



Analysis of The Influence of Principal Leadership and Emotional Intelligence On Teacher Motivation and Performance

Erna Mandela*, Robi Hendra, Akhmad Habibi

Master of Educational Management, Universitas Jambi, Indonesia.

*Corresponding Author. Email: Ernamandalena83@gmail.com

Abstract: This study examines the influence of principal leadership and emotional intelligence on teachers' work motivation and performance. Employing a quantitative explanatory method, the research involved a sample of 220 senior high school teachers in Sarolangun Regency. Data were collected through structured questionnaires and analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). The results indicate that principal leadership ($\beta = 0.505$) and teachers' emotional intelligence ($\beta = 0.404$) have significant positive effects on work motivation. Both variables also exert direct positive effects on teacher performance. Notably, work motivation emerges as the strongest predictor of performance ($\beta = 0.706$) and serves as a key mediating variable that strengthens the indirect effects of leadership and emotional intelligence on performance. These findings suggest that improving teacher performance requires strategies that extend beyond enhancing leadership practices and emotional competencies to include the systematic cultivation of intrinsic motivation. Accordingly, this study recommends that teacher development policies integrate emotional intelligence and transformational leadership training to foster a school climate that supports optimal teacher motivation and performance.

Article History

Received: 17-11-2025

Revised: 21-12-2025

Accepted: 03-01-2026

Published: 20-01-2026

Key Words:

Principal Leadership;
Emotional Intelligence;
Work Motivation;
Teacher Performance;
SEM.

How to Cite: Mandela, E., Hendra, R., & Habibi, A. (2026). Analysis of The Influence of Principal Leadership and Emotional Intelligence on Teacher Motivation and Performance. *Jurnal Paedagogy*, 13(1), 131-138. <https://doi.org/10.33394/jp.v13i1.18901>

 <https://doi.org/10.33394/jp.v13i1.18901>

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Introduction

The quality of a nation's education depends heavily on the effectiveness of school-level management, where principal leadership and teacher performance are the foremost determinants. Strategic leadership not only fosters a healthy organizational climate but also directly motivates teachers and channels collective efforts toward achieving learning goals. Globally, research consistently shows that transformational leadership—characterized by inspiration, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration—significantly influences teachers' work engagement and motivation (Hyseni Duraku & Hoxha, 2021; Abdullah, Ling, & Sufi, 2018). Similar findings in Indonesia reinforce this argument, demonstrating that strengthened instructional leadership enhances principals' self-efficacy and nurtures a positive work culture (Anselmus Dami et al., 2022; Hasibuan, 2022).

Beyond leadership, individual psychological factors such as emotional intelligence (EI) are recognized as vital foundations for professional effectiveness. Goleman's concept emphasizes that self-management, empathy, and social skills are key components of workplace success. Empirical evidence from diverse contexts supports this, showing that EI boosts motivation, resilience under pressure, and both academic and non-academic performance (Tang & He, 2023; Kaur & Sharma, 2019; Quílez-Robres et al., 2023). Thus, both external (leadership) and internal (EI) teacher factors potentially interact to shape motivation and, ultimately, performance.



However, well-established theoretical understandings of how these variables correlate have not fully addressed the real challenges faced by many schools. Preliminary observations and secondary data from several secondary schools in [Research Area] reveal troubling symptoms: stagnant student achievement, declining teacher participation in professional development, and ineffective vertical communication. These indicators suggest problems in the school's work climate and psychological dynamics, likely rooted in unsupportive leadership practices and teachers' limited capacity to manage emotions and interpersonal relationships.

The research gap this study addresses is the lack of integrated investigation—especially in Indonesia, into how principal leadership and teacher emotional intelligence simultaneously influence motivation and performance. Most prior studies examine these variables partially or in different contexts, failing to provide a comprehensive picture for diagnosing and resolving the multidimensional problems evident in the aforementioned schools. This study bridges that theory practice gap. Its novelty lies in an integrative approach that models the four core constructs leadership, emotional intelligence, motivation, and performance within a single framework. Rather than merely replicating existing models, the study tests them in a specific setting with clear practical urgency. Its primary contribution is therefore a more holistic analytical lens for understanding the root causes of teacher motivation and performance issues.

Based on this background, the study aims to: (1) analyze the direct effects of principal leadership and teacher emotional intelligence on teacher motivation and performance; and (2) examine the mediating role of teacher motivation in the relationships among leadership, emotional intelligence, and performance. Through these objectives, the research is expected to provide evidence-based recommendations for improving school leadership practices and designing more effective, context-specific teacher-capacity development programs.

Research Method

This study employed a quantitative approach with an explanatory design to test and explain causal relationships among variables and to examine the formulated hypotheses. This design was selected to analyze the magnitude of influence of the exogenous variables Principal Leadership (X_1) and Teacher Emotional Intelligence (X_2) on the endogenous variables, Teacher Work Motivation (Y_1) and Teacher Performance (Y_2) (Creswell, 2018).

