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# Transformational Leadership for School Well-Being: Building a Positive Learning Environment

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## Abstract

Transformational leadership plays a crucial role in enhancing school well-being by influencing the behavior, motivation, and moral commitment of staff. This study aims to analyze how the principal's transformational leadership contributes to school well-being in a holistic sense and how this leadership style fosters a positive learning environment. A qualitative case study approach was used, with data collected through observations, in-depth interviews with the principal, teachers, supervisors, and educational staff, as well as analysis of school reports, quality assurance documents, supervision records, and meeting minutes. The findings indicate that the principal effectively applied the four core dimensions of transformational leadership: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. These practices built trust, motivation, creativity, and emotional support among teachers, improving the overall well-being of the school community. The integration of transformational leadership with systematic quality improvement processes created a sustainable culture of quality and a collaborative, positive, and religious learning environment. The study concludes that transformational leadership significantly strengthens school well-being and fosters a conducive atmosphere for learning.

## Keywords

Educational Leadership, Learning Environment, School Culture, School Well-Being, Teacher Motivation, Transformational Leadership.

## 1. Introduction

Education plays a strategic role in shaping the quality of human resources and the direction of national development. Law Number 20 of 2003 affirms that education aims to develop the potential of students to become people of faith, piety, noble character, and responsibility. In this context, the principal plays not only an administrator but also a learning leader, a driver of school culture, and an agent of change. The quality of education in Indonesia still faces various challenges, particularly related to teacher competence, disparities in facilities, variations in school management, and the implementation of quality policies such as the Internal Quality Assurance System (*Sistem Penjamin Mutu Internal/SPMI*) and the National Assessment (Nurlaela et al., 2025). In an effort to address quality challenges, transformational leadership is seen as the most relevant and humanistic approach in the 21st century.

Sendjaya (2005) argued that transformational leadership enhances the morality and motivation of both leaders and followers, while Bass and Avolio (1994) clarified four main dimensions idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. These four dimensions enable collaboration, innovation, and a positive work environment. Recent research by Kuntoro (2019), Khoirunnisaa and Maunah (2021), Sulistiyarini et al. (2024), and Suprihatin (2025) also show that transformational leadership in elementary schools can foster a collaborative culture, enhance teacher professionalism, and strengthen the quality of learning. One important aspect currently receiving attention is school wellbeing, a condition in which all school components teachers, students, and educational staff feel comfortable, have emotional support, psychological safety, and adequate learning facilities. Wellbeing not only influences the comfort of working and learning but also directly contributes to student achievement, learning effectiveness, and a healthy school culture (Barrett et al., 2013).

In practice, transformational leadership in schools involves principals actively engaging with teachers and staff, facilitating professional development, and promoting a culture of collaboration and continuous improvement. This active engagement ensures that teachers feel empowered, supported, and equipped with the necessary skills and resources to innovate and excel in their roles. Simultaneously, it fosters an environment where students are encouraged to participate actively, develop self-confidence, and internalize positive values. Such leadership creates an environment where both educators and students feel supported, motivated, and empowered to contribute positively to the school community. By addressing both instructional quality and the emotional and social needs of school members, transformational principals lay the foundation for a well-functioning, resilient, and adaptive learning environment.

Daar El Falah Elementary School, West Karawang, is an integrated Islamic elementary school that demonstrates good quality performance, with A accreditation and consistent implementation of SPMI. Initial observations indicate that the principal plays an active role in fostering a religious culture, improving teacher professionalism, conducting regular supervision, and building positive interpersonal relationships with the school community. In addition, the school consistently implements the Plan, Do, Check, Act (PDCA) cycle through weekly reflections, monthly evaluations, and annual follow-ups, which helps strengthen the school's culture of quality and well-being.

