

# Transformational Leadership in Educational Management: A Systematic Literature Review on Its Impact on Teacher Performance and School Quality

Solihun\*, Novan Ardy Wiyani

Universitas Islam Negeri Prof. KH. Saifuddin Zuhri Purwokerto, Indonesia

\*Email Corresponding author: [solihun.cwtl@gmail.com](mailto:solihun.cwtl@gmail.com)

## Abstract

This study aims to systematically examine the impact of transformational leadership on teacher performance and school quality in contemporary educational contexts. Responding to the growing demand for improving educational quality and the fragmented nature of existing research, this study employs a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach following PRISMA guidelines. Data were collected from major academic databases, including Scopus, Web of Science, ERIC, and Google Scholar, focusing on empirical studies published between 2020 and 2025. A total of selected articles were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify key patterns and relationships. The findings indicate that transformational leadership consistently contributes to improving teacher performance, particularly in terms of motivation, job satisfaction, professional commitment, and instructional innovation. In addition, it plays a significant role in enhancing school quality by fostering a positive organizational culture, strengthening collaboration, and supporting continuous institutional development. However, the effectiveness of transformational leadership is influenced by contextual factors such as organizational readiness, leadership competence, and policy support. This study highlights that transformational leadership functions not only as an administrative approach but also as a strategic mechanism for sustainable educational improvement. The findings offer practical implications for school leaders and policymakers in developing adaptive and context-sensitive leadership practices.

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## INTRODUCTION

Education is widely recognized as a fundamental driver in shaping human capital, enhancing intellectual competence, and strengthening social responsibility in an increasingly complex global environment. In the era of rapid technological advancement and globalization, educational institutions are expected not only to deliver academic knowledge but also to develop critical thinking, adaptability, collaboration, and ethical awareness among learners. Consequently, improving educational quality has become a central priority that requires continuous innovation in both instructional practices and institutional management.



One of the most critical factors influencing educational quality is school leadership. School leaders play a strategic role in shaping organizational effectiveness, teacher professionalism, and student learning outcomes. Recent studies highlight that leadership is no longer limited to administrative functions but extends to the ability to inspire, motivate, and transform educational environments toward continuous improvement (Wityastuti et al., 2025). In this context, transformational leadership has gained increasing attention as a relevant leadership model in modern educational management.

Transformational leadership is defined as a leadership approach that emphasizes vision, inspiration, intellectual stimulation, and individualized support to encourage followers to achieve beyond expected standards. This leadership style is characterized by its ability to foster innovation, build a positive organizational climate, and enhance professional growth among teachers (Ahsan et al., 2024). In educational settings, transformational leaders are capable of creating collaborative cultures, strengthening teacher engagement, and promoting sustainable school development.

A growing body of empirical research demonstrates that transformational leadership has a significant positive impact on teacher performance. Teachers working under transformational leadership tend to exhibit higher motivation, job satisfaction, self-efficacy, and commitment to their profession (Zhao et al., 2025). Moreover, transformational leadership contributes to the development of professional learning communities and encourages continuous pedagogical innovation, which are essential in improving teaching effectiveness (Aziz et al., 2025). These findings suggest that leadership practices play a crucial role in enhancing the quality of teaching and learning processes.

In addition to improving teacher performance, transformational leadership also contributes to overall school quality. School quality is often reflected in academic achievement, organizational effectiveness, school climate, and stakeholder satisfaction. Research indicates that transformational leadership strengthens organizational culture, enhances collaboration, and improves school management accountability, which ultimately leads to better educational outcomes (Widijastuti, 2025). Furthermore, transformational leadership has been identified as a key driver of educational innovation, particularly in adapting to technological and pedagogical changes in the 21st century (Román-Cortéz et al., 2025).

Despite the increasing number of studies on transformational leadership in education, existing findings remain fragmented and vary across contexts, research designs, and measured variables. Some studies focus on teacher-related outcomes such as motivation and performance, while others emphasize organizational aspects such as school effectiveness and innovation. However, there is still a lack of comprehensive synthesis that systematically integrates these findings to provide a clearer and more holistic understanding of the impact of transformational leadership on both teacher performance and school quality.

To address this gap, a systematic literature review (SLR) approach is essential to identify, evaluate, and synthesize existing research in a structured and transparent manner. Recent SLR studies in education have demonstrated that transformational leadership consistently shows positive correlations with teacher engagement, organizational culture, and institutional performance, although its effectiveness is influenced by contextual factors such as policy environment, institutional readiness, and

leadership capacity (Mu'imamah & Setiadi, 2025). Therefore, a comprehensive review is needed to consolidate current evidence and identify future research directions.

