

The Influence of Principal Leadership Style and Teacher Work Motivation on Teacher Performance Through Job Satisfaction: A Study of Public Junior High Schools in Serang Regency

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Abstract

This study examined the effects of principal leadership style and teacher work motivation on teacher performance, with job satisfaction as a mediating variable, in public junior high schools in Serang Regency. Research Methodology: This study used a quantitative approach with a cross-sectional survey design. Data were collected using a 5-point Likert-scale questionnaire administered to 122 teachers from six public junior high schools in Baros District and Petir District, selected through proportionate stratified random sampling. The questionnaire was distributed online through Google Forms and completed voluntarily by the teachers. Data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS version 4.0, including evaluation of the measurement model and structural model through a bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 iterations. Results: Principal leadership style and teacher work motivation each had a significant effect on teacher job satisfaction, with path coefficients of 0.715 and 0.450, respectively ($p < .01$). Job satisfaction was a significant mediator, with indirect effects of 0.402 for leadership style and 0.254 for work motivation on teacher performance. Among the three predictors, job satisfaction had the largest direct effect on teacher performance, with a coefficient of 0.563. The proposed model explained 81.6 percent of the variance in job satisfaction and 90.2 percent of the variance in teacher performance. Conclusion: Teacher performance improves when principals lead adaptively, teacher work motivation is sustained, and the work environment enables teachers to feel satisfied. Job satisfaction serves as an important bridge linking leadership and motivation to day-to-day teaching performance; therefore, these three factors need to be managed simultaneously rather than separately. Limitations: Data were collected from teachers' self-reports at a single point in time and may therefore be subject to common method bias. The discriminant validity assessment also indicated a high correlation between job satisfaction and teacher performance; thus, findings involving these two variables should be interpreted cautiously. The sample, which was limited to two districts, also restricts the generalizability of the findings to other regions. Contribution: This study provides empirical evidence of the role of job satisfaction as a link between leadership, motivation, and teacher performance at the junior high school level. The findings are useful for principals, the Serang Regency Education Office, and other education researchers seeking to develop more targeted school leadership development policies and teacher welfare programs.

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1. Introduction

Educational quality reflects a nation's progress and determines the quality of human resources for long-term development. Indonesia has established ambitious targets through the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to achieve equitable, inclusive, and high-quality education for all segments of society. However, the 2022 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) results indicate that Indonesian students' mathematical literacy remains substantially below the OECD average, at 366 points compared with 472 points (OECD, 2023). These results underscore that the national education system continues to face serious challenges requiring attention from various stakeholders, including schools as the smallest units responsible for delivering instruction.

High-quality learning cannot be achieved without teachers who perform effectively. Teachers interact directly with students daily, design instruction, and shape classroom learning experiences. Various studies have shown that teacher performance is influenced by numerous interrelated organizational factors, with principal leadership style among the most frequently examined because principals serve as both instructional leaders and motivators for the entire school community (Alzoraiki et al., 2024). In addition to leadership, teacher work motivation is an important factor that encourages teachers to perform their duties optimally, as highly motivated teachers tend to be more diligent in preparing instruction and more attentive to their students' development (Kumari & Kumar, 2023).

Serang Regency, one of the regencies in Banten Province, faces distinctive educational challenges. Of the 207 public junior high schools distributed across 29 districts, only 18.84% have achieved an A accreditation rating, whereas most schools are rated B or C, indicating a continued need for quality improvement. Another issue has emerged as the number of elementary school graduates continues to increase while the capacity of public junior high schools remains relatively unchanged. This situation has prompted a policy to increase class capacity from 32 to 40 students, which has, in turn, increased teachers' workloads. Increasingly crowded classrooms may create work-related pressures, reduce teachers' opportunities for individual interaction with students, and ultimately diminish teacher job satisfaction.

