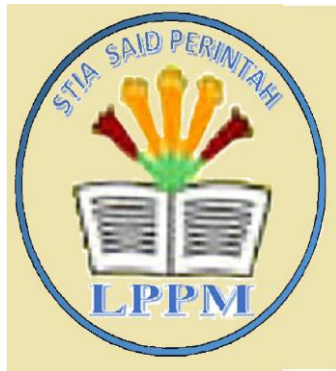


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## The Influence of School Principal Leadership, Motivation, and Interpersonal Communication on Teacher Performance

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### Abstract

*This study explores the influence of principal leadership, work motivation, and interpersonal communication on teacher performance in elementary schools in the Teluk Ambon District, Ambon City. The results reveal that each of these factors significantly impacts teacher performance, with principal leadership emerging as the most influential contributor. Furthermore, the study confirms that the combined effect of these variables plays a vital role in enhancing teacher outcomes. Effective school leadership improves resource management, fosters a supportive work environment, and strengthens teacher professionalism. Work motivation sustains teacher engagement and commitment, while strong interpersonal communication promotes collaboration and reduces conflict. These findings are consistent with previous research and offer practical implications for advancing school leadership practices and enhancing teacher performance through a strategic emphasis on motivation and communication.*

Keywords : Principal Leadership,  
Motivation, Interpersonal  
Communication, Teacher  
Performance

## **Introduction**

Education plays a vital role in shaping individuals' potential to thrive in the modern world. It encompasses intellectual abilities, communication skills, social behavior, awareness, self-regulation, character development, and active engagement in societal advancement. The quality of human resources is essential for achieving these objectives; however, low human resource quality remains a barrier to national economic growth. To address this issue, it is crucial to enhance human resource development through a sustainable and high-quality education system.

Teachers, being at the forefront of education, play a significant role in improving its quality. As outlined in Law No. 14 of 2005 on Teachers and Lecturers and Ministerial Regulation No. 16 of 2007, improving teacher quality is fundamental to advancing education. Teachers must actively participate in training programs to update their knowledge and strengthen their expertise.

The effectiveness of educational institutions depends not only on teachers but also on the leadership of school principals. A competent principal should possess strong leadership skills, administrative expertise, and the ability to manage staff, organize educational activities, and utilize school resources efficiently. These leadership competencies are crucial for fostering a conducive learning environment and achieving high-quality learning outcomes. In addition, motivation and interpersonal communication are essential factors influencing teacher performance. Motivation, as defined by Winardi, (2012), is an internal force stimulated by external rewards, which can significantly affect work performance.

Effective interpersonal communication within educational institutions is equally vital. The relationship between school principals and teachers significantly impacts teacher performance. Beyond communicating institutional goals, communication helps resolve conflicts and enhance cooperation among teachers, principals, and parents. This communication includes not only verbal interactions but also non-verbal cues such as facial expressions and gestures.

Several studies have examined the impact of school leadership, motivation, and interpersonal communication on teacher performance. Research by Purwoko, (2018) and Yunus et al., (2021) emphasizes the critical role of school leadership, while studies by Ardiana Eka, (2017) and Diana et al., (2020) confirm that motivation positively influences teacher performance. Similarly, Herlina, (2018) and Afrianti, (2016) found that effective interpersonal communication enhances teacher performance. However, some studies—

such as those by Sari and Wijaya, (2019), Rahmawati, (2016), and Yunus et al., (2021) suggest that these factors do not always have a significant impact on teacher performance, indicating the complexity of their relationship.

This inconsistency in research findings highlights the need for further exploration of how school leadership, motivation, and interpersonal communication jointly influence teacher performance. While previous studies have often focused on these factors individually, few have investigated their combined effect, particularly in elementary schools with high accreditation.

This study focuses on elementary schools with A and B accreditation, which represent high-quality educational environments. These schools typically have better resources, qualified teachers, and strong performance records, making them ideal for examining how leadership, motivation, and communication strategies contribute to enhanced teacher performance. By studying these schools, this research aims to identify best practices that can be applied to other institutions striving for educational excellence.

