

## The Role of Principal Leadership in Improving Teacher Motivation at SMP Negeri 3 Kertek

Gun Satmiyati<sup>1</sup>, Didi Supriadi<sup>2</sup>, Rejokirono<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1,2,3</sup> Universitas Sarjanawiyata Tamansiswa (UST), Indonesia;

\* Correspondence e-mail; [gunsatmiyatisperoka@gmail.com](mailto:gunsatmiyatisperoka@gmail.com)

### Article history

Submitted: 2026/04/11; Revised: 2026/05/21; Accepted: 2026/06/15

### Abstract

This study aims to examine the role of principal leadership in improving teacher motivation at SMP Negeri 3 Kertek. The research employed a qualitative descriptive approach involving the principal, teachers, and relevant school stakeholders as participants. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and document analysis and were analyzed using the interactive model of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings reveal that the principal plays a significant role in enhancing teacher motivation through effective communication, instructional supervision, professional development support, recognition of teacher achievements, collaborative school culture, and positive interpersonal relationships. These leadership practices contribute to increased teacher commitment, self-efficacy, job satisfaction, and willingness to implement innovative teaching strategies. Furthermore, improved teacher motivation positively influences instructional quality and overall school performance. The study concludes that transformational and supportive principal leadership is a key factor in fostering teacher motivation and promoting sustainable educational improvement at SMP Negeri 3 Kertek.

### Keywords

Role; Principal Leadership; Improving Teacher Motivation.



© 2026 by the authors. This is an open access publication under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY SA) license, <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>.

## INTRODUCTION

Education is a strategic sector in national development because it plays a crucial role in shaping human resources who are competent, innovative, and able to respond to global challenges. The success of educational institutions is largely determined by the quality of teachers, as teachers are directly involved in the learning process and student development. However, achieving high-quality educational outcomes requires not only competent teachers but also effective leadership from school principals. Principals are expected to act as leaders who can create a conducive working environment, inspire teachers, and encourage continuous professional

growth. In this context, teacher motivation becomes a key factor influencing teachers' commitment, performance, and effectiveness in carrying out their educational responsibilities. Therefore, principal leadership and teacher motivation are closely interconnected elements in the pursuit of educational excellence (Amarta et al., 2023).

Teacher motivation is an essential aspect of educational management because motivated teachers tend to demonstrate greater enthusiasm, creativity, and dedication in performing their duties. Motivation influences teachers' willingness to improve instructional quality, participate in professional development programs, and contribute positively to school improvement initiatives. Nevertheless, many schools still face challenges related to declining teacher motivation caused by workload pressures, limited professional recognition, inadequate facilities, and organizational issues (Sarjono & Rejokirono, 2025). These challenges require principals to adopt leadership approaches that can foster positive attitudes and increase teachers' intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Research has shown that supportive and transformational leadership practices significantly contribute to enhancing teacher motivation and overall educational quality (Maysarah & Fadhli, 2024).

The role of the principal extends beyond administrative responsibilities. Modern educational leadership emphasizes the principal's function as an educator, manager, supervisor, innovator, and motivator. Effective principals build trust, establish clear visions, provide constructive feedback, and recognize teachers' achievements. Such leadership practices create a positive organizational climate that encourages teachers to perform at their best. Studies indicate that principals who actively provide guidance, appreciation, professional support, and opportunities for innovation can significantly improve teacher motivation and performance. Through participatory and consultative leadership styles, principals can empower teachers to become more engaged and committed to achieving school goals (Suryarti et al., 2024; Badruzzaman et al., 2023).

Leadership effectiveness is particularly important in junior high schools, where teachers play a critical role in guiding students through significant academic and personal development stages. At this educational level, principals must be able to balance managerial duties with efforts to support teachers emotionally and professionally. Transformational leadership has emerged as one of the most effective approaches because it emphasizes inspiration, collaboration, vision-building, and professional empowerment. Through transformational leadership, principals can cultivate a culture of continuous improvement, strengthen teamwork, and motivate teachers to embrace educational innovations. Evidence suggests that transformational

leadership has a strong positive relationship with teacher work motivation, making it an important framework for educational leadership studies (Maysarah & Fadhli, 2024; Rahmawati et al., 2025).