This study contributes to the literature by providing an in-depth empirical analysis of how principals' transformational leadership practices influence school well-being within the context of elementary education, particularly in an integrated Islamic school that consistently implements internal quality assurance mechanisms. While previous studies have largely focused on the impact of transformational

leadership on teacher performance, organizational culture, or learning outcomes, limited attention has been given to its role in shaping holistic school well-being that encompasses emotional, psychological, and institutional dimensions. This research addresses this gap by linking transformational leadership with school well-being through concrete leadership practices and quality assurance processes, thereby offering contextualized evidence that enriches leadership and school management studies in Indonesia. Based on this context, this study examines how the principal's transformational leadership shapes school well-being and creates a positive learning environment at Daar El Falah Elementary School.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1. Transformational Leadership**

Transformational leadership has emerged as one of the most influential leadership paradigms in educational settings, particularly in driving school improvement and fostering collaborative cultures. Bass and Avolio's (1994) Full Range Leadership Model identifies transformational leadership as comprising four core dimensions: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. Recent systematic reviews confirm that transformational leadership creates organizational cohesiveness, enhances school culture, and significantly impacts teacher motivation and performance (Muflihah & Haqiqi, 2019; Wilson et al., 2023). Contemporary research demonstrates that transformational leadership positively influences school outcomes including collaborative and innovative school cultures, job satisfaction, teacher self-efficacy, and collective efficacy.

The impact of transformational principals on teacher commitment and innovative practices has been extensively documented in recent studies. Research by Kılınc et al. (2024) involving 611 teachers found that trust in the school leader serves as a significant moderator of the indirect effect of transformational leadership on teacher innovative practices. Furthermore, transformational leadership inspires individuals to surpass expectations and engage in self-improvement by cultivating a shared vision and collective purpose (Wibowo, 2006; Wahjosumidjo, 2010; Deng et al., 2023). In educational contexts, transformational leaders not only aid teachers in improving their teaching skills but also encourage them to explore and innovate in the classroom (Sasan et al., 2023; Sidik et al., 2024). Kareem et al. (2023) emphasize that principals with transformational leadership styles are supportive and hardworking leaders who motivate teachers through constructive criticism and support in both personal and professional lives. Recent evidence from Cyprus indicates that transformational and transactional leadership can be combined as a second-order factor that serves as a strong predictor of teachers' self-efficacy beliefs (Hallinnger, 2011; Jus'at & Indrawati, 2022; Lefteri & Menon, 2025).

### **2.2. School Well-Being**

School well-being has gained increasing recognition as a critical component of educational quality and encompasses multiple dimensions that extend beyond mere academic achievement. According to contemporary frameworks, school well-being includes emotional, psychological, and social dimensions that collectively create conditions where all school components experience comfort, emotional support, and psychological safety (Ozturk et al., 2024). This multidimensional construct reflects both subjective psychological states and objective material conditions that influence how individuals function within educational environments.

Psychological safety has emerged as a fundamental element of thriving learning spaces. Delizonna (2017) defines psychological safety as an environment where individuals feel secure to take interpersonal risks, ask questions, make mistakes, and

collaborate without fear of negative consequences. When students feel psychologically safe, their threat systems in the brain are regulated, enabling them to broaden their mindsets, remain in the learning zone where creativity and productivity thrive, and engage more deeply with academic content. The importance of teacher well-being within school ecosystems has also received unprecedented attention, with research indicating that teachers report one of the highest levels of occupational stress and burnout compared to other professions (Taylor et al., 2024).

The Teacher Wellbeing Index 2024 reveals that 77% of education staff experience poor mental health due to work, highlighting that staff well-being directly impacts their capacity to support student learning and development (Education Support, 2024). Contemporary evidence demonstrates that well-being serves as both a prerequisite for achievement and a consequence of it, creating a bidirectional relationship between psychological wellness and academic success (Doan et al., 2023). Schools that prioritize whole-school approaches to well-being, engaging all components of the school ecosystem, can create supportive environments that foster positive relationships, collaboration, and personal development for all stakeholders (March et al., 2024).

