Transformational Leadership and Its Impact on the Psychological Well-being of School Members

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Abstract:

This study aims to explore the role of madrasah principals in creating a work environment that supports the psychological well-being of madrasah members. Using a qualitative case study approach, data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. Thematic analysis revealed that transformational leadership practices, including exemplary behavior, spiritually based motivation, openness to innovative ideas, and personal attention, significantly contribute to a harmonious and supportive work environment. Madrasah principals also facilitate career development, provide emotional support, and ensure adequate facilities, which strengthen dimensions of psychological well-being, including positive interpersonal relationships, autonomy, personal growth, and a clear sense of purpose in life. These findings highlight that integrating transformational leadership with spiritual values not only fosters a positive madrasah climate but also contributes to long-term teacher commitment and educational quality. This study contributes to the literature by demonstrating how leadership practices concretely influence psychosocial dynamics in madrasahs, filling a gap in previous studies that often only emphasize the perspective of stress and burnout.

Keywords: *Transformational Leadership, Work Environment, Psychological Well-Being*

Abstrak:

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi peran kepala madrasah dalam menciptakan lingkungan kerja yang mendukung kesejahteraan psikologis warga madrasah. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan studi kasus kualitatif, data dikumpulkan melalui observasi dan wawancara dan dokumentasi. Analisis tematik mengungkapkan bahwa praktik kepemimpinan transformasional melalui perilaku teladan, motivasi berbasis spiritual, keterbukaan terhadap ide-ide inovatif, dan perhatian personal berkontribusi signifikan terhadap lingkungan kerja yang harmonis dan suportif. Kepala madrasah juga memfasilitasi pengembangan karier, memberikan dukungan emosional, dan memastikan fasilitas yang memadai, yang memperkuat dimensi kesejahteraan psikologis, termasuk hubungan interpersonal yang positif, otonomi, pertumbuhan pribadi, dan tujuan hidup yang jelas. Temuan ini menyoroti bahwa mengintegrasikan kepemimpinan transformasional dengan nilai-nilai spiritual tidak hanya menumbuhkan iklim madrasah yang positif tetapi juga berkontribusi pada komitmen guru jangka panjang dan kualitas pendidikan. Studi ini memberikan kontribusi terhadap literatur dengan menunjukkan bagaimana praktik kepemimpinan secara konkret memengaruhi dinamika psikososial di madrasah, mengisi kesenjangan dalam studi sebelumnya yang sering kali hanya menekankan perspektif stres dan kelelahan.

Kata Kunci: *Kepemimpinan Transformasional, Lingkungan Kerja, Kesejahteraan Psikologis*

INTRODUCTION

Schools, as educational institutions, serve as safe and comfortable spaces that support the psychological well-being of all members. A healthy, conducive work environment is essential to enhancing motivation, a sense of belonging, and positive relationships among teachers and staff. Leadership can be understood as the ability to facilitate the achievement of common goals through influence and direction (Nurkholis & Santosa, 2024). The role of the school principal, therefore, is crucial in shaping and maintaining a climate that supports psychological well-being, including self-confidence, autonomy, personal growth, life purpose, environmental mastery, and positive interpersonal relationships (Simatupang et al., 2023). However, in practice, principals often face various challenges. These include a lack of awareness regarding the importance of psychological aspects in leadership, limited strategies to enhance psychological well-being, and ineffective communication with school stakeholders (Rahayu & Iskandar, 2022; Solihah, 2023). For example, a study in South Africa found that strong principal–teacher relationships, adaptability, and a green school environment positively affected teacher well-being (Kwatubana, 2024). Similarly, research in Sulawesi revealed that principal leadership accounted for 15.4% of the variance in teacher performance (Kesek, 2024; Santosa, 2022). In a broader context, Li et al. (2024) showed that, among 834 teachers in China, emotional intelligence directly and indirectly predicted organisational commitment through psychological well-being, highlighting the mediating role of well-being in strengthening teachers' professional commitment.

Although research has emphasised teacher stress and burnout, fewer studies have examined how school principals actively shape supportive psychosocial environments (Anwar et al., 2021). Transformational leadership is known to enhance organisational commitment through well-being, but its effectiveness varies across contexts (Zhang et al., 2022).