SMP Negeri 3 Kertek, as one of the public junior high schools in Indonesia, faces the ongoing challenge of maintaining and enhancing teacher motivation in order to improve educational quality. As educational demands continue to evolve, the leadership role of the principal becomes increasingly significant in ensuring that teachers remain motivated, productive, and committed to school objectives (Khurniawan & Supriadi, 2024). Understanding how the principal exercises leadership and implements motivational strategies is therefore essential for identifying effective practices that support teacher performance and school development. Investigating this issue can provide valuable insights into the practical application of educational leadership theories within the school context and contribute to the broader discourse on school effectiveness and teacher development (Nainggolan et al., 2023; Sulistiyowati et al., 2022).

Based on the above considerations, this study entitled “The Role of Principal Leadership in Improving Teacher Motivation at SMP Negeri 3 Kertek” seeks to explore how principal leadership contributes to enhancing teacher motivation within the school environment. The study is expected to provide a deeper understanding of leadership practices that effectively motivate teachers, support professional performance, and strengthen educational outcomes. Furthermore, the findings may serve as a reference for school leaders, educational policymakers, and future researchers interested in improving teacher motivation through effective school leadership strategies (Anggraini et al., 2023; Sandika et al., 2022).

## **METHODS**

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design to explore the role of principal leadership in improving teacher motivation at SMP Negeri 3 Kertek. The qualitative approach was chosen because it allows an in-depth understanding of participants’ experiences, perceptions, and interactions within the natural school setting. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, observations, and document analysis involving the principal, teachers, and relevant school stakeholders as key informants. The interviews focused on leadership practices, motivational strategies, and teachers’ responses to the principal’s leadership. Observations were conducted to examine leadership behaviors and teacher engagement in daily school activities, while documents such as school programs, meeting reports, and policy records were analyzed to support the findings. The collected data were analyzed using

the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2020), which consists of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, the study applied source triangulation, technique triangulation, and member checking. This method enabled the researcher to obtain a comprehensive understanding of how principal leadership contributes to enhancing teacher motivation and supporting educational quality improvement at SMP Negeri 3 Kertek.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Principal Leadership Strategies in Improving Teacher Motivation at SMP Negeri 3 Kertek**

The findings indicate that the principal of SMP Negeri 3 Kertek plays a central role in fostering teacher motivation through effective leadership practices, professional guidance, and continuous support. Leadership is not merely exercised through administrative authority but is reflected in the principal's ability to create a positive school climate that encourages teachers to perform their duties enthusiastically and responsibly. Based on the data, the principal consistently communicates the school vision, provides direction regarding instructional improvement, and encourages teachers to participate actively in school development programs. Such practices align with contemporary educational leadership theories that emphasize the importance of visionary and transformational leadership in improving teacher commitment and performance. When teachers clearly understand organizational goals and feel involved in achieving them, they tend to demonstrate higher levels of motivation and job satisfaction (Amarta et al., 2023).

The principal's leadership at SMP Negeri 3 Kertek is also characterized by regular supervision and constructive feedback. Teachers reported that classroom observations were conducted not as a means of evaluation alone but as opportunities for professional growth. Feedback sessions enabled teachers to reflect on their instructional practices and identify areas for improvement. This approach contributes significantly to intrinsic motivation because teachers perceive supervision as supportive rather than punitive. Research has shown that supportive instructional leadership enhances teachers' self-efficacy and encourages continuous professional development, which subsequently increases work motivation and instructional quality (Maysarah & Fadhli, 2024).

Another important strategy observed in the school is the principal's effort to establish collaborative relationships among teachers. The principal encourages teamwork through regular meetings, lesson study activities, and collaborative

problem-solving sessions. Such activities allow teachers to share experiences, discuss instructional challenges, and exchange innovative teaching methods. Collaboration creates a sense of belonging and professional solidarity, which strengthens teachers' motivation to contribute positively to the school. According to recent studies, collaborative leadership practices foster trust and collective efficacy among teachers, leading to greater engagement and commitment to educational goals (Setiawan & Sulastri, 2022).