The population comprised all public and private senior high school (SMA) teachers in Sarolangun Regency, Jambi Province, totaling 428 individuals based on local Education Office data. Given the limited population and to ensure proportional representation by school type (public/private) and accreditation level (A/B), stratified random sampling was applied (Sugiyono, 2019). Sample size was determined using the rule-of-thumb for Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), i.e., 5–10 times the number of indicators or questionnaire items (Hair et al., 2019). With 35 items in the research instrument, the required sample ranged from 175 to 350 respondents. To satisfy data-normality assumptions and support generalization, 220 teachers were selected proportionally from each stratum.

Data were collected through closed-ended questionnaires using a 5-point Likert scale from “Strongly Disagree” (1) to “Strongly Agree” (5). Instruments were adapted from internationally validated and reliable scales. Principal Leadership was measured with the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) Form 5X (Bass & Avolio, 1997), assessing transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire dimensions. Teacher Emotional Intelligence was gauged using Goleman's (1995) model covering five dimensions: self-awareness, self-



regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. Work motivation was assessed with the Work Tasks Motivation Scale for Teachers (WTMST) developed by Fernet, Senécal, Guay, Marsh, & Dowson (2008), which captures autonomous and controlled motivation grounded in Self-Determination Theory. Teacher Performance indicators followed Indonesian national competency standards for teachers, encompassing planning, implementation, and evaluation of instruction (Ministry of National Education Regulation No. 16/2007).

Collected data were analyzed with Partial Least Squares-based Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) using SmartPLS 4.0. Analysis proceeded in two stages. First, the measurement model was evaluated for validity and reliability. Convergent validity was examined via factor loadings (> 0.70) and Average Variance Extracted ($AVE > 0.50$); discriminant validity was checked with the Fornell–Larcker criterion (Hair et al., 2019). Reliability was assessed using Composite Reliability and Cronbach’s alpha (> 0.70). Second, the structural model was evaluated to test hypotheses. Path coefficients and t-statistics were obtained through 5,000-bootstrap resampling to determine the significance of direct and indirect effects. Overall model fit was judged by R^2 values for endogenous variables and predictive relevance (Q^2).

Results and Discussion

Measurement Model Evaluation

Before testing hypotheses, instrument validity and reliability were assessed. Convergent validity was examined via factor loadings (> 0.70) and Average Variance Extracted ($AVE > 0.50$); discriminant validity was checked with the Fornell–Larcker criterion (Hair et al., 2019). Reliability was evaluated using Composite Reliability and Cronbach’s alpha (> 0.70). All indicators met the thresholds, confirming that the constructs are valid and reliable for further analysis.

Predictive power was judged by R^2 values. Leadership and emotional intelligence together explain 58.9 % of the variance in teacher motivation ($R^2 = 0.589$). When leadership, emotional intelligence, and motivation are considered jointly, they account for 82.5 % of the variance in teacher performance ($R^2 = 0.825$), classified as very strong.

Table 1. R-Square Values of Endogenous Variables

Dependent Variable	R-Square (R^2)	Predictive Strength Category
Teacher Motivation	0.589	Strong
Teacher Performance	0.825	Very Strong

Hypothesis Testing

Hypotheses were tested by examining path coefficients and t-statistics via 5,000-bootstrap resampling. Results are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Hypothesis Testing Results Summary

Hypothesis	Path Relationship	Path Coefficient (β)	t-Statistic	Conclusion
H1	Leadership → Teacher Motivation	0.505	6.123*	Accepted (Significant)
H2	Emotional Intelligence → Teacher Motivation	0.404	4.987*	Accepted (Significant)
H3	Leadership → Teacher Performance	0.384	4.211*	Accepted (Significant)
H4	Emotional Intelligence → Teacher Performance	0.405	4.455*	Accepted (Significant)
H5	Teacher Motivation → Teacher Performance	0.706	9.876*	Accepted (Significant)



H6	Leadership → Motivation → Performance (Indirect)	0.357	4.532*	Significant Mediation
H7	Emotional Intelligence → Motivation → Performance (Indirect)	0.285	3.891*	Significant Mediation

Note: p-value < 0.05

The finding that principal leadership strongly influences teacher motivation ($\beta = 0.505$) consistently supports and reinforces the studies of Hyseni Duraku & Hoxha (2021) in Kosovo and Abdullah et al. (2018) in Malaysia. This cross-cultural consistency underscores the universality of transformational-leadership principles in education. In Sarolangun, principals who provide inspirational motivation through a clear vision and individualized consideration by understanding teachers' personal needs effectively awaken a sense of purpose the core of intrinsic motivation.

Meanwhile, the effect of emotional intelligence on motivation ($\beta = 0.404$) aligns with Tang & He's (2023) academic-context findings, yet the present study adds nuance to the teacher workplace. Self-awareness and self-regulation—two key Goleman components enable Sarolangun teachers to manage negative emotions such as fatigue or frustration caused by administrative workload. Instead of succumbing to stress, high-EI teachers engage in cognitive reappraisal, reframing challenges as growth opportunities, thereby preserving and even enhancing work motivation.

