

The Impact of Principal Leadership and Teacher Motivation on Literacy Program Implementation in Elementary Schools: A Study in Purwodadi District

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Abstract: This study examines the influence of principal leadership styles and teacher motivation on teacher performance in implementing literacy programs at elementary schools in Purwodadi District, Grobogan Regency, with job satisfaction as an intervening variable. Using a quantitative approach, data were collected through structured questionnaires distributed to 83 teachers selected via purposive sampling. The research employed path analysis and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to evaluate direct and indirect effects among variables. Findings reveal that transformational leadership significantly enhances teacher job satisfaction and performance in literacy activities. Teacher motivation also plays a critical role, with higher motivation correlating with improved job satisfaction and better literacy program outcomes. Job satisfaction acts as a strong mediator, explaining 77.8% of the variance in satisfaction levels and 63.4% of the variance in teacher performance. These results underscore the importance of supportive leadership, professional development opportunities, and recognition systems in fostering a positive work environment. The study recommends strengthening collaboration between principals and teachers, providing continuous training, and creating policies that promote literacy culture. This research contributes to understanding how leadership and motivation can be leveraged to improve educational quality, particularly in literacy education, offering practical insights for school management and policymakers.

Keywords: Principal leadership, teacher motivation, job satisfaction, literacy programs, teacher performance, elementary schools

1. Introduction

Educational leadership plays a pivotal role in shaping the quality of teaching and learning within schools, particularly at the elementary level where foundational skills such as literacy are developed. School principals, as key figures in educational leadership, have the responsibility to create an environment conducive to effective literacy programs through their leadership styles and support systems (Budiyanto et al., 2026). However, despite the recognized importance of leadership in education, there remains a gap in understanding how specific leadership approaches directly influence teacher performance in literacy initiatives. In regions like Purwodadi District, Grobogan Regency, where literacy proficiency among elementary students is reportedly below the minimum competency level (BBPMP Provinsi Jateng, 2023), addressing this gap becomes crucial for improving educational outcomes.

The primary issue addressed in this study revolves around the limited exploration of how school principals' leadership styles and teachers' work motivation collectively impact teacher performance in implementing literacy activities. While previous research has examined various aspects of educational leadership and teacher motivation separately, few studies have investigated these factors together with job satisfaction as an intervening variable in the context of literacy programs (Mukti, 2018). This research seeks to fill that void by examining the interplay between principal leadership, teacher motivation, and job satisfaction, and how these elements affect teacher performance in literacy education.

The objective of this research is to provide a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics between school principals' leadership styles and teachers' work motivation on teacher performance through job satisfaction as an intervening

variable. Specifically, this study aims to identify the extent to which transformational leadership and intrinsic motivation contribute to improved literacy program implementation in elementary schools. By achieving this goal, the research hopes to offer actionable insights that can enhance literacy education practices and student outcomes in Purwodadi District.

A critical review of existing literature reveals several gaps that this study intends to address. Many prior studies have focused on either leadership or teacher motivation but have not adequately explored their combined effects on teacher performance, especially in literacy contexts (Andrianti, 2018; Widayoko et al., 2018). Furthermore, while some research highlights the importance of job satisfaction as a mediator, few have empirically tested its role in the relationship between leadership, motivation, and performance (Fadlilah et al., 2022). This study contributes by integrating these variables into a cohesive model applicable to elementary school settings.

The novelty of this research lies in its focus on analyzing the influence of school principals' leadership styles and teachers' work motivation on teacher performance in literacy activities, with job satisfaction acting as an intervening variable. Unlike previous studies that may have broader scopes or different focal points, this research provides specific and measurable empirical contributions relevant to the local context of Grobogan Regency. By doing so, it adds depth to the existing body of knowledge and offers targeted recommendations for enhancing literacy education in the region.

This study is justified by the pressing need to improve literacy education in elementary schools, particularly in areas facing significant challenges like Purwodadi District. The findings are expected to benefit various stakeholders, including school principals, teachers, and policymakers, by offering evidence-based strategies to foster a supportive educational environment. Ultimately, this research underscores the importance of aligning leadership practices and motivational strategies to boost teacher performance and, consequently, student literacy outcomes (See & Gorard, 2020).

2. Methodology

This study employs a quantitative research design to examine the relationships between school principal leadership styles, teacher motivation, job satisfaction, and teacher performance in literacy program implementation. The research utilizes a cross-sectional survey method with data collected through structured questionnaires using a Likert scale. The sampling technique applied is purposive sampling, selecting respondents based on specific criteria relevant to the research objectives. The population consists of elementary school teachers from 60 public schools in the Purwodadi District, Grobogan Regency, totaling 492 teachers. Using the Slovin formula with a 10% margin of error, a sample size of 83 teachers is determined to ensure representativeness and data accuracy.

The sampling distribution across different schools is presented in Table 1 below, showing the allocation of teacher respondents from each school. Data analysis involves descriptive statistics for respondent characteristics and inferential statistics using Path Analysis and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to test the research hypotheses. This approach enables the examination of both direct and indirect effects among variables while maintaining statistical rigor in establishing causal relationships..

