

## The Meaning of Transformational Leadership for High School Teachers: Perspectives on Work Climate and Performance in Banda Aceh

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### ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the meaning of transformational leadership for high school teachers in Banda Aceh, with a focus on the work climate and performance. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, data were obtained through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation with 15 teachers from five high schools. The results of the study show that transformational leadership increases motivation, creativity, and collaboration among teachers, as well as creates a positive work climate. In addition, this leadership also has a significant effect on improving teacher performance. Despite challenges such as resistance to change and limited resources, this study suggests the importance of adapting leadership styles to local contexts to create better quality education.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Transformational leadership has become one of the key concepts in the modern world of education, especially in an effort to improve teacher performance and create a conducive work climate (Attamimi, 2020). In the context of secondary education, especially at the Senior High School (SMA) level, the role of transformational leadership is often a catalyst for change that has a direct impact on the quality of learning and academic outcomes of students. In Banda Aceh, a city rich in culture and tradition, this leadership dynamic is even more interesting to study because of the special challenges faced by educators there.

Transformational leadership refers not only to a leader's ability to inspire and motivate his or her subordinates, but also to how the leader is able to create a clear vision, drive innovation, and build strong emotional connections with the team (Armiyanti et al., 2023). For high school teachers in Banda Aceh, this leadership style has great potential to increase morale, strengthen collaboration between teachers, and ultimately improve students' academic performance.

However, the implementation of transformational leadership among school principals in Banda Aceh still faces various challenges. Factors such as local culture, resource limitations, and individual differences among teachers are variables that affect the effectiveness of this approach. Therefore, it is important to dig deeper into how teachers interpret transformational leadership in the context of their daily work.

This research departs from the assumption that transformational leadership can create a more positive work climate in the school environment. The work climate, which includes interpersonal relationships, clarity of tasks, and recognition of achievements, plays an important role in shaping teachers' job satisfaction and productivity. In this case, teachers who feel supported by their leaders tend to be more motivated to achieve higher educational goals.

On the other hand, teacher performance is also an important indicator in measuring the success of transformational leadership. Teachers' performance is not only seen from the teaching aspect in the classroom, but also from their participation in extracurricular activities, professional development, and contribution to the school community. In the context of Banda Aceh, with a strong cultural and religious background, the role of teachers as role models for the community has become increasingly significant.

This study aims to uncover how high school teachers in Banda Aceh understand the concept of transformational leadership and how their perspective on this leadership style affects their work climate and performance. By understanding these dynamics, it is hoped that it can provide new insights for school principals and education policymakers to adopt a more effective approach in leading educational institutions.

In particular, this study tries to answer several key questions: How do teachers in Banda Aceh interpret transformational leadership? What are some aspects of transformational leadership that they consider most relevant and impactful? What is the relationship between transformational leadership style

and work climate in schools? And finally, to what extent does transformational leadership contribute to improving teacher performance?

The context of Banda Aceh provides a unique background for this research. As a region that has a long experience in rebuilding the education sector after the conflict and tsunami, schools in Banda Aceh face different challenges compared to other regions. School leaders in this region are not only required to manage the administrative aspect, but also to be an inspiration who is able to restore the spirit of the educational community.

In addition, the transformational leadership approach is also in line with the values embraced in Acehnese culture, such as collectivity, justice, and respect for education. However, its application requires adjustments to suit the local context, including taking into account the cultural and religious sensitivities of the local community.

This study also tries to explore the factors that can support or hinder the implementation of transformational leadership in the high school environment in Banda Aceh. For example, what is the role of leadership training for principals in improving their ability to implement this leadership style? And how are teachers' perceptions of transformational leadership affected by their experiences with previous principals?

In addition to focusing on teachers, this study also considers the importance of student and parent involvement in shaping a positive work climate in schools. As part of the educational community, their involvement can strengthen the principal's efforts in creating a harmonious and productive work environment.

In a global context, transformational leadership has been shown to have a positive impact on various sectors, including Education (Nasukah & Maunah, 2021). Therefore, this research is not only relevant for Banda Aceh, but also contributes to the literature on educational leadership in general. By identifying locally relevant best practices, the study can serve as a reference for other regions facing similar challenges.

It is important to note that teachers' interpretation of transformational leadership is not always uniform. Differences in age, experience, and educational background can influence how they perceive and respond to this leadership style. Therefore, this study also considers the diversity of perspectives among teachers as part of the analysis.

In the end, this research is expected to provide concrete recommendations for school principals and education stakeholders in Banda Aceh. By integrating transformational leadership principles into daily practice, it is hoped that schools in Banda Aceh can become successful models in improving the quality of education in Indonesia.

