

**THE EFFECT OF PRINCIPALS' TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP ON SCHOOLS' LIFE IN INDONESIA: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS OF MERAUKE DISTRICT, PAPUA, INDONESIA**

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**Abstract**

This study mainly discusses the direct effect of principals' transformational leadership on school climate and teachers' morale in elementary schools of Merauke district, Papua, Indonesia. This effect was tested with a sampel of 258 teachers drawn from amongst 1300 elementary school teachers of Merauke district, Papua, Indonesia. Data were analyzed quantatively using *Statistical Package for Social Sciences* (SPSS) version 21 for windows. Result of the study shows that principals' transformational leadership has a significant effect on school climate and teachers' morale in elementary schools of Merauke district, Papua, Indonesia. This finding might be worthwhile for the government of Papua in general and especially of Merauke dictrict to pay more attention and to make an effort of creating different programs to provide principals with the suitable knowledges and skills relate to transformational leadership in order that teachers' and students' right would be adequately met.

**Keywords: Transformational leadershipSchool climate; Teachers' morale; Elementary schools Merauke district.**

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## 1. Introduction

One of the most central issues in today's school principal leadership is of how to motivate teachers to effectively participate in the process of making decision. Vary of studies have been conducted to investigate the important roles played by the principals in running schools to its success ([21], [8], [23], [31], [34], [4], [16], [26], [41], [14], [10], [43], [45], [47]), but the lack of empirical studies that specifically explore the effect of principals' transformational leadership on elementary schools' life, with regards to school climate and teachers' morale in elementary schools of Merauke district makes this present study robust.

Scholars have proposed various definitions of leadership. Yukl [50] defined leadership as the process of influencing others to understand and agree what need to be done and how to do it, and the process of facilitating individual and collective efforts to accomplish shared objectives, while Northouse [36] defined leadership as a process in which a person influences others to achieve a common goal. Whereas Wilson [49] defined leadership from the perspective of leaders' capability in creating organizational climate or culture in order that others are inspired to do the same.

Though there are various styles of leadership, in this study we focus on transformational leadership style as it emerged as the most popular approach to explain leaders' way of directing the organization's life in today's world. Transformational leadership theory has continually highlighted the importance of leaders' influence on followers' emotional states [5]. In order to be able to influence his or her followers, transformational leader aims to ensure that the employees are capable to identify themselves with the goals of the organization and are able therefore to do more than what is required of them. Rouche et al. [39] defined transformational leadership as the leader's ability to influence employees' attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviors by working through them and with them in order to accomplish the organization's goals, missions, and purposes. Meanwhile Northouse [36] defined transformational leadership as the ability to get people who want to change, improve, and be led. It involves assessing associates' motives, satisfying their needs, and valuing them.

Bass [11] pointed out four components of transformational leadership, namely: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. *Idealized influence* refers to the degree in which leaders are perceived as an inspiring role model. Pierce & Newstorm [37] asserted that transformational leaders are models of integrity and fairness, set clear goals, have high expectations, provide support and recognition, stir the emotions and passions of people, and get the people to do more than required of them. Leaders with *idealized influence* can be trusted and respected by their followers to make good decisions for the organization.

*Inspirational motivation* refers to the degree in which leaders state a vision that is attractive and inspiring to followers. “Transformational leaders provide for his or her followers with an inspiring vision and give them an identity. Transformational leaders transform and motivate his or her followers to achieve great success” (Bass, as cited in [46]: 26). Leaders with inspirational motivation encourage their followers with fighting spirit to reach the organizational goals.

*Intellectual stimulation* refers to the degree in which a leader stimulates his or her followers to achieve extraordinary outcomes. Leaders with *intellectual stimulation* always promote critical thinking and problem solving to make the organization better and better. In connection with this, Bass & Riggio [46]) stated as follows:

Transformational leaders are those who stimulate and inspire followers to both achieve extraordinary outcomes and, in the process, develop their own leadership capacity. Transformational leadership helps followers grow and develop into leaders by responding to individual followers' needs by empowering them and by aligning the objectives and goals of the individual followers, the leader, the group, and the larger organization (p. 26).