### 3. Methods

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study type. The qualitative approach was chosen because the research focuses on an in-depth exploration of the principal's leadership practices in a real context, rather than simply measuring variables numerically (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Carter, 2014; Moleong, 2019; Flick, 2022). Creswell (2017) explains that qualitative research provides a holistic picture of phenomena from the subject's perspective, making it suitable for studying leadership behavior and school culture. The case study was used to intensively describe the phenomenon of transformational leadership at Daar El Falah Elementary School. Yin (2014) explains that case studies are relevant when researchers ask "how" and "why" a phenomenon occurs, when researchers have minimal control over the subjects, and when the phenomenon being studied is contemporary. This is in accordance with the context of research on transformational leadership practices in school principals. Research subjects were selected using a purposive sampling technique, namely selecting individuals who are most knowledgeable and understand the phenomenon being studied (Sugiyono, 2019). Informants consisted of the principal (A1), school supervisor (B1), head of the Foundation (C1), teachers (D1-D4), education staff (E1-E2), and parent representatives (if necessary). The principal was positioned as a key informant because he has direct control over the implementation of transformational leadership.

Teachers were selected based on their varied experience and length of service to obtain rich data. Data collection was conducted through participant observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation studies. Observations were made of learning activities, religious culture, supervision, teacher-student interactions, and school meeting dynamics. Interviews were conducted semi-structured to allow informants to convey their experiences in depth. The documentation study included analysis of education report cards, SPMI documents, supervision results, organizational structures, and school work plans. Data analysis used the Miles & Huberman model, which includes 1) data reduction, 2) data presentation, and 3) drawing conclusions. The reduction process was carried out by sorting data according to themes, while the data presentation was done in the form of analytical narratives. Conclusions were drawn continuously throughout data collection (Sinha et al., 2024). The validity of the study was strengthened through source triangulation, technical triangulation, and member checking. Information from the principal was compared with

observational findings and official school documents, resulting in credible and consistent data.

#### **4. Results**

The implementation of transformational leadership at Daar El Falah Elementary School demonstrates that the principal is a central figure in creating school well-being. This centrality highlights that leadership effectiveness is not only measured by administrative success but also by its capacity to influence the socio-emotional and moral dimensions of the school. The principal functions simultaneously as a manager, motivator, mentor, and moral exemplar, creating a multi-layered impact on the school ecosystem. The ideal influence dimension is evident in the principal's exemplary discipline, assertiveness, and religious attitude. By consistently modeling these behaviors, the principal sets clear behavioral and ethical standards, which encourage teachers and staff to emulate these values, fostering a strong sense of integrity and mutual respect within the school. This attitude creates a sense of security and high trust among teachers, consistent with Bass and Avolio's (1994) view that ideal influence builds trust and loyalty among followers. Teachers stated that the principal serves as a role model in work ethic and spirituality, thus creating a harmonious and comfortable work environment. The role-modeling effect also reinforces teachers' intrinsic motivation, promoting a culture where ethical behavior and spiritual development are intertwined with professional responsibilities.

The inspirational motivation dimension is reflected in the principal's ability to clearly convey the school's vision and motivate teachers to work with full commitment. Clear communication of vision not only aligns individual teacher goals with the school's broader objectives but also cultivates a shared sense of purpose, which is crucial for sustaining motivation during challenging periods. The principal expresses appreciation for teachers' performance both verbally and symbolically, thereby enhancing teachers' intrinsic motivation. Dewi et al. (2022) emphasized that leader motivation significantly influences subordinates' job satisfaction and emotional well-being, something also evident in the context of Daar El Falah Elementary School. This approach underscores the importance of recognizing effort and achievement as a continuous practice rather than a one-time gesture, as it strengthens engagement and loyalty while reducing burnout and turnover intentions.

