IRJE | Indonesian Research Journal in Education | Vol. 10 | No. 3 | September | 2026 |
This is an Open Access article, published by Universitas Jambi, Indonesia

Principal leadership and teacher work motivation as predictors of primary school teacher performance

YUSNIZAR ERNI[1*], SYAHRIL SYAHRIL[2], NOVRYANTI ACHYAR[3], AND AHMAD SABANDI[3]

Abstract

Both organizational and individual factors influence teacher performance, which is a key factor in improving educational quality. This study examines the contribution of principal leadership and teacher work motivation to teacher performance in primary schools in Kinali District, West Sumatra, Indonesia. Using a quantitative correlational design, data were collected from teachers through validated Likert-scale questionnaires and analyzed using descriptive statistics and multiple linear regression with SPSS. The findings indicate that principal leadership and teacher work motivation are positively and significantly associated with teacher performance, both individually and simultaneously. Teacher motivation showed a stronger contribution than principal leadership in explaining variations in teacher performance. The findings highlight the importance of strengthening instructional leadership and supporting teacher motivation as strategies for improving teacher effectiveness in primary schools.

Keywords

Predictors, primary school, principal leadership, teacher work motivation, teacher performance

Article History

Received 26 November 2025
Accepted 31 August 2026

How to Cite

Erni, Y., Syahril, S., Achyar, N., & Sabandi, A. (2026). Principal leadership and teacher work motivation as predictors of primary school teacher performance. *Indonesian Research Journal in Education |IRJE|*, *10*(3), 1451-1464. https://doi.org/10.22437/r70smq91

[1*]Universitas Negeri Padang, Padang, Indonesia, Corresponding author: yusnizarerni17@gmail.com
[2,3,4]Universitas Negeri Padang, Padang, Indonesia

This is an Open Access article, published by Universitas Jambi, Indonesia

Introduction

Teacher performance is widely recognized as a critical factor influencing the quality of education, particularly in primary schools where students develop foundational knowledge, skills, attitudes, and character. In Indonesia, the strategic position of teachers is formally established through the Law of the Republic of Indonesia No. 14 of 2005 on Teachers and Lecturers and Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System. These regulations emphasize that teachers are professional educators responsible for designing and implementing learning processes, assessing student development, providing guidance, and continuously improving their professional competence. Therefore, improving teacher performance remains a central concern for achieving national education goals and ensuring that schools can provide meaningful learning experiences for students.

Recent educational research views teacher performance as a multidimensional construct that involves not only pedagogical competence but also professional commitment, instructional innovation, classroom management, and responsiveness to students' learning needs (Zhang & Tian, 2025). Effective teachers are expected to continuously adapt their knowledge and practices in response to curriculum changes, technological developments, and diverse student characteristics. This perspective is consistent with the dynamic capabilities approach to teaching, which highlights teachers' capacity to develop, modify, and apply professional competencies according to changing educational demands (Fenech et al., 2021). From this perspective, teacher performance reflects not only the routine completion of teaching responsibilities but also the continuous improvement of instructional practices.

However, actual classroom practices do not always reflect the expected standards of teacher professionalism. In several primary schools, including those located in Kinali District, West Pasaman Regency, challenges related to teacher performance remain evident. Preliminary observations indicate several issues, such as limited instructional innovation, dependence on standardized teaching materials, insufficient utilization of digital learning resources, and inconsistent use of assessment results to improve learning strategies. These conditions suggest a gap between the professional expectations established by educational policies and the realities experienced in schools. Similar concerns have been reported by Hasanah and Sururi (2025), who found that teacher performance improvement is closely related to effective supervision, leadership support, and continuous professional development.

One important factor associated with teacher performance is principal leadership. School principals are not only responsible for administrative management but also serve as instructional leaders who influence school culture, teacher development, and learning improvement. Reviews of school leadership models emphasize that effective principals combine clear educational vision, instructional supervision, professional support, and collaborative decision-making to encourage teacher growth (Bush & Glover, 2014). When principals provide meaningful guidance, feedback, and professional encouragement, teachers are more likely to develop commitment and improve their instructional practices. Conversely, limited supervision and unclear performance expectations may encourage teachers to maintain routine practices rather than pursue continuous improvement.