In conclusion, this study aims to examine how school leadership, motivation, and interpersonal communication collectively influence teacher performance, particularly in highly accredited elementary schools. By analyzing these variables within this context, the research seeks to provide valuable insights into the conditions under which these factors most effectively contribute to teacher performance and institutional success.

## **Theoretical Framework and Research Hypothesis Development**

### **School Principal Leadership**

Leadership refers to the behavioral norms that a leader employs to influence the actions of others, as perceived by those being led. These norms are manifested through actions taken within leadership activities aimed at achieving organizational goals through the efforts of others. In the context of schools, the leadership of a principal plays a crucial role in shaping the work environment. The principal's policies, social influence on teachers and students, and decision-making processes directly affect teacher performance. In this context, teacher performance refers to the motivation and commitment demonstrated by teachers in fulfilling their responsibilities. Therefore, it can be hypothesized that effective school leadership positively influences teacher performance at the elementary school level. In other words, strong leadership is expected to enhance teacher performance.

A school principal's leadership significantly impacts the school environment, particularly by influencing teacher motivation and providing essential support for optimal performance. Effective leadership involves sound decision-making, the creation of policies that support teacher development, and the maintenance of open communication between the principal and the teaching staff. When principals lead with competence and a clear vision, teachers are more likely to feel motivated and engaged in their work.

Furthermore, strong leadership helps establish a positive work culture, which fosters greater commitment and dedication among teachers. With clear goals, sufficient resources, and continuous opportunities for professional development, teachers are better positioned to improve their teaching performance. Thus, a principal who demonstrates strong leadership creates conditions that enable teachers to thrive and enhance their overall performance.

This is consistent with the findings of Purwoko, (2018), who examined the influence of school principal leadership, teacher commitment, work discipline, and school culture on the performance of vocational high school (SMK) teachers in Sleman Regency, Yogyakarta. The study concluded that principal leadership has a positive and significant effect on teacher performance. Strong leadership was associated with improved teacher outcomes, while poor leadership in school management negatively affected teacher performance in vocational high schools in the region.

H<sub>1</sub> ; School principal leadership has a positive and significant effect on teacher performance.

### **Work Motivation**

The sources of an individual's motivation can vary, as each person is unique. Nevertheless, what remains essential is that motivation provides individuals with the resilience and strength necessary to achieve their goals. In the context of organizational settings, motivation plays a vital role in encouraging employees to carry out their responsibilities enthusiastically and contribute toward achieving organizational objectives. When employees are motivated, their performance typically improves. Furthermore, motivation enhances their commitment to meeting the performance standards established by the organization. Therefore, it can be concluded that employee motivation positively influences performance, as affirmed by Putu Sunarcaya (2008).

H<sub>2</sub> ; Motivation has a positive and significant effect on teacher performance.

