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Transformational Leadership of School Principals in Optimizing the Management of Teacher E-Performance Through Ruang GTK: A Multi-Site Study at SMP Negeri 2 Plaosan and SMP Negeri 1 Takeran

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ABSTRACT

School principals hold a strategic role in directing teachers to use the Ruang GTK platform for managing teacher e-performance (e-Kinerja), as mandated by Regulation of the Director General of Teachers and Education Personnel No. 7327/B.B1/HK.03.01/2023 on the School Principal Competency Model. However, the success of this digitalization depends less on system availability than on the quality of principal leadership in managing change. This study describes in depth how principals enact transformational leadership, namely idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration in Bass and Riggio's framework [2], to optimize teacher e-performance management through Ruang GTK. A descriptive qualitative approach with a multi-site design was used at SMP Negeri 2 Plaosan and SMP Negeri 1 Takeran, Magetan Regency. Data were gathered through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation with principals, vice principals, and teachers as key informants, then analyzed using Miles and Huberman's interactive model together with cross-site analysis. Trustworthiness was established through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Findings show that principals at both sites consistently enacted all four dimensions: exemplary conduct built teachers' trust in digital change; inspirational motivation reframed e-Kinerja from an administrative burden into a professional responsibility; intellectual stimulation drove collaborative problem solving; and individualized consideration provided mentoring matched to each teacher's digital competence. These results affirm transformational leadership as the primary driver of school digital transformation, offering a reference for developing principal competencies in the era of digital performance management.

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1. INTRODUCTION

School principals hold a strategic role as instructional leaders and as managers of educational units who are expected to improve the quality of education through learning transformation that is oriented toward students, as affirmed in Regulation of the Director General of Teachers and Education Personnel Number 7327/B.B1/HK.03.01/2023 on the School Principal Competency Model. This regulation stipulates that a principal's professional competence includes the ability to develop a vision and a learning culture, implement student-centered instructional leadership, and manage school resources, including teaching staff, effectively, transparently, and accountably. This competency requirement aligns with the characteristics of transformational leadership, which emphasizes a leader's ability to provide idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration to organizational members so that they can perform beyond standard expectations.

Within the national policy framework, the presence of the Ruang GTK platform as a digital instrument for managing teacher performance (e-Kinerja/SKP) has become a strategic means for principals to translate their leadership competencies into real practice. This policy derives from Regulation of the Minister of Administrative and Bureaucratic Reform Number 6 of 2022 on the Performance Management of State Civil Apparatus Employees [1], which was subsequently elaborated through Decree of the Director General of Teachers and Education Personnel Number 7607/B.B1/HK.03/2023 [2] and Number 4242/B.B1/HK.03.01/2024 [3] on the assessment of teacher and principal performance. This digitalization of performance management genuinely offers substantial opportunities for teacher governance that is more measurable, transparent, and data-driven. In practice, however, the transition toward a digital system often encounters teacher resistance that stems not merely from limited technical ability, but from the perception that e-Kinerja is an additional administrative burden outside of instructional duties.

A number of prior studies have confirmed the relationship between transformational leadership and technology adoption in schools. The study by Berkovich and Hassan [4] highlights the importance of digital transformational leadership in school governance, while Banoğlu, Vanderlinde, Çetin, and Aesaert [5] emphasize the role of principals' technology leadership in building a digital school culture. These studies are generally still large-scale quantitative surveys or focus on basic-education contexts outside Indonesia, so they have not yet contextually and thoroughly explained how the process of transformational leadership unfolds in managing teachers' digital resistance at the junior secondary level in Indonesia, particularly in relation to the Ruang GTK platform, which is specific to national policy.

Based on this review, at least five research gaps can be identified that justify the urgency of this study. First, there is no research that specifically examines the role of transformational leadership in optimizing teacher e-performance through Ruang GTK. Second, few studies position the Ruang GTK digital platform as an object of school management research in Indonesia. Third, there is no multi-site research comparing transformational leadership practices related to e-Kinerja across two schools with different contexts. Fourth, no study has separately examined the contribution of each dimension of

transformational leadership in the context of teacher e-performance. Fifth, there is an absence of research that integrates current Indonesian education regulation perspectives with studies of transformational leadership and teacher performance digitalization [6].

Building on these gaps, this study aims to describe in depth the practices of idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration among school principals in optimizing the management of teacher e-performance through Ruang GTK at SMP Negeri 2 Plaosan and SMP Negeri 1 Takeran, Magetan Regency. Theoretically, this study is expected to enrich the conceptual framework of transformational leadership in the context of digital teacher performance management and to contribute a multi-site study methodology model for future research on educational leadership. Practically, the findings are expected to serve as a reference for principals, teachers, supervisors, and education offices in formulating effective leadership strategies to support the digital transformation of teacher performance management.