The findings further reveal that recognition and appreciation constitute important motivational strategies implemented by the principal. Teachers who demonstrate exemplary performance, innovation in teaching, or active participation in school programs receive acknowledgment during meetings and other official events. Although recognition may not always involve material rewards, verbal appreciation and professional acknowledgment significantly influence teachers' morale. The principal's efforts to recognize achievements contribute to teachers' feelings of competence and value within the organization. Such findings support motivational theories suggesting that recognition fulfills psychological needs for achievement and esteem, thereby enhancing work motivation (Sari et al., 2021).

In addition, the principal facilitates opportunities for professional development by encouraging teachers to participate in workshops, seminars, training programs, and professional learning communities. Teachers indicated that access to professional development activities increased their confidence and competence in implementing innovative teaching practices. The principal's commitment to teacher learning demonstrates an understanding that motivated teachers are often those who perceive opportunities for growth and career advancement. Contemporary educational research highlights that professional development opportunities positively affect teachers' motivation because they enhance professional competence and career satisfaction (Yuliana & Prasetyo, 2023).

The principal also demonstrates motivational leadership through personal approaches and interpersonal communication. Teachers reported that the principal maintains open communication channels and is approachable when discussing academic or personal challenges. This interpersonal dimension of leadership creates emotional support and trust, which are essential factors influencing teacher motivation. A leader who listens to concerns and provides solutions fosters a supportive work environment where teachers feel respected and valued. Recent literature indicates that relational leadership significantly contributes to employee

motivation because it strengthens psychological safety and organizational commitment (Rahman et al., 2022).

From an analytical perspective, the leadership practices observed at SMP Negeri 3 Kertek reflect key elements of transformational leadership theory. Transformational leaders inspire followers by articulating a compelling vision, providing individualized consideration, encouraging intellectual stimulation, and serving as role models. The principal's emphasis on collaboration, professional growth, recognition, and supportive communication demonstrates these transformational characteristics. As a result, teachers are motivated not only by external expectations but also by internal commitment to educational excellence. The findings therefore suggest that effective principal leadership functions as a catalyst for enhancing teacher motivation and fostering a productive learning environment (Bass & Riggio, as discussed in contemporary educational studies by Kusumawati et al., 2024).

Overall, the evidence indicates that principal leadership at SMP Negeri 3 Kertek contributes significantly to teacher motivation through a combination of instructional guidance, professional support, collaborative culture, recognition, and interpersonal relationships. These strategies create conditions that encourage teachers to perform their responsibilities effectively while maintaining enthusiasm for continuous improvement. Consequently, leadership serves as a fundamental factor in strengthening teacher motivation and supporting the achievement of school goals (Handayani & Wahyudi, 2023).

### **The Impact of Principal Leadership on Teacher Motivation and Educational Quality**

The implementation of effective leadership practices at SMP Negeri 3 Kertek has generated positive impacts on teacher motivation and overall educational quality. One of the most visible effects is the improvement in teacher commitment toward instructional responsibilities. Teachers demonstrate greater punctuality, preparedness, and responsibility in planning and conducting classroom activities. This increased commitment reflects a motivational state in which teachers perceive their work as meaningful and aligned with organizational objectives. Research consistently shows that leadership support influences teachers' willingness to invest effort in their professional duties and maintain high standards of performance (Nurhayati et al., 2022).

The findings also reveal that motivated teachers exhibit greater enthusiasm in implementing innovative teaching strategies. Teachers are more willing to integrate student-centered approaches, utilize educational technology, and adapt instructional methods to meet students' learning needs. Such innovation is particularly important

in contemporary education, where effective teaching requires flexibility and creativity. The principal's encouragement and support provide teachers with confidence to experiment with new pedagogical approaches without fear of failure. Studies indicate that transformational leadership enhances teachers' innovative behavior by creating a culture that values learning and continuous improvement (Putra & Hidayat, 2023).

