

Transformational Leadership of School Principals in Fostering Educational Innovation and School Organizational Climate

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Abstract. This study aims to analyze the role of principals' transformational leadership in fostering educational innovation and shaping the school organizational climate. This research uses a qualitative approach through a literature study based on academic theories, best practices, and recent educational policies. The findings show that successful educational innovation is influenced by stakeholder readiness, transformational leadership, supportive policies, and the integration of local values with global developments. Transformational leadership enhances motivation, innovation, and professional growth among school members. In addition, the school organizational climate plays an essential role in determining school performance and operational dynamics. A positive organizational climate supports the development of inclusive, adaptive, and collaborative school environments that empower students, teachers, and other stakeholders. Therefore, maintaining a positive organizational climate is a key factor in achieving sustainable school improvement and long-term organizational success. These findings highlight the importance of continuous professional development, strategic collaboration, and effective communication to sustain innovation and organizational improvement efforts.

Keywords: Educational Innovation, Transformational Leadership, School Organizational Climate

1 Introduction

Transformational leadership is an approach that focuses on the leader's ability to inspire and motivate their members. The leader plays a crucial role in driving a long-term vision that leads to significant change. This approach emphasizes strengthening commitment, developing individual potential within the team, enhancing morale, motivation, and overall team performance. In addition to pursuing organizational goals, a transformational leader functions as a change agent to achieve the organization's objectives. In order to create organizational environments, this leadership style is increasingly relevant, as the ability to adapt and drive changes has become a key to sustainable success. Educational management requires deep reflection and analysis to ensure that educational implementation is well-targeted and aligned

with predetermined goals. In this regard, the role of educational leaders becomes essential in achieving educational objectives.

Educational leaders are required to formulate and communicate a clear vision and mission to improve the quality of education. As top leaders, their roles become increasingly complex. Transformational leaders play an important role in shaping organizational culture by articulating a shared vision, empowering members through participative decision-making, and promoting collaborative practices that enhance commitment and organizational effectiveness [1-2]. The transformational leadership style is considered one of the most effective approaches for driving positive change within educational institutions. This style can also influence the entire school community, including educators, encouraging them to improve their teaching performance. Effective leadership in educational institutions plays a significant role in improving organizational effectiveness, teacher performance, and overall school outcomes. Transformational leadership, in particular, has been shown to enhance motivation, encourage innovation, and create a supportive school climate that contributes to improved institutional performance [3].

Transformational leadership is characterized by the process of bringing about change into a new form. It involves reorganizing existing structures in a way that systematically controls activities toward consistency and the achievement of goals. As a leader, one must possess the courage to uphold truth, eradicate injustice, and avoid prioritizing ego or personal interests. Not only school principals but also educators should set real examples rather than merely speaking as if they always hold the truth. The transformational leadership model serves as an effective approach for institutional heads to enhance the quality of their institutions. Research on this topic is particularly interesting, as transformational leadership is considered a modern or millennial form of leadership innovative and highly effective when applied within educational institutions. This leadership style is regarded as one of the ideal types of leadership. Every school institution has a complex structure, encompassing various scopes and environments within the educational process, making leadership systems crucial in education. The rapid development of culture within education has led to transformations in leadership styles, one of which is transformational leadership. This shift is also influenced by the evolution of time and the characteristics of the current generation.

2 Method

This study employs a qualitative approach using a literature review method. This approach was chosen because the topic under investigation is conceptual and theoretical in nature, allowing the analysis to focus on an in-depth understanding of relevant literature concerning principals' transformational leadership, educational innovation, and school organizational climate. The literature review enables the researcher to systematically identify, evaluate, and synthesize various perspectives and findings from previous studies related to these concepts.

The data in this study consist of scientific books, accredited journal articles, research reports, and educational policy documents published within the last ten years, both at the national and international levels. The selection of literature was carried out purposively based on the relevance and credibility of the sources to the research focus [4]. This method was chosen to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon of principals' transformational leadership in promoting educational innovation and shaping school organizational climate.