Amid such pressures, the role of the principal becomes increasingly important. Principals who can create a positive work environment, provide constructive guidance, and recognize each teacher's contribution are believed to sustain high levels of teacher work motivation and teacher job satisfaction. Studies conducted in various countries have demonstrated a consistent pattern in which job satisfaction often serves as a bridge linking leadership and motivation to improved employee or teacher performance (Jentsch, Hoferichter, Blömeke, König, & Kaiser, 2023). Nevertheless, studies that

simultaneously examine these three relationships within an integrated model, particularly in public junior high schools in Serang Regency using the SEM-PLS approach, remain rare. Most previous studies have examined only the direct effects of leadership or motivation on teacher performance without incorporating job satisfaction as an intervening factor; consequently, the mechanisms underlying these relationships have not been fully elucidated.

This issue becomes more important in light of the fact that local education policies often focus on expanding physical facilities and achieving administrative targets, whereas teachers' psychological factors, such as motivation and job satisfaction, do not always receive the same attention. Teachers are not merely curriculum implementers; they are also individuals who require recognition, security, and opportunities for professional growth. When these psychological needs are neglected, policies to increase class capacity and other quality-improvement programs may fail to produce optimal outcomes because teachers, as the primary implementers of learning, are not working under supportive conditions.

Based on this gap, this study empirically examines the direct and indirect effects of principal leadership style and teacher work motivation on teacher performance through teacher job satisfaction as a mediating variable in public junior high schools in Serang Regency. This study is expected to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how these three factors are interrelated and to inform principals and the Serang Regency Education Office in developing more targeted policies for leadership development and teacher well-being. Academically, this study is also expected to enrich research on the mediating mechanism of job satisfaction in the Indonesian primary and secondary education context, which has thus far been examined more extensively in higher education and industrial settings.

Literature review and hypothesis development

Teacher performance

In this study, teacher performance is understood as the observable work outcomes demonstrated by teachers in carrying out their professional duties in a planned, responsible, and sustained manner. This definition refers to Regulation of the Minister of National Education Number 16 of 2007, which establishes four core teacher competencies: pedagogical, personal, social, and professional. Mulyasa (2021) emphasizes that teacher performance is not merely an administrative matter but also concerns the quality of the learning process and teachers' ability to create a comfortable learning environment for students. In other words, high-performing teachers are not only administratively compliant but also fully engaged in their students' learning processes.

Principal leadership style

In this study, principal leadership style is grounded in

Situational Leadership Theory, which distinguishes four primary styles: directing, consulting, participating, and delegating. This theory is relevant because it recognizes that no single leadership style is appropriate for all situations. Effective leaders are able to assess their teachers' maturity and needs and then adapt their approach to the context at hand. Kılınç, Polatcan, Savaş, and Er (2024) showed that principals who are able to build trust with teachers tend to be more successful in fostering commitment and innovative teaching practices than principals who rely solely on one-way instructions.

Teacher work motivation

Teacher work motivation is understood through two broad factors: hygiene factors and motivator factors. Hygiene factors include adequate salaries, appropriate working conditions, fair school policies, and harmonious interpersonal relationships, whereas motivator factors relate to recognition, responsibility, and opportunities for professional development. Kumari and Kumar (2023) found that both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation significantly affected teacher performance in private and public schools. Similar findings were reported by Layek and Koodamara (2024), who showed that work experience strengthens the relationship between motivation and teacher performance, indicating that motivation does not operate independently but develops alongside teachers' teaching experience over time.

Teacher job satisfaction

In this study, job satisfaction is understood as a positive affective response to work that emerges from a comparison between teachers' expectations and the realities they experience at school. Through a systematic review of literature published from 2010 to 2021, Hoque, Wang, Qi, and Norzan (2023) concluded that teacher job satisfaction is consistently associated with school climate and principal support and is also ultimately related to student learning achievement. Thus, job satisfaction is not merely a personal feeling among teachers but also affects the quality of learning received by students in the classroom.