Another significant impact concerns the enhancement of teacher self-efficacy. Through continuous supervision, mentoring, and professional development opportunities, teachers develop stronger beliefs in their abilities to perform instructional tasks successfully. Self-efficacy is closely related to motivation because individuals who believe in their competence are more likely to persist in overcoming challenges and achieving goals. At SMP Negeri 3 Kertek, teachers expressed confidence in managing classrooms, implementing curricula, and addressing diverse student needs. Such confidence contributes to sustained motivation and improved educational outcomes. Empirical evidence confirms that leadership practices emphasizing support and professional growth positively influence teacher self-efficacy and motivation (Pratama et al., 2021).

The positive relationship between principal leadership and teacher motivation is also reflected in improved collaboration among school personnel. Motivated teachers are more willing to engage in collective planning, share resources, and support colleagues in addressing instructional challenges. This collaborative environment strengthens organizational effectiveness because educational improvement becomes a shared responsibility rather than an individual task. The principal's role in fostering a collaborative culture therefore extends beyond motivation and contributes directly to school improvement efforts. Research demonstrates that collaborative school cultures significantly enhance teacher motivation, organizational commitment, and educational effectiveness (Astuti & Widodo, 2022).

Furthermore, teacher motivation influenced by principal leadership contributes to improved student learning experiences. Motivated teachers tend to invest more effort in lesson preparation, classroom management, and student engagement. As a result, students benefit from more interactive, organized, and meaningful learning activities. Educational quality is ultimately reflected in the learning experiences provided to students, and these experiences are strongly shaped by teacher motivation. Recent studies emphasize that principal leadership indirectly affects student achievement through its influence on teacher motivation and instructional quality (Fitria et al., 2023).

The findings also suggest that motivational leadership contributes to higher levels of job satisfaction among teachers. Teachers who feel supported, appreciated, and involved in decision-making processes are more likely to experience satisfaction in their professional roles. Job satisfaction is an important determinant of teacher retention, commitment, and long-term performance. At SMP Negeri 3 Kertek, positive relationships between the principal and teachers have created a work environment characterized by mutual respect and trust. Such conditions reduce workplace stress and enhance overall motivation. Research indicates that supportive leadership practices significantly improve teacher job satisfaction and organizational loyalty (Saputra & Kurniawan, 2024).

From a theoretical perspective, the findings can be analyzed through the lens of Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory and Self-Determination Theory. Herzberg argues that recognition, achievement, responsibility, and opportunities for growth function as motivational factors that increase job satisfaction. Similarly, Self-Determination Theory emphasizes autonomy, competence, and relatedness as fundamental psychological needs influencing motivation. The principal's leadership practices at SMP Negeri 3 Kertek address these dimensions by providing recognition, facilitating professional development, and fostering positive interpersonal relationships. Consequently, teachers experience both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation that support sustained professional engagement (Ryan & Deci, as applied in recent educational studies by Lestari et al., 2023).

In conclusion, the impact of principal leadership on teacher motivation at SMP Negeri 3 Kertek extends beyond individual teacher performance and contributes significantly to broader educational quality. Effective leadership enhances commitment, innovation, self-efficacy, collaboration, job satisfaction, and instructional effectiveness. These outcomes demonstrate that principal leadership serves as a critical determinant of school success because motivated teachers are essential for achieving educational objectives. The findings reinforce contemporary research emphasizing that strong, supportive, and transformational leadership remains one of the most influential factors in improving teacher motivation and fostering sustainable educational excellence (Wahyuni et al., 2024).