The research procedures include collecting and selecting literature based on its relevance to the research topic, conducting a critical analysis of the selected sources, and synthesizing the findings to develop a conceptual framework of principals' transformational leadership in fostering educational innovation and school organizational climate. The data were analyzed using a qualitative descriptive analysis technique, which involves organizing, interpreting, and drawing conclusions from the collected literature to identify key themes and relationships relevant to the research focus.

3 Results and Discussion

3.1 Transformational Leadership

The term transformational leadership consists of two words: leadership and transformational. Leadership refers to any action taken by an individual or group to coordinate and direct other individuals or groups within a certain organization to achieve predetermined goals [1]. According to the Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia (KBBI), the root word of pemimpin (leader) is pimpin (to lead); when given the prefix me-, it denotes a guide, a director, or a person who provides instruction. Meanwhile, transformation refers to a transitional process that begins with one structure and progresses to another. The term transformational originates from the verb to transform, which means to change or reorganize something so that it is no longer the same as before [5].

Transformational leadership is a form of leadership that involves processes aimed at achieving goals through high levels of morality and motivation. A transformational leader must be able to guide and build awareness among subordinates to move toward predetermined objectives. In essence, transformational leadership can be understood as the leader's effort to transform an institution or organization through a process of change from one state to another [6]. Fundamentally, transformational leaders are born to lead, not merely shaped by various experiences or training programs. Transformational leaders consistently motivate and guide their followers; their messages are easily understood, making subordinates feel comfortable and supported rather than merely being ordered around without direction. Such leaders demonstrate genuine concern for their subordinates when challenges arise and wise solutions are needed, they provide maximum assistance and guidance. They also encourage subordinates to participate in training programs to enhance their quality and develop their skills.

Leadership is generally understood as a process of influencing group activities toward the achievement of shared goals. Stogdill (1950) explains that leadership involves influencing the activities of an organized group in determining and achieving objectives. In educational organizations, transformational leadership is considered effective because it encourages motivation, innovation, and professional development of members. This leadership style also

supports organizational growth by strengthening trust, commitment, and collaborative performance among members [7].

Characteristics of Transformational Leadership of School Principals

The characteristics of transformational leaders include the ability to overcome obstacles or challenges within an institution, a willingness to share power with subordinates by guiding, advising, and striving to provide solutions that contribute to the institution's success and the advancement of their subordinates' careers. They also make an effort to consider the needs and aspirations of their subordinates to foster greater responsibility. When categorized, transformational leadership can be classified based on three foundational models: (1) a leadership model focused on the needs of work implementation, (2) a leadership model centered on the implementation of cooperative relationships, and (3) a leadership model oriented toward achieving desired outcomes [1].

In one analysis, Kirby et al (1992) found that transformational leadership contributes significantly to satisfaction, examining the extent to which this leadership style impacts the contentment and evaluation of educational leaders compared to transactional leaders. The findings demonstrated that transformational leadership has a stronger influence on satisfaction and institutional cohesion. They also discovered that teachers tend to prefer transformational leadership, asserting that their ideas emerge from the actions of their leaders rather than from others. This indicates that their ideas are inspired by the actions of transformational leaders, who are regarded as exceptional figures capable of fostering teachers' commitment within their schools [8]. Furthermore, an analysis of forty five professionals and managers in New Zealand by Waldman et al (1987) revealed that subordinates' hard work has a substantial impact on charismatic and intellectually stimulating behaviour [9]. Their study highlighted that transformational leadership positively affects employee motivation and performance outcomes

Transformational leadership has been found to contribute to both efficiency and job satisfaction. In a short period of time, when faced with an emergency situation, a diligent leader who demonstrates intellectually stimulating behavior proves to be more effective than one who merely displays charisma or individual consideration. The main characteristic of a transformational leader is having a clear vision. The ability to formulate and communicate this vision is essential for transformational leaders, it serves as a holistic picture of how an organization mobilizes its human resources once its goals are achieved. This vision ensures that transformational leaders operate based on future-oriented ideals. A leader must take full responsibility for translating the organizational vision into reality. One of the key requirements for becoming a transformational leader is possessing strong self-confidence. When a leader demonstrates confidence, subordinates are more likely to admire and trust them, and in turn, emulate their actions.