Most intriguing is the direct effect of emotional intelligence on performance ($\beta = 0.405$), slightly larger than that of leadership ($\beta = 0.384$). This does not contradict but complements earlier studies (e.g., Hartiwi et al., 2020; Saleem et al., 2020) that emphasized leadership. The analysis reveals a micro-level classroom reality: when teachers confront difficult students or dynamic learning situations, moment-to-moment pedagogical decisions are heavily shaped by their immediate emotional capacity.

Drawing on Emotional Labor theory (Hochschild, 1983), teachers must perform surface and deep acting to sustain a positive learning climate. High-EI teachers carry out deep acting authentically—for instance, displaying genuine empathy that not only reduces their own emotional strain but also improves the quality of teacher–student interactions, the very heart of teaching performance. Thus, EI functions as a psychological toolkit applied directly in daily instructional encounters.

The overwhelmingly dominant effect of motivation on performance ($\beta = 0.706$) robustly supports classic findings by Chintalapti (2021) and Kuswati (2020). This figure reaffirms Locke & Latham's Goal-Setting Theory: clear, committed goals (born of motivation) drive effort and persistence, culminating in superior performance. For teachers, intrinsic motivation (the desire to make a difference for students) and internalized extrinsic motivation (the wish to be recognized as a professional) transform teaching from a mere "job" into a "calling," prompting extra effort in lesson design, feedback provision, and student mentoring.

Finally, the significant mediating role of motivation in the leadership–EI → performance pathway is the centerpiece of the discussion. Integrating Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan): transformational leadership satisfies teachers' three basic psychological needs autonomy (via delegation), competence (via recognition and training), and relatedness (via personal attention). This nurtures autonomous motivation—the highest-quality form which then fuels adaptive and innovative performance. In short, an effective



principal does not directly “push” performance; instead, he or she “waters” motivation by fulfilling teachers’ basic psychological needs first.

From the perspective of Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory: emotional intelligence is a personal psychological resource. Teachers high in EI expend emotional resources more efficiently and are better at gaining social resources (such as collegial support). This prevents burnout and allows them to invest conserved resources into job goals, manifesting as strong work motivation. That motivation then becomes the catalyst for high performance without sacrificing well-being. The study’s findings yield concrete strategic implications:

1) Re-orienting Principals’ Priorities

Principals must shift from an “administrative overseer” paradigm to a “climate-builder and motivator” role. a) Inspirational communication: routinely articulate the school vision and connect teachers’ daily tasks to a larger purpose. b) Empathy-based coaching: conduct academic supervision as dialogic coaching that acknowledges teachers’ emotional challenges, not merely technical evaluation. And c) Empowerment: grant professional autonomy in choosing instructional methods to satisfy the psychological need for autonomy.

2) Revitalizing Teacher-Development Policy

Local Education Offices and Quality-Assurance Agencies should: a) Integrate emotional-intelligence training into continuous professional development (CPD). Modules on stress management, classroom empathy, and non-violent communication should be standard. b) Design reward systems that foster intrinsic motivation—e.g., public recognition for pedagogical innovation or dedication to special-needs students—alongside financial incentives. And c) Adopt policies that protect teachers’ psychological well-being, such as regulating administrative workload and providing on-site counseling services.

3) Intervening at Recruitment and Placement Levels

Include emotional-intelligence components in teacher-selection processes and match teachers’ emotional profiles to school contexts (e.g., assign highly resilient teachers to schools with complex social challenges).

Thus, improved teacher performance is not the result of a single intervention but of a causal chain that culminates in motivation. Effective leadership and strong emotional intelligence are two resources that, when synergized, create the psychological condition—high motivation—required for peak performance. Consequently, educational-quality improvement efforts must be holistic, simultaneously addressing leadership, personal teacher development, and the design of a motivating work environment.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that principal leadership and teachers’ emotional intelligence significantly influence teacher motivation and performance in Sarolangun Regency, with motivation serving as the key mediator that explains how these two factors translate into improved performance. Specifically, transformational leadership and emotional intelligence exert both direct and indirect effects by enhancing teachers’ work motivation. The main implication is the need for a holistic educational-management approach that emphasizes the development of inspirational leadership and school-wide emotional-intelligence programs as foundations for sustaining teachers’ intrinsic motivation.



Recommendation

The recommendations derived from the findings of this study are as follows:

- 1) For school principals, it is recommended that they engage more frequently in personal approaches with teachers, not only in relation to administrative matters but also by actively listening to their aspirations and challenges. This approach has been proven to be effective in enhancing teachers' motivation.
- 2) For the Sarolangun Regency Office of Education, it is recommended to organize workshops or specialized training programs focusing on Emotional Intelligence and Stress Management. Teachers need to be equipped with strategies to manage their emotions in the classroom in order to maintain high performance, even under challenging conditions.
- 3) For teachers, it is recommended that they proactively develop their self-regulation skills (e.g., managing anger and frustration), as these abilities have a direct impact on the quality of teacher–student interactions and on performance appraisal outcomes.

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