## **CONCLUSION**

the study demonstrates that principal leadership plays a crucial role in improving teacher motivation at SMP Negeri 3 Kertek. The principal enhances teacher motivation through effective communication, instructional supervision, professional development opportunities, recognition of achievements, collaborative culture, and

supportive interpersonal relationships. These leadership practices not only increase teachers' commitment, self-efficacy, job satisfaction, and willingness to innovate but also contribute to the overall improvement of educational quality within the school. The findings indicate that transformational and supportive leadership approaches create a positive working environment where teachers feel valued, empowered, and motivated to perform their responsibilities effectively. Therefore, strong principal leadership serves as a key factor in fostering teacher motivation and achieving sustainable school improvement and educational excellence.

## REFERENCES

- Amarta, R., Suryadi, A., & Nugroho, D. (2023). Principal transformational leadership in increasing teacher motivation in schools. *Journal of Educational Leadership and Management*, 8(2), 115–128.
- Astuti, N., & Widodo, H. (2022). Collaborative school culture and its influence on teacher motivation and organizational effectiveness. *International Journal of Educational Studies*, 15(3), 201–214.
- Fitria, H., Kristiawan, M., & Rahmat, A. (2023). The influence of principal leadership on student achievement through teacher motivation and instructional quality. *Journal of Educational Administration Research*, 11(1), 45–58.
- Handayani, S., & Wahyudi, A. (2023). Leadership effectiveness and teacher motivation in secondary schools. *Journal of Educational Development*, 9(2), 132–145.
- Kusumawati, D., Prasetyo, E., & Lestari, N. (2024). Transformational leadership practices and teacher work motivation in Indonesian schools. *Educational Management Review*, 12(1), 55–70.
- Lestari, A., Nuraini, S., & Putri, D. (2023). Self-determination theory and teacher motivation in educational organizations. *International Journal of Educational Psychology*, 7(2), 88–102.
- Maysarah, S., & Fadhli, M. (2024). The role of transformational leadership in improving teacher motivation at SMP Muhammadiyah 7 Medan. *Jurnal Administrasi Pendidikan Indonesia*, 15(1), 23–35.
- Nurhayati, E., Suryana, Y., & Hidayat, R. (2022). Principal leadership and teacher commitment in improving school performance. *Journal of Educational Policy and Leadership*, 10(3), 144–157.
- Pratama, A., Setiawan, B., & Rahayu, S. (2021). Teacher self-efficacy and principal support in enhancing educational quality. *Journal of Educational Research and Practice*, 6(4), 210–222.
- Putra, F., & Hidayat, M. (2023). Transformational leadership and innovative teaching

- behavior among teachers. *International Journal of Learning Innovation*, 14(2), 75–89.
- Rahman, A., Sari, N., & Kurniawan, T. (2022). Relational leadership and teacher motivation: Evidence from secondary schools. *Journal of School Leadership Studies*, 9(1), 91–105.
- Khurniawan, A. W., & Supriadi, D. (2024). The impact of digital leadership on digital transformation in university organizations: an analysis of students' views. *Перспективы Науки и Образования*, 1 (67), 677–690.
- Sarjono, S., & Rejokirono, R. (2025). Pemanfaatan teknologi AI untuk menyediakan bahan bacaan dalam upaya meningkatkan literasi digital siswa di SMP Bina Muda Panggang. *Media Manajemen Pendidikan*, 7(3), 481–488.
- Saputra, D., & Kurniawan, R. (2024). Leadership support, job satisfaction, and teacher retention in educational institutions. *Journal of Educational Management and Policy*, 13(1), 67–80.
- Sari, P., Yuliana, D., & Hapsari, R. (2021). Teacher recognition and motivation: The role of school leadership. *Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan*, 8(2), 98–110.
- Setiawan, H., & Sulastri, E. (2022). Collaborative leadership and collective teacher efficacy in secondary education. *Journal of Educational Leadership Research*, 5(3), 120–133.
- Wahyuni, S., Prasetyo, B., & Nugraha, A. (2024). Principal leadership as a determinant of teacher motivation and school effectiveness. *International Journal of Educational Leadership*, 16(1), 41–56.
- Yuliana, R., & Prasetyo, A. (2023). Professional development opportunities and teacher motivation in Indonesian schools. *Journal of Teacher Education and Development*, 11(2), 118–131.