The intellectual stimulation dimension emerges through the principal's encouragement of teachers to have the courage to innovate in learning. This dimension nurtures a culture of curiosity, experimentation, and reflective practice. By supporting innovation, the principal empowers teachers to take initiative, explore new teaching methods, and adapt creatively to students' diverse needs, which aligns with modern educational demands. The principal facilitates training, supports the use of technology, and encourages teachers to engage in project-based learning. Such initiatives not only improve teaching quality but also cultivate lifelong learning attitudes among teachers, which ultimately benefit students' cognitive and practical skills development. These practices provide space for creativity and enhance teacher professionalism, in line with Yukl (2013) concept, which emphasizes that intellectual stimulation can enhance creativity and performance quality.

The individualized attention dimension is evident through the emotional support provided to teachers. By acknowledging individual needs, challenges, and aspirations, the principal strengthens teacher resilience, reduces stress, and promotes a sense of belonging. This attentiveness is critical in developing a psychologically safe environment where teachers feel secure to express opinions, propose ideas, and learn from mistakes. The principal assists teachers experiencing difficulties, listens to personal problems, and provides fair assignments based on individual abilities. Leithwood and Jantzi (2006) state that individualized

consideration improves well-being through a sense of being valued and cared for as individuals, not simply as task performers. This personalized approach demonstrates that effective leadership is relational, where understanding and addressing the unique context of each teacher contributes significantly to overall school well-being.

Transformational leadership ultimately shapes school well-being. Teachers feel valued, supported, and have room to grow. The presence of supportive leadership enhances teachers' emotional intelligence, collaboration, and commitment, creating ripple effects on students' learning outcomes and school climate. Students experience a safe, religious, and supportive environment. A nurturing environment not only promotes academic achievement but also instills socio-emotional and moral values, preparing students to become responsible and well-rounded individuals. The school has a positive culture such as the 5S habituation, Quran literacy, memorization, and daily etiquette, which strengthen the socio-spiritual climate. This structured cultural practice reinforces consistency in behavior, moral discipline, and collective responsibility among both teachers and students, contributing to a sustainable culture of well-being. This environment reflects holistic school well-being, where the physical, psychological, social, and moral aspects of the school community develop in balance.

Another important contribution is the implementation of a PDCA-based SPMI (Student Performance Assessment) that strengthens the sustainability of wellbeing. This structured approach exemplifies how leadership effectiveness is magnified when combined with systematic quality management, ensuring that improvements are continuous, evidence-based, and integrated into everyday practice. The principal ensures consistent quality mapping, program implementation, reflection, and follow-up. This cycle creates a culture of reflection and continuous improvement, characteristic of effective schools. The PDCA cycle promotes accountability and transparency, enabling all stakeholders to participate in decision-making and monitoring processes, which enhances collective responsibility and ownership of school well-being.

Thus, well-being emerges not only from inspirational leadership but also from a quality system that supports continuous improvement. The interplay between human-centered leadership and structured quality assurance ensures that initiatives are both meaningful and sustainable, rather than dependent solely on individual effort or charisma. Challenges such as varying teacher competencies, resistance to digitalization, and limited resources were successfully mitigated through coaching, internal training, task delegation, and strengthening team collaboration. This demonstrates that transformational leadership is not abstract but operationally effective, capable of converting vision into tangible outcomes despite obstacles. The principal's dedication to building positive interpersonal relationships and a collaborative work culture was a key factor in the success of this transformation. The results illustrate that transformational leadership, when synergized with structured processes and supportive culture, fosters an enduring school well-being that benefits teachers, students, and the broader educational community.

## 5. Discussion

The findings from Daar El Falah Elementary School strongly corroborate the idea that transformational leadership by the principal plays a pivotal role in cultivating school well-being and a positive learning environment. In the dimension of idealized influence, the principal's exemplary discipline, religious orientation, and integrity fostered trust and a sense of security among teachers, which mirrors what earlier studies have documented: when school leaders model high moral standards and consistency, they become role models whose behavior shapes collective commitment and organizational culture (McCarley et al., 2016). Likewise, the dimension of inspirational motivation as manifested in the principal's clear

articulation of school vision and the use of verbal and symbolic appreciation for teachers seems to reinforce teacher intrinsic motivation and commitment. This echoes findings by Supriatna and Rosmilawati (2025) who reported that transformational leadership in schools significantly increases teacher motivation, job satisfaction, and overall engagement in educational tasks