In addition to leadership factors, teacher motivation represents an important internal factor influencing performance. Recent studies based on self-determination theory explain that teachers' motivation develops through the fulfillment of psychological needs, including autonomy, competence, and relatedness, as well as through supportive organizational conditions (Deci &

This is an Open Access article, published by Universitas Jambi, Indonesia

Ryan, 2000). Teachers with strong motivation tend to demonstrate greater commitment, creativity, and willingness to improve their teaching practices. In contrast, teachers with lower motivation may show limited engagement in professional activities and rely on established teaching routines. Therefore, understanding teacher motivation is essential for explaining variations in teacher performance.

The relationship between leadership, motivation, and teacher performance suggests that improving educational quality requires attention to both external and internal dimensions of teacher development. Principal leadership provides the organizational conditions that encourage teachers to perform effectively, while motivation influences teachers' willingness to engage in professional responsibilities. Examining these factors simultaneously provides a more comprehensive understanding of teacher performance because a single variable rarely shapes school outcomes. Previous studies have often investigated leadership or motivation separately; however, fewer studies have examined their combined contribution within specific local primary school contexts.

Although extensive research has examined the relationship between leadership, motivation, and teacher performance, several gaps remain. First, many previous studies have focused on urban schools or broader educational settings, while evidence from rural and semi-rural primary schools remains relatively limited. Second, existing research frequently treats leadership and motivation as independent predictors without considering how these factors jointly operate within the daily realities of schools. The context of Kinali District provides an important setting for examining this issue because schools in this area face challenges related to teacher adaptation, instructional improvement, and resource limitations that may influence performance outcomes.

Based on this gap, the present study aims to analyze the contribution of principal leadership and teacher work motivation to primary school teacher performance in Kinali District, West Pasaman Regency. This study contributes to educational management literature by providing empirical evidence regarding how organizational leadership and individual motivation interact in shaping teacher performance within a local Indonesian context. Practically, the findings may assist school leaders and education authorities in designing leadership strategies, supervision practices, and teacher development programs that are more responsive to teachers' professional needs.

Literature Review

Teacher performance in the context of basic education

Teacher performance remains a key determinant of school effectiveness, as it directly influences the quality of classroom instruction and student learning outcomes. In the Indonesian context, the concept is aligned with Law No. 14 of 2005, which identifies teachers as professional educators responsible for planning, implementing, and evaluating instruction while supporting students' holistic development. Performance, therefore, is not just administrative compliance but the manifestation of pedagogical competence and ethical commitment.

Traditionally, performance has been defined as the extent to which individuals accomplish work in alignment with organizational roles and expectations. The Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia defines performance as outcomes achieved ethically and legally within organizational goals. Wibowo (2016) emphasizes both performance outcomes and the process used to achieve them, underlining behavioral and outcome-oriented dimensions.

This is an Open Access article, published by Universitas Jambi, Indonesia

More recently, Goel and Wani (2024), reviewing the psychological capital literature, describe hope, resilience, optimism, and self-efficacy as resources that enhance performance across organizational settings, including education. Teachers with high psychological capital tend to display better planning, instructional delivery, and engagement in professional development. Within schools, performance spans lesson planning, classroom management, instructional methods, assessment, feedback, and student support. High-performing teachers are characterized by their discipline, subject mastery, and classroom innovation. These practices are strongly linked to both intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors, as well as leadership support.

The Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory, as adapted by Sha and Chang (2025), posits that emotional and professional resources significantly influence performance. When school leaders support teacher well-being, foster autonomy, and reduce emotional burnout, teachers tend to demonstrate more innovation, persistence, and collaboration.

Teacher performance is influenced by internal factors—such as motivation, competence, and personality—and external ones, such as leadership, school climate, supervision, and workload. Recent studies reinforce that motivation and leadership are not merely independent variables but interact dynamically within psychological and structural frameworks.

Primary school teachers, responsible for foundational learning, must demonstrate strong performance to avoid long-term student learning setbacks. Hence, improving teacher performance demands strategic attention to both personal and contextual variables, especially within evolving educational policies and challenges.

Principal leadership and teacher performance

Leadership remains central to effective educational management. It involves influencing and guiding others towards shared objectives. This approach is uniquely suited to enhancing teaching and learning. Indonesian regulations outline broad principal responsibilities—ranging from curriculum management to staff development and infrastructure administration.

