Transformational Leadership Beyond Behavior: A Structural Equation Model of Motivation and Culture as Mediators of Teacher Effectiveness

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ABSTRACT: Transformational leadership (TL) has become an important approach to improving teacher performance in various educational settings. In Indonesia's secondary education sector, where leadership reforms are accelerating, it is essential to understand how TL influences teacher outcomes. This study examines the mediating roles of teacher motivation and organizational culture in the TL–performance relationship, using data from 300 teachers across SMP, SMA, SMK, and MA schools nationwide. This study applied a cross-sectional design and structural equation modeling (SEM) with bootstrapped mediation analysis to test direct and indirect pathways. The instruments used were the Indonesian version of MLQ 5X Short, adapted scales for motivation and culture, and the national PKG rubric for teacher performance. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) validated all constructs with strong fit indices (CFI > 0.91; RMSEA < 0.06). The results show that TL significantly predicts motivation ($\beta = 0.61$) and organizational culture ($\beta = 0.53$). Both variables strongly influence teacher performance ($\beta = 0.47$ and $\beta = 0.42$). The direct effect of TL on performance is modest ($\beta = 0.18$), which indicates that psychological and cultural mediators play a dominant role. The total explained variance in performance ($R^2 = 0.51$) confirms the importance of these indirect mechanisms. This study contributes to educational leadership theory by validating a dual mediation model in a developing country context, while offering practical insights for leadership training programs and policy reforms. It underscores the importance of building school cultures and enhancing intrinsic motivation to maximize leadership impact. Limitations include the cross sectional design, suggesting future research adopt longitudinal or mixed method approaches.

Keywords: Transformational Leadership, Teacher Performance, Teacher Motivation, Organizational Culture, Educational Leadership, Indonesia, Mediation Model.

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia's secondary education sector faces increasing demands to deliver high quality instruction across a complex and diverse system encompassing over 1.4 million teachers. Improving teacher performance is a national priority, as teacher quality is closely linked to student outcomes, educational equity, and long term national development. Amid these reforms, school leadership particularly transformational leadership (TL) has emerged as a central focus. Transformational leadership, characterized by its emphasis on inspiring, intellectually stimulating, and individually

supporting staff, represents a shift from traditional, often bureaucratic leadership approaches common in many Indonesian schools (Gaol, 2021; Ninković & Florić, 2016).

Although transformational leadership is increasingly recognized, its implementation in Indonesian secondary schools is still developing. In many cases, it coexists with transactional or hierarchical styles, which may reduce its transformative potential. Nonetheless, empirical evidence increasingly supports TL's role in promoting a collaborative and innovation oriented school culture. Transformational school leaders are shown to foster teacher motivation, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment key components of sustained teacher performance(Damanik & Aldridge, 2017; Zacharo et al., 2018).

Educational reforms in Indonesia have accelerated the shift toward TL models. Through decentralization and increased autonomy, principals now have greater capacity to implement leadership strategies tailored to their schools' unique needs. These reforms align with the values of participative leadership and professional learning communities, encouraging collaboration, trust, and continuous improvement (Amzat et al., 2022; Sumintono et al., 2019). However, challenges remain in professionalizing leadership roles and equipping school leaders with the competencies necessary to implement TL practices effectively across varied regional and socio economic contexts (Passakonjaras & Hartijasti, 2019).

At the global level, TL has been associated with a range of positive outcomes in education. International literature reveals strong links between TL and teacher job satisfaction, professional engagement, and classroom innovation (Dutta & Sahney, 2016; Prabahar & Jerome, 2023). Moreover, TL supports the development of collective teacher efficacy, which strengthens professional culture and improves overall school performance (Ninković & Florić, 2016; Tian & Guo, 2022). These benefits also include reducing teacher burnout by enhancing emotional resilience and workplace well being (J. Tian et al., 2022).

Despite such promise, TL does not operate in isolation. Its effectiveness depends on various mediating mechanisms that influence how leadership behaviors translate into teacher performance. Two of the most consistently reported mediators are teacher motivation and organizational culture. Teachers who feel valued, autonomous, and competent are more likely to respond positively to TL, engaging in behaviors aligned with school goals. Likewise, a school culture that promotes openness, collaboration, and mutual respect enhances the implementation of TL strategies. These pathways are supported by multiple frameworks, including Bass and Avolio's Transformational Leadership Theory, Self Determination Theory, and Social Exchange Theory, which emphasize the interplay between leadership behavior, internal motivation, and social dynamics (Lai et al., 2020; Nurtjahjani et al., 2020).