## Interpersonal Communication

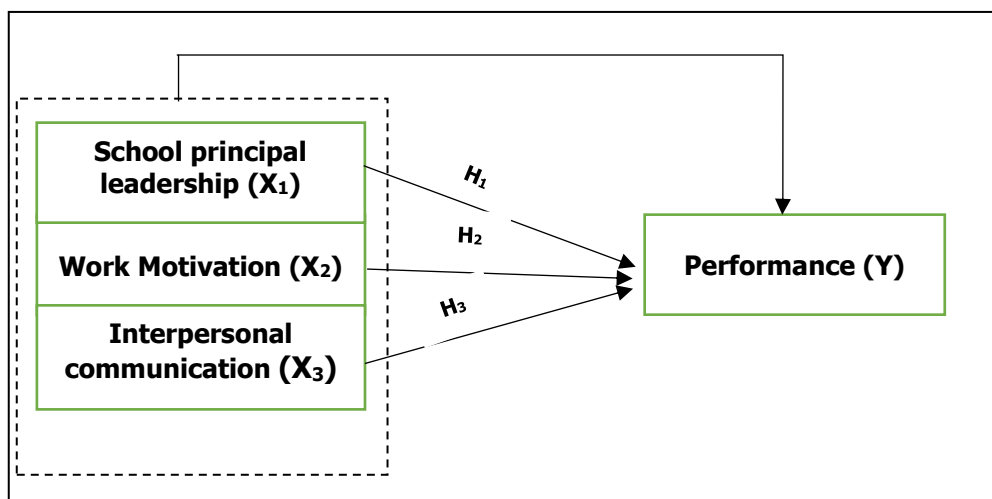
Interpersonal communication refers to the exchange of thoughts between individuals during various activities. For communication to be effective, information must be conveyed accurately and clearly. It plays a crucial role in stimulating several aspects of life, including (1) intellectual and social development, (2) self-identity formation, (3) understanding of the surrounding reality, and (4) improvement of mental health. According to Ardiana Eka, (2017), teacher performance can be enhanced through optimized interpersonal communication. Therefore, fostering effective interpersonal communication is essential to ensure that teachers perform at their best.

These findings are consistent with the argument presented by Pace and Faules, (2013), who describe organizational communication as a bridge between human resources and organizational functionality, contributing to overall vitality. In a school context, effective and frequent communication between principals and teachers significantly influences teachers' attitudes toward their responsibilities, leading to improved performance. Conversely, poor communication within the school environment may foster authoritarian tendencies, particularly when prolonged disagreements occur between the principal and teachers. Such situations can negatively impact teacher performance and hinder their ability to reach their full potential.

H<sub>3</sub> ; Interpersonal communication has a positive and significant effect on teacher performance.

The framework in this study can be presented in the following figure.

### Research Framework



## Method

The study population comprises 29 accredited (A and B) elementary schools in the Teluk Ambon District, Ambon City, including both public and private institutions. The research was conducted in 26 schools, representing 89.66% of the total population, with 340 teachers as the study population. The sample size was determined using Slovin's formula (Sekaran & Bougie, 2017) with a 10% margin of error, resulting in a sample of 100 respondents:

$$n = \frac{340}{1 + 340 (0,1)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{340}{3,41} = 100 \text{ responden}$$

The data analysis involved descriptive statistics, classical assumption tests (normality, multicollinearity, and heteroscedasticity), and multiple linear regression to assess the impact of principal leadership, work motivation, and interpersonal communication on teacher performance.

## Discussion

The Pearson correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) for each item related to Principal Leadership ( $X_1$ ), Motivation ( $X_2$ ), and Interpersonal Communication ( $X_3$ ) on Teacher Performance ( $Y$ ) exceeds the critical value of 0.217, indicating that the research instrument is valid. An instrument is considered reliable if the reliability test yields a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient above 0.60. Based on a sample of 30 respondents and a 95% confidence level ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ), the reliability test confirmed that all study variables have Cronbach's Alpha values greater than 0.60, demonstrating the instrument's reliability in measuring the relationships among the variables.

Furthermore, classical assumption tests indicate no violations of multicollinearity, heteroscedasticity, or autocorrelation assumptions. This suggests that the independent variables Principal Leadership ( $X_1$ ), Motivation ( $X_2$ ), and Interpersonal Communication ( $X_3$ ) are not significantly correlated with one another. Therefore, multiple linear regression analysis is deemed appropriate for hypothesis testing in this study.

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

The results of the study show that principal leadership has a significant partial effect on teacher performance. Hypothesis testing reveals that the calculated t-value for principal leadership is 7.749, which exceeds the critical t-table value of 1.664 at  $\alpha = 5\%$ . Since the t-value (7.749) is greater than the t-table value (1.664), and the significance level is 0.000 (below 0.05), the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) is rejected and the alternative hypothesis ( $H_a$ ) is accepted. This confirms that principal leadership significantly influences teacher performance in elementary schools in Teluk Ambon District, Ambon City.

