

ANALYSIS OF SCHOOL PRINCIPAL LEADERSHIP AND TEACHER COMPETENCE ON TEACHER PERFORMANCE WITH WORK MOTIVATION AS A MEDIATING VARIABLE AT SMP NEGERI 1 BANDAR, BENER MERIAH REGENCY

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the influence of principal leadership and teacher competence on teacher performance with work motivation as a mediating variable at SMP Negeri 1 Bandar, Bener Meriah Regency. This study uses a quantitative approach with a survey method. The study population consisted of all 74 teachers at SMP Negeri 1 Bandar, Bener Meriah Regency, all of whom were included in the study sample. Data were collected through questionnaires and analyzed using Partial Least Square (PLS) with the help of the SmartPLS application. The results showed that principal leadership and teacher competence had a positive and significant effect on teacher performance. In addition, principal leadership and teacher competence also had a positive and significant effect on work motivation. Work motivation was found to have a positive and significant effect on teacher performance. The results of the indirect effect test showed that work motivation was able to mediate the effect of principal leadership and teacher competence on teacher performance. These findings indicate that good leadership and competence will be more effective in improving teacher performance when accompanied by high work motivation. Based on the research results, it is recommended that schools improve the effectiveness of principal leadership through clearer communication of the school's vision and goals, strengthen teacher competence through continuous professional development, and increase teacher work motivation so that teacher performance can be optimally and sustainably improved.

Introduction

Teacher performance is a key indicator of the success of human resource management in education. Teacher performance reflects the level of success of teachers in carrying out their professional duties, from lesson planning and teaching to learning outcome evaluation. Rahman and Lataruva (2023) emphasize that teacher performance is not only influenced by individual abilities but also by organizational and psychological factors. In line with this, Robbins and Judge (2021) state that performance s are the results of work influenced by leadership, competence, and individual motivation within an organization.

In the school context, one of the most influential organizational factors on teacher performance is the leadership of the principal. The principal has a strategic role in directing the learning vision, conducting academic supervision, and creating a conducive school climate. Hallinger (2020) explains that the instructional leadership of the principal focuses on managing learning programs and providing direct support for teachers' teaching practices. Empirical research conducted by Yusof, Don, and Ismail (2021) shows that principal leadership has a positive and significant effect on teacher performance through improved supervision and professional support. Similar results were also found by Leithwood et al. (2020), who stated that effective school leadership can improve teacher performance by building a learning-oriented school culture.

Apart from leadership, teacher competence is a fundamental factor that determines teacher quality and performance. Darling-Hammond et al. (2020) define teacher competence as the integration of knowledge, skills, and professional attitudes that enable teachers to carry out learning effectively. Research in the last five years shows that teachers' pedagogical and professional competence has a direct influence on teacher performance. Sutarto, Sari, and Fathurrochman (2021) found that teachers with high levels of competency tend to perform better in planning and implementing learning. Similarly, the OECD (2021) emphasizes that improving teacher competency through continuous professional development contributes significantly to improving performance and education quality.

However, various studies show that the influence of principal leadership and teacher competence on teacher performance is not always direct. From a human resource management perspective, work motivation is seen as an important mechanism that bridges the influence of organizational and individual factors on performance. Ryan and Deci (2020), through Self-Determination Theory, explain that work motivation arises when an individual's basic psychological needs—autonomy, competence, and social connectedness—are met. Research by Gagné et al. (2022) shows that work motivation plays a significant role in improving employee performance, including in the context of educational organizations.

Several empirical studies in the last five years have also confirmed the role of work motivation as a mediating variable. Putri and Wahyuni (2022) found that work motivation mediates the influence of school leadership on teacher performance. Similar findings were reported by Hidayat and Syahrani (2023), who stated that teacher competence affects teacher performance through increased work motivation. These research results indicate that good leadership and competence will be more effective in improving teacher performance when accompanied by high work motivation.

Based on this description, research on the influence of principal leadership and teacher competence on teacher performance with work motivation as a mediating variable is relevant to be conducted at SMP Negeri 1 Bandar, Bener Meriah Regency. This research is important to provide empirical understanding of how leadership practices and teacher competence can be optimized through strengthening work motivation to improve teacher performance. In addition to contributing theoretically to the development of educational human resource management studies, this research is also expected to provide practical recommendations for school administrators in formulating policies for continuous improvement of teacher performance.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Teacher Performance

Definition of Teacher Performance

According to Rahman and Lataruva (2023), teacher performance is the level of success of teachers in carrying out their professional duties and responsibilities as measured by applicable work standards.