Previous studies and the position of the present study

A number of studies have examined the relationships among leadership, motivation, job satisfaction, and teacher performance, yielding generally consistent findings despite differences in context and methodology. Abid, Siming, Chao, Amin, and Sarwer (2025) examined the effects of three leadership styles on faculty teaching performance in Pakistan and found that job satisfaction served as an important mediator that strengthened the effect of leadership on performance. Alzoraiki, Ahmad, Ateeq, and Milhem (2024) found similar results among public-school teachers in Yemen, where principals' transformational leadership was closely associated with school culture, which in turn promoted teaching

performance. In the Indonesian context, Ompusunggu, Ruspitasari, and Handoko (2025) examined the effects of transformational leadership and intrinsic motivation on teacher performance through job satisfaction using a SEM-PLS approach. They found that job satisfaction partially mediated the effect of motivation on performance, although the direct effect of situational leadership in that study was not significant.

Another study by Andrianto, Komardi, and Priyono (2023), involving elementary school teachers in Pekanbaru, showed that leadership, work motivation, and work discipline jointly shaped job satisfaction, which subsequently affected teacher performance. Diantara, Yudana, and Sulindawati (2025) provided additional evidence concerning the effects of situational leadership, work motivation, and work ethic on teacher performance, with job satisfaction remaining an important mediating variable. Meanwhile, Zulfah (2023), who studied civil servant teachers in Indramayu Regency, found that principal leadership style and work motivation significantly affected teacher job satisfaction, consistent with patterns identified in the international studies above.

To provide a concise overview, Table 1 summarizes several previous studies relevant to the present study, including their research focus, methods, and main findings.

Table 1. Summary of relevant previous studies

Researcher (year)	Focus and method	Main findings
Abid et al. (2025)	SEM involving 346 faculty members in Pakistan	Constructive leadership improves teaching performance through job satisfaction
Alzoraiki et al. (2024)	Survey of public-school teachers in Yemen	Transformational leadership strengthens school culture and teaching performance
Jentsch et al. (2023)	Survey of teachers in Germany	Principal support is associated with teacher self-efficacy and job satisfaction
Kumari & Kumar (2023)	PLS-SEM involving private-school teachers in Pakistan	Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation significantly affect teacher performance
Ompusunggu et al. (2025)	SEM-PLS involving teachers in Indonesia	Job satisfaction mediates the effect of motivation on teacher performance
Andrianto et al. (2023)	Survey of elementary school teachers in	Leadership and motivation shape job satisfaction, which promotes performance

Zulfah (2023)	Pekanbaru Survey of civil servant teachers in Indramayu	Leadership and motivation significantly affect job satisfaction
Hoque et al. (2023)	Systematic review of studies published from 2010 to 2021	Teacher job satisfaction is associated with school climate and student achievement

Source: Compiled from various studies, 2025.

Although the findings above are generally consistent, most studies have been conducted separately, have examined direct effects without mediation, or have focused on educational levels and regions that differ from the context of public junior high schools in Serang Regency. This study seeks to address this gap by testing an integrated model that simultaneously incorporates principal leadership style, work motivation, job satisfaction, and teacher performance, using primary data from public junior high school teachers in two districts of Serang Regency.

The contextual differences among the studies reviewed above also indicate that the effects of leadership, motivation, and job satisfaction on teacher performance are not necessarily uniform across settings. School organizational culture, regional policies, and teachers' demographic characteristics may affect the strength of the relationships among these variables. Therefore, replicating the model in different contexts, as this study does in public junior high schools in Serang Regency, remains important both for testing the consistency of the theory and for providing policy recommendations that align with local conditions, rather than uncritically adopting findings from other regions or countries.

Hypothesis development

Based on the theoretical review and synthesis of previous research presented above, this study proposes the following seven hypotheses.

H1: Principal leadership style has a significant effect on teacher job satisfaction.

H2: Teacher work motivation has a significant effect on teacher job satisfaction.

H3: Principal leadership style has a significant effect on teacher performance.

H4: Teacher work motivation has a significant effect on teacher performance.

H5: Teacher job satisfaction has a significant effect on teacher performance.

H6: Job satisfaction mediates the effect of principal leadership style on teacher performance.

H7: Job satisfaction mediates the effect of teacher work motivation on teacher performance.