These findings not only demonstrate statistical significance but also underscore the practical implications of effective school leadership in day-to-day teaching activities. For example, principals who demonstrate strong communication skills are more likely to cultivate an open and transparent school environment where teachers feel supported and valued. Clear communication helps articulate expectations, deliver constructive feedback, and foster a shared sense of purpose, all of which directly enhance teacher motivation and job satisfaction. As a result, teachers become more engaged in their instructional practices, aligning their work more closely with the school's vision and objectives.

Moreover, principals who excel at motivating staff contribute to a culture of enthusiasm and commitment. This environment encourages teachers to exceed basic expectations and pursue continuous improvement. For instance, when principals recognize achievements, provide growth opportunities, and offer meaningful feedback, teachers feel empowered to innovate in their teaching strategies. This increased motivation can lead to improved student learning outcomes, as teachers implement fresh, energy-driven approaches in the classroom.

Leadership also plays a critical role in fostering collaboration among teachers. Principals who promote teamwork and mutual respect facilitate peer mentoring, joint lesson planning, and the exchange of best practices. Such collaboration improves overall instructional quality, which in turn enhances teacher performance and student achievement.

These results are consistent with the views of H.E. Mulyasa (n.d.), who defines leadership as the process of influencing individuals or groups to direct their efforts toward achieving specific goals. Similarly, Mafudah and Asrori, (2016) describe leadership as both a science and an art of influencing and guiding subordinates by

encouraging obedience, loyalty, trust, respect, and cooperation to fulfill organizational objectives. Therefore, the leadership of a school principal plays a crucial role in determining the institution's direction and effectiveness.

Previous studies also support these findings. For instance, Novitasari et al., (2012) and Maryodona et al., (2022) both found that principal leadership significantly affects teacher performance. While these studies focus on general leadership styles, the present research offers deeper insights by detailing how specific leadership behaviors particularly communication and motivation concretely impact teacher performance in practice. Although earlier works by Mulyasa and Mafudah & Asrori link leadership broadly to educational outcomes, this study emphasizes that leadership effectiveness lies not only in personal traits like charisma, but also in the ability to provide professional development and structural support to teachers (Zain & Djamarah, 2006).

Thus, this study contributes to the existing literature by identifying practical leadership actions that directly enhance teacher satisfaction, instructional quality, and student learning outcomes. It advances the understanding that effective school leadership is operationalized through strategic actions, not just personality, thereby offering actionable guidance for improving educational practice.

### **The Influence of Work Motivation on Teacher Performance**

The results of the study show that work motivation has a significant partial effect on teacher performance. Hypothesis testing reveals that the calculated t-value for motivation is 3.261, which exceeds the critical t-table value of 1.664 at  $\alpha = 5\%$ . Since the t-value (3.261) is greater than the t-table value (1.664) and the significance level is 0.000 (below 0.05), the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) is rejected and the alternative hypothesis ( $H_a$ ) is accepted. This confirms that work motivation significantly influences teacher performance in elementary schools in Teluk Ambon District, Ambon City.

Motivation in these elementary schools acts as a key driver for enhancing teacher performance by exerting a positive influence. The findings indicate that, although most teachers demonstrate good performance, some complete their tasks at a slower pace. This variation in performance is not solely attributable to a lack of motivation. Other contributing factors such as excessive workload, insufficient training, or a less supportive school environment may also affect teacher effectiveness. For instance, motivated teachers burdened by heavy workloads or lacking adequate support may struggle to



complete tasks efficiently. Likewise, limited access to professional development opportunities or targeted training can impede teachers' ability to reach their full potential.

Therefore, in addition to fostering motivation such as through career advancement opportunities schools must also address these external factors. Efforts to ensure a manageable workload, provide relevant training programs, and establish a supportive school climate are crucial to enabling all teachers to perform optimally.

