and responsibility, which in turn motivated teachers to be punctual and diligent. Teachers reported feeling a sense of accountability due to the principal's leadership style. Additionally, the principal collaborated with teachers in formulating the school's vision and mission, ensuring collective commitment to school programs. Classroom supervision was conducted regularly, followed by constructive feedback sessions to help teachers improve their instructional methods.

At SD Negeri Gampong Gajah, the principal adopted a different approach to Idealized Influence by fostering a culture of inclusivity and respect among teachers. The principal eliminated hierarchical barriers, treating both senior and junior teachers equally. By creating a collaborative work environment, teachers felt encouraged to share their knowledge and skills, leading to a supportive atmosphere where teachers learned from one another.

(2) Implementation of Inspirational Motivation in Transformational Leadership

At SD Islam Mutiara, the principal applied Inspirational Motivation by providing continuous encouragement and appreciation to teachers. Teachers who demonstrated exceptional performance, such as consistent punctuality, received small incentives or verbal recognition, fostering a sense of achievement and motivation. The principal

also provided motivational messages to boost teachers' confidence, reinforcing the belief that they were capable of adapting to educational advancements.

At SD Negeri Gampong Gajah, the principal implemented Inspirational Motivation by creating a Learning Community (Komunitas Belajar - Kombel). The principal actively participated in learning sessions alongside teachers, reinforcing the idea that professional development was a shared responsibility. By establishing an inclusive and motivating learning environment, teachers were encouraged to continuously improve their skills, knowing they had the principal's full support.

(3) Implementation of Intellectual Stimulation in Transformational Leadership

At SD Islam Mutiara, the principal practiced Intellectual Stimulation by encouraging open discussions before making decisions. Teachers were actively involved in problem-solving processes, and their suggestions were considered before finalizing any school policies. The principal also welcomed constructive criticism, using it as a tool for self-improvement and institutional growth.

Similarly, at SD Negeri Gampong Gajah, the principal emphasized the importance of professional development. Teachers were given the opportunity to attend workshops, seminars, and specialized training programs. This stimulated intellectual engagement and ensured that teachers were continuously improving their competencies. Teachers who gained new insights from training sessions were encouraged to share their knowledge with colleagues, fostering a culture of collective learning.

(4) Implementation of Individualized Consideration in Transformational Leadership

At SD Islam Mutiara, the principal implemented Individualized Consideration by providing targeted support based on teachers' individual needs. Teachers experiencing financial difficulties received social assistance from a dedicated school fund, ensuring their well-being and job satisfaction. The principal also tailored rewards and sanctions to match teachers' performance levels, reinforcing accountability while maintaining a supportive environment.

At SD Negeri Gampong Gajah, Individualized Consideration was demonstrated through personalized task delegation. Teachers were assigned responsibilities aligned with their strengths and expertise. This approach enhanced teacher performance by allowing them to work within their area of competence, thereby increasing efficiency and job satisfaction. Teachers were also given opportunities to mentor one another, reinforcing teamwork and skill-sharing among staff members.

3.2. Discussion

The research findings confirm that transformational leadership plays a crucial role in enhancing teacher performance. According to Bass and Avolio (2023), transformational leaders inspire and stimulate their followers to exceed expectations by fostering idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. The school principals at SD Islam Mutiara and SD Negeri Gampong Gajah effectively demonstrated these four dimensions in their leadership approaches.

(1) Idealized Influence and Teacher Performance

The findings suggest that role modeling and setting a strong example significantly influence teachers' work ethics. This aligns with Kouzes and Posner's (2021) leadership model, which highlights the importance of leading by example in fostering organizational commitment. At SD Islam Mutiara, the principal's punctuality and active participation in instructional activities positively influenced teacher behavior. Meanwhile, at SD Negeri Gampong Gajah, the emphasis on inclusivity strengthened teamwork and professional relationships among teachers.

(2) Inspirational Motivation and Teacher Performance

The provision of motivation and recognition was found to be a key factor in improving teacher engagement. According to Burns (2020), transformational leaders elevate their followers' motivation by instilling a sense of purpose and confidence. This was evident in SD Islam Mutiara, where teachers who received verbal encouragement and rewards exhibited greater enthusiasm and dedication. At SD Negeri Gampong Gajah, collaborative learning communities enhanced motivation by fostering a culture of shared growth and development.

(3) Intellectual Stimulation and Teacher Performance

Both schools demonstrated a strong emphasis on teacher autonomy and professional development. As Gibson (2021) suggests, intellectual stimulation is essential for fostering creativity and critical thinking. At SD Islam Mutiara, teachers actively contributed to decision-making processes, ensuring that school policies aligned with their practical needs. At SD Negeri Gampong Gajah, continuous learning opportunities and knowledge-sharing platforms encouraged teachers to stay updated with modern educational trends.

(4) Individualized Consideration and Teacher Performance

Recognizing and addressing teachers' individual needs and competencies contributed to an overall increase in job satisfaction and performance. Bass and Jung (2021) argue that individualized consideration enhances employee well-being and productivity. At SD Islam Mutiara, financial assistance programs provided teachers with economic stability, reducing stress and improving their focus on teaching. Meanwhile, at SD Negeri Gampong Gajah, task assignments based on individual strengths enabled teachers to work more effectively, leading to improved classroom management and instructional quality.

4. Conclusion

The study concludes that transformational leadership significantly enhances teacher performance at SD Islam Mutiara and SD Negeri Gampong Gajah. The implementation of Idealized Influence was carried out through exemplary leadership, shared commitment, and direct instructional innovations. Inspirational Motivation was fostered by providing rewards, motivational encouragement, and the establishment of learning communities. Intellectual Stimulation was implemented through collaborative decision-making, openness to feedback, and delegating responsibilities based on teachers' strengths. Lastly, Individualized Consideration was demonstrated through personalized rewards and sanctions, social assistance tailored to teachers' economic conditions, and task delegation according to individual expertise.

These findings highlight that school principals can effectively apply transformational leadership to create a supportive and dynamic learning environment, ultimately fostering teacher growth and improving educational quality.

Declarations

Source of Funding

This study did not receive any grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

Competing Interests Statement

The authors have not declared any conflict of interest.

Consent for publication

The authors declare that they consented to the publication of this study.

Ethical Approval

This study was conducted in accordance with institutional ethical research guidelines.

Informed Consent

Interviews were conducted with school principals and teachers using a guided free interview approach, allowing flexibility while maintaining a structured question framework. Informed consent was obtained from all participants before conducting interviews and observations, with assurances of confidentiality and anonymity in the reporting of results.

Authors' contributions

All the authors took part in literature review, analysis, and manuscript writing equally.

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