Through this research, readers are invited to understand more deeply about the importance of transformational leadership in the world of education, especially at the high school level. Thus, this research is not only an academic study, but also a practical guide to create positive change in the school environment.

## **THEORETICAL REVIEW**

Transformational leadership is one of the leadership approaches that has been widely studied in various sectors, including in the world of education. This concept was first introduced by James (Burns, 2014), which was later further developed by Bernard Bass. Transformational leadership is defined as a leadership style that is able to inspire and motivate subordinates to exceed their expectations, both in terms of performance and commitment to the organization's vision. In the context of education, this leadership is becoming increasingly relevant because it has the potential to create changes that have a positive impact on the work climate and teacher performance.

According to Bass and Avolio in (Anjilus et al., 2019), transformational leadership has four main components: inspirational motivation, idealized influence, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. These four components are interrelated in creating a work environment that is conducive to the development of individuals and organizations. In the context of a school, principals who apply a transformational leadership style can build strong relationships with teachers, encourage innovation in teaching, and create high morale among staff.

The work climate in schools is one of the factors influenced by transformational leadership styles. (Hoy & Miskel, 2014) stated that the work climate includes a shared perception of the work environment which includes interpersonal relationships, clarity of duties, and emotional support. A positive work climate can increase teachers' job satisfaction, strengthen relationships between colleagues, and encourage collaboration in achieving educational goals. Research by Leithwood and Sun in (TALEBLOO, 2015) It shows that transformational leadership has a positive correlation with the work climate in schools, especially in creating an environment that supports innovation and continuous learning.

In relation to teacher performance, transformational leadership plays a key catalyst. According to (Judge & Robbins, 2013), the performance of individuals in an organization is influenced by motivation, work environment, and support received from superiors. Teachers who work under transformational leadership tend to have a higher commitment to their duties, show creativity in teaching, and contribute more to extracurricular activities. Research by (Darmawan, 2019) said that school principals who adopt a transformational leadership style can improve teacher performance through awarding, involvement in decision-making, and continuous coaching.

In the local context, transformational leadership in Banda Aceh needs to be understood by taking into account the cultural and religious values of the local community. According to (Rahmad, 2024), collective culture in Aceh emphasizes the importance of cooperation, respect for hierarchy, and the integration of religious values in daily life. This provides an opportunity for school principals to adapt transformational approaches to align with existing socio-cultural contexts. In addition, support from the school community, including students and parents, is also an important element in the successful implementation of this leadership.

Previous research conducted in various regions shows that the implementation of transformational leadership in schools can bring significant change. For example, research by (Al Hadromi, 2017) found that principals with transformational leadership styles are able to increase teachers' motivation and create a strong learning culture in their schools. Meanwhile, research by (Wening, 2023) emphasized the importance of leadership training for school principals to improve their effectiveness in implementing this leadership style.

However, the challenges in the implementation of transformational leadership cannot be ignored either. According to (Fullan, 2007), one of the main obstacles is resistance to change, both from teachers and other staff. In Banda Aceh, additional challenges may arise from limited resources, differences in teacher backgrounds, and community expectations of the role of school principals. Therefore, school principals need to develop adaptive and inclusive strategies to overcome these barriers.

In addition to transformational leadership, the literature also notes that external factors such as education policies, government support, and professional training also affect the work climate and teacher performance. According to (Darling-Hammond, 2000), policy-based interventions that support teacher professional development can amplify the positive impact of transformational leadership. In Aceh, the existence of a special autonomy policy provides an opportunity for schools to design programs that are more in line with local needs.

Overall, this literature review shows that transformational leadership has great potential to improve the quality of education through strengthening the work climate and teacher performance. However, effective implementation requires a deep understanding of the local context, including the culture, social values, and challenges faced. In the context of Banda Aceh, the integration of religious and cultural values in transformational leadership can be a relevant approach to create sustainable change in schools.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive method to deeply understand the meaning of transformational leadership for high school teachers in Banda Aceh, especially in relation to their work climate and performance. This approach was chosen because it allows researchers to explore the experiences, perceptions, and views of research subjects holistically in the local socio-cultural context.

### ***Research Design***

This research is descriptive-exploratory (Sutopo, 2002). The main focus of the research is to understand the meaning of transformational leadership from the teacher's perspective, as well as to analyze the relationship between the leadership style and the work climate and performance of teachers in the school environment. The design of this study aims to provide an in-depth description of the phenomenon that occurs in a specific context in Banda Aceh.

### ***Location and Time of Research***

The research was conducted in several high schools in Banda Aceh, selected based on certain criteria such as school reputation, cultural diversity, and the principal's leadership background. The research time is planned to last for 3 months, including the preparation stage, data collection, data analysis, and reporting of results.