In Indonesia, a growing body of research has explored these mediating variables. Localized studies in regions such as Jambi, Bantul, and Batang Hari demonstrate that TL affects teacher performance primarily through its influence on motivational and cultural factors (Tian & Guo, 2022; journal.aripi.or.id). However, these studies often feature small samples and are limited to single

school types or regions. As such, their generalizability is restricted, and broader scale empirical evidence is needed to confirm and expand on their findings.

Additionally, the challenge of accurately measuring teacher performance complicates the evaluation of TL's effects. In developing countries, including Indonesia, the lack of standardized instruments and variability in school contexts hinder the comparability of findings (Sumintono et al., 2019;Liu et al., 2019). Indonesia's use of the PKG framework incorporating 14 competency indicators across pedagogic, social, personal, and professional domains offers a robust, context specific solution, yet its implementation remains uneven. Evaluative efforts are further limited by disparities in infrastructure and professional development support, especially in rural or under resourced schools (Thomas et al., 2018; Tin & Ahmad, 2022)ti.

Cultural context is another critical consideration. In Indonesian society, hierarchical norms and respect for authority can shape how leadership is perceived and how performance feedback is received. These factors may obscure honest appraisals of both leadership behavior and teacher efficacy (Fenech et al., 2023). Thus, studies must balance rigorous measurement with cultural sensitivity to accurately assess the dynamics of leadership and performance.

Recent leadership reforms in Indonesia aim to address these challenges by fostering leadership practices that empower rather than control. These reforms have already shown positive associations with teacher commitment and professional development outcomes (Prabahar & Jerome, 2023; Nurtjahjani et al., 2020). Nevertheless, further evidence is needed to assess how well these reforms are institutionalized and whether they lead to systemic improvements across diverse school types and regions.

Theoretically, transformational leadership's influence on teacher performance is explained by several complementary frameworks. Transformational Leadership Theory highlights the mechanisms by which leaders inspire, intellectually challenge, and individually support staff (Bass & Avolio, in Lai et al., 2020). Self Determination Theory emphasizes autonomy, competence, and relatedness as key drivers of intrinsic motivation, all of which can be fostered by effective TL (Day et al., 2016; Amzat et al., 2022). Social Exchange Theory adds another layer, suggesting that when teachers perceive reciprocal respect and support from their leaders, they are more likely to reciprocate through enhanced performance (Kang et al., 2023; Udin, 2023).

Despite the growing volume of TL research in Southeast Asia, significant gaps remain. Few studies explore how cultural values mediate the effects of leadership, or how intersectional issues like teacher identity and social justice interact with leadership approaches (Agosto & Roland, 2018; Samuel et al., 2019). Moreover, much of the literature is cross sectional and quantitative, limiting insight into long term leadership impacts or the lived experiences of teachers (Fenech et al., 2023).

To address these gaps, the current study examines the mediating roles of teacher motivation and organizational culture in the relationship between TL and teacher performance. Using a multi provincial sample and rigorous structural equation modeling (SEM), this research builds on and extends the findings of earlier studies while incorporating validated Indonesian instruments. The

central thesis is that TL enhances teacher performance primarily by influencing internal (motivation) and environmental (culture) mediators.

This study offers a novel contribution by empirically testing these mediation pathways in a large, diverse Indonesian context using valid, policy aligned performance measures. Its findings aim to inform both scholarly understanding and practical leadership development efforts, offering a scalable framework for improving teacher outcomes nationwide.

METHOD

This study investigates the mediating effects of teacher motivation and organizational culture in the relationship between transformational leadership (TL) and teacher performance in Indonesian secondary schools. To ensure methodological robustness and contextual relevance, this research integrates established theoretical frameworks with empirically validated measurement instruments, adapting them to the Indonesian educational context.

Research Design and Approach

This study used a cross-sectional explanatory design with Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to analyze both direct and mediated relationships. This approach is suitable for exploring the complex mechanisms of transformational leadership, especially when multiple mediators are present. Given the study's focus on latent constructs and their interdependencies, SEM provides a comprehensive analytical framework capable of capturing the multifaceted nature of leadership influence on performance.

Population, Sample, and Sampling Strategy

The population comprised secondary school teachers (SMP, SMA, SMK, MA) from multiple provinces across Indonesia. A multistage sampling strategy was used to ensure proportional representation across school types and regional contexts (urban/rural). The final sample included 300 teachers from at least 15 schools, in line with methodological recommendations for SEM sample adequacy.