Furthermore, most studies focus on a single leadership style, overlooking how principals integrate different approaches in situational contexts. Cece et al. (2022) found that perceived support from principals had a greater impact on psychological well-being than the leadership style labels themselves, suggesting that emotional support and collaboration are central.

This study seeks to address these gaps by exploring how school principals' leadership directly contributes to creating a work environment that supports the psychological well-being of school members. The novelty of this research lies in its integration of transformational leadership with spiritual values, offering a culturally contextualised perspective. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to reveal the principal's role in shaping a psychologically supportive school climate that enhances motivation, commitment, and overall educational quality. In this way, leadership is reaffirmed as a decisive factor in sustaining the well-being and performance of the school community. This gap underscores the need for further research that not only describes leadership styles but also explores how school principals' leadership concretely shapes the psychosocial dynamics within the school workplace.

School leadership plays a significant role in the psychological well-being of the school community (Ibrahim et al., 2025), and school leaders' insensitivity to this issue can have serious consequences. A supportive work environment is often undermined by unempathetic leadership, which in turn can lead to increased stress, emotional exhaustion, and dissatisfaction among school staff (Saefurridja et al., 2023). Additionally, a lack of attention to psychological well-being can worsen the work environment and hinder the principal's ability to create an inclusive and harmonious climate. School principals who are unable to implement a supportive leadership approach may create tension among school members, which, in turn, worsens their psychological well-being and increases the risk of emotional exhaustion (Tari et al., 2024). In this context, it is important to develop strategies that support the mental health of school members, as required by responsive and caring leadership (Diah Sastaviana, 2023; Komarudin, 2023).

Attention to the psychological well-being of the school community is a very significant aspect in supporting educational success. When school principals and management take steps to address the psychological well-being of students and staff, the school atmosphere tends to become more conducive and comfortable for all involved (Gatarina Nurani Oktavia et al., 2023). Maintaining psychological well-being can enhance the motivation and productivity of school members, ultimately contributing positively to academic outcomes and the overall teaching and learning process (Riyanto, 2022). Research indicates that a school environment that supports mental health not only reduces the risk of stress and depression but also plays a crucial role in creating an atmosphere that fosters individual self-development.

Therefore, managing psychological aspects needs to be a top priority (Cahyanti et al., 2023; Diah Sastaviana, 2023). In this context, schools need to implement policies that support and respond to the psychological needs of all school members. Thus, creating a supportive environment for psychological well-being is key to overall educational success. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine the principal's leadership role in creating a work environment that supports the psychological well-being of school members. The title of the study is "the role of the principal's leadership in shaping a work environment that supports the psychological well-being of school members".

RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study design to deeply analyze various aspects of the phenomenon under study, with the goal of understanding the context holistically and comprehensively. In this study, the researcher plays an active role as the primary instrument responsible for collecting and interpreting descriptive data (Rahayuningsih & Rijanto, 2022). This strategy is quite effective for understanding social phenomena through the exploration of relevant and in-depth information. The informant selection method in this study used purposive sampling, a sample selection technique based on specific objectives to represent characteristics relevant to the research. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and observations. All

data were then validated using a triangulation approach to strengthen the analysis, verify the findings, and provide more solid support for the constructs to be developed. Documentation was also conducted to support the data collection process and ensure the validity of the research findings. This documentation included field notes, interview recordings, and observation results, which were used to verify and deepen the analysis conducted in the study. (Fahma et al., 2024; Hadibroto et al., 2023).

The research setting took place at MAN 1 Bantul, with the selection of research subjects focusing on the principal, vice principal for curriculum, seven teachers, and three education staff. This is because this group of subjects interacts most directly and is directly involved in the dynamics of the school's work environment. Thus, they experience the real impact of the principal's leadership. Qualitative research generally uses limited sample sizes because its primary focus is on gathering information that can provide an in-depth description of the difficulty, complexity, variation, or context of a phenomenon (Dana et al., 2022; Wafiah & Wustari L Mangundjaya, 2023).