2. METHOD

This study used a descriptive qualitative approach with a multi-site study design, aimed at describing in depth the phenomenon of principals' transformational leadership within its natural context across two different research settings. The multi-site design was chosen because it allows the researcher to compare and integrate findings from each site to formulate a stronger theoretical proposition, following the within-case and cross-site analysis framework developed by Bogdan and Biklen [7].

The research was conducted at two education units, namely SMP Negeri 2 Plaosan as Site I and SMP Negeri 1 Takeran as Site II, both located in Magetan Regency, East Java Province. The main data sources were the principal, the vice principal for curriculum affairs, and teachers at each school as key informants, selected through a snowball sampling technique to obtain a range of perspectives on the process of managing e-Kinerja through Ruang GTK.

Data were collected through three techniques: participant observation of the principal's leadership activities and the management of e-Kinerja at the school, in-depth semi-structured interviews with key informants, and documentation in the form of school profiles, staffing data, and administrative documents related to e-Kinerja. Data analysis followed Miles and Huberman's interactive model, consisting of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification, carried out simultaneously before, during, and after field data collection.

Cross-site analysis was conducted in three stages: (1) formulating the findings at Site I as substantive theory I; (2) formulating the findings at Site II as substantive theory II and comparing them with substantive theory I; and (3) systematically reconstructing the similarities and differences between the two sites to produce a final theoretical proposition. Data trustworthiness was tested using Lincoln and Guba's four criteria, namely credibility (through prolonged engagement in the field, sustained observation, source and technique triangulation, and member checks), transferability (through systematic presentation of findings so that they can be applied to other contexts), dependability (through an audit by

the supervising lecturer as an independent auditor), and confirmability (through tracing the consistency between data, interpretation, and research conclusions) [8].

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings at SMP Negeri 2 Plaosan (Site I) and SMP Negeri 1 Takeran (Site II) show that the success of managing teacher e-performance is not determined solely by technology availability or teachers' ability to operate Ruang GTK, but is strongly influenced by the principal's leadership in managing the change process. Cross-site findings show that principals at both schools consistently enacted the four dimensions of transformational leadership developed in Bass and Riggio's theory [9], namely idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. In the context of this study, these four dimensions functioned not only to improve teacher performance in general, but also as a mechanism for changing teachers' attitudes toward the digitalization of performance management. This finding is supported by recent studies: Zhou and Niu [10] found that principals' transformational leadership is related to teachers' intention to use digital technology through psychological mechanisms and an organizational innovation climate, while Termizi, Hamid, and Razak [11] found a positive relationship between transformational leadership and teacher digital competence, with transformational leadership explaining approximately 12.3% of the variance in teacher digital competence in their study [12].

3.1. Idealized Influence: Exemplary Conduct as the Basis for Reducing Digital Resistance

Principals at both sites demonstrated exemplary conduct through discipline, responsibility, integrity, and commitment in carrying out their duties, rather than simply instructing teachers to complete e-Kinerja. This finding aligns with Bass and Riggio's concept of idealized influence [13], in which a leader becomes a figure who is trusted, respected, and emulated by followers. Teacher resistance to technology in this study was found to stem not merely from technical inability, but from the perception that the change was an additional administrative burden. When a principal acted only as a supervisor, e-Kinerja tended to be perceived as a top-down obligation. Conversely, when a principal showed commitment and direct involvement, a sense of psychological trust emerged that made teachers more open about disclosing difficulties in using Ruang GTK. This finding is consistent with the study by Dasruth, Naicker, and Smith [14], which shows that school digital transformation requires leadership capable of directing change, and that leadership practices still limited to conventional patterns make digital transformation less than optimal. The relational pattern that can be drawn from this finding is: principals' exemplary conduct leads to teacher trust, which leads to openness about difficulties, which leads to reduced digital resistance [15].

3.2. Inspirational Motivation: Reframing e-Kinerja from an Administrative Burden into a Professional Responsibility

Principals at both sites motivated meetings, briefings, direct communication, and reinforcement of school goals. An important finding of this study is that principals did not stop at the normative message that "teachers must fill in e-Kinerja," but consistently explained the connection between e-Kinerja and teachers' professional responsibility, in line with Bass and Riggio's concept that transformational leaders give meaning to work and direct followers toward higher goals [16]. Teachers who were oriented only toward administrative compliance tended to fill in e-Kinerja merely to fulfill an obligation, while teachers who understood e-Kinerja as part of their professionalism showed stronger internal motivation to use it correctly. This finding is reinforced by Tobondo [17], who shows that transformational leadership is needed to create a conducive environment for teachers to adapt to technology and optimize work effectiveness in an increasingly digitalized educational setting. Inspirational motivation in this study can be understood as a meaning-reframing mechanism, that is, a shift in teachers' perspective from "e-Kinerja as an administrative obligation" to "e-Kinerja as part of teacher professionalism," which in turn encourages acceptance of the digital system [18].