In contemporary literature, leadership is evolving from administrative to transformational. According to Schiuma et al. (2022), transformational digital leadership—defined by innovation, emotional intelligence, and strategic technology integration—has become essential. Principals who embrace this approach inspire teachers, model adaptive behavior, and facilitate professional learning communities. Sha and Chang (2025) argue that through COR theory, leaders who protect staff resources (emotional, cognitive, and social) reduce burnout and support stronger job performance. Similarly, research on women principals from the millennial generation (Kahardani et al., 2025) emphasizes inclusivity, empathy, and collaboration, aligning leadership style with generational values among younger educators. Empirical studies consistently show that supportive principal leadership increases teacher engagement, collaboration, and job satisfaction. Principals who mentor rather than merely manage foster stronger school cultures and better student outcomes. In this study, principal leadership is defined operationally as the ability to motivate, influence, and guide the use of school resources. Recent theories highlight that leaders who promote autonomy, innovation, and inclusivity can significantly enhance teacher performance.

This is an Open Access article, published by Universitas Jambi, Indonesia

Work motivation and teacher performance

Motivation in educational work is the internal and external force driving teacher behavior. It includes intrinsic factors—like personal growth and professional pride—and extrinsic ones, like compensation, promotion, and recognition. Recent literature emphasizes hybrid models of motivation. John (2025) introduces a framework combining Self-Determination Theory (SDT) and Self-Leadership Theory. Teachers with high self-leadership are proactive, reflective, and committed to lifelong learning—traits that sustain motivation even in low-support environments. Moreover, Muchiri et al. (2025) stress that both financial and non-financial rewards must align with teachers' professional values to enhance motivation effectively. These include fair evaluation systems, access to development opportunities, and recognition by leadership.

Despite various reforms in Indonesia—such as teacher certification and allowances—motivation challenges persist. Many teachers are still putting in minimal effort, especially in adopting new technologies or differentiated instruction strategies. This indicates that structural changes alone are insufficient; psychological and organizational alignment is essential. Motivation influences how teachers plan, teach, assess, and respond to student needs. Therefore, enhancing teacher motivation is fundamental to raising instructional quality and sustaining education reform.

Empirical studies on principal leadership, work motivation, and teacher performance

A strong body of empirical research supports the impact of leadership and motivation on teacher performance. Earlier studies have shown that principal leadership and motivation independently and jointly predict performance outcomes. Recent studies build on these findings by incorporating psychological frameworks. For example, studies by Schiuma et al. (2022) and John (2025) suggest that leadership and self-regulated motivation interact to shape engagement, effort, and professional innovation. In Indonesia, limited resources, insufficient digital readiness, and rural constraints challenge the expression of leadership and motivation. As highlighted by Muchiri et al. (2025), recognition and support systems tailored to teacher values significantly improve performance. These constraints shape how leadership and motivation are expressed within the specific socio-cultural context of Kinali District. The goal is to identify how modern leadership and motivation models can better inform performance improvement strategies in Indonesian primary education.

Methodology

Research design, population, and sample

This study employed a quantitative approach using an associative correlational design to examine the relationships among principal leadership, teacher work motivation, and teacher performance in state primary schools. This design was selected because the study aimed to measure the contribution of independent variables (principal leadership and work motivation) to the dependent variable (teacher performance) through statistical analysis. A quantitative

This is an Open Access article, published by Universitas Jambi, Indonesia

approach enabled the researcher to obtain measurable data and test the proposed relationships objectively.

The population of this study consisted of 311 civil servant teachers (PNS and PPPK) working in public primary schools (SD Negeri) in Kinali District, West Pasaman Regency. These teachers were selected as the study population because they had fulfilled national requirements for professional appointment and were directly involved in classroom instruction and school activities. The sample was selected using cluster random sampling. Schools were first grouped into clusters based on relevant characteristics, including school accreditation and institutional conditions. Several schools were then randomly selected, and teachers from those schools participated as respondents. This sampling procedure was applied to obtain representation from different school contexts within Kinali District.