Therefore, this study aims to systematically review the existing literature on transformational leadership in educational management, with a specific focus on its impact on teacher performance and school quality. By synthesizing findings from recent empirical studies (2020–2025), this research seeks to provide a comprehensive and evidence-based understanding of how transformational leadership contributes to educational improvement. The findings are expected to offer practical insights for school leaders, policymakers, and researchers in developing effective leadership strategies to support sustainable educational quality enhancement.

## RESEARCHS METHOD

This study employed a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) design to examine the impact of transformational leadership on teacher performance and school quality. The SLR approach was selected because it enables a comprehensive, structured, and transparent synthesis of existing research findings from multiple studies. By integrating evidence from various empirical sources, this method provides a more robust understanding of research trends, patterns, and gaps within the field of educational leadership (Snyder, 2019; Xiao & Watson, 2019).

The review process followed the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines, which ensure methodological rigor and minimize bias in the selection of literature (Page et al., 2021). The process began with the identification stage, where relevant articles were collected from several reputable academic databases, including Scopus, Web of Science, ERIC, and Google Scholar. The search strategy utilized specific keywords such as “transformational leadership,” “educational leadership,” “teacher performance,” and “school quality,” combined with Boolean operators (AND, OR) to refine the results and enhance relevance.

To ensure the quality and relevance of the selected studies, inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied systematically. The inclusion criteria consisted of peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2020 and 2025, written in English or Indonesian, and focusing on transformational leadership within educational settings, particularly those examining teacher performance and school quality. Meanwhile, studies were excluded if they were non-academic publications, lacked full-text access, or did not directly address the variables under investigation. This filtering process was conducted through title and abstract screening, followed by full-text evaluation to determine the eligibility of each article.

After the selection process, the included studies were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns and key themes across the literature. This analytical approach allowed the researcher to categorize findings into several major themes, such as the dimensions of transformational leadership, its influence on teacher performance, its contribution to school quality, and the contextual factors affecting its effectiveness. Thematic analysis was chosen due to its flexibility and suitability in synthesizing qualitative findings from diverse studies (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

To enhance the validity and reliability of the review, a quality assessment was conducted for each selected article. The evaluation focused on the clarity of research objectives, methodological rigor, data validity, and relevance to the study focus. Only studies that met acceptable academic standards were included in the final synthesis to

ensure that the conclusions drawn were based on credible and high-quality evidence.

As this study relied exclusively on secondary data from published literature, it did not involve direct interaction with human participants. Nevertheless, ethical considerations were strictly maintained by ensuring proper citation of all sources, avoiding plagiarism, and adhering to principles of academic integrity throughout the research process. Through this systematic and rigorous approach, the study aims to provide a reliable and comprehensive understanding of the role of transformational leadership in improving teacher performance and school quality.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Result

The findings of this systematic literature review are based on the analysis of articles published between 2020 and 2025. Table 1 presents a summary of the selected studies, including their methodological characteristics, research focus, and key findings.

**Table 1. Summary of Selected Studies (n = 34)**

No	Author(s)	Year	Focus	Key Findings
1	Nguyen et al.	2022	Teacher performance	Positive impact on motivation & performance
2	Zheng et al.	2022	Teacher motivation	Strong link with intrinsic motivation
3	Sun & Leithwood	2021	Leadership effect	Leadership influences teacher commitment
4	Grissom et al.	2021	School leadership	Improves teacher outcomes
5	Pietsch & Tulowitzki	2021	School climate	Enhances collaboration
6	Román-Cortés et al.	2023	Innovation	Supports innovation in schools
7	Sebastian et al.	2021	School quality	Improves organizational effectiveness
8	Day et al.	2020	School outcomes	Impacts student achievement
9	Podsakoff et al.	2020	Leadership behavior	Positive behavioral outcomes
10	Robinson et al.	2020	Leadership effect	Strong influence on student learning

The table summarizes key characteristics of selected studies, highlighting methodological diversity and consistent evidence regarding the positive role of transformational leadership in educational settings.

The findings of this systematic literature review provide comprehensive and converging evidence that transformational leadership plays a central and multidimensional role in enhancing teacher performance and overall school quality. Across the body of empirical studies published between 2020 and 2025, a consistent pattern emerges indicating that leadership practices grounded in vision, inspiration, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration significantly influence both individual-level outcomes and organizational effectiveness. These findings demonstrate that transformational leadership operates not merely as a managerial approach but as a strategic and cultural force that shapes educational processes, professional behaviors, and institutional development (Sun & Leithwood, 2021; Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2020).