Structured model of transformational leadership in his book *Leadership and Performance Beyond Expectations* by Bass (1985). He defined transformational leadership as the leader's ability to motivate members to perform beyond expectations through influence, inspiration, and individualized consideration. Bass (1985) also developed the Transformational Leadership Model, which consists of the following components [1].

- a. Idealized Influence (Charisma). According to Bass (1985), transformational leaders demonstrate behaviors that build trust and respect among their members. A close

relationship between the leader and the members is formed because the members view their leader as a role model whose vision and mission are worthy of emulation.

- b. **Inspirational Motivation.** This element reflects a leader's ability to communicate an engaging and inspiring vision to others. Transformational leaders pursue goals that extend beyond merely achieving organizational or individual objectives. They encourage members to commit to a shared vision through the use of symbols and inspirational speeches, while maintaining attention to both short-term and long-term outcomes.
- c. **Intellectual Stimulation.** Bass (1985) emphasized the importance of encouraging followers to think creatively and critically, while also challenging existing beliefs and mindsets. Transformational leaders do not rely solely on conventional approaches; instead, they cultivate a culture that promotes creativity and innovative solutions by providing intellectual freedom.
- d. **Individualized Consideration.** Transformational leaders take into account the needs and potential of each member to create an environment that supports personal growth. Bass (1985) emphasized the importance of providing individual support and guidance. This approach allows team members to feel valued and emotionally connected to the organization's goals.

3.2 Education Innovation

Educational innovation has a very broad dimension, encompassing aspects of technology, pedagogy, curriculum, and educational management. Essentially, this innovation aims to improve the quality of teaching and learning processes and outcomes to make them more relevant to the demands of the times. One of the most dominant forms of innovation is the utilization of digital technology in learning. Learning models such as flipped classroom, blended learning, and e-learning have been proven to enhance students' active participation and promote independent learning [10]. Technology also enables differentiated instruction, allowing students to learn at their own pace and according to their individual learning styles. However, a major challenge arises in ensuring equitable access to technology, particularly in remote areas that still lack adequate infrastructure.

An innovative curriculum not only emphasizes cognitive aspects but also instills character values and life skills. Integrative thematic curriculum models and project-based learning have been implemented in various countries as a means to strengthen literacy and foster collaboration across subjects [11]. In Indonesia, the Merdeka Curriculum serves as a concrete example of curriculum innovation that is more flexible and student-centered. However, its implementation in the field still faces challenges related to teacher training and infrastructure readiness.

In addition, the government, through the Directorate General of Primary and Secondary Education, has introduced educational innovations related to Deep Learning, an instructional approach focused on holistic and meaningful understanding. In this approach, students are not merely expected to memorize information but to comprehend, apply, and reflect on their knowledge within real-world contexts. This method emphasizes the comprehensive development of students' potential through intellectual, emotional, moral, and physical cultivation-creating a conscious, meaningful, and joyful learning environment. There are some

characteristics of deep learning, such as; student-centered, connected to real life, focus on process, development of high-order thinking skills, and encouragement of knowledge transfer.

Teachers play a central role in realizing educational innovation. Innovative teachers are not only proficient in subject matter but also capable of designing creative and meaningful learning experiences for students. Studies have shown that teacher innovation in instructional methods is directly proportional to increased student learning motivation. However, teacher innovation is strongly influenced by institutional support and educational policies that allow for exploration and experimentation.

Several factors hinder innovation, including resistance to change, limited resources, and lack of collaboration among educational stakeholders [12]. Therefore, the strategy for implementing educational innovation should include continuous professional development, strengthening collaborative culture within schools, and creating adaptive evaluation systems responsive to change. Overall, the concepts of educational innovation demonstrate great potential for improving the quality of education. However, alignment between the national education vision, teacher readiness, technological support, and active community involvement is essential to ensure that these innovations truly have a positive impact on learners.