Demographic balance was maintained across gender, school type, location, and teacher certification status. This diversity enhances the generalizability of the findings and ensures that the results reflect varied leadership and performance environments in Indonesian education.

Instrumentation and Measurement

1. Transformational Leadership (TL)

Transformational leadership was assessed using the MLQ 5X Short, which has undergone validation in Indonesian contexts. Prior studies affirm its psychometric robustness, reporting Cronbach's alpha values exceeding 0.70 and confirmatory factor structures consistent with Bass and Avolio's original design (Alegbeleye & Kaufman, 2020; Qader & Benoliel, 2023). The instrument includes four dimensions: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration.

Adaptations of the MLQ to suit Indonesian educational culture emphasize linguistic clarity and contextual applicability. Its construct validity has been confirmed through studies emphasizing its cultural alignment and predictive power for teacher related outcomes (Hariri, 2020).

2. Teacher Motivation and Organizational Culture

Motivation and organizational culture were measured using Likert type scales adapted from validated instruments in Southeast Asian educational research. Items assessed intrinsic motivation, autonomy, shared vision, collegiality, and school ethos. These instruments were pre tested for face validity, and item modifications were made to ensure semantic alignment with Indonesian schooling terminology.

3. Teacher Performance

Teacher performance was assessed using Indonesia's national framework, the Penilaian Kinerja Guru (PKG), which operationalizes teacher effectiveness into 14 competencies spanning pedagogic, personality, social, and professional domains. Despite known reliability challenges in PKG implementation, efforts were made to standardize scoring via trained assessors and inter rater reliability checks. This approach is consistent with recommendations to mitigate subjective bias and inconsistencies often present in observational evaluation systems (Ajia, 2021).

Digital scoring protocols were introduced to ensure data integrity, and assessors received training in the interpretation and application of PKG rubrics. The use of these national indicators allows for policy alignment and provides a culturally grounded measure of teacher performance.

Data Collection Procedures

Data collection occurred over a three month period and involved both digital and paper based surveys, depending on regional access to internet infrastructure. Surveys were anonymized, and informed consent was obtained from all participants. Observational performance data were gathered via on site visits by trained raters.

To strengthen the reliability of responses, surveys incorporated reverse coded items, and checks for response consistency were applied. Inter rater reliability among assessors was calculated using intra class correlation coefficients (ICC), achieving values above 0.80, which denotes high consistency.

Data Analysis Techniques

1. Preliminary Analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to examine distributional properties of the variables. Missing data were handled via multiple imputation. Normality tests, skewness, and kurtosis were assessed prior to SEM.

2. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)

CFA was conducted to assess the construct validity of all latent variables. Fit indices such as the Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Tucker Lewis Index (TLI), and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) were used. Acceptable model fit was defined as CFI and TLI > 0.90, and RMSEA < 0.08. The reliability of constructs was further confirmed using Composite Reliability (CR) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE).

3. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)

SEM was conducted using maximum likelihood estimation. Direct paths from TL to teacher performance and indirect paths through motivation and culture were tested. The model incorporated control variables including teacher tenure, certification, school accreditation level, and urban/rural status.

To evaluate mediation, bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples was employed. This approach addresses potential non normality and yields confidence intervals for indirect effects. It is widely regarded as a superior alternative to the Sobel test, particularly in educational data contexts with latent constructs (Subiyanto & Susanto, 2021).

4. Sensitivity Analysis

Subgroup analyses were conducted to test the robustness of findings across different school types and regions. Invariant modeling was used to assess whether the structural relationships varied significantly by demographic subgroup.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was obtained from the relevant institutional review board. Participation was voluntary, and all data were anonymized and securely stored. Respondents were informed of their rights to withdraw at any time without penalty. Data handling complied with national education research standards.

Methodological Limitations

While the study applied rigorous techniques, certain limitations persist. The cross sectional design restricts causal inference, and despite high inter rater reliability, some subjectivity in PKG scoring may remain. Additionally, while the MLQ and other instruments were validated in Indonesia, further refinements could enhance cultural specificity. Longitudinal follow ups and qualitative triangulation are recommended to validate the stability of observed relationships over time.

In conclusion, the methodology employed in this study reflects a robust approach to understanding the mediating mechanisms through which transformational leadership impacts teacher performance. By integrating validated tools, representative sampling, and advanced statistical analysis, this research contributes meaningfully to both scholarly literature and practical leadership development in Indonesian education.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the analytical findings of the study in four main sections: descriptive statistics of the sample, validation of measurement models via Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), structural equation modeling (SEM) outcomes including mediation analysis, and subgroup/sensitivity analyses based on school level and teacher specific moderators.