Factors Affecting Teacher Performance

According to Rahman and Lataruva (2023), teacher performance is influenced by:

1. Teachers' abilities and competencies
Good competencies enable teachers to complete tasks with high quality.
2. Work motivation
Teachers who are highly motivated tend to perform better.
3. Work discipline and responsibility
Discipline ensures that work is completed on time and according to procedure.
4. Cooperation with coworkers
Collaboration improves work effectiveness and learning quality.

Teacher Performance Indicators

Teacher Performance Indicators According to Rahman and Lataruva (2023)

1) Quantity of Work

Describes the number of tasks and workload that teachers can complete in accordance with the standards set by the school.

2) Work Quality

Indicates the quality of a teacher's work in carrying out teaching and professional tasks effectively and in accordance with standards.

3) Punctuality

Reflects the teacher's ability to complete tasks and duties on schedule.

4) Attendance and Discipline

Demonstrates the level of teacher compliance with working hours, attendance, and school regulations.

5) Cooperation

Describes the ability of teachers to cooperate and collaborate with colleagues and school leaders.

6) Initiative and Responsibility

Demonstrates teachers' proactive attitude in carrying out their duties and willingness to take responsibility for the work they undertake.

Work Motivation

Understanding Work Motivation

According to Ryan and Deci (2020), work motivation is an internal drive that directs, strengthens, and maintains an individual's work behavior, which is greatly influenced by the fulfillment of basic psychological needs.

Factors that Influence Work Motivation

According to Ryan and Deci (2020), work motivation is influenced by the fulfillment of three basic psychological needs:

1. **Autonomy**
Individuals feel they have the freedom to determine how they work and make decisions.
2. **Competence**
Individuals feel capable and confident in carrying out their tasks.
3. **Social connectedness**
Individuals feel accepted and have positive relationships with colleagues and leaders.

Work Motivation Indicators

Work motivation indicators according to Ryan and Deci (2020) are described as follows:

1. **Autonomy**
The degree of freedom in performing work
2. **Competence**
Belief in one's own abilities
3. **Relatedness**
Quality of social relationships in the work environment

Teacher Competence

Definition of Teacher Competence

According to Darling-Hammond et al. (2020), teacher competency is the integration of knowledge, skills, and professional attitudes that enable teachers to design, implement, and evaluate learning effectively.

Factors that Influence Teacher Competence

According to Darling-Hammond et al. (2020), teacher competency is influenced by the following factors:

1. Mastery of pedagogical knowledge and teaching materials
Teachers who have mastered teaching methods and subject matter will be better able to deliver learning effectively.
2. Professional experience and reflection
Teaching experience accompanied by reflection helps teachers improve the quality of their teaching practices.
3. Continuing professional development
Lifelong training and learning enable teachers to update their competencies in line with curriculum and technology requirements.
4. School organizational support
A school environment that supports innovation and teacher development contributes to improving teacher competencies.

Teacher Competency Indicators

According to Darling-Hammond et al. (2020), indicators of teacher competency include:

1. Pedagogical competence
The ability to design and implement learning
2. Professional competence
Mastery of subject matter and learning strategies
3. Social competency
Ability to communicate and interact effectively
4. Personal competencies
Integrity, ethics, and exemplary behavior of teachers

School Principal Leadership

Understanding Principal Leadership

According to Hallinger (2020), principal leadership (instructional leadership) is the principal's ability to set the direction of learning, manage instructional programs, and create a school climate that supports continuous improvement in the quality of learning and teacher performance.

Factors that Influence Principal Leadership

According to Hallinger (2020), the effectiveness of principal leadership is influenced by several key factors directly related to learning practices in schools, namely:

1. **Clarity of learning vision and goals**
Principals who have a clear learning vision are able to direct all school activities towards achieving academic goals. A shared vision will make it easier for teachers to harmonize learning planning and implementation.
2. **Quality of academic supervision**
Supervision that is carried out systematically and continuously enables the principal to provide constructive feedback to teachers, thereby improving their competence and performance.
3. **Support for teacher professional development**
Effective leadership is demonstrated through support for teacher training, workshops, and learning communities. This support enhances teachers' professional capacity in facing the ever-evolving demands of learning.
4. **Conducive school climate**
The principal plays an important role in creating a safe, collaborative, and learning-oriented work environment, so that teachers are motivated to work optimally.