These seven hypotheses are represented in a single structural model that positions principal leadership style and work motivation as exogenous variables, job satisfaction as the mediating variable, and teacher performance as the primary endogenous variable.

2. Research methodology

Research approach and design

This study employed a quantitative approach using an explanatory survey method. Thus, the study not only described field conditions but also explained the causal relationships among variables. The study used a cross-sectional design in which data were collected from all respondents during a single period without repeated measurements. Data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) because this method can simultaneously test a model involving latent variables and mediation paths without requiring data to be strictly normally distributed (Hair, Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2022).

Population, sample, and study location

The study was conducted in six public junior high schools across Baros District and Petir District, Serang Regency, Banten Province. The study population consisted of 176 teachers. The sample size was calculated using the Slovin formula with a 5% margin of error, resulting in a minimum sample of 122 teachers. The sample was selected using proportionate stratified random sampling to ensure representation of the proportion of teachers from each school and variations in accreditation status. A total of 130 questionnaires were distributed to account for the possibility that some respondents would not return completed questionnaires. The eligibility criteria were permanent teachers, including both civil servant and PPPK teachers, who had worked for at least one year at their assigned schools.

Table 2. Distribution of the study sample by school

School	Accreditation	Population	Sample
SMPN 1 Baros	A	43	30
SMPN 2 Baros	B	32	22
SMPN 3 Baros	B	21	15
SMPN 1 Petir	A	40	28
SMPN 2 Petir	B	32	22
SMPN 3 Petir	C	8	5
Total	-	176	122

Source: Dapodik Kemendikdasmen data (2025), processed

by the researcher.

Research instrument

The research instrument was a structured 5-point Likert-scale questionnaire comprising 61 items, with response options ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Principal leadership style was measured using 16 items covering four situational dimensions; work motivation was measured using 14 items distinguishing between intrinsic and extrinsic factors; job satisfaction was measured using 15 items covering five aspects of work; and teacher performance was measured using 16 items covering four core teacher competencies. The questionnaire was developed using Google Forms and distributed to teachers in coordination with their respective principals, enabling teachers to complete it online at their convenience outside teaching hours.

Table 3. Research instrument blueprint

Variable	Dimensions	Number of items
Leadership style (X1)	Directive, consultative, participative, delegative	16
Work motivation (X2)	Intrinsic and extrinsic factors	14
Job satisfaction (M)	Work, rewards, supervision, coworkers, opportunities for advancement	15
Teacher performance (Y)	Pedagogical, personal, social, professional	16
Total	-	61

Source: Developed by the researcher based on the theoretical review, 2026.

Convergent validity was assessed using the outer loading value of each indicator, with a minimum threshold of 0.70, and an average variance extracted (AVE) value of at least 0.50. Discriminant validity was assessed using the Fornell-Larcker criterion and the heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT), with a maximum threshold of 0.90. Instrument reliability was assessed using composite reliability, with a minimum threshold of 0.70. All analyses were conducted using SmartPLS version 4.0 on a computer running the Windows 11 operating system, whereas initial demographic data processing was conducted using Microsoft Excel 365.

Data analysis technique

Data analysis was conducted in two stages. The first stage involved evaluating the measurement model, or outer model, which assessed instrument validity and reliability as described above. The second stage involved evaluating the structural model, or inner model, which tested the research hypotheses through a bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 iterations. The criteria for hypothesis acceptance were a t statistic greater than 1.96 and a p value less than .05 at a significance level of .05. In

addition to hypothesis testing, this study calculated the coefficient of determination (R^2) to assess the ability of predictor variables to explain the dependent variable, effect size (f^2) to assess the magnitude of each predictor's contribution, predictive relevance (Q^2) using the blindfolding procedure, and model fit using the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) value.

3. Results and discussion

Respondent description

Of the 130 questionnaires distributed, 122 were returned completed and suitable for analysis, resulting in a response rate of 93.8%. The respondents comprised 62 female teachers (50.8%) and 60 male teachers (49.2%), indicating a relatively balanced gender distribution. In terms of teaching experience, the majority of respondents (48.4%) had 5 to 15 years of service, followed by 28.7% with 16 to 25 years of experience, 15.6% with 1 to 5 years of experience, and 7.3% with more than 25 years of experience. This distribution indicates that most respondents had moderate levels of teaching experience; thus, their perceptions of leadership and work were relatively well developed.