The data obtained through interviews and observations were analyzed using systematic thematic analysis techniques as described by Braun and Clarke. This process involved six main stages, namely: (1) recognizing and repeatedly reading the data and noting initial ideas; (2) systematically creating initial codes from all data; (3) identifying themes by grouping related codes; (4) reviewing themes to ensure that the identified themes are consistent and aligned with the overall data; (5) defining and naming themes to clarify the meaning of each theme; and (6) compiling a coherent and understandable analysis report (Braun et al., 2022), so that the hidden meaning within the data can be revealed more comprehensively.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Results

The research findings show that the transformational leadership model developed by Bass and Avolio, consisting of four aspects—ideal influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration—is illustrated in Figure 1.
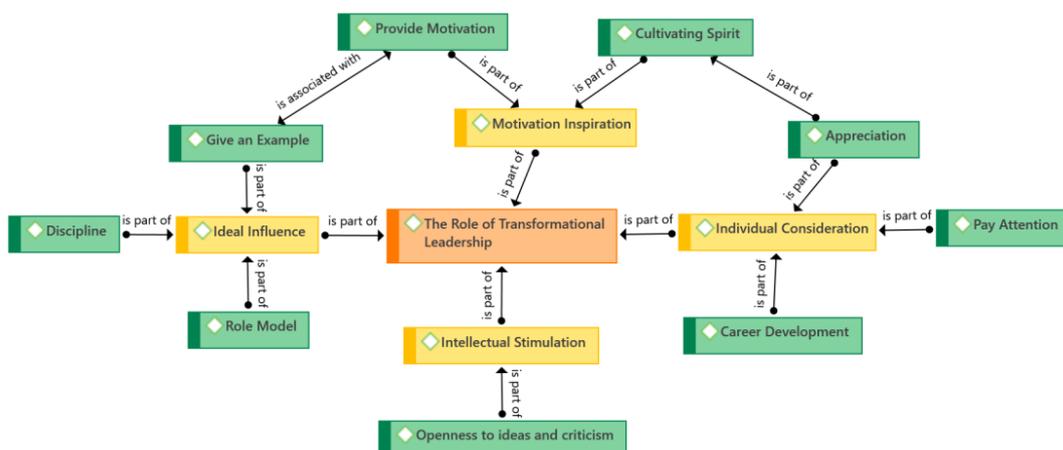

Figure 1. Transformational Leadership

Ideal Influence

This study found that the principal sets an example. This is as stated by P1: "As leaders, the product we are shaping and managing is children. We hope that these children will be useful members of society. Children have minds, hearts, and feelings, so we must set an example for them by participating ourselves. As leaders, we cannot simply give orders; we must also participate and integrate ourselves with the entire madrasah community" (P1).

School principals who set an example through concrete actions, such as participating in school activities that demonstrate positive values, have been shown to improve the well-being of the school community. In agreement with statement P1, P2 also expressed the same opinion. "Yes, of course, ma'am, he is also patient and disciplined, because he can also be a role model for us, and I can also emulate him" (P2).

Motivational Inspiration

Research participants said that the principal motivated the entire school community through a spiritual approach. This approach was manifested through motivation that emphasised the values of sincerity and patience, whereby the principal consistently guided the school community to interpret educational duties as a form of worship to God. P1 revealed: "Obviously, as a leader, when motivating teachers and staff, it would certainly be easier to use a spiritual approach. How do we remind the teachers that our role is not only to educate but also to guide and direct the children? The most appropriate approach is the one done with the utmost sincerity. If we are sincere, insha'Allah, our focus will be solely on Allah, and we will not place too much hope in human beings" (P1).

Intellectual Stimulation

The principal provides opportunities and encourages critical thinking. P3 reveals "Yes, the principal encourages critical thinking so that teachers and staff can encourage us to be innovative. Even when teachers share ideas during meetings, he accepts the ideas and suggestions we propose" (P3).

As explained by P3, the principal's openness to ideas, criticism, and suggestions will foster a culture of innovation, reflection, and adaptability. This is in P1 "I respond to all ideas, suggestions, input, evaluations, and even criticism as a form of their enthusiasm for the madrasah. Therefore, I provide space, I serve them face-to-face, I serve them via private WhatsApp messages, I serve them through my staff if they are more comfortable talking to my staff, and I tell my staff that if someone provides input, they don't have to mention their name, it's okay if they are reluctant to mention their name" (P1).

Individual Considerations

The principal shows concern by giving appreciation and attention to teachers and staff. Revealed by P3 and P2, "The principal always gives appreciation even for small things, such as saying thank you, so I feel more confident" (P3). "If a teacher or staff member is sick, the principal always asks about their condition, gives them attention, and even visits them. Sometimes he asks about the class, how the class is going today. So I feel more comfortable" (P2).