From a conceptual perspective, transformational leadership contributes to educational improvement through its ability to align organizational vision with individual motivation, thereby creating coherence between institutional goals and teacher practices. Leaders who adopt this approach are able to articulate a compelling direction for the school, foster shared commitment among stakeholders, and create an

environment conducive to continuous learning and innovation. As a result, the influence of transformational leadership extends beyond administrative coordination to encompass psychological empowerment, professional development, and organizational transformation.

First, the literature consistently demonstrates that transformational leadership has a significant and robust impact on teacher performance across cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions. Teachers working under transformational leaders tend to exhibit higher levels of intrinsic motivation, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and self-efficacy (Nguyen, Pham, & Nguyen, 2022; Zheng, Yin, & Li, 2022). These improvements are not incidental but are systematically linked to the core dimensions of transformational leadership. Inspirational motivation, for instance, enhances teachers' sense of purpose and professional meaning, while intellectual stimulation encourages critical thinking, creativity, and pedagogical innovation.

In addition, individualized consideration plays a crucial role in addressing teachers' diverse needs, aspirations, and professional challenges. Leaders who provide personalized support, mentoring, and constructive feedback are more likely to foster teacher engagement and long-term professional growth. This supportive leadership approach contributes to reducing teacher burnout and increasing resilience, particularly in demanding educational environments. Furthermore, transformational leadership promotes reflective teaching practices, where educators continuously evaluate and improve their instructional strategies. This reflective orientation enhances teaching effectiveness and enables teachers to adapt to changing curriculum demands and student needs.

Moreover, the findings indicate that transformational leadership supports the development of teachers' professional competencies through continuous learning opportunities. Leaders often encourage participation in training programs, collaborative workshops, and professional learning communities, which contribute to the enhancement of pedagogical skills and instructional quality. As a result, teacher performance improves not only in terms of classroom instruction but also in terms of innovation, collaboration, and adaptability. These outcomes highlight the critical role of leadership in fostering a professional culture that values growth, learning, and excellence.

Second, the findings reveal that transformational leadership significantly contributes to the development of a positive school climate and a strong organizational culture. Schools led by transformational leaders consistently demonstrate higher levels of trust, collaboration, and open communication among teachers, administrators, and stakeholders (Pietsch & Tulowitzki, 2021; Grissom, Egalite, & Lindsay, 2021). This positive organizational climate is essential for creating a supportive and inclusive environment where teachers feel valued, respected, and motivated to contribute to institutional goals.

Transformational leaders actively promote participatory decision-making processes, allowing teachers to be involved in planning, problem-solving, and policy implementation. This inclusive approach fosters a sense of ownership and collective responsibility, which strengthens organizational commitment and accountability. Furthermore, the development of shared vision and common goals enhances alignment across different levels of the organization, ensuring that all stakeholders work toward the same educational objectives.

Another important aspect identified in the literature is the role of transformational leadership in establishing professional learning communities (PLCs). These communities function as collaborative platforms where teachers engage in knowledge sharing, peer mentoring, and joint reflection on instructional practices. Through PLCs, schools are able to build collective expertise, improve teaching quality, and respond more effectively to educational challenges. The presence of a strong collaborative culture also enhances organizational learning, enabling schools to continuously adapt and innovate in response to internal and external demands.

In addition, a positive organizational culture contributes to teacher retention and institutional stability. Schools characterized by supportive leadership and collaborative environments tend to experience lower turnover rates and higher levels of teacher satisfaction. This stability is crucial for sustaining long-term improvement efforts and maintaining consistent educational quality.

Third, the literature demonstrates a strong and multidimensional relationship between transformational leadership and school quality. School quality is a complex construct that encompasses academic achievement, organizational effectiveness, innovation capacity, and stakeholder satisfaction (Day, Gu, & Sammons, 2020; Sebastian, Allensworth, & Huang, 2021). The findings indicate bahwa transformational leadership influences all of these dimensions through strategic and integrated management practices.

Transformational leaders play a key role in aligning school vision with educational goals, ensuring that institutional strategies are effectively translated into classroom practices. They also contribute to improving instructional supervision, curriculum implementation, and resource management, which are essential components of school effectiveness. By fostering a culture of accountability and continuous improvement, transformational leadership enhances both individual and organizational performance.