Table 4. Characteristics of the study respondents

Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Female	62	50,8%
	Male	60	49,2%
Years of service	1 to 5 years	19	15,6%
	5 to 15 years	59	48,4%
	16 to 25 years	35	28,7%
	More than 25 years	9	7,3%

Source: Primary data processing results, 2026.

Descriptive statistics showed that the mean teacher performance score was 65.84 out of a maximum possible score of 80; teacher job satisfaction was 63.67 out of 75; principal leadership style was 68.70 out of 80; and teacher work motivation was 61.25 out of 70. These values indicate that, in general, teachers perceived performance, leadership, and motivation at their schools to be in the good category, although there remains room for improvement, particularly in work motivation, which had the relatively lowest score among the variables. As shown by the distribution of years of service in Table 4, teachers with 5 to 15 years of service tended to dominate the sample. Thus, the perceptions recorded in this study were substantially influenced by the experiences of teachers within this range, who were generally sufficiently familiar with the culture and leadership patterns of their respective schools.

Measurement model evaluation

The measurement model assessment began by examining the outer loading values for each indicator. The results showed that all indicators had loadings above 0.70, with mean loadings per construct ranging from 0.73 to 0.81, as summarized in Table 3.

Table 3. Summary of outer loadings, composite reliability, and AVE

Variable	Number of indicators	Mean loading	Composite reliability	AVE
Principal leadership style	16	0,810	0,967	0,645
Work motivation	14	0,729	0,938	0,523
Job Satisfaction	15	0,805	0,961	0,623
Teacher Performance	16	0,768	0,956	0,575

Source: Primary data processed using SmartPLS version 4.0, 2026.

Composite reliability for all constructs was above 0.93, and AVE for all constructs was above 0.50; therefore, the research instrument was considered valid and reliable. The next step was to conduct a discriminant validity assessment to examine the extent to which each construct was genuinely distinct from the others, using the Fornell-Larcker criterion and HTMT.

Table 4. Discriminant validity (Fornell-Larcker and HTMT)

Construct pair	Fornell-Larcker	HTMT
Job satisfaction and teacher performance	0,933	0,977
Principal leadership style and teacher performance	0,808	0,842
Principal leadership style and job satisfaction	0,786	0,814
Work Motivation and Job Satisfaction	0,564	0,594
Work Motivation and Teacher Performance	0,561	0,592
Work motivation and principal leadership style	0,159	0,171

Source: Primary data processed using SmartPLS version 4.0, 2026.

Most construct pairs showed HTMT values below 0.90, indicating that they were adequately distinct from one another. However, the pair of job satisfaction and teacher performance showed an HTMT value of 0.977, slightly exceeding the recommended threshold. This condition should be reported candidly as an important consideration in this study. The high correlation between the two constructs may have arisen because both were measured from the same source—namely, teachers’

self-perceptions—at the same time, thereby potentially introducing common method bias (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). On the other hand, this high correlation may also reflect a substantively close relationship, as teachers who are satisfied with their work may reasonably rate their own performance more highly. The researchers considered removing several indicators to reduce the HTMT value, but this step risked compromising the comprehensiveness of the conceptual coverage of both variables. Therefore, all indicators were retained, while this limitation was openly disclosed in the final section of the article.

Collinearity assessment

Before interpreting the path coefficients, a collinearity assessment was conducted to ensure that indicators and predictor variables did not overlap excessively. At the indicator level, all outer VIF values ranged from 1.59 to 4.01, well below the threshold of 5. At the structural level, inner VIF values ranged from 1.03 to 5.43. Only the path from job satisfaction to teacher performance had a value slightly above 5, which was understandable because job satisfaction served as a mediator that was simultaneously influenced by two exogenous variables and predicted teacher performance; thus, correlations among predictors in this equation were naturally higher. Overall, the research model was relatively free of serious multicollinearity issues.