As stated by P3 and P2, principals who consistently show appreciation — through both praise and actions — can increase comfort and strengthen feelings of being valued. In addition, principals also provide opportunities for teachers and staff to develop their competencies and careers. P1 and P3 stated this. "So, in terms of career development, we always encourage them to participate in training courses and seminars. For example, if there is an official online training course from the ministry, we list everyone in the group. Regarding further studies, there's also the concept of study leave and such, which we support for personal development, especially for younger teachers who still have the potential to excel in this madrasah. It's precisely the younger ones who should be prioritized, as they still have the energy and enthusiasm, so we must maximize their potential" (P1).

"Because yesterday there was a seminar, and even the head of the madrasah said that for future development, he suggested that if we want to develop something new, we are welcome to do so. The principal always provides training by attending seminars, and of course, it is permitted to continue studies to keep learning and developing even while teaching. The principal also provides good facilities for us, starting from the teachers' room or seminar and training sessions tailored to our respective fields" (P3).
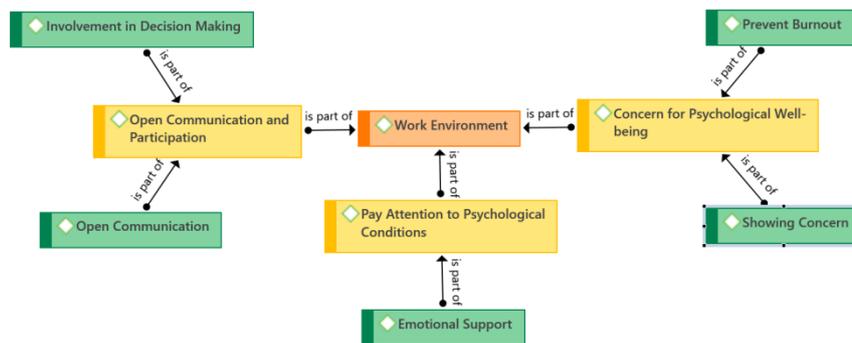

Figure 2. Work Environment

The work environment in this study is analysed through three dimensions: open communication and participation, attention to psychological well-being, and concern for psychological conditions, which result from the modification and novelty of transformational leadership.

Open Communication and Participation

Some research participants reported that the principal engaged in open communication and involved teachers and staff in decision-making. This was observed in P3 and P5 "Indeed, every time there is a meeting and so on, we as teachers are always given guidance and advice. Of course, we moderate between the principal and the teachers and other staff. And at every meeting, we as teachers are always involved in decision-making, especially regarding education" (P3).

"When we make a decision, sometimes we have to communicate with the principal, because as the principal, he is informed of activities dedicated to teachers during meetings. However, when the decision is made only by me and the staff, we communicate it to the other staff, and then we decide and report it

to him. But if we need to communicate with him first, we will do so. However, the final decision is still made by us and communicated to him" (P5).

Concern for Psychological Well-Being

The principal shows concern and prevents burnout among teachers and staff. Revealed by P1, P3, and P5, "When teachers or staff are exhausted, I will ask them directly and do not hesitate to lighten their workload. Or by asking younger teachers to assist senior teachers in their duties, especially with today's technology. Being able to collaborate and respect subordinates, peers, or those we serve. Supporting and caring for them. Sometimes, if someone has a sick child, I give them attention, ask about their condition, whether they have recovered, and visit when there are family members who are sick, have passed away, or other situations—again, by showing concern." (P1). "Yes, of course, the principal provides assistance to us, even if it is only a small amount, it makes things easier for me and I feel comfortable" (P3).

Based on the statements from P1 and P3, the principal consistently expresses concern and care, both verbally and through concrete actions, which help increase comfort within the school community. P5 also believes: "I feel comfortable with the principal because we are close and have worked together often. We can discuss our concerns and confide in her, and she also guides us and always directs all of us teachers in any activity, whether it is for our personal careers or for the advancement of the madrasah" (P5).

Paying Attention to Psychological Conditions

The study found that principals address psychological conditions by providing emotional support. As stated by P1 and P2, "Sometimes, if someone has a sick child, I pay attention to them, ask how the child is doing and whether they have recovered. We visit when a family member is sick, has passed away, or something else happens. We show our concern" (P1). "I feel comfortable because the principal helps divide the work hours well, so I don't feel burdened by the tasks assigned. For me, the important thing is comfort at work" (P2).