The dimension of intellectual stimulation emerges in your context through support for pedagogical innovation, encouragement of technology use, and promotion of project-based learning. This is in line with research showing that transformational school leaders who stimulate teacher creativity and professional growth succeed in building a collaborative and innovative learning community (Dyan, 2024). When teachers are encouraged to think creatively and adopt new teaching practices, their professionalism and sense of efficacy grow, which likely contributes to school well-being and the overall improvement of educational quality.

Individualized consideration demonstrated by emotional support, listening to personal problems, and fair assignment distribution seems to foster a sense of being valued, thereby enhancing psychological well-being among teachers. This aligns with the findings of Purwanti et al. (2025), who showed that transformational leadership rooted in personal attention and spiritual value orientation supports a harmonious and supportive work atmosphere, contributing to long-term teacher commitment and well-being at school.

An important contribution of this study is highlighting the synergy between transformational leadership and a systematic quality assurance process (PDCA based SPMI). While many prior studies emphasize leadership behaviors alone, your data suggest that coupling humanistic leadership with structured institutional mechanisms strengthens the sustainability of school wellbeing. This echoes arguments in the literature that effective leadership must be supported by organizational structures that enable continuous improvement, collaboration, and shared responsibility among the school community (Windasari et al., 2022). Similarly, a recent study by Nurrizayani et al. (2024) demonstrated that transformational leadership combined with a supportive work climate positively influences teacher performance in schools with good accreditation status, reinforcing the claim that leadership and work environment together determine educational outcomes.

The results from Daar El Falah align with and extend the existing body of research by demonstrating that transformational leadership, when enacted comprehensively across all four dimensions and supported by structured quality assurance processes, can effectively foster teacher well being, positive school climate, innovation, and sustainable educational quality. This holistic integration combining humanistic leadership, spiritual values, professional development, and continuous improvement appears especially relevant in faith-based or value-oriented schools, and may provide a model for other schools striving for balanced academic, social, and moral development.

It enriches the understanding of how transformational leadership when combined with quality assurance systems can foster a broad, holistic notion of school well being, beyond academic outputs. It underscores the importance of considering cultural, spiritual, social, and institutional dimensions when studying leadership in school contexts, particularly in faith based or mission driven schools like Daar El Falah. These findings can inform principals, school boards, and policy makers about the benefits of implementing transformational leadership in tandem with continuous quality improvement processes (e.g., SPMI and PDCA). This combined model can be a blueprint for other schools aiming not only for higher academic performance but also for a healthy, supportive, and sustainable school community where educators and learners thrive socially, emotionally, and morally.

## 6. Conclusion

This study shows that the principal's transformational leadership plays a significant role in building school well-being and a positive learning environment at Daar El Falah Elementary School. The four dimensions of transformational leadership are strongly implemented and impact teacher motivation, a religious school culture, learning innovation, and a safe and supportive school atmosphere. The integration of transformational leadership with the PDCA-based SPMI strengthens the sustainability of the culture of quality and well-being. Transformational leadership can be used as a model for the development of integrated Islamic elementary schools in facing the challenges of modern education.

The results imply that principals, school managers, and education policymakers can benefit from promoting transformational leadership practices alongside structured quality management systems to encourage holistic development, continuous improvement, and positive school climate. However, this study is limited by its focus on a single school context, which may affect the generalizability of the findings to other types of schools, regions, or educational systems. Future research could examine transformational leadership across multiple schools with diverse socio-cultural contexts, compare its effectiveness in secular and faith-based institutions, and explore longitudinally how specific leadership interventions influence teacher well-being, student achievement, and organizational resilience over time.

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The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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Ethical approval was obtained for this study. The manuscript represents original work and has not been previously published, nor is it under consideration by another journal.

### ***Data Disclosure Statement***

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.



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