Hypothesis testing

Hypothesis testing was conducted using a bootstrapping procedure, with acceptance criteria of a t-statistic greater than 1.96 and a p-value less than 0.05. The complete results for all seven hypotheses are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Summary of hypothesis testing results

Hypothesis	Path	Coefficient (β)	t-statistic	p-value	Decision
H1	Principal leadership style → Job satisfaction	0,715	16,075	< 0,01	Accepted
H2	Teacher work motivation → Job satisfaction	0,450	9,188	< 0,05	Accepted
H3	Principal leadership style → Teacher performance	0,335	6,168	< 0,01	Accepted
H4	Teacher	0,19	4,5	<	Accepted

	work motivation → Teacher performanc e	0	66	0,01	pted
H5	Job satisfaction → Teacher performanc e	0,56 3	9,4 25	< 0,01	Acce pted
H6	Principal leadership style → Teacher job satisfaction → Teacher performanc e	0,40 2	-	< 0,01	Acce pted
H7	Teacher work motivation → Teacher job satisfaction → Teacher performanc e	0,25 4	-	< 0,01	Acce pted

Source: Results of primary data processing using SmartPLS 4.3, 2026. The (–) symbol for H6 and H7 indicates that the indirect effect values were tested through bootstrapping without separate t-values in the summary table.

All seven research hypotheses were accepted. Principal leadership style had a very strong effect on teacher job satisfaction and was the strongest predictor among all tested paths. Teacher work motivation also had a significant effect on job satisfaction, although its magnitude was lower than that of leadership. Among the paths to teacher performance, job satisfaction exerted the largest direct effect, exceeding the direct effects of both leadership and motivation. The mediating effects were also significant for both paths, indicating that most of the effects of leadership and motivation on teacher performance were transmitted through job satisfaction rather than through direct effects alone.

Predictive power and model fit

The coefficient of determination indicated that principal leadership style and work motivation jointly explained 81.6 percent of the variance in teacher job satisfaction, whereas the three independent variables explained 90.2 percent of the variance in teacher performance. Both values are very high for social science research, indicating that the proposed model has

strong explanatory power.

The effect size (f^2) assessment showed that job satisfaction made the largest contribution to teacher performance ($f^2 = 0.599$, large category), followed by principal leadership style ($f^2 = 0.302$, approaching the large category) and work motivation ($f^2 = 0.174$, medium category). For the paths to job satisfaction, the contributions of principal leadership style and work motivation were both in the large category. The predictive relevance assessment using the blindfolding procedure yielded Q^2 values of 0.298 for job satisfaction and 0.537 for teacher performance; both values were above zero, indicating that the model had predictive relevance, with a large value for teacher performance. The model fit assessment yielded an SRMR value of 0.054, which was below the required threshold of 0.08; thus, the research model can be considered to fit the field data adequately.

4. Discussion

The first finding of this study confirms that principal leadership style is a key factor in shaping teacher job satisfaction. Principals who are attentive to teachers' concerns, willing to listen to their aspirations, able to provide constructive guidance, and capable of building relationships of mutual trust tend to create psychologically more comfortable work environments for teachers. This finding is consistent with Kılınc, Polatcan, Savaş, and Er (2024), who found that trust in the principal was closely associated with teacher commitment and job satisfaction. This consistency strengthens the argument that relational, rather than merely instructional, leadership is crucial for managing human resources in schools.

Teacher work motivation was also shown to play an important role in shaping job satisfaction, although its effect was more moderate than that of leadership. This finding reinforces the results of Andrianto, Komardi, and Priyono (2023), which indicated that elementary school teachers' work motivation contributed significantly to their job satisfaction. The dominant effect of job satisfaction on teacher performance in this study reveals an important point: teachers' psychological well-being is not merely a byproduct of effective school management but rather lies at the core of strategies for improving educational quality. Teachers who are satisfied with their work tend to be more committed to student learning, more creative in developing teaching strategies, and better able to manage the pressures of daily work.