Indicators of Principal Leadership

Based on Hallinger (2020), the indicators of principal leadership are described as follows:

1. **Setting and communicating school goals**
The principal actively develops and communicates learning goals to the entire school community.
2. **Managing learning programs**
The principal ensures that the curriculum, learning methods, and evaluation are carried out according to standards.
3. **Conducting supervision and evaluation of learning**
The principal observes classes and provides feedback to improve the quality of teaching.
4. **Supporting teacher professional development**
The principal facilitates the improvement of teachers' competencies through training and mentoring.
5. **Creating a conducive learning environment**
The principal builds a school culture that supports collaboration and continuous learning.

Conceptual Framework

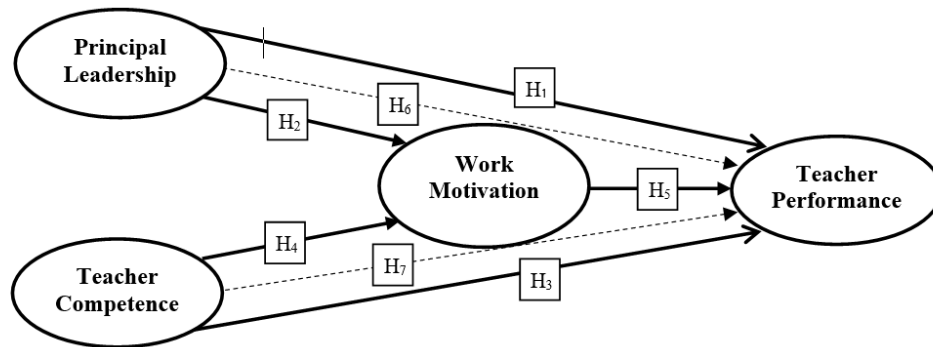


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Research Hypothesis

- H₁: The leadership of the principal has a positive and significant effect on teacher performance at SMP Negeri 1 Bandar, Bener Meriah Regency.
- H₂ Teacher competence has a positive and significant effect on teacher performance at SMP Negeri 1 Bandar, Bener Meriah District.
- H₃ The leadership of the principal has a positive and significant effect on teacher work motivation at SMP Negeri 1 Bandar, Bener Meriah Regency.
- H₄ Teacher competence has a positive and significant effect on teacher work motivation at SMP Negeri 1 Bandar, Bener Meriah Regency.
- H₅ : Work motivation has a positive and significant effect on teacher performance at SMP Negeri 1 Bandar, Bener Meriah Regency.
- H₆ : Work motivation mediates the influence of principal leadership on teacher performance at SMP Negeri 1 Bandar, Bener Meriah Regency.
- H₇ : Work motivation mediates the influence of teacher competence on teacher performance at SMP Negeri 1 Bandar, Bener Meriah Regency.

Research Method

Type of Research

The type of research used by the researcher is quantitative research. According to Sugiyono (2022), quantitative research can be defined as a method based on positivism philosophy, used to study a specific population or sample, with sampling techniques generally conducted randomly, data collection using research instruments, and quantitative/statistical data analysis with the aim of testing predetermined hypotheses. This type of quantitative research was conducted to create a study aimed at adjusting a study and analyzing the leadership of school principals and teacher competence on teacher performance with work motivation as a mediating variable at SMP Negeri 1 Bandar, Bener Meriah Regency.

Research Location and Time

The research location was at SMP Negeri 1 Bandar, Bener Meriah Regency, located at Jalan Blangkejeren No. 1, Kampung Blang Trienggadeng, Bandar District, Bener Meriah Regency, Aceh. The research was conducted over a period of 3 months, from December 2025 to March 2026.

Population and Sample

According to Arikunto (2025), if the number of subjects is less than 100, it is better to take all of them so that the research is a population study. In this study, the population consists of all employees at SMP Negeri 1 Bandar, Bener Meriah Regency, with a total of 74 teachers, and the entire population will be used as the sample.