Descriptive Statistics

The demographic composition of the sample reflects typical patterns observed in Indonesian secondary education. Of the 300 participants, 60% were female, aligning with national trends indicating a female majority among secondary school educators (Purwandoko et al., 2023). Most respondents had between 6 and 20 years of teaching experience, with nearly 70% holding a bachelor's degree in education and the remainder either pursuing or holding a master's degree. These characteristics suggest a mature, professionally engaged teacher population, capable of offering nuanced perspectives on leadership and organizational dynamics (Alam et al., 2023; Senjaya & Anindita, 2020).

Additionally, school type distribution was balanced across SMP (33.3%), SMA (23.3%), SMK (26.7%), and MA (16.7%), while the regional distribution indicated that 60% of the sample taught in urban areas and 40% in rural schools. This diversity enhances the representativeness and generalizability of the findings across Indonesia's heterogeneous educational landscape.

Table 1. Sample Demographics (N = 300)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	120	40.0%
	Female	180	60.0%
School Type	SMP	100	33.3%
	SMA	70	23.3%
	SMK	80	26.7%
	MA	50	16.7%
Location	Urban	180	60.0%
	Rural	120	40.0%

Measurement Model Validity

To validate the constructs used in the study, Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was conducted on all measurement models. The CFA yielded satisfactory model fit indicators for all constructs: TL (CFI = 0.94; RMSEA = 0.05), Motivation (CFI = 0.93; RMSEA = 0.06), Organizational Culture (CFI = 0.95; RMSEA = 0.04), and Teacher Performance (CFI = 0.91; RMSEA = 0.06).

Table 2. CFA Results for Measurement Constructs

Construct	CFI	RMSEA	CR	AVE
Transformational Leadership	0.94	0.05	0.89	0.63
Motivation	0.93	0.06	0.87	0.61
Organizational Culture	0.95	0.04	0.90	0.65
Teacher Performance	0.91	0.06	0.88	0.60

Structural Model Results and Mediation Analysis

The structural model was tested using SEM with bootstrapping (5,000 resamples) to examine direct and indirect relationships. Fit indices for the structural model were within acceptable ranges (CFI = 0.93; TLI = 0.91; RMSEA = 0.06).

Direct and Indirect Effects

Table 3. SEM Path Coefficients and Mediation Effects

Pathway	β	p value	95% Confidence Interval
TL → Motivation	0.61	< .001	[0.50, 0.72]
TL → Organizational Culture	0.53	.002	[0.40, 0.67]
Motivation → Performance	0.47	.003	[0.31, 0.61]
Organizational Culture → Performance	0.42	.004	[0.28, 0.56]
TL → Performance (Direct)	0.18	.048	[0.01, 0.35]
Total R² for Performance			0.51

Subgroup and Sensitivity Analyses

To assess the potential moderating effects of contextual variables, subgroup analyses were conducted.

School Type:

- TL's effects were stronger in SMK and MA contexts compared to SMP and SMA. This could be due to more flexible organizational cultures in vocational and religious schools (Meliana et al., 2023).

Accreditation:

- Schools with higher accreditation status showed stronger TL performance linkages, consistent with research indicating that quality assurance mechanisms enhance leadership responsiveness (Heystek & Emekako, 2020).

Certification Status:

- Certified teachers demonstrated stronger motivation and performance associations than non certified peers, suggesting that professional qualification moderates responsiveness to leadership (Nurabadi et al., 2021).

These findings reinforce the view that leadership effectiveness is contextually moderated and that TL strategies must be tailored to institutional and teacher characteristics (Hidayat et al., 2023).

This study examined how teacher motivation and organizational culture mediate the relationship between transformational leadership (TL) and teacher performance in Indonesian secondary education. The results confirm that both mediators significantly influence TL effectiveness, jointly explaining a large portion of the variance in teacher performance (R^2 = 0.51). These findings strengthen existing evidence that TL is most effective when working through psychological and contextual factors.

Transformational leadership models have evolved over recent decades to incorporate psychological and cultural mediators as core components. Originally focused on visionary and motivational aspects, contemporary models now emphasize how leadership behaviors influence internal states such as empowerment, self efficacy, and intrinsic motivation (Gozzoli & Gazzaroli, 2018). This broader lens aligns with self determination theory, which identifies autonomy, competence, and relatedness as key drivers of motivation needs that transformational leaders can effectively nurture through supportive, intellectually stimulating, and personalized interactions(Alamer & Marsh, 2022; Nguyễn & Luot, 2019).