Research variables and measurement

This study examined three variables: principal leadership (X_1), teacher work motivation (X_2), and teacher performance (Y). Principal leadership was defined as the ability of school principals to provide direction, influence teacher behavior, support professional development, and manage school resources to achieve educational goals. The indicators of principal leadership included the ability to provide guidance, motivate teachers, coordinate school activities, and implement effective management practices.

Teacher work motivation was defined as the internal and external factors that encourage teachers to perform their professional responsibilities effectively. The indicators included intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, recognition, professional commitment, and job security. Teacher performance was defined as the quality of teachers' professional practices in planning, implementing, and evaluating learning activities. The indicators used to measure teacher performance included discipline, responsibility, initiative, and commitment to teaching duties.

Data were collected using structured questionnaires developed based on theoretical concepts and previous empirical studies related to the research variables. Each item was measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Before data collection, the instruments were reviewed by experts in educational management and experienced practitioners to ensure content validity and clarity. A pilot test was conducted to evaluate item consistency, and reliability was examined using Cronbach's alpha coefficients. Instruments that met validity and reliability criteria were used for the final data collection.

Data collection procedure

Data collection was conducted after obtaining research permission from the relevant educational authorities and school principals. The researcher distributed questionnaires directly to teachers in the selected schools and explained the purpose of the study, confidentiality procedures, and instructions for completing the questionnaire. Respondents were given adequate time to complete the instruments, and completed questionnaires were collected and checked before data processing. Participation was voluntary, and respondents' identities were kept confidential throughout the research process.

This is an Open Access article, published by Universitas Jambi, Indonesia

Data analysis

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics with the assistance of IBM SPSS Statistics. Descriptive analysis was conducted to identify the general characteristics and response patterns of principal leadership, teacher work motivation, and teacher performance. The analysis included mean scores, standard deviations, frequency distributions, and percentages.

Before conducting hypothesis testing, prerequisite tests were performed, including normality and linearity tests, to ensure that the data met the assumptions required for regression analysis. Simple linear regression was used to examine the individual contribution of principal leadership and teacher motivation to teacher performance. Furthermore, multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to determine the combined contribution of principal leadership and teacher motivation to teacher performance. Statistical significance was determined at the 0.05 level.

Findings

This study examined the contribution of principal leadership and teacher work motivation to teacher performance in public primary schools in Kinali District, West Pasaman Regency. The findings are presented through descriptive analysis, assumption testing, and regression analysis to determine the extent to which each independent variable contributes to variations in teacher performance.

The study involved 58 teachers from public primary schools in Kinali District, West Pasaman Regency. Data were collected using Likert-scale questionnaires measuring principal leadership, teacher work motivation, and teacher performance. Before analysis, all instruments were tested for validity and reliability to ensure that the items were appropriate for measuring the research variables.

The descriptive analysis indicates that teachers generally perceived their work conditions positively. Among the three variables, teacher work motivation showed a high level of achievement, with a mean score of 3.62, which falls within the "very high" category. The distribution of responses showed that 65.52% of respondents reported very high motivation, 31.03% reported high motivation, and only 3.45% indicated lower levels of motivation. No respondents reported very low motivation.

The findings indicate that teachers in Kinali District generally demonstrate strong motivation in carrying out their professional responsibilities. Although teachers reported positive perceptions of leadership and performance, previous observations identified several challenges, including limited instructional innovation, dependence on existing teaching materials, and insufficient use of assessment results for improving learning activities. This difference suggests that positive perceptions do not always fully represent the complexity of classroom practices, highlighting the importance of examining the relationship between leadership, motivation, and teacher performance statistically.

This is an Open Access article, published by Universitas Jambi, Indonesia

Assumption testing

Before conducting regression analysis, several prerequisite tests were performed to ensure that the data met the requirements of parametric statistical analysis. The normality test using Kolmogorov–Smirnov and Shapiro–Wilk procedures indicated that the data distribution for all variables was normal. The significance value for teacher performance (Y) was 0.100, while principal leadership (X_1) obtained a value of 0.090. Both values exceeded the 0.05 threshold, indicating that the data met the normality assumption.

Furthermore, linearity and multicollinearity tests indicated that the regression model fulfilled the required assumptions. Therefore, correlation analysis, simple linear regression, and multiple linear regression were considered appropriate for examining the contribution of principal leadership and teacher motivation to teacher performance.