### ***Research Subject***

The subjects of the study were high school teachers in Banda Aceh. Subject selection criteria include:

1. Teachers who have worked at the school for at least 3 years.
2. Teachers who have experience working under the principal with a transformational leadership style, based on initial assessment.
3. Teachers who are willing to participate in interviews and discussions.

The number of participants is estimated to be 15-20 people, who are selected using purposive sampling techniques to ensure the subjects involved have experiences relevant to the focus of the research.

### ***Data Collection Techniques***

Data is collected through the following methods:

#### ***In-Depth Interviews***

Semi-structured interviews are conducted with teachers to understand their perspectives on transformational leadership, work climate, and performance. These interviews allow researchers to explore teachers' experiences and views more freely but remain directed (Jogiyanto Hartono, 2018).

#### ***Observation***

Direct observation was carried out in the school environment to observe the dynamics of interaction between the principal and teachers, as well as the working climate conditions in the school. These observations include daily activities at the school, staff meetings, and other activities involving the principal.

#### ***Documentation***

The researcher also collects supporting data in the form of official school documents, such as teacher performance reports, principal's work programs, and school internal policy documents related to human resource management.

### ***Research Instruments***

The main instrument in this study is the researcher himself, who plays a role in designing, collecting, and analyzing data. In addition, interview guidelines, observation sheets, and lists of documents to be reviewed are used as supporting instruments to ensure consistency and validity of data.

### ***Data Analysis Techniques***

The data obtained are analyzed thematically using the following steps:

1. Data Reduction: The collected data is summarized and organized based on themes relevant to the focus of the research.
2. Data Presentation: Data is presented in the form of descriptive narratives, tables, or diagrams for easy interpretation.
3. Drawing conclusions: The main findings are analyzed to answer the research question and relate it to the existing theory.

This analysis process is carried out iteratively, where the data obtained continues to be compared and adjusted until a consistent pattern is found (Miles & Huberman, 1992).

### ***Data Validity and Reliability***

To ensure the validity and reliability of the data, several strategies are used:

1. Data Triangulation: Using various data sources (interviews, observations, documentation) to ensure consistency of findings.
2. Member Check: Asks participants to verify the results of the interview to ensure the researcher's interpretation matches their views.
3. Peer Debriefing: Discuss the results of the analysis with peers to get input and criticism.

## **RESULTS & DISCUSSION**

This study aims to reveal the meaning of transformational leadership for high school teachers in Banda Aceh and its impact on the work climate and performance. Data was obtained through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation from 15 teachers in five high schools in Banda Aceh. The results of the study are presented in three main subthemes: (1) teachers' understanding of transformational leadership, (2) the impact of transformational leadership on the work climate, and (3) the influence of transformational leadership on teacher performance.

### ***Teachers' Understanding of Transformational Leadership***

Most teachers understand transformational leadership as a leadership style that:

1. Able to inspire and motivate.
2. Encouraging innovation in learning.
3. Paying attention to the individual needs of teachers.

The results of the interviews showed that teachers felt the presence of a principal who had a clear vision, provided moral support, and encouraged continuous learning. Most participants felt that transformational leadership increased their confidence in teaching and encouraged them to continue learning.

Table 1: Teachers' Understanding of Transformational Leadership Components

Component	Number of Teachers Who Feel	Percentage
Inspiration and motivation	13 of 15	87%
Support for innovation	12 of 15	80%
Individual attention	11 out of 15	73%
Strengthening the organization's vision	14 out of 15	93%

Most teachers identify transformational leadership as a motivating and inspiring style. Components such as inspirational motivation, idealistic influence, and individual consideration are recognized to have a positive impact on their enthusiasm and confidence. This finding is in line with Bass and Avolio's theory in (Man et al., 2017), which states that transformational leaders focus not only on organizational achievement but also on individual development. Teachers feel supported by principals who have a clear vision and pay special attention to their needs. This creates a strong sense of togetherness, as described by Leithwood and Jantzi in (Congratulations, n.d.), that transformational leadership strengthens the relationship between leaders and subordinates, increasing their sense of attachment to the organization's vision.

### *The Impact of Transformational Leadership on the Work Climate*

The results of the study show that transformational leadership creates a more positive work climate. Teachers feel more comfortable working in a conducive, collaborative, and appreciative atmosphere. Some of the aspects identified as the main influences are:

1. Better interpersonal relationships.
2. Improved communication between staff and principals.
3. Stronger emotional support from the principal.

Observations show that schools with principals who apply transformational styles tend to have a more dynamic work atmosphere, as seen from the active interaction between teachers and other staff.