The role of job satisfaction as a significant mediator in both paths indicates that investing in the creation of satisfying working conditions will have a more sustainable impact on teacher performance than relying solely on leadership or motivation separately. This finding is consistent with Ompusunggu, Ruspitasari, and Handoko (2025), who also found that job satisfaction mediated the relationship between motivation and teacher performance in Indonesia. However, in that study, the direct effect of situational leadership on

performance was not significant, unlike in the present study, in which the direct effect of leadership remained significant. This difference may be influenced by differences in school contexts, educational levels, and the ways principals perform their roles in each region.

The findings regarding the direct effects of principal leadership style and work motivation on teacher performance, beyond the mediating path through job satisfaction, also provide important additional information. This indicates that effective leadership and high motivation continue to positively affect teacher performance even when they have not been fully translated into job satisfaction. This condition may be understood because some teachers may continue to perform their duties professionally based on responsibility and a sense of vocational calling, even when their level of job satisfaction is not yet optimal. Nevertheless, the magnitude of the indirect effect through job satisfaction in this study indicates that relying solely on professional responsibility without attending to teacher job satisfaction is not a sustainable long-term strategy.

Practical implications

For principals, these findings underscore the importance of developing relational and supportive leadership through ongoing mentoring, building strong personal relationships with teachers, providing regular constructive feedback, and openly recognizing teachers' contributions. For the Serang Regency Education Office, this study may serve as a basis for formulating more comprehensive teacher welfare policies that address not only financial aspects but also psychological well-being and opportunities for ongoing professional development. The policy to increase class-group capacity that has already been implemented should also be accompanied by additional support for teachers, such as reduced administrative workloads, so that increases in class size do not erode teacher job satisfaction in the long term.

Conclusions, limitations, and recommendations

Conclusions

This study tested a structural model linking principal leadership style, teacher work motivation, job satisfaction, and teacher performance in public junior high schools in Serang Regency using the SEM-PLS approach. All seven research hypotheses were accepted at high levels of significance. Principal leadership style and teacher work motivation were found to affect job satisfaction; job satisfaction was found to have the strongest effect on teacher performance among the three predictors; and job satisfaction was also found to mediate the effects of both leadership and motivation on teacher performance. In summary, teacher performance cannot be sufficiently promoted by good leadership or high motivation alone; rather, it requires job satisfaction as the mechanism that translates these two factors into actual teaching performance in

the classroom.

These findings also underscore that efforts to improve educational quality at the school level should be viewed as an interconnected whole rather than as separate programs operating independently. Leadership training for principals, programs to strengthen teacher motivation, and the creation of a satisfying work environment should be designed in an integrated manner because all three work together to shape teacher performance. Such an integrated approach is more likely to produce lasting change than single interventions that address only one aspect.

Limitations

This study has several limitations that should be openly acknowledged. First, all data were collected through teachers' self-reports at a single point in time, which may have introduced common method bias, particularly in the relationship between job satisfaction and teacher performance. Second, the discriminant validity assessment indicated an HTMT value between job satisfaction and teacher performance that slightly exceeded the recommended threshold; therefore, the results for this path should be interpreted cautiously and should not be regarded as conclusive evidence. Third, the study sample was limited to two districts in Serang Regency, and thus the generalizability of the findings to other regions, particularly to different educational levels, should be approached with caution. Fourth, this study did not include other moderating variables, such as school culture or teachers' individual characteristics, which may also influence the strength of the relationships among the variables examined.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and limitations above, future studies are recommended to measure teacher performance using independent assessment sources, such as evaluations by principals or supervisors, to avoid relying entirely on teachers' own perceptions. Separating the timing of data collection for measures of job satisfaction and teacher performance is also recommended to reduce the potential for common method bias. Future research may also expand the sample to include diverse regions and educational levels, employ longitudinal research designs to confirm causal relationships more rigorously, and examine potential moderating variables such as school organizational culture. For principals and the Serang Regency Education Office, the findings of this study may serve as a foundation for designing relational leadership development programs and more comprehensive and sustainable teacher welfare policies.

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