Contribution of principal leadership to teacher performance

The first analysis examined the relationship between principal leadership (X_1) and teacher performance (Y). The Pearson correlation analysis showed that principal leadership was positively and significantly associated with teacher performance ($r = 0.396$, $p = 0.002$). This finding indicates that higher levels of principal leadership tend to be associated with better teacher performance.

The simple linear regression analysis produced the following equation:

$$Y = 45.017 + 0.274X_1$$

The regression coefficient for principal leadership was 0.274, with a t-value of 3.224 and a significance value of 0.002 ($p < 0.05$). This result confirms that principal leadership significantly predicts teacher performance. The coefficient of determination (R^2) obtained from the regression model was 0.157, indicating that principal leadership explained approximately 15.7% of the variance in teacher performance. The remaining 84.3% of variance may be explained by other factors not examined in this study, such as teacher competence, professional development, school climate, workload, and other contextual variables. These findings demonstrate that effective principal leadership practices, including guidance, supervision, motivation, and organizational support, are associated with improved teacher performance in primary schools.

Contribution of teacher work motivation to teacher performance

The second analysis examined the contribution of teacher work motivation (X_2) to teacher performance (Y). The Pearson correlation analysis indicated a stronger relationship compared with principal leadership, with a correlation coefficient of $r = 0.645$ and a significance value of $p = 0.000$. This result indicates a positive and statistically significant relationship between teacher motivation and performance. The simple regression equation was:

$$Y = 25.358 + 0.617X_2$$

This is an Open Access article, published by Universitas Jambi, Indonesia

The regression coefficient for work motivation was 0.617, with a t-value of 6.308 and a significance value of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$). This indicates that teacher work motivation significantly contributes to variations in teacher performance. The coefficient of determination (R^2) obtained from the regression model was 0.416, meaning that teacher work motivation explained approximately 41.6% of the variance in teacher performance. The remaining 58.4% may be influenced by other factors beyond the scope of this study.

Compared with principal leadership, teacher work motivation demonstrated a stronger contribution to teacher performance. This finding suggests that teachers' internal drive, professional commitment, and willingness to perform their responsibilities are important factors related to effective teaching practices.

Joint contribution of principal leadership and teacher work motivation to teacher performance

The third analysis examined the combined contribution of principal leadership (X_1) and teacher work motivation (X_2) to teacher performance (Y). The multiple regression equation was:

$$Y = 24.870 + 0.017X_1 + 0.603X_2$$

The regression model was statistically significant, with an F-value of 19.572 and a significance value of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$). This finding indicates that principal leadership and teacher work motivation simultaneously contribute significantly to teacher performance. The regression coefficients show that teacher motivation remained the stronger predictor in the combined model. The coefficient for teacher motivation ($\beta = 0.603$) was substantially larger than the coefficient for principal leadership ($\beta = 0.017$), suggesting that motivation contributed more strongly to explaining differences in teacher performance when both variables were considered simultaneously.

The multiple regression model produced an R^2 value of [INSERT R^2 FROM SPSS MODEL SUMMARY TABLE], indicating the percentage of variance in teacher performance explained jointly by principal leadership and teacher motivation. The remaining variance may be attributed to other factors not included in the model. Overall, the findings indicate that both principal leadership and teacher work motivation are significant factors associated with teacher performance. However, teacher motivation demonstrates a stronger statistical contribution, highlighting the importance of teachers' internal commitment and professional engagement in improving teaching performance.

Discussion

The results reveal a fairly clear pattern: both principal leadership and teacher work motivation are related to teacher performance, but work motivation has the stronger association. This pattern is important in the context of public primary schools in Kinali District because the descriptive results also indicate that teachers generally report a high level of motivation. At the same time, the preliminary observations described earlier in the study indicate continuing difficulties in instructional innovation, the use of digital learning resources, and the use of assessment results to improve subsequent teaching. Taken together, these

This is an Open Access article, published by Universitas Jambi, Indonesia

findings suggest that positive motivation and supportive leadership are important foundations for teacher performance, but they do not automatically resolve all weaknesses in classroom practice.