3.3 School Organizational Climate

Based on an understanding of the dynamics of the school's organizational climate, schools can be developed into inclusive, adaptive, and supportive organizations capable of empowering all their members, including students, teachers, and other school stakeholders. Understanding, developing, and maintaining a positive organizational climate is one of the key factors for achieving long-term success in educational institutions. In the organizational context, the term organizational climate refers to a general concept that expresses the living conditions of an organization [13]. It describes how members of the organization collectively perceive and experience various specific aspects of the organizational environment in which they work.

Organizational climate refers to the shared perceptions of organizational members regarding the organizational structure, managerial policies, operational procedures, and daily work practices within an organization [14]. All these elements collectively shape the work environment, which in turn influences the behavior and attitudes of organizational members. This definition emphasizes that organizational climate results from the collective perceptions of employees (as organizational members) about how the organization operates in practice. This means that the climate can differ between departments within the same organization, depending on employees' experiences and their interactions with the organization's elements.

Organizational climate represents the shared meaning among members concerning the behaviors that are valued, supported, and expected by the organization. The concept of organizational climate has evolved from early ideas focusing on how the environment affects individual behavior toward a more complex and measurable understanding [14]. Organizational climate consists of a set of measurable attributes of the work environment as perceived by organizational members [15]. It reflects employees' perceptions of their work environment, which can influence various organizational outcomes. Organizational climate is an essential part of organizational behavior because of its influence on members' attitudes and overall performance. A positive climate can enhance motivation, satisfaction, commitment, and employee performance, ultimately leading to improved organizational effectiveness.

Conversely, a negative climate can decrease these factors, resulting in lower productivity and organizational performance. Therefore, understanding and managing the organizational climate is crucial for achieving long-term organizational success.

Organizational climate refers to the shared perceptions of organizational members about their organization and work environment [16]. In practice, since organizational climate is perceived individually, the number of perceptions about it can be as numerous as the number of people within the organization. Each individual may react differently to the same organizational policy. A policy perceived as fair by one person might seem unfair to another. When members of the organization share similar perceptions of the organizational environment, the climate can be described and defined at the system level. Organizational climate develops as a collective product of individual members' perceptions, encompassing both positive and negative views toward organizational practices.

Organizational climate also refers to the level of agreement among employees or members regarding their perceptions of the organization and its work environment [17]. This level of agreement reflects how similarly members view how the organization operates and how it treats and supports them. For example, if most employees agree that management is fair and supportive, the organizational climate is considered positive. A high level of agreement indicates a strong and cohesive organizational climate, whereas a low level of agreement suggests dissatisfaction that may affect performance.

In a healthy, positive, or conducive organizational climate, members tend to feel more satisfied and demonstrate higher productivity aligned with organizational goals [18]. Organizational climate represents the cognitive and psychological interpretations of each member toward the organizational structure and processes [19]. Furthermore, several aspects are identified as representations of organizational climate, including responsibility, encouragement to take initiative, organizational concern, freedom to solve problems in diverse ways, tolerance for mistakes, opportunities to learn new aspects of work, and access to acquire new knowledge when needed.

Dimensions and Characteristics of School Organizational Climate

The school organizational climate, or school climate, is developed by adapting the broader concept of organizational climate within the context of educational institutions. In principle, there is no fundamental difference between the school organizational climate and organizational climate in general. School climate refers to the perceptions of individuals within the school regarding the conditions of the school as an organization. In this context, the school is viewed as a formal organization that specifically focuses on the administration of education [20]. Like other types of organizations, a school is a unique environment with its own distinctive characteristics, involving a community of individuals who actively participate in it. For instance, the principal functions as both a leader and manager; teachers and educational staff serve as employees; while students act as the primary recipients of the educational services provided by the school.

The school organizational climate develops according to the perceptions of each member of the school community. In line with the general concept of organizational climate, the school climate refers to all aspects of the school's internal environment that form its unique characteristics. The school organizational climate represents a contemporary perspective for describing the

distinctive traits or characteristics of a school. The school climate is a relatively enduring characteristic of a school, manifested through the collective perceptions of its members regarding organizational behavior. It serves to differentiate one school from another and influences the behavior of each individual within it. The school climate reflects the quality and consistency of interpersonal interactions within the school community [21]. The organizational climate that develops in a school is shaped by shared experiences of school life; it reflects the norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching and learning practices, leadership styles, and organizational structures that define the school.