These findings are consistent with those of Gusmalia, (2021), who concluded that increased teacher motivation enhances performance, while a decline in motivation negatively affects it. As a psychological construct, motivation plays a vital role in shaping an individual's commitment to their professional responsibilities.

### **The Influence of Interpersonal Communication on Teacher Performance**

The findings indicate that interpersonal communication has a significant partial effect on teacher performance. Hypothesis testing shows that the calculated t-value for interpersonal communication is 4.268, which exceeds the critical t-table value of 1.664 at  $\alpha = 5\%$ . Since the t-value (4.268) is greater than the t-table value (1.664) and the significance level is 0.000 (below 0.05), the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis ( $H_a$ ) is accepted. This confirms that interpersonal communication significantly influences teacher performance in elementary schools in Teluk Ambon District, Ambon City.

Beyond the statistical significance, the influence of interpersonal communication is also evident in practical, day-to-day interactions. Effective communication between teachers and school principals fosters teamwork and cultivates a more supportive and collaborative work environment. Teachers who engage in frequent, meaningful communication with the principal are more likely to feel appreciated and empowered, which increases motivation and job satisfaction. These psychological benefits translate into greater commitment to the school's objectives and improved performance in the classroom.

Moreover, interpersonal communication facilitates the exchange of ideas and teaching strategies among colleagues. Open communication channels among teachers promote problem-solving and innovation in instructional practices. Clear and consistent communication also minimizes misunderstandings and conflict, leading to a more harmonious and productive school climate. Thus, the quality of interpersonal

communication contributes to enhanced teacher performance through improved motivation, collaboration, and professional satisfaction.

Interpersonal communication serves several vital functions that directly impact teacher performance, including supporting intellectual and social development, helping individuals form self-identity, enhancing awareness of one's surroundings, and promoting mental well-being (DeVito in Suranto AW, n.d.). Siahaan and Meilani, (2019) also emphasize that effective interpersonal communication is essential for improving teacher performance.

These findings are consistent with Pace and Faules, (2013), who argue that organizational communication acts as a bridge between human resources and institutional operations, influencing overall organizational effectiveness. In the context of a school, effective and sustained communication between principals and teachers positively shapes teacher attitudes and work behavior, leading to better performance outcomes. Conversely, poor communication may lead to authoritarian practices and persistent conflict, ultimately hindering teacher effectiveness and job fulfillment.

### **The Influence of Principal Leadership, Motivation, and Interpersonal Communication on Teacher Performance**

The findings of this study indicate that principal leadership, motivation, and interpersonal communication have a significant collective impact on teacher performance. The results of the ANOVA test show a calculated F-value of 186.353 with a significance level of 0.000, which far exceeds the F-table value of 2.72. This leads to the rejection of the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ), confirming that these three variables simultaneously influence teacher performance in elementary schools in Teluk Ambon District, Ambon City.

These results are consistent with previous studies. For instance, Purwoko, (2018) found that the combination of leadership, motivation, and communication significantly enhances teacher performance, highlighting the need for an integrated leadership approach. Likewise, Ardiana Eka, (2017) emphasized the synergistic effect of motivation and communication alongside strong leadership. Diana et al., (2020) further support this view by showing that aligning these elements leads to better teacher outcomes. In contrast, Rahmawati, (2016) demonstrated that deficiencies in any of these areas can undermine teacher productivity.

This study contributes to the existing literature by reaffirming that managing leadership, motivation, and communication collectively is more effective than addressing them in isolation. A school environment that simultaneously cultivates effective leadership, fosters motivation, and encourages open communication is more likely to support sustained improvements in teacher performance and, consequently, student learning outcomes.

### **The Most Influential Variable on Teacher Performance: Principal Leadership**

The study's results demonstrate that principal leadership is the most significant factor influencing teacher performance in elementary schools in Teluk Ambon District, Ambon City. This finding confirms the hypothesis that principal leadership exerts the strongest impact on teacher outcomes. As the central figure in school management, the principal plays a critical role in optimizing resources, fostering a positive work ethic, and steering school productivity toward achieving educational goals. Leadership is vital not only as a motivational force but also in shaping teacher professionalism and resolving challenges within the educational environment. According to the Ministry of Education and Culture, (1995), the quality of education depends not solely on the number or competence of teachers, but significantly on the principal's leadership.