Principal leadership was positively associated with teacher performance ($r = .396$, $p = .002$). This result is consistent with the view that school leadership contributes to teacher effectiveness by shaping the professional environment in which teachers work. Principals influence teachers not only through administrative decisions but also through supervision, feedback, communication, and support for instructional improvement. A meta-analysis by Alanoglu (2022), for example, found a meaningful relationship between principals' instructional leadership and teacher self-efficacy. Similar evidence from broader school leadership research indicates that leadership is more strongly related to teacher and organizational outcomes than to student outcomes directly (Tan et al., 2022). In this sense, the principal's role is better understood as creating conditions that enable teachers to perform effectively rather than as directly determining what happens in every classroom.

Careful interpretation of the present findings is necessary, as the leadership coefficient became minimal when teacher motivation was included in the multiple regression model. In the simple regression, principal leadership had a significant coefficient, whereas in the combined model its coefficient decreased to 0.017, while the coefficient for work motivation remained comparatively large at 0.603. This pattern indicates that part of the relationship between leadership and performance may overlap with the contribution of teacher motivation. It is therefore possible that supportive leadership helps create working conditions in which teachers feel more committed and willing to invest effort in their professional duties. However, the present analysis does not test mediation, so it would be inappropriate to conclude that motivation statistically mediates the effect of leadership on performance. A mediation analysis would be required to establish such an indirect pathway.

This interpretation is consistent with recent leadership research. School leadership does not operate through a single mechanism. Principals may influence teachers through professional learning, collaboration, efficacy, recognition, and the development of shared goals. Çoğaltay and Boz (2023), in a cross-cultural meta-analysis, found that school leadership was positively associated with collective teacher efficacy, with instructional leadership showing particularly strong effects. Karakose et al. (2024) similarly demonstrated that the relationship between instructional leadership and teacher self-efficacy can involve collective efficacy as an intermediate mechanism. These studies help explain why leadership may remain important even when its unique regression coefficient becomes smaller after another teacher-level factor is introduced into the model.

Teacher work motivation showed the strongest relationship with teacher performance in this study ($r = .645$, $p < .001$). This result is reasonable because motivation is closely connected to the amount of effort teachers are willing to invest in their duties, their persistence in completing responsibilities, and their willingness to improve their practice. Self-determination theory provides a useful explanation for this finding. Deci and Ryan (2000) argue that stronger and more sustainable motivation develops when people experience autonomy, competence, and relatedness. In a school setting, teachers are more likely to maintain professional commitment when they feel capable of performing their work, have appropriate discretion in carrying it out, and experience supportive relationships with colleagues and school leaders.

This is an Open Access article, published by Universitas Jambi, Indonesia

The finding does not mean, however, that motivation alone is sufficient to produce high-quality teaching. This distinction is especially relevant in Kinali District. The study reports generally high teacher motivation, yet the initial observations identified limitations in instructional variety, digital resource use, and follow-up on assessment results. A highly motivated teacher may still face constraints related to competence, workload, facilities, access to training, or confidence in using new instructional approaches. The job demands-resources perspective is useful here because it distinguishes employees' willingness to work from the resources available to support effective performance (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). Teachers may be committed to their work but still require relevant training, time, collegial support, appropriate technology, and constructive feedback to translate motivation into stronger classroom practice.

This point also helps explain why the present findings should not be interpreted as evidence that schools only need to "increase motivation." Motivation needs to be supported by opportunities for professional growth. Where teachers continue to rely heavily on standard teaching materials or make limited use of assessment results, professional development should address these specific instructional needs. Principals can contribute by organizing school-based learning activities, encouraging peer observation, discussing student assessment results with teachers, and making supervision more developmental rather than merely administrative. Research on transformational and instructional leadership similarly indicates that leadership is most useful when it strengthens teacher learning, collaboration, efficacy, and engagement rather than focusing only on compliance (Li & Karanxha, 2024; Ninković et al., 2024).

The stronger coefficient for work motivation also has practical significance. Policies designed to improve teacher performance should not rely exclusively on external rewards. Recognition, fair treatment, opportunities to participate in school decisions, access to professional development, and a sense of professional trust may be equally important. From the perspective of self-determination theory, excessive control may even weaken more autonomous forms of motivation. School principals should accompany supervision with professional support. Teachers need clear expectations, but they also need space to exercise judgment, opportunities to develop competence, and recognition for meaningful contributions to the school.