*Individualized consideration* refers to the degree in which leaders providing support, encouragement, and coaching to followers. Transformational leaders sincerely serve the needs of others, empower them and inspire followers to achieve great success (Castanheira and Costa,

as cited in [9]). Leaders with *individualized consideration* encourage their followers to do the best in reaching goals that help both the followers and the organization.

The term *transformational leadership* used in this present study refers to school principal. Principal's transformational leadership is the school leader's ability to increase member commitment, capacity, and engagement to meet school's goals [12]. School principals, by displaying transformational leadership style, can significantly affect the schools' life aspects with regards to school climate and teachers morale. In other words, by displaying suitable behaviors, school principal transformational leadership could be one of the most important predictors of school climate and teachers' morale.

### **1.1 School Climate and Transformational Leadership**

The term climate is initially used as a general notion to express the enduring quality of organizational life. Tagiuri (as cited in [38], p. 26) observed that a particular configuration of enduring characteristics of the ecology, milieu, social system and culture would constitute a climate, as much as a particular configuration of personal characteristics constitute a personality. Gilmer (as cited in [18], p. 1) defined climate as "the attributes that set one organization apart from another and positively influence the behavior of the workers within that organization". Litwin & Stringer (as cited in [44], p. 58) viewed organizational climate as "the perceived subjective effects of the formal system, the informal style of managers, and other important environmental factors on the attitude in the beliefs, values, and motivation of people who work in a particular organization". On the Nicholson & Miljus (1992), Adenike [2] asserted,

Organizational climate serves as a measure of individual perceptions or feelings about an organization. Organizational climate includes management or leadership styles, participation in decision making, provision of challenging jobs to employees, reduction of boredom and frustration, provision of benefits, personnel policies, provision of good working conditions and creation of suitable career ladder for academics (p. 152).

To measure school climate, Halpin & Croft [24] develop the *Organizational Climate Descriptive Questionnaire (OCDQ)* that measures the climate of elementary schools. The latest rendering of measuring climate is the *Organizational Climate Index (OCI)* which is recognized as a

combination of a revised *Organizational Climate Descriptive Questionnaire (OCDQ)* and the *Organizational Health Inventory (OHI)* [27]. The *OCI* captures open and healthy dimension of school climates at the student, teacher, principal, and community levels [28].

School climate has been measured along two dimensions of interpersonal interactions with regard to principal's behavior and teachers' behavior. Principal's behavior comprised of four aspects: (a) *alooffness*: refers to principal's behavior that characterized by a formal and impersonal relationship, (b) *production emphasis*: refers to principal's behavior that characterized by a close supervision that uses directions and stereotyped communication channels, (c) *turst*: refers to principal's behavior that characterized by an evident effort to move the organization forward, and (d) *consideration*: refers to principal's behavior that characterized by a human relationship with teachers; while teachers' behavior comprised of four aspects: (a) *disengagement*: refers to teachers' tendency to be non-chalant and merely routinised in task oriented situation, (b) *hindrance*: refers to teachers' feeling that the principal bothers them with routine duties and other commitments that do not relate to the actual job of teaching and which they consider as unnecessarily encroaching on their time, (c) *esprit*: refers to morale felt as a result of social-needs satisfaction while teachers still enjoy a sense of task accomplishment, and (d) *intimacy*: refers to teachers' enjoyment of friendly social relations with other teachers [1], [40].

School climate is closely related to school principals' transformational leadership. Wilson [49] stated,

Leadership is about creating the climate or culture where people are inspired from inside out. You can shout you care from the rooftops and you can put signs and banners about how much your people matter, but what will inspire them is when you demonstrate it (p. 17).

Raza [38] stressed that the leader's behavior has an important influence on organizational climate due to that the leader can make a big difference in the climate of a group, for instance by changing an open and cooperative climate to one that is perceived as being closed and repressive. Similarly, Litwin & Stringer (as cited in [38]) revealed that the leader has a pivotal effect on organizational climate. These arguments lead us to hypothesize the following:

Hypothesis 1: Principal transformational leadership (idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration) will significantly effect on

school climate (alooffness, production emphasis, trust, consideration, disengagement, hindrance, esprit, and intimacy).