Referring to statements P1 and P2, the principal directly shows emotional concern, both by dividing the workload fairly and by showing concern for the personal situations of the school community. This approach helps create a comfortable atmosphere and a sense of appreciation in the workplace.
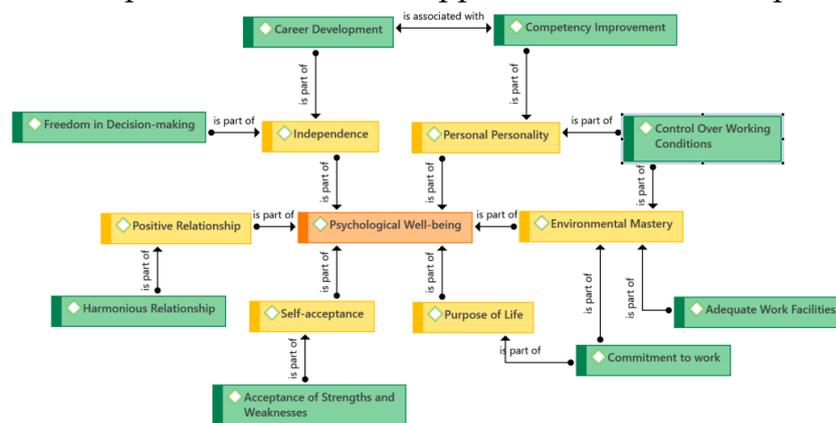

Figure 3. Psychological Well-being

Figure 3 shows psychological well-being as developed by consisting of six aspects: self-acceptance, positive relationships, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth.

Self-acceptance

The principal is well aware of the diversity of teachers' competencies. Understanding that every teacher has strengths and weaknesses, the principal strives not to let teachers' and staff members' weaknesses become obstacles to their work performance. Instead, they create a positive atmosphere by providing tangible support, as expressed by P1 and P5: "We even encourage self-development, so we always encourage career development, starting from attending training courses and seminars. For example, if there is an official online training course from the ministry, we list everyone who is interested. Then, in relation to further studies, there is also a term called study permit, and we support self-development, especially for young teachers" (P1).

"Of course, we all have our strengths and weaknesses. I spoke to the principal and told her that when we have weaknesses, our teammates will back us up. After all, we are part of the curriculum, so the principal assists with the curriculum, and we support each other. When there is a task to be completed, we work together to finish it. So, when we are overwhelmed, the principal and the other curriculum coordinators will assist us. The principal, as the leader, helps motivate us, assists with our work, and provides guidance." (P5).

Positive Relationships

This study found that principals build positive relationships with school members to foster comfort, trust, and emotional support. This is in line with statement P1: "What I do for them to prevent stress and burnout is to often organize refreshing activities. Sometimes during semester breaks, we hold capacity building activities such as group exercises, tours, outbound activities, family recitations... So that hopefully, not only will they be harmonious and close with their families, but they will also be harmonious and close with their families and understand each other" (P1).

Agreeing with P1's statement, P also expressed the same opinion. ["Because we have been very close to him during our relationship. We can work together to build this school... so every year there are four religious gatherings, and these are family gatherings, and we will have halal bihalal events in between. This is one way to strengthen our bonds and harmony" (P5).

Independence

Participants in the study stated that decision-making autonomy, positive recognition, and the principal's perception of school staff made the teaching profession an attractive option for innovation and career development. This was revealed in P3 "Yes, of course, as teachers we are free to make decisions, especially regarding teaching methods. The principal gives us the freedom to use methods that can increase students' interest in learning, so that the learning process becomes more enjoyable and meaningful" (P3).

Environmental Mastery

This study reveals that principals provide adequate infrastructure and facilities for school members and manage work systems effectively, thereby supporting environmental mastery and mental well-being among school members. Revealed in P1: "Yes, of course, to create a safe and conducive environment, it must be equipped with facilities and infrastructure that provide a comfortable space. And this year, we will focus on adiwiyata, which we have already included in our curriculum for our work program as well as for adiwiyata. With that, a pleasant and comfortable environment will provide greater comfort for them... then we will create a clear work program and socialize it with all parties at the madrasah, and for its implementation, we will break it down to the staff, the madrasah's curriculum department, public relations, student affairs, infrastructure, and also supported by the religious affairs coordinator and many others. All of this will be compiled into a clear work program tailored to each department's responsibilities." (P1).