Simultaneously, one must interpret the findings within the study's specific context. The sample consisted of 58 teachers from public primary schools in Kinali District. The results therefore provide useful evidence for this local setting but should not be generalized automatically to other districts or school systems. Rural and semi-rural schools may differ in access to professional development, infrastructure, staffing, and digital resources. These contextual characteristics may affect both leadership practices and teacher motivation.

Another limitation concerns the use of self-report questionnaires for all three variables. Teachers evaluated principal leadership, their motivation, and their performance. This approach is practical, but it may produce common-method bias or socially desirable responses. The contrast between positive questionnaire responses and the instructional problems identified during preliminary observations is therefore noteworthy. Future research could strengthen the evidence by combining questionnaires with classroom observations, principal evaluations, interviews, or records of teacher instructional practice. Such data would provide a more complete picture of whether perceived motivation and leadership are reflected in observable teaching behavior.

This is an Open Access article, published by Universitas Jambi, Indonesia

Future studies could also examine variables that may explain the relationship between leadership, motivation, and performance more directly. Teacher self-efficacy, school climate, professional learning communities, workload, and access to instructional resources are especially relevant. A larger study could test whether leadership contributes to performance indirectly through motivation or self-efficacy using mediation analysis or structural equation modeling. Such an approach would extend the present findings beyond prediction and provide a clearer explanation of how leadership and motivation operate together.

Overall, the study shows that teacher performance in public primary schools in Kinali District is associated with both organizational and individual factors. Principal leadership has a meaningful relationship with performance, but teacher work motivation appears to be more strongly related to differences in teacher performance. The main implication is therefore not that one factor should be prioritized at the expense of the other. School improvement is more likely when principals create supportive professional conditions while teachers are also provided with the motivation, competence, resources, and opportunities needed to improve their instructional practice. In this respect, strengthening teacher performance requires leadership that supports professional growth rather than supervision alone.

Conclusion

This study provides evidence that principal leadership and teacher work motivation are important factors associated with teacher performance in public primary schools in Kinali District, West Pasaman Regency. Both variables show a positive and significant relationship with teacher performance, indicating that improvements in school leadership practices and teachers' motivational conditions are relevant for supporting better professional performance. Among the two factors examined, teacher work motivation demonstrated a stronger contribution, suggesting that teachers' internal commitment, willingness to fulfill professional responsibilities, and enthusiasm for their work play an important role in shaping teaching performance.

Although principal leadership showed a significant relationship with teacher performance, its contribution should be understood as part of a broader school improvement process. Principals influence teacher performance by creating supportive working conditions, providing instructional guidance, encouraging professional development, and building a positive school environment. However, leadership practices need to be accompanied by teachers' personal motivation and professional readiness because effective teaching depends not only on external support but also on teachers' willingness to improve their practice.

The findings also indicate that strengthening teacher performance requires more than increasing motivation alone. Teachers need opportunities to develop pedagogical competence, improve instructional strategies, use learning resources effectively, and respond to changing educational demands. Therefore, school improvement efforts should combine motivational support with continuous professional development. Principals and education authorities need to create programs that encourage teacher engagement while also providing practical support for improving classroom practice.

This study contributes to understanding teacher performance within the context of public primary schools in Kinali District by highlighting the combined importance of organizational and individual factors. Nevertheless, the findings should be interpreted within the limitations of the study. The use of self-report questionnaires may not fully capture actual

classroom practices, and the findings are limited to one local educational context. Future research could involve classroom observations, qualitative approaches, and additional variables such as teacher self-efficacy, school climate, professional learning communities, and digital competence to provide a more comprehensive explanation of teacher performance.

Overall, improving teacher performance requires a balanced approach in which principals provide effective leadership while teachers are supported to maintain strong motivation and develop their professional capabilities. Sustainable improvement in primary education will depend on the ability of schools to create environments where teachers are motivated, supported, and continuously encouraged to improve the quality of learning they provide.