The study's finding that TL strongly predicts teacher motivation ($\beta = 0.61$) and that motivation, in turn, significantly influences performance ($\beta = 0.47$), corroborates previous research suggesting psychological empowerment is a primary mechanism through which leadership affects educational outcomes. It further emphasizes the necessity of understanding how leadership behavior translates into teacher agency, efficacy, and engagement factors increasingly recognized as central to school improvement.

In parallel, the significant role of organizational culture as a mediator highlights the social context in which leadership is enacted. Cultural dimensions such as collaboration, openness, and shared purpose not only reflect the operational ethos of a school but also determine how leadership initiatives are received and internalized. Studies suggest that supportive cultures amplify the effects of TL by fostering professional learning communities and relational trus(Santos et al., 2022; Vélez-Pastrana et al., 2016). This environment enables teachers to feel connected to collective goals, thus aligning their behaviors with institutional visions.

Conversely, in toxic or mistrustful environments, even highly capable leaders may struggle to implement transformative practices effectively. Teachers may perceive leadership efforts as performative or misaligned with institutional values, leading to disengagement or passive resistance (Al-Dossary, 2016; Khazaie et al., 2022). The interaction between TL and school culture thus acts as both a catalyst and a constraint, underscoring the importance of cultural fit in leadership design (Evren et al., 2018; Turan et al., 2023).

These insights reinforce the argument that leadership training must go beyond technical skill development to include modules on motivation and culture building. Programs that embed theories of psychological motivation and cultural responsiveness are better equipped to prepare school leaders for the realities of dynamic educational settings. Initiatives such as "Transformational Leadership for Learning" have demonstrated the value of integrating role playing, mentoring, and reflective practice to enhance leaders' abilities to foster inclusive, motivating environments(Girela-López et al., 2022; Natalya & Purwanto, 2018)g.

Moreover, leadership programs grounded in adaptive styles help leaders navigate the complexities of school environments where a one size fits all approach is no longer viable. Tailoring leadership actions to the cultural and motivational characteristics of staff not only increases effectiveness but also enhances staff morale and retention(Ray et al., 2022). Such training must be viewed as a continuous developmental process rather than a one time intervention.

While the current study provides robust empirical evidence of mediation, it also acknowledges the limitations inherent in its cross sectional design. As in most cross sectional research, the simultaneity of data collection prevents definitive conclusions about causality. Although SEM and bootstrapping techniques provide robust statistical insights into mediation, longitudinal designs would better capture the evolving impact of leadership behaviors on performance outcomes (Maba et al., 2020).

Cross sectional data also risk social desirability bias, particularly in contexts like Indonesia, where hierarchical norms may discourage critical feedback. Respondents may have provided favorable assessments of leadership out of respect or conformity rather than as reflections of their actual experiences (Nematollahi & Eslami, 2017). Mixed methods approaches including interviews, document reviews, and longitudinal surveys could help triangulate findings and mitigate such biases.

In sum, this study contributes to the expanding discourse on leadership effectiveness by demonstrating that TL influences teacher performance most powerfully when mediated by motivation and organizational culture. These findings emphasize that successful school leadership requires more than charismatic direction; it demands the cultivation of psychological engagement and supportive environments. For Indonesian educational reform to achieve its goals, leadership development must evolve accordingly embracing complexity, fostering empowerment, and sustaining collaborative cultures.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that transformational leadership (TL) significantly influences teacher performance in Indonesian secondary schools, primarily through the mediating roles of teacher motivation and organizational culture. While TL has a modest direct effect, its strongest impact emerges when leaders cultivate intrinsic motivation and foster a positive school culture. These mediating pathways explain over half of the variance in teacher performance, underscoring the central importance of psychological and organizational contexts in translating leadership into educational outcomes.

The findings provide both theoretical and practical contributions. Theoretically, they validate a dual mediation model that emphasizes the interplay of motivation and culture in leadership effectiveness. Practically, the results highlight the need for leadership development programs that go beyond behavioral skills, equipping school leaders to enhance teacher motivation and strengthen collaborative cultures. Future research should adopt longitudinal or mixed-method designs to deepen causal understanding and capture the long-term influence of TL on teacher performance across diverse educational contexts.

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