The norms, goal standards, and values embraced by members of the school community form the framework for the school organization. Interpersonal relationships encompass aspects of communication, cooperation, and mutual respect among teachers and students, between students themselves, and among teachers. Leadership practices reflect the support provided by the principal to teachers and students. The school's organizational structure includes structural and managerial aspects, such as policies, procedures, and decision-making processes within the school. Furthermore, the school climate involves the entire school community connected to school life, including students, principals, teachers, school staff, and parents. The school climate is the product of social interactions that occur between the school community and the school organization itself [21]. In general, the school climate refers to the physical, social, and emotional environment within the school [22]. It is formed through the combination of physical, social, and academic components that define the overall school environment [23].

A positive school climate is one in which all members of the school community feel accepted and work together to promote the school's educational vision and mission. School climate refers to the intangible dimensions of school life that result from the overall relationships among all staff and students, each of whom experiences it subjectively at the emotional, social, and environmental levels [24]. School climate is often referred to as the school environment or learning environment, which reflects the characteristics of the school where there is a balanced relationship between students and teachers to develop the teachers' abilities, attitudes, and performance [25]. The organizational climate of a school is closely related to various psychosocial aspects and, in fact, has the potential to either hinder or support learning activities within the school [26]. The school's organizational climate represents the character of school life for both students and educational staff; it consists of psychosocial factors (e.g., positive relationships, connectedness) as well as organizational factors (e.g., policies and regulations) [26].

In the context of student learning, a positive school climate refers to a learning environment in which students have the opportunity to complete their tasks without feeling disturbed or distracted in carrying out their activities [27]. The measurement of school organizational climate based on five dimensions: (1) the quality of leadership, which relates to communication and support for teachers as well as school management and values; (2) the quality of teacher support, which includes the willingness to develop professionally as teachers, emotional support, and assistance; (3) the school's motivational orientation toward the learning process and academic achievement; (4) the quality of students' attitudes, which involves perceptions of self-confidence, classroom cooperation, and learning motivation; and (5) the quality of parental support, which concerns collaboration with teachers, parental contribution to learning, appreciation for teachers, and the role of parents in encouraging students' learning efforts [28].

4 Conclusion

Overall, transformational leadership supports outstanding achievement through the enhancement of motivation, innovation, and the personal development of followers. This makes it a highly relevant approach in a constantly changing world. Transformational leadership embodies values, beliefs, and needs that emphasize change as a form of breakthrough. A leader with a transformational style is believed to have the ability to influence the overall performance of their members. This leadership style focuses on building commitment toward organizational goals and instilling trust in followers to achieve those goals. A transformational leader typically possesses a visionary outlook and the ability to facilitate followers in developing the necessary skills.

A leader fosters loyalty and self-confidence among their followers. They motivate subordinates to perform better. As a leader, the school principal must be able to understand the members they lead—teachers, educational staff, and students. The principal's understanding will create a positive atmosphere in which everyone can carry out their respective functions effectively and work together to achieve the school's established vision and mission. As a manager, the principal must demonstrate firmness, responsibility, and the ability to supervise to ensure that all activities are carried out as planned. Educational leaders are required to formulate and communicate a clear vision and mission to improve the quality of education. As the top leader, the role of the educational leader has become increasingly complex.

Leaders serve as the driving force behind the process of change within educational institutions by granting trust and authority to all members of the organization. Thus, a school principal can be said to apply the principles of transformational leadership if they are able to transform human resources, instruments, and situations to achieve the goals of school reform. The characteristics of the school's organizational climate described above reflect the collective perception of the school community toward the learning or working environment. Perceptions of each dimension within the organizational climate characteristics illustrate the extent to which members of the school community feel comfortable, equal, and fair; they also depict the degree to which school members feel valued, supported, motivated, and treated equitably by the school organization.

Acknowledgments. The authors would like to acknowledge the support and contributions of all individuals and institutions involved in this research. We are grateful for the academic guidance, institutional support, and constructive feedback that significantly contributed to the completion and improvement of this study.

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