Furthermore, the findings suggest that transformational leadership is closely associated with increased student achievement and engagement. Although the relationship is often mediated by teacher performance and school climate, the overall impact on student outcomes is significant. Schools led by transformational leaders tend to demonstrate better academic results, more active student participation, and stronger character development programs.

In addition to academic outcomes, transformational leadership also enhances institutional reputation and stakeholder trust. Parents and communities are more likely to perceive schools positively when they observe effective leadership, strong organizational culture, and consistent student development. This increased trust contributes to stronger school-community partnerships, which further support educational improvement.

Fourth, the findings highlight that the effectiveness of transformational leadership is influenced by various mediating and contextual factors. Mediating variables such as teacher motivation, organizational commitment, and collaborative culture serve as mechanisms through which leadership impacts performance and quality (Sun & Leithwood, 2021). These variables explain how and why transformational leadership produces positive outcomes in educational settings.

At the same time, contextual factors play a critical role in determining the extent to which transformational leadership can be successfully implemented. These include

organizational readiness, leadership capacity, teacher competence, policy support, and socio-cultural conditions (Román-Cortés et al., 2023). Schools with strong institutional support, adequate resources, and a culture of openness to change are more likely to benefit from transformational leadership practices.

Conversely, several barriers may hinder the effectiveness of transformational leadership. Resistance to change, limited professional development opportunities, and rigid bureaucratic structures can reduce the impact of leadership initiatives. In some contexts, policy constraints and lack of autonomy may also limit leaders' ability to implement innovative strategies. These findings emphasize the importance of adopting context-sensitive approaches to leadership, rather than applying universal models without adaptation.

Furthermore, the review identifies the growing importance of transformational leadership in promoting educational innovation and adaptability, particularly in response to contemporary challenges such as digital transformation and post-pandemic recovery. Transformational leaders are more likely to encourage the integration of technology into teaching and learning processes, support flexible instructional models, and promote digital literacy among teachers and students (OECD, 2020; Schleicher, 2020). This capacity for innovation enhances the resilience and competitiveness of educational institutions in a rapidly changing global environment.

The findings of this study suggest that transformational leadership functions as a comprehensive and dynamic framework that influences multiple dimensions of education simultaneously. Its impact extends from individual teacher performance to organizational culture and institutional quality. The effectiveness of transformational leadership lies in its ability to integrate vision, motivation, collaboration, and innovation into a coherent strategy for educational improvement. These results reinforce the conclusion that transformational leadership is not only relevant but essential for achieving sustainable and high-quality education in the contemporary era.

## Discussion

The findings of this study confirm that transformational leadership serves as a critical and multidimensional factor in improving educational effectiveness in contemporary schooling contexts. The strong and consistent relationship identified between transformational leadership and teacher performance reinforces the argument that leadership in education extends beyond administrative functions to encompass motivational, developmental, and transformational roles (Sun & Leithwood, 2021; Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2020). This perspective aligns with contemporary leadership theories that position school leaders as agents of change who actively shape professional practices and organizational outcomes.

The positive impact of transformational leadership on teacher performance, as identified in the findings, can be understood through its influence on intrinsic motivation, professional commitment, and self-efficacy. Transformational leaders create meaningful work environments by articulating a clear vision, fostering professional trust, and encouraging innovation among teachers. This supports previous research indicating that teachers are more likely to engage in reflective practices and instructional improvement when they feel empowered and supported by their leaders (Nguyen, Pham, & Nguyen, 2022; Zheng, Yin, & Li, 2022). In this context, leadership functions as a catalyst that enhances not only individual performance but also collective

professional capacity within the school.

Furthermore, the influence of transformational leadership on school climate highlights the importance of relational and cultural dimensions in educational management. The findings demonstrate that schools characterized by trust, collaboration, and shared vision are more conducive to sustained improvement and innovation. This supports the argument that organizational culture is a key mediating factor through which leadership impacts educational outcomes (Pietsch & Tulowitzki, 2021). Transformational leaders foster inclusive and participatory environments, where teachers are actively involved in decision-making processes and institutional development. Such collaborative cultures promote organizational learning and strengthen the capacity of schools to respond effectively to internal and external challenges.

The establishment of professional learning communities, as highlighted in the findings, further reinforces the role of transformational leadership in facilitating continuous professional development. These communities enable teachers to share knowledge, reflect on practices, and collectively solve instructional problems, thereby enhancing teaching quality and student learning outcomes. This aligns with broader educational reform perspectives that emphasize collaboration and collective efficacy as key drivers of school improvement.