Table 1. Distribution of Teacher Respondents by School

School Name	School Code	Number of Teachers
SD NEGERI 1 PURWODADI	20313578	12
SD NEGERI 2 NGRAJI	20313959	8
SD NEGERI 3 KURIPAN	20313957	10
SD NEGERI 4 PURWODADI	20313604	16
SD NEGERI 5 NGRAJI	20313961	7
SD NEGERI 5 PURWODADI	20313940	7
SD NEGERI 6 KURIPAN	20313930	7
SD NEGERI 6 PURWODADI	20313944	8
SD NEGERI 7 KURIPAN	20313958	8
SD NEGERI 8 PURWODADI	20313956	8
SD NEGERI 9 PURWODADI	20313954	12

Source: Korwil Bidang Pendidikan Kecamatan Purwodadi 2025

3. Findings and Discussion

3.1 Interpretations of results

The findings of this study reveal significant relationships between school principal leadership styles, teacher motivation, job satisfaction, and teacher performance in literacy program implementation. Specifically, the results indicate that

teacher motivation significantly influences job satisfaction (path coefficient = 4.248, $p < 0.05$), which in turn positively impacts teacher performance in literacy activities (path coefficient = 5.021, $p < 0.05$). These outcomes align with Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory (1959), which posits that intrinsic motivators such as recognition and achievement are critical for enhancing job satisfaction and performance. However, contrary to expectations, the leadership style of school principals did not show a significant direct effect on either job satisfaction or teacher performance. This finding contrasts with prior studies by Marliansyah and Suwadi (2024) and Wibowo et al. (2023), which emphasized the transformative role of leadership in fostering positive educational environments. The discrepancy may stem from contextual factors unique to Purwodadi District, such as variations in organizational culture or external policy influences.

3.2 Impact on theory and practice

This research contributes to existing theories by highlighting the mediating role of job satisfaction in the relationship between teacher motivation and performance. While previous studies often focused on direct effects, this study underscores the importance of addressing job satisfaction as a key determinant of teacher effectiveness. Practically, these findings suggest that school leaders should prioritize creating supportive work environments that enhance teacher motivation and satisfaction. For instance, initiatives such as professional development programs, recognition systems, and collaborative decision-making processes can empower teachers to excel in literacy education. Furthermore, the results imply that rigid leadership styles may be less effective than adaptive approaches tailored to individual teacher needs, as suggested by Hersey and Blanchard's Situational Leadership Model (1977).

3.3 Limitations of study

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations that warrant consideration. First, the cross-sectional design limits the ability to establish causal relationships over time. Longitudinal studies could provide deeper insights into how leadership styles and motivational dynamics evolve and impact teacher performance. Second, the sample was drawn exclusively from public elementary schools in Purwodadi District, potentially limiting the generalizability of the findings to other regions or educational levels. Additionally, the reliance on self-reported questionnaires may introduce response bias, as participants might overestimate their levels of motivation or satisfaction. Future research should incorporate mixed-methods designs, combining quantitative data with qualitative interviews or observations, to capture a more nuanced understanding of these phenomena.

3.4 Suggestions for future research

Future studies should explore additional variables that may influence teacher performance, such as school infrastructure, parental involvement, and digital technology integration. Given the increasing adoption of digital tools in education, investigating how technological advancements affect literacy programs could yield valuable insights. Moreover, comparative analyses across different geographical areas or socio-cultural contexts would enhance the robustness of the findings. Researchers might also consider examining the long-term effects of leadership interventions on teacher motivation and student literacy outcomes, using experimental or quasi-experimental designs to strengthen causal inferences.

3.5 Social and ethical implications

The findings carry important social and ethical implications, particularly in promoting equitable access to quality literacy education. By emphasizing the role of job satisfaction and motivation, this study highlights the need for policies that support teachers' psychological well-being and professional growth. Ethically, it is crucial to ensure that all educators, regardless of location or resource availability, have opportunities to thrive professionally. In the context of digital technology use, there is an added responsibility to address potential disparities in access and training. As noted by See & Gorard (2020), integrating technology into literacy programs must be done thoughtfully to avoid exacerbating existing inequalities. Schools and policymakers should strive to create inclusive environments where both teachers and students feel valued and empowered to succeed.

Table 2. Summary of Key Findings and Their Implications

Variable Relationship	Path Coefficient	Significance (p-value)	Theoretical Contribution	Practical Implication
Motivation → Job Satisfaction	4248	< 0.05	Supports Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory	Implement motivational strategies like recognition and professional development
Job Satisfaction → Teacher Performance	5021	< 0.05	Highlights mediation effect of job satisfaction	Focus on improving workplace conditions to boost satisfaction and performance
Leadership Style → Job Satisfaction	Not Significant	> 0.05	Contradicts prior findings; suggests context-specific factors	Encourage flexible leadership styles adaptable to local school cultures

Leadership Style → Teacher Performance	Not Significant	> 0.05	Indicates indirect pathways through satisfaction	Develop leadership practices that prioritize teacher empowerment and collaboration
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Conclusions

This study underscores the critical role of teacher motivation and job satisfaction in shaping teacher performance within literacy programs in elementary schools, while also highlighting the limited direct influence of school principal leadership styles on these variables. The findings reveal that teacher motivation significantly enhances job satisfaction, which in turn positively impacts teacher performance in literacy activities, emphasizing the importance of creating supportive work environments that foster intrinsic motivation and professional growth. Although leadership styles did not demonstrate a significant direct effect, the potential for adaptive and situational leadership approaches remains a promising avenue for future exploration. These insights contribute to a deeper understanding of the dynamics between leadership, motivation, and performance, offering practical recommendations for school leaders and policymakers to strengthen literacy education through targeted interventions. Further research is encouraged to explore additional contextual factors and long-term strategies to address existing gaps in literacy program implementation.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare there is no conflict of interest

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