Life Purpose

The study found that the principal consistently emphasised that the duties of teachers and staff were a mandate that required sincerity from the heart and were meaningful as a life purpose. This was revealed in P3: "The principal always reminds us that teaching is a noble task and part of worship. This made me realize that my job is not only to educate but also to shape the character of students, which is a noble task and also a charitable deed for me" (P3).

"And of course, he always reminds us that we are not only teaching but also educating children well and that this is a charitable act for us. During meetings, he always encourages us that our work will be a source of reward for us" (P2).

Personal Growth

Personal growth was found to be that teachers and staff always reflect on themselves to continue improving their potential. The principal consistently supports the development of competencies. P3 conveyed this: "The head of the madrasah also said that for the sake of future development, he would encourage us to try new things. Of course, with the advancement of technology, I continue to develop and keep up with the times, starting from searching the internet and other things. As I have mentioned, the school always provides training through seminars, and it is also permitted to continue further studies to keep learning and developing even while teaching. This is to enhance competencies and improve skills." (P3).

In agreement with P3's statement, P1 expressed a similar opinion: "Then, in relation to further studies, there is also the term study permit and so on, which we support for self-development, especially for young teachers. Because they still have the opportunity to strive in this madrasah. It is precisely those who are capable who should be supported, because they still have the energy and enthusiasm, so we must maximize their potential. In fact, for the school program teams, I maximize the potential of young people" (P1).

Discussion

The principal's leadership role is crucial in creating a work environment that supports the psychological well-being of all school members. Effective leadership can build positive relationships and create a conducive environment, which not only influences psychological well-being but also the motivation and productivity of school members. Figure 4 illustrates the principal's role in creating a harmonious work environment that supports psychological well-being, including leadership that is responsive and sensitive to the needs and psychological conditions of school members.
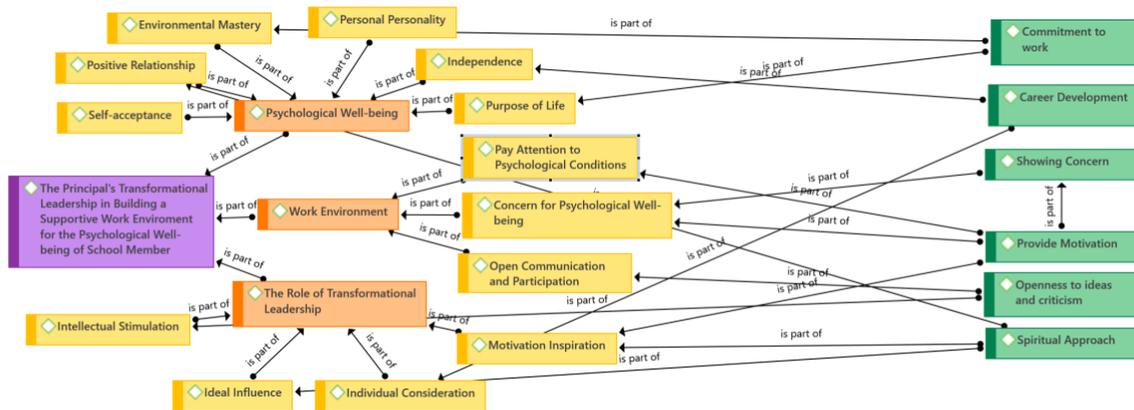

Figure 4. The role of school principals in creating a work environment that supports the psychological well-being of school members

In the context of education, the principal's leadership is pivotal in creating a work environment that supports the psychological well-being of all school members. Effective leadership fosters positive relationships and a conducive environment, which not only affects psychological well-being but also the motivation and productivity of school members. Principal leadership that is sensitive and responsive to the needs and psychological conditions of school members can foster a harmonious work environment that supports their psychological well-being. This aligns with research showing that a supportive learning environment positively influences performance, including actions such as building positive relationships, providing direct attention, and appreciating and motivating individuals in the school environment. These three elements have been shown to increase a sense of comfort and trust and to foster harmonisation within the school environment (Okwis et al., 2021). Creating harmony and increasing emotional support in schools serves as a protective factor against the challenges they face. When principals prioritise responsive leadership, there is mutual trust and strong bonds between all members of the school community, which ultimately improves their psychological well-being.