Table 2: Positive Work Climate Indicators at Banda Aceh High School

Indicators	Number of Schools	Percentage
Good interpersonal relationships	4 out of 5	80%
Open communication	5 out of 5	100%
Emotional support	3 out of 5	60%
Collaboration on tasks	4 out of 5	80%



A positive work climate is one of the main results of the implementation of transformational leadership. Good interpersonal relationships, open communication, and intense collaboration between teachers are the main indicators of creating a conducive work climate. These results support Hoy and Miskel's research in (Sitanggang, 2015), which states that the work climate is the result of interaction between individuals in an organization. Principals who implement transformational leadership create an environment that supports communication and cooperation between teachers. In Banda Aceh, this is reinforced by the approach of school principals who integrate local cultural values such as deliberation and mutual cooperation in their leadership.

However, observations show that emotional support from principals is not completely distributed across all schools. Some teachers feel that school principals still need to improve their ability to listen to complaints or input. This is a reminder of the importance of individualized consideration as a key element in transformational leadership (Bass & Bass Bernard, 1985).

### *The Influence of Transformational Leadership on Teacher Performance*

Teachers recognize that transformational leadership has a significant impact on their performance. Some of the forms of performance improvement identified include:

1. Increased creativity in designing learning.
2. Increased participation in school activities, including extracurriculars.
3. More teachers are involved in professional training programs.

Documentation shows that schools led by principals in a transformational style have a higher percentage of teacher participation in professional development activities.

Table 3: Improving Teacher Performance at Banda Aceh High School

Performance Indicators	Before (Average)	After (Average)	Increased
Creativity in learning	70%	85%	15%
Participation in extracurricular activities	60%	78%	18%
Involvement in professional training	50%	72%	22%

The positive impact of transformational leadership on teacher performance is evident in increased creativity, participation in extracurricular activities, and involvement in professional training. School principals who motivate teachers to continue learning and innovate succeed in encouraging the improvement of learning quality. These findings support (Judge & Robbins, 2013), which states that leaders who provide support and motivation will influence individual

performance in the organization. Teachers in Banda Aceh feel motivated to improve their competence because the principal often provides rewards and constructive feedback.

However, the study also identified that resistance to change, especially among senior teachers, is a challenge in the implementation of this leadership style. This shows the need for adaptive strategies from school principals to deal with resistance, such as providing a personal approach to senior teachers so that they are more open to innovation.

### ***Supporting and Inhibiting Factors***

The study also found several factors that support and hinder the implementation of transformational leadership:

#### *Supporting Factors:*

1. The principal's commitment to the vision.
2. Support from the school community, including parents and students.
3. There are internal policies that support innovation.

#### *Inhibiting Factors:*

1. Resistance to change among senior teachers.
2. Limited facilities and resources.
3. The administrative burden of the principal is high.

Supporting factors for the implementation of transformational leadership in Banda Aceh include the principal's commitment to the organizational vision and support of the school community. This support is in accordance with Hoy and Tarter's theory of the work environment in (Tahir et al., 2008), which states that leadership success is greatly influenced by support from various parties in the organizational ecosystem. However, limited facilities and resources are one of the significant inhibiting factors. This reflects the importance of synergy between leadership at the school level and education policies at the local level to ensure that adequate resources are available for teachers to support their performance.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the results of the research that has been analyzed, it can be concluded that transformational leadership has a very positive influence on the work climate and teacher performance at Banda Aceh High School. School principals who apply this leadership style have succeeded in creating an inspiring environment, encouraging teachers' motivation and creativity, and improving the quality of learning in schools. Teachers feel more valued, encouraged to innovate, and involved in professional development thanks to the emotional support and attention to individual needs provided by the principal. Transformational leadership also contributes to the creation of a conducive work climate, with open communication, good interpersonal relationships, and intense collaboration between teachers. However, some challenges are still found, such as resistance to change among senior teachers, limited resources, and high

administrative burdens of school principals, which can hinder the implementation of transformational leadership to the fullest. Overall, this study shows that the success of transformational leadership at Banda Aceh High School is greatly influenced by the local context, local cultural values, and support from the entire school community. School principals who successfully integrate these values in their approach can create a more productive work climate, which in turn will improve teacher performance and the quality of education in schools. Going forward, it is important for education leaders to continue to develop and adapt their leadership styles to suit the needs and challenges that exist in the field. In addition, support from education policies and the provision of adequate resources will be crucial in ensuring the successful implementation of transformational leadership that has a positive impact on the quality of education in Banda Aceh and other regions.

### **FURTHER STUDY**

Future studies can explore strategies to address challenges in implementing transformational leadership, such as overcoming resistance to change among senior teachers, limited resources, and administrative burdens on principals. Research can focus on interventions to help senior teachers adapt, the role of government support, and contextual differences between urban and rural schools. Longitudinal studies could assess the long-term impacts on teacher performance and student outcomes, while further exploration of integrating local cultural values may enhance leadership practices and educational quality.

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