Research Data Sources

The data source used in this study is primary data.

Results and Discussion

Outer Model Analysis

Outer Model Analysis using the PLS Algorithm produced the following results:

Validity Test

Table 1. Outer Loadings Values

	Principal Leadership	Teacher Competency	Teacher Performance	Work Motivation
X1.1	0.776			
X1.2	0.809			
X1.3	0.857			
X1.4	0.834			
X1.5	0.788			
X2.1		0.807		
X2.2		0.870		
X2.3		0.859		
X2.4		0.864		
Y.1			0.734	
Y.2			0.823	
Y.3			0.633	
Y.4			0.848	
Y.5			0.831	
Y.6			0.884	
Z.1				0.798
Z.2				0.743
Z.3				0.881

Source: Smart PLS Output, 2025

Based on the values in Table 1 above, which show the results of outer model testing through loading factor/outer loadings values, all indicators in each variable have a loading value ≥ 0.60 . This indicates that each indicator is measured validly and strongly. Therefore, it can be concluded that all items in the questionnaire have met the validity criteria, as shown in the following figure.

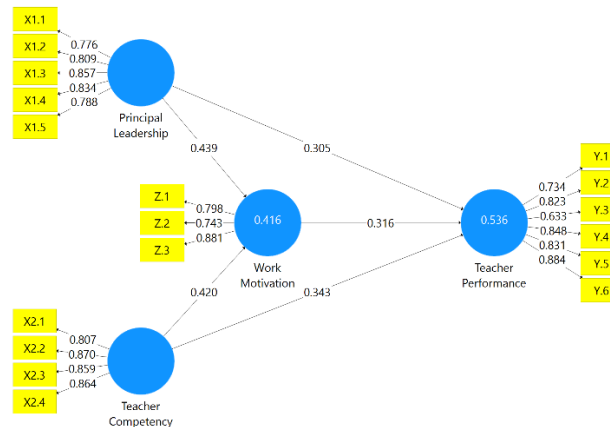


Figure 1. Outer Loading

In this study, there is an equation, and that equation consists of two substructures for substructure 1:

$$Z = \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + e_1$$

$$Z = 0.439 X_1 + 0.420 Z + e_1$$

For substructure 2:

$$Y = \beta_2 X_1 + \beta_3 X_2 + \beta_3 Z + e_2$$

$$Y = 0.305 X_1 + 0.343 X_2 + 0.316 Z + e_2$$

Reliability Test

Table 2. Construct Reliability and Validity Test

	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Principal Leadership	0.872	0.876	0.907	0.662
Teacher Competency	0.874	0.892	0.913	0.724
Teacher Performance	0.882	0.888	0.912	0.635
Work Motivation	0.738	0.770	0.850	0.655

Source: Smart PLS Output, 2025

From Table 2 above, the reliability test results show that the Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values for all constructs are above 0.70. This indicates that all indicators have high internal consistency and are reliable in measuring their respective constructs. Thus, the research instrument is declared reliable and suitable for use in structural model testing.

Coefficient of Determination (R^2)

In assessing the model with PLS, we begin by looking at the R-square for each dependent latent variable. The table below shows the R-square estimation results using SmartPLS.

Table 3. R Square Results

	R Square	Adjusted R-Square
Work Motivation	0.416	0.404
Teacher Performance	0.536	0.521

Source: Smart PLS, 2025

Table 3 shows the R square values for both dependent variables. For the work motivation variable, the R square value is 0.416, meaning that the influence of the principal's leadership () and teacher competence () is 0.416 or 41.6%, with the remainder attributable to other variables outside the model. The R-square value for teacher performance is 0.536, meaning that the influence of principal leadership, teacher competence, and work motivation is 0.536 or 53.6%, with the remainder attributable to other variables outside the model.

Structural Model Testing (Inner Model)

Hypothesis Testing

Direct Influence Between Variables

The direct effect between variables can be seen in the *path coefficients*. The data processing results show the direct effect values in the following table.