Furthermore, Kusdarianto et al. (2022) showed that principals who adopt a transformational style, with open and empathetic communication, are more successful at building trust among school members. This work climate not only improves psychological well-being but also encourages increased motivation and productivity. The work climate created by this approach not only improves individuals' psychological well-being but also promotes increased motivation

and productivity. Research shows that effective transformational leadership can create an organisational culture that supports employees' mental well-being, with transparent communication and attention to team members' psychological needs as the primary focus (Ausat et al., 2024; Shabbir et al., 2022). The role of a leader in shaping a work environment that supports psychological well-being is crucial, as it affects individuals' commitment to their work and personal growth. With leaders who motivate and inspire, employees feel more engaged and have a sense of purpose in their work, which is also closely linked to their career development. Transformational leadership contributes to building employee autonomy, which is essential for the psychological well-being of school members (Ding & Yu, 2022). In addition, supportive leadership can help prevent burnout by creating a work environment that is considerate of psychological conditions and emphasises aspects of mental well-being (Corbin et al., 2024).

Based on these findings, it can be understood that the principal of MAN 1 Bantul plays a role in building a responsible professional attitude among school members. The principal opens space for ideas and criticism from the school community and also plays a role in fostering participatory communication, which further adds to the vitality of interpersonal relationships within the school environment. This strengthens social bonds and creates an atmosphere where each individual feels valued and has a voice, fostering mutual trust and minimising feelings of alienation among school members, which, in turn, supports psychological comfort, emotional attachment, and shared commitment among all elements of the school community (Bedrov & Gable, 2023). This role is realised through the application of a transformational leadership style, which focuses on psychological well-being. In this case, the principal is not only tasked with making administrative decisions, but also with building a harmonious, open and supportive working atmosphere. Transformational leadership in the school environment not only focuses on delivering a clear vision and mission but also on creating conditions conducive to the psychological well-being of school members. Leaders who apply the principles of transformational leadership can strengthen interpersonal relationships, which are essential to fostering a favourable organisational climate. According to research, a work environment supported by transformational leadership can reduce stress, increase job satisfaction, and improve organisational commitment, all of which contribute to overall psychological well-being (Ausat et al., 2024; Meidelina et al., 2023).

Furthermore, forward-thinking principals with an inclusive managerial approach are reported to encourage the active participation of the entire school community in decision-making. When team members feel heard and valued, they are more likely to contribute creative ideas and maintain high motivation. The emergence of greater responsibility for shared outcomes also improves the quality of interactions among members. This engagement shows a positive relationship with school success, through increased psychological resilience and reduced risk of burnout. Meanwhile, Lamirin et al. (2023) also emphasise that attention to the mental well-being of school members directly impacts motivation and productivity. In this context, school principals demonstrate consistency in providing moral support and recognition, and in fostering healthy

communication channels, which significantly enhance the comfort and work enthusiasm of teachers and staff. The principal's transformational leadership is also evident in concrete actions, such as openness to criticism, sincere praise, and support for career development. This aligns with Nena's (2021) view that transformational leadership style can help improve educational quality by motivating and inspiring staff (Syahroni et al., 2025). As an inspirer, motivator, and facilitator, the school principal directly contributes to creating a healthy work environment that supports individual growth.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this study shows that school principals' transformational leadership significantly influences the creation of a work environment that supports psychological well-being in educational institutions. In the context of the principal of MAN 1 Bantul, it was found that a responsive and empathetic leadership model can create a favourable climate, increase mutual trust, and strengthen interpersonal relationships among members of the school community. This not only contributes to psychological well-being but also increases motivation and productivity, as studies show that open communication and attention to team members' psychological needs are key to creating a healthy organisational culture. Thus, transformational leadership not only improves individual performance but also serves as a protective factor against stress and burnout among school community members. Recommendations for further research include conducting longitudinal studies to investigate the long-term impact of transformational leadership on psychological well-being and staff performance in schools. In addition, future research could focus on how a supportive school culture can be established and sustained in different educational contexts, as well as exploring the innovative role of principals in promoting school culture.

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