## **1.2 Morale and Transformational Leadership**

There are various definition of morale. Davis ([17], p. 207) defined morale as the attitude of individuals and group toward their work environment and toward voluntary cooperation to the full extent of their ability in the best interest of the organization, while Washington & Watson ([42], p. 3) defined morale as the feeling a worker has about his job based on how the worker perceives himself in the organization and the extent to which the organization is viewed as meeting the worker's own needs and expectations. Whereas Harris ([25], p. 348) stated that morale is usually envisioned as a group or organizational phenomenon which is characterized by the willingness of the group to work together for a common (organizational) goals.

The term morale used in this study refers directly to what teacher believes and feels when performing the schools' work. Whiles & Lovell [48] asserted,

Morale is the emotional and mental reaction of a person to his job...Morale is what the teacher believes or feels...Morale is intangible; it cannot be seen or isolated. But it is possible to determine the quality of morale by careful observation of the way people act (p. 227).

While Bentley & Rempel (as cited in [22], p. 57) defined teacher's morale as the degree to which the needs of a teacher are satisfied and the teacher's perception on how the job situation brought the state of satisfaction of the teacher to fruition. Whereas Werang ([44], p. 691) viewed teacher's morale as the teacher's fighting spirit to produce a qualified work of teaching to enhance students' academic achievement.

Teacher's morale could be high and low. Bafadal [7] asserts that teachers with high morale will work with high responsibility, initiative, tenacious, and discipline. Teachers with high morale will work more than what are requested of them. Teachers with low morale, in contrast, will show unfavorable attitudes in their work (Benton as cited in [7]), such as: (a) lack of respect for supervisory authority, (b) excessive lateness and absenteeism, (c) excessive proportion of low

quality work and low productivity in general, (d) lack of cooperation, (e) derogatory comment about the educational institution and its supervisor, (f) excessive turnover, and (g) high level of grievances.

Lumsden [33] suggested that teachers may take some definitely steps to boost their own morale both personally and professionally but it is also must be nurtured, supported, and valued in all involved in the educational process. In this context of view, principal's leadership is one of the most school's elements that playing a pivotal role to raising teacher's morale. Lumsden [33] stated,

Teacher morale is higher in schools where principals create a positive school culture and climate. Principals are the key to improving teachers' morale because they control many of the contingencies in the work environment and are the source of much reinforcement for teachers (p. 39).

In the similar way, Littleford [32] stated,

High teacher morale occurs when the work environment is optimistic and teachers feel they have a purposeful job. These positive feelings are encouraged and promoted through principal's leadership. When teachers feel enthusiastic about their purpose, they become more productive, set higher standards, and perform better resulting in higher achievement for students (p. 692).

When teachers feel good about themselves, they will work harder, produce more, meet deadlines, and give it their all. On the contrary, teachers become less motivated, less comitted, and absent more often (Seahan, as cited in [13]). These arguments lead us to hypothesize the following:

Hypothesis 2: Principal transformational leadership (idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration) will significantly effect on teachers' morale (initiative; tenacity; discipline, and responsibility).

Based on related literatures investigating the effect of principal transformational leadership on school climate and teachers' morale, and the answers of respondents to various items imbedded in questionnaires, the analytical framework of this present study is as presented in Figure 1.