The t-test results reinforce this conclusion, showing that principal leadership has the highest partial effect on teacher performance, consistent with findings from the simultaneous analysis. This suggests that leadership, when combined with motivation and interpersonal communication, contributes significantly to performance outcomes. Effective school leadership transcends task delegation it involves fostering active participation among all school stakeholders. Leadership grounded in mutual respect and collaboration, rather than authoritarianism, strengthens teachers' sense of ownership and responsibility, ultimately enhancing their performance.

These results align with the Ministry of Education and Culture's, (1995) definition of educational leadership as the ability to influence and motivate teachers to work collectively toward common goals in an efficient and effective manner. Therefore, strong principal leadership is not only essential in managing schools but is also a key driver of improved teacher performance and educational quality. Regression analysis further supports this, showing a strong positive correlation between principal leadership and teacher performance, thereby underscoring its strategic importance in shaping successful schools.

## **Conclusion**

This study finds that principal leadership, work motivation, and interpersonal communication each have a significant individual effect on teacher performance in elementary schools in Teluk Ambon District, Ambon City, with principal leadership emerging as the most dominant factor. Simultaneous analysis confirms that the combined influence of these three variables significantly enhances teacher performance.

Principal leadership plays a central role in optimizing school resources, cultivating a supportive work environment, and fostering teacher professionalism. Motivation serves as a driving force that sustains teacher engagement and consistent performance, while interpersonal communication facilitates collaboration and reduces conflict among school personnel.

These findings align with previous research and theoretical perspectives, emphasizing that effective teacher performance is the result of an integrated approach—where strategic leadership, strong motivation, and effective communication function in harmony. Therefore, improving educational quality in elementary schools requires a holistic management strategy that strengthens all three components simultaneously.

## **Suggestions**

This study makes a meaningful contribution to the development of theories on school leadership, motivation, and interpersonal communication within educational settings. It reinforces the understanding that effective leadership positively influences teacher performance by enhancing motivation and commitment. The findings provide empirical support for existing leadership theories, demonstrating that school principals play a key role not only in instructional leadership but also in shaping a supportive work environment.

In particular, the study reveals that teacher motivation is influenced not only by financial rewards but also by social support and opportunities for career development offered by school leaders. Moreover, it emphasizes that effective interpersonal communication is vital in building a positive school climate, which, in turn, fosters improved teacher performance.

From a practical perspective, the study offers valuable guidance for school management and educational policy. School principals are encouraged to refine their leadership approaches by integrating motivational strategies, promoting career growth,

and establishing clear communication channels. Additionally, enhancing interpersonal communication between school leaders and teachers can create a collaborative, respectful atmosphere that promotes creativity, innovation, and job satisfaction among educators.

### Limitation and Future Research

This study has several limitations that should be considered. First, the sample was restricted to elementary schools in the Teluk Ambon District, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other regions or educational contexts. Second, the study focused solely on principal leadership, work motivation, and interpersonal communication, without accounting for external influences such as educational policies or socioeconomic factors that may also impact teacher performance.

To build on these findings, future research should consider expanding the sample to include schools from different geographical and demographic backgrounds. This would provide a broader understanding of how leadership, motivation, and communication influence teacher performance across diverse educational settings. Additionally, incorporating external variables such as policy frameworks and socioeconomic conditions could offer a more comprehensive view of the factors affecting teacher outcomes.

Future studies might also benefit from using qualitative methods to explore teachers' personal experiences, challenges, and perspectives on the influence of leadership, motivation, and communication in their work. Such approaches would yield deeper, context-rich insights and contribute to a more nuanced understanding of how to effectively enhance teacher performance.

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