Moreover, the strong association between transformational leadership and school quality underscores the strategic role of leadership in achieving sustainable educational improvement. School quality, as identified in the findings, is not solely determined by structural factors such as curriculum or infrastructure, but is deeply influenced by leadership practices that shape institutional direction, resource management, and stakeholder engagement (Day, Gu, & Sammons, 2020; Sebastian, Allensworth, & Huang, 2021). Transformational leaders are able to align organizational vision with operational practices, ensuring coherence between policy and implementation. This alignment enhances institutional effectiveness and contributes to improved student outcomes, stronger school reputation, and increased stakeholder trust.

In addition, the findings suggest that transformational leadership contributes to innovation and adaptability in educational settings. In an era characterized by rapid technological change and evolving learning demands, the ability of school leaders to promote innovation becomes increasingly important. Transformational leaders encourage experimentation, support the integration of digital technologies, and foster a culture of continuous improvement (OECD, 2020; Schleicher, 2020). This adaptive capacity enables schools to remain responsive and relevant in dynamic educational environments, thereby strengthening their long-term sustainability.

However, this study also highlights that the effectiveness of transformational leadership is not uniform across all contexts. The findings indicate that its impact is mediated and moderated by various organizational and contextual factors, including institutional capacity, policy frameworks, teacher competence, and socio-cultural conditions (Román-Cortés et al., 2023). This suggests that transformational leadership should not be viewed as a one-size-fits-all solution, but rather as a flexible framework that must be adapted to specific educational contexts. Leaders need to be sensitive to local conditions and capable of adjusting their strategies to align with organizational realities.

Additionally, the presence of mediating variables such as teacher motivation, organizational commitment, and school climate emphasizes the complexity of the relationship between leadership and educational outcomes. Transformational leadership does not directly produce improved performance; instead, it operates through these intermediate variables, which shape how leadership practices are experienced and enacted within the organization (Sun & Leithwood, 2021). Understanding these mechanisms is essential for designing effective leadership development programs and policy interventions.

Despite its significant benefits, the implementation of transformational leadership also presents several challenges. The findings indicate that barriers such as resistance to change, limited professional development opportunities, and rigid bureaucratic structures may hinder the effectiveness of leadership practices. In some contexts, school leaders may lack the necessary training or institutional support to fully implement transformational strategies. This highlights the importance of investing in leadership capacity building and providing continuous professional development opportunities for school leaders.

Furthermore, policy alignment and institutional support are critical in ensuring the successful implementation of transformational leadership. Without supportive policy frameworks and adequate resources, even highly capable leaders may struggle to translate transformational principles into practice. Therefore, educational policymakers must play an active role in creating enabling environments that support leadership innovation and school improvement efforts.

This study demonstrates that transformational leadership is a powerful and comprehensive approach to enhancing teacher performance and school quality. However, its effectiveness depends on the interaction between leadership practices, organizational conditions, and stakeholder collaboration. The findings reinforce the importance of adopting a holistic, adaptive, and context-sensitive approach to educational leadership. By integrating visionary leadership with supportive organizational structures and collaborative cultures, schools can achieve sustainable and meaningful improvements in educational quality.

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that transformational leadership plays a significant and consistent role in improving teacher performance and overall school quality. Based on the synthesis of literature published between 2020 and 2025, transformational leadership has been shown to enhance teachers' motivation, job satisfaction, professional commitment, and instructional innovation. These improvements contribute directly to more effective teaching and learning processes, which are essential for achieving educational excellence.

Furthermore, transformational leadership positively influences school quality by fostering a supportive organizational culture, strengthening collaboration among stakeholders, and promoting continuous institutional improvement. Schools led by transformational leaders tend to demonstrate higher levels of effectiveness, adaptability, and stakeholder trust, indicating that leadership practices are central to sustainable educational development. However, the effectiveness of transformational leadership is influenced by various contextual factors, including organizational readiness, leadership competence, policy support, and socio-cultural conditions.

Without adequate institutional support and professional development, the implementation of transformational leadership may not achieve optimal results. Therefore, educational institutions need to adopt context-sensitive strategies and invest in leadership capacity building to maximize its impact. In conclusion, transformational leadership serves as a strategic approach in enhancing both teacher performance and school quality. This study highlights the importance of integrating visionary leadership practices with supportive organizational conditions to achieve sustainable improvement in education. Future research is recommended to explore longitudinal and context-specific analyses to further strengthen the evidence base in this field.

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