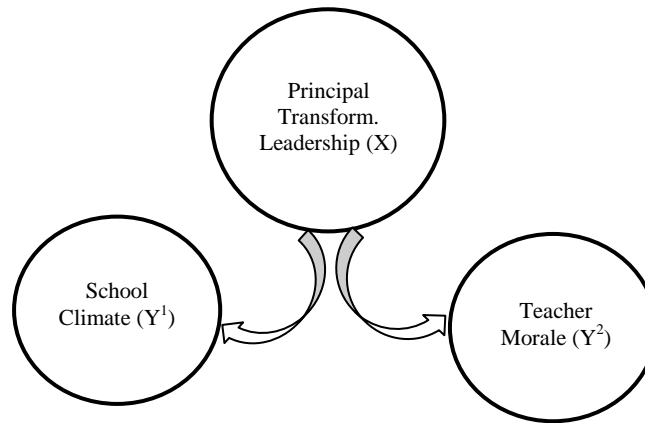


Figure 1. Conceptual Model of the Study

## 2. Research Method

### 2.1 Research Design and Participants

The nature of the study is a quantitative research approach that is conducted using case study method as it sought to establish the effect of principals' transformational leadership on school climate and teachers' morale in elementary schools of Merauke district, Papua, Indonesia. We employed a case study design due to that: (a) we know well on when, how, or why research statements are being formulated; (b) we have a little control only over events; and (c) our focus is on the contemporary phenomena, namely: principals' leadership, school climate, and teachers' morale.

Three quantitative questionnaires using Likert Scale was administered to 1300 elementary school teachers of Merauke district, Papua, Indonesia, of whom 258 are samples/respondents. Samples were drawn purposively due to that: (a) limited research personnel, and (b) most of the elementary schools of Merauke districts are located in the remote area which are difficult to access.



Null hypothesis that were examined in this study as follow: (a) there is no significant effect of principals' transformational leadership on school climate in elementary schools of Merauke district, Papua, Indonesia; and (b) there is no significant effect of principals' transformational leadership on teachers' morale in elementary schools of Merauke district, Papua, Indonesia. Data were analyzed quantitatively using multivariate analysis. In order to have an accurate results of data analysis, we employed *Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS)* program for Windows version 21.

## 2.2 Measures

*Principals' transformational leadership.* Principals' transformational leadership was measured by modifying *Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) Form 6S* [12] item-item into 12 positive statements which are distributed over four dimensions of transformational leadership (idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration). The inventory uses a four point scale (4 = strongly agree and 1 = strongly disagree). In this context of view, respondents are requested to respond each statement on a scale of four alternatives, that are *strongly agree (SA)*, *agree (A)*, *disagree (D)* and *strongly disagree (SD)*. Sample items include "School principal makes teachers feel good to be around him/her", "School principal provides appealing images about what teachers can do", "School principal enables teachers to think about old problems in new ways", and "School principal helps teachers develop themselves".

*School Climate.* School climate was measured by modifying Halpin & Croft's *Organizational Climate Descriptive Questionnaire (OCDQ)* item-item into 29 positive statements which are distributed over eight dimensions of school climate (alooffness, production emphasis, trust, consideration, disengagement, hindrance, esprit, and intimacy). The inventory uses a four point scale (4 = strongly agree and 1 = strongly disagree). In this context of view, respondents are requested to respond each statement on a scale of four alternatives, that are *strongly agree (SA)*, *agree (A)*, *disagree (D)* and *strongly disagree (SD)*. Sample items include "teachers seek special favors from the principal", "teachers interrupt other faculty members who are talking in staff meeting", "teachers have too many committee requirements", "teachers know the family

background of other faculty members”, “the principal goes out of his way to help teachers”, and “the principal help teachers solve personal problem”.

*Teachers’ morale.* Teachers’ morale was measured by developing Bafadal’s [7] morale descriptors into 18 positive statements which are distributed over four dimensions of morale (initiative, tenacity, discipline, and responsibility). The inventory uses a four point scale (4 = strongly agree and 1 = strongly disagree). In this context of view, respondents are requested to respond each statement on a scale of four alternatives, that are *strongly agree* (SA), *agree* (A), *disagree* (D) and *strongly disagree* (SD). Sample items include “I used to participate in seminars and workshop to upgrade knowledge and skills”, “I am happy to come earlier to school every morning”, “I never leave the school (during the school time) without any permission”, “Difficult job becomes a challenge for me to go forward”, “I would never give up on the working conditions that could discourage me”, “I used to design school program at the beginning of school year”, “I used to personally provide learning media which are not provided by the school”, and “I used to develop learning method to improve students academic achievement”.