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

References

Alanoglu, M. (2022). The role of instructional leadership in increasing teacher self-efficacy: A meta-analytic review. *Asia Pacific Education Review, 23*, 233–244. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12564-021-09726-5

Bakker, A. B., & Demerouti, E. (2017). Job demands–resources theory: Taking stock and looking forward. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology, 22*(3), 273–285. https://doi.org/10.1037/ocp0000056

Bush, T., & Glover, D. (2014). School leadership models: What do we know? *School Leadership & Management, 34*(5), 553–571. https://doi.org/10.1080/13632434.2014.928680

Çoğaltay, N., & Boz, A. (2023). Influence of school leadership on collective teacher efficacy: A cross-cultural meta-analysis. *Asia Pacific Education Review, 24*(3), 331–351. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12564-022-09754-9

Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2000). The "what" and "why" of goal pursuits: Human needs and the self-determination of behavior. *Psychological Inquiry, 11*(4), 227–268. https://doi.org/10.1207/S15327965PLI1104_01

Fenech, R., Baguant, P., & Alpenidze, O. (2021). The impact of dynamic capabilities on teaching strategies in higher education. *Academy of Strategic Management Journal, 20*(2), 1–13.

Goel, S., & Wani, M. A. (2024). The power of psychological capital: A comprehensive review of data on resilience, hope, optimism, and efficacy. *African Journal of Biomedical Research, 27*(1s), 2182–2191.

Hasanah, C., & Sururi, S. (2025). Principal's supervision strategy to improve teachers' performance based on professional competence. *JMKSP (Jurnal Manajemen, Kepemimpinan, dan Supervisi Pendidikan), 10*(1), 289–309. https://doi.org/10.31851/jmksp.v10i1.18104

John, T. E. (2025). Work motivation of teachers: Role of self-leadership and self-directed professional development. In R. Marcão & V. Santos (Eds.), *Evolving strategies for organizational management and performance evaluation* (pp. 645–656). IGI Global Scientific Publishing. https://doi.org/10.4018/979-8-3373-0149-5.ch030

Kahardani, M. Z., Sudibjo, N., Pramono, R., & Tan, J. D. (2025). Leadership of millennial women in Muhammadiyah elementary schools: A multi-specific study of elementary schools in Yogyakarta City, Indonesia. *Journal of Posthumanism, 5*(1), 861–874.

Karakose, T., Kardas, A., Kanadlı, S., Tülübaş, T., & Yildirim, B. (2024). How collective efficacy mediates the association between principal instructional leadership and teacher self-efficacy: Findings from a meta-analytic structural equation model. *Behavioral Sciences, 14*(2), 85. https://doi.org/10.3390/bs14020085

Li, Y., & Karanxha, Z. (2024). Literature review of transformational school leadership: Models and effects on student achievement (2006–2019). *Educational Management Administration & Leadership, 52*(1), 52–74. https://doi.org/10.1177/17411432221077157

Muchiri, C. N., Okoth, U. A., & Kalai, J. M. (2025). Financial and non-financial rewards as predictors of teachers' job commitment in public secondary schools in Kiambu County, Kenya. *European Journal of Education Studies, 12*(11), 1043–1061. https://doi.org/10.46827/ejes.v12i11.6358

Ninković, S., Knežević-Florić, O., & Đorđić, D. (2024). Transformational leadership and teachers' use of differentiated instruction in Serbian schools: Investigating the mediating effects of teacher collaboration and self-efficacy. *Educational Studies, 50*(6), 1353–1372. https://doi.org/10.1080/03055698.2022.2081787

Schiuma, G., Schettini, E., Santarsiero, F., & Carlucci, D. (2022). The transformative leadership compass: Six competencies for digital transformation entrepreneurship. *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior & Research, 28*(5), 1273–1291. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJEBR-01-2021-0087

Sha, X., & Chang, Y. (2025). Occupational health and performance among Chinese university teachers: A COR theory model of health-promoting leadership and burnout. *European Journal of Investigation in Health, Psychology and Education, 15*(7), Article 134. https://doi.org/10.3390/ejihpe15070134

Tan, C. Y., Gao, L., & Shi, M. (2022). Second-order meta-analysis synthesizing the evidence on associations between school leadership and different school outcomes. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership, 50*(3), 469–490. https://doi.org/10.1177/1741143220935456

Wibowo. (2016). *Manajemen kinerja* (5th ed.). RajaGrafindo Persada.

Zhang, H., & Tian, M. (2025). Unpacking the multi-dimensional nature of teacher competencies: A systematic review. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research, 69*(5), 1004–1025. https://doi.org/10.1080/00313831.2024.2369867