Table 4. *Path Coefficients* (Direct Effects)

	Original Sample	T Statistics	P Values	Conclusion
Principal Leadership -> Teacher Performance	0.305	3.737	0.000	Accepted
Principal Leadership -> Work Motivation	0.439	5,510	0	Accepted
Teacher Competency -> Teacher Performance	0.343	4,462	0	Accepted
Teacher Competency -> Work Motivation	0.420	5.416	0	Accepted
Work Motivation -> Teacher Performance	0.316	2.971	0.003	Accepted

Source: Smart PLS Output, 2025

The results in Table 4 show the following direct effect values:

1. The leadership of the principal has a positive and significant effect on teacher performance with a t-statistic value of 3.737 above 1.96 and a significance of 0.000 below 0.05, meaning that the leadership of the principal has a real effect on teacher performance because the significance value is below 0.05. The results of this study are in line with previous studies, namely that principal leadership has a positive and significant effect on teacher performance (Jayadi & Ferine, 2024).

2. The leadership of the principal has a positive and significant effect on work motivation with a t-statistic value of 5.510 above 1.96 and a significance of 0.000 below 0.05, meaning that the leadership of the principal has a real effect on work motivation because the significance value is below 0.05. The results of this study are in line with previous research findings, namely that school principal leadership has a positive and significant effect on work motivation (Siregar & Indrawan, 2025).
3. Teacher competence has a positive and significant effect on teacher performance with a t-statistic value of 4.462 above 1.96 and a significance of 0.000 below 0.05, meaning that teacher competence has a significant effect on teacher performance because the significance value is below 0.05. The results of this study are in line with previous studies, namely that teacher competence has a positive and significant effect on teacher performance (Putra et al., 2025).
4. Teacher competence has a positive and significant effect on work motivation with a t-statistic value of 5.416 above 1.96 and a significance of 0.000 below 0.05, meaning that teacher competence has a real effect on work motivation because the significance value is below 0.05. The results of this study are in line with previous studies, namely that teacher competence has a positive and significant effect on work motivation (Boset & Asmawi., 2020).
5. Work motivation has a positive and significant effect on teacher performance with a t-statistic value of 2.971 above 1.96 and a significance of 0.003 below 0.05, meaning that work motivation has a real effect on teacher performance because the significance value is below 0.05. The results of this study are in line with previous research findings, namely that work motivation has a positive and significant effect on teacher performance (Mesra & Rahayu, 2025).

6. Indirect Influence Between Variables

The indirect effect between variables can be seen in the *specific indirect effects* value. The data analysis results show the indirect effect value in Table 5 below.

Table 5. *Specific Indirect Effects* (Indirect Effects)

	Original Sample	T Statistics	P Values	Conclusion
Principal Leadership -> Work Motivation -> Teacher Performance	0.139	2.564	0.011	Accepted
Teacher Competency -> Work Motivation -> Teacher Performance	0.133	2.551	0.011	Accepted

Source:
Smart

PLS, 2025

Table 5 shows the indirect effects between variables, namely:

1. Principal leadership has a positive and significant effect on teacher performance through work motivation with a t-statistic value of 2.564 above 1.96 and a significance value of 0.011 below 0.05, meaning that work motivation acts as an intervening variable between principal leadership and teacher performance.
2. Teacher competence has a positive and significant effect on teacher performance through work motivation with a t-statistic value of 2.551 above 1.96 and a significance value of 0.011 below 0.05, meaning that work motivation acts as an intervening variable between principal leadership and teacher performance.

Conclusion

1. Principal leadership has a positive and significant effect on teacher performance at SMP Negeri 1 Bandar, Bener Meriah Regency.
2. Teacher competence has a positive and significant effect on teacher performance at SMP Negeri 1 Bandar, Bener Meriah Regency.
3. Principal leadership has a positive and significant effect on teacher work motivation at SMP Negeri 1 Bandar, Bener Meriah Regency.
4. Teacher competence has a positive and significant effect on teacher work motivation at SMP Negeri 1 Bandar, Bener Meriah Regency.
5. Work motivation has a positive and significant effect on teacher performance at SMP Negeri 1 Bandar, Bener Meriah Regency.
6. Work motivation mediates the influence of principal leadership on teacher performance at SMP Negeri 1 Bandar, Bener Meriah Regency.
7. Work motivation mediates the influence of teacher competence on teacher performance at SMP Negeri 1 Bandar, Bener Meriah Regency.

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