### 3. Results and Analysis

As stated above, we conducted data analysis using SPSS program version 21 for windows, quantitative approach design to investigate the effect of principals’ transformational leadership on school climate and teachers’ morale in elementary schools of Mearauke district, Indonesia. The results of data analysis are presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Results of Data Analysis  
Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Source	Dependent Variable	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	School Climate	7654.764 <sup>a</sup>	12	637.897	71.441	.000	.778
	Teacher Morale	2402.315 <sup>c</sup>	12	200.193	35.680	.000	.636

Intercept	School Climate	2362251.60	1	2362251.60	2.646E5	.000	.999
	Teacher Morale	879238.939	1	879238.939	1.567E5	.000	.998
Leadership	School Climate	7654.764	12	637.897	71.441	.000	.778
	Teacher Morale	2402.315	12	200.193	35.680	.000	.636
Error	School Climate	2187.597	245	8.929			
	Teacher Morale	1374.650	245	5.611			
Total	School Climate	2934865.000	258				
	Teacher Morale	1094217.000	258				
Corrected Total	School Climate	9842.360	257				
	Teacher Morale	3776.965	257				

a. R Squared = ,778 (Adjusted R Squared = ,767)

b. R Squared = ,636 (Adjusted R Squared = ,618)

c. Computed using alpha = ,05

Based on the results of data analysis as they are presented above, empirical model of the effect of principals' transformational leadership on the schools' life may be reflected in Figure 2.

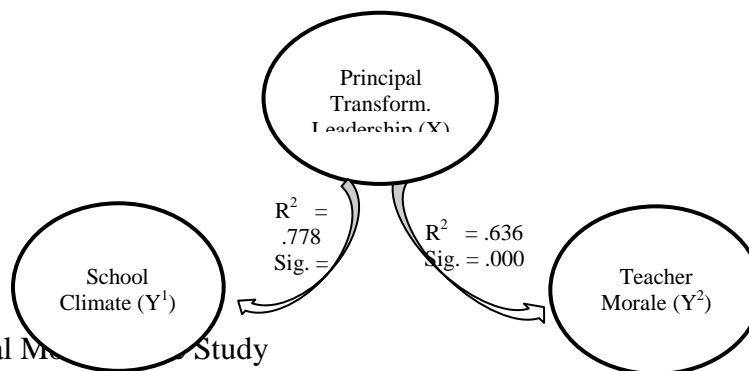


Figure 2. Empirical Model of the Study

The results of data analysis as they are presented on the above figure reveal that:

1. School principal's transformational leadership has a significant effect on school climate as the value of  $R^2$  (0.778) is significant at  $p = 0.000$  ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ). As the significant value (*p-value*) is less than 5 %, our study hypothesis that principal transformational leadership (idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration) will significantly effect on school climate (alooffness, production emphasis, trust, consideration, disengagement, hindrance, esprit, intimacy) is accepted. In other words, at the level of alpha ( $\alpha$ ) = 0.05, the null hypothesis that there is no significant effect of principal's transformational leadership (idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration) on school climate (alooffness, production emphasis, trust, consideration, disengagement, hindrance, esprit, intimacy) in elementary schools of Merauke district, Papua, Indonesia, is rejected.

2. School principal's transformational leadership has a significant effect on teachers' morale as the value of  $R^2$  (0.636) is significant at  $p = 0.000$  ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ). As the significant value (*p-value*) is less than 5 %, our study hypothesis that principal transformational leadership (idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration) will significantly effect on teachers' morale (initiative; tenacity; discipline, responsibility) is accepted. In other words, at the level of alpha ( $\alpha$ ) = 0.05, the null hypothesis that there is no significant effect of principal's transformational leadership (idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration) on teachers' morale (initiative; tenacity; discipline, responsibility) in elementary schools of Merauke district, Papua, Indonesia, is rejected.

#### **4. Discussion**

This present study investigates the effect of principals' transformational leadership on school climate and teachers' morale in elementary schools of Merauke district, Papua, Indonesia. The result of multivariate analysis shows a positive significant effect of principals' transformational leadership on school climate and teachers' morale. This means that changes one point in independent variabel "principal transformational leadership" would strongly effect on dependent variabels "school climate" and "teachers' morale". In other words, as the values of  $R^2$  are positive and significant, it show that when the research variabel "principal transformational

leadership” increases or decreases then the variabel “school climate” and “teachers’ morale” would also increases or decreases.

Teaching is a very stressful profession. Since teacher’s life and work is dedicated to develop and improve knowledges and skills of new generation of nations, having a good principal who view teachers as part of his or her school family is a key to boost school climate and teachers’ morale. Vary of studies have shown the important role of school principal as the key to guide school into its success (Murphy, 1991; Newmann & Wehlage, 1995; Quinn, 2002 as cited in [30]). Johnson [30] described some important roles the school principal playing in the development of school as a collaborative and profesional community,

In discussing the school as a workplace, one might sensibly include the principal as part of the organizational context. For it is the principal who holds formal authority in the school, supervises the work of teachers, and serves as a link between the school and the community as well as the district office.[...]The principal can set a positive tone for adult interactions and make collaboration possible by creating a schedule that allows teachers to work with those who teach the same student or subjects. [...] The principal can arrange for professional workshops and inform teachers about the opportunities for teacher learning and differentiated roles. The principal can support teachers by working collaboratively with staff and students to develop norms for acceptable behavior and a system of discipline to reinforce those norms (pp. 15-16).

In order that school principals are able to handle all the tasks and responsibilities given to them and are able to ‘embrace uncertain, complex and challenging context and work with others to seek creative and innovative solutions that support quality outcomes for all’ ([6], p. 6), school principals should be well trained, educated, and equiped with all the competences needed. Indonesian Education Minister Regulation No. 13 year 2007 [29] point out five minimum standards that the school principal should have, namely managerial skill, personal skill, social skill, entrepreneurial skill, and supervision skill. Independent of what standards should be the school principal candidates had and of how its may effect on schools’ life, having school principals who always “inspires students, staff and members of the community to continuously

enhance the learning of all and they continually strive to understand and improve their impact” ([6], p. 6) are of the schools most important element to schools effectiveness.

Principals with transformational leadership style are able to create a conducive climate and to guide teachers’ morale in achieving success. Mulford ([35], p. 18) asserted, “teachers will be attracted to, and stay in, the profession if they feel they belong and believe they are contributing to the success of their school and students”. This finding confirms results obtained in other studies conducted in a vary of contexts, such as Raza [38], Wilson [49], Lumsden [33], Littleford [32], Ejimofor [19], Werang [45], Adeyemi [3], Cavazotte, et al. [15], and Ekaningsih [20].

## 5. Conclusion

Result of this present study provides a closer look on the effect of principal transformational leadership on school climate and teachers’ morale in elementary schools of Merauke district, Papua, Indonesia. The conclusions depicted from the results of the study are follows:

a. School principal transformational leadership has a positive significant effect on school climate in the elementary schools of Merauke district, Papua, Indonesia as it is indicated the value of  $R^2= 0,778$  and the *p-value* of 0.000. It means that school climate in the elementary schools of Merauke district is of 77,8 % explained by the principals’ transformational leadership, while the rest of 22,2% is explained by other variables.

b. School principal transformational leadership has a positive significant effect on teachers’ morale in elementary schools of Merauke district, Papua, Indonesia as it is indicated by the value of  $R^2= 0,636$  and the *p-value* of 0.000. It means that teachers’ morale in the elementart schools of Merauke district is of 63,6 % explained by the principals’ transformational leadership, while the rest of 36,4 % is explained by other variables.

Practical implication of these findings is that if the school supervisors and The Head of Educational Office at government level want to improve school climate and to boost teachers’ morale in the elementary schools of Merauke district then they have to make sure that principal transformational leadership is at high level.

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