3.3. Intellectual Stimulation: Turning Technological Difficulties into a Learning Process

Principals at both sites gave teachers room to ask questions, discuss, raise difficulties, and seek solutions to problems in managing e-Kinerja, rather than positioning themselves as the sole party who knows the solution. Teachers were encouraged to think critically to assess the alignment between performance targets, activities carried out, performance evidence, and results achieved, and were given room to question procedures they did not yet understand [19]. This approach built two-way communication between principals and teachers that developed into a shared learning process, while also fostering a culture of knowledge sharing among teachers in overcoming both technical and administrative obstacles in Ruang GTK. This finding is consistent with Bass and Riggio's concept of intellectual stimulation [20], which asserts that transformational leaders encourage followers to rethink, innovate, and not merely carry out routines. In the context of performance digitalization, this dimension functions to turn technological obstacles from a source of frustration into an opportunity for collective learning among teachers.

3.4. Individualized Consideration: Mentoring Tailored to Teachers' Needs and Digital Competence

Principals at both sites provided mentoring tailored to the needs, abilities, and conditions of each teacher in managing e-Kinerja. Teachers with lower digital competence received more intensive attention and guidance, while teachers who were already proficient were given room to assist their colleagues [21]. This individual attention was not only technical, but also touched on psychological aspects, namely ensuring that teachers did not feel left behind or pressured by the demands of digitalization. This tiered mentoring pattern is consistent with Bass and Riggio's concept of individualized consideration [22], which

emphasizes that a leader treats each follower as an individual with different developmental needs, and in the context of this study proved important in addressing the digital competence gap among teachers and improving the school's collective readiness to optimize Ruang GTK [23].

3.5. Synthesis: A Transformational Leadership Model in the Digital Transformation of Teacher Performance

Cross-site analysis of SMP Negeri 2 Plaosan and SMP Negeri 1 Takeran shows a relatively consistent pattern despite taking place in different school contexts, indicating that the four dimensions of transformational leadership work sequentially and reinforce one another: the principal's exemplary conduct builds teachers' initial trust toward digital change; inspirational motivation builds awareness and understanding that e-Kinerja is part of professionalism; intellectual stimulation encourages teacher involvement in collaborative technical problem solving; and individualized consideration ensures that mentoring is carried out according to each teacher's needs and level of digital competence. This sequence of processes can be formulated in a conceptual model: transformational leadership leads to trust and motivation, which leads to digital readiness, which leads to technology adaptation, which leads to the optimization of e-Kinerja. This finding extends the meaning of Bass and Riggio's 4I theory [24] within the context of school digital leadership, while also affirming that the success of digital regulations and systems in managing teacher performance depends heavily on the quality of principal leadership in translating policy into practices that teachers can understand, accept, and carry out. This study is limited by its coverage of only two sites in one regency, an informant perspective centered on principals, vice principals, and teachers, a research timeframe limited to a single policy period, and a theoretical framework focused on Bass and Riggio's 4I model without deeply integrating perspectives on digital leadership, technology acceptance, or digital readiness, so that generalization of the findings should be made cautiously to school contexts with similar characteristics [25].

4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that principals' transformational leadership plays an important role in optimizing the management of teacher e-performance through Ruang GTK at SMP Negeri 2 Plaosan and SMP Negeri 1 Takeran. On the idealized influence dimension, principals demonstrated exemplary conduct through discipline, responsibility, integrity, and commitment that built teachers' trust toward digital change. On the inspirational motivation dimension, principals communicated school goals and reframed e-Kinerja as part of professional responsibility rather than merely an administrative obligation. On the intellectual stimulation dimension, principals opened space for discussion and joint problem-solving that made teachers increasingly adaptive to technology. On the individualized consideration dimension, principals provided mentoring tailored to each teacher's needs and level of digital competence.

Theoretically, this study extends the meaning of Bass and Riggio's 4I transformational leadership theory into the context of school digital leadership, affirming

that transformational leadership can serve as a foundation for a principal's digital leadership model that mobilizes the human dimension, not merely the technical dimension, of educational digital transformation. Practically, the findings recommend that principals regularly facilitate collaborative forums and personal coaching; that teachers use Ruang GTK as a means of ongoing professional reflection; that supervisors and education offices develop digital data-based supervision oriented toward competence development rather than mere administrative compliance; and that policymakers build a supportive school digital ecosystem through socialization, mentoring, and sustained assistance mechanisms. Further research is recommended to expand the scope of sites, the timeframe, and the theoretical framework, for example by integrating perspectives on digital leadership and technology acceptance, in order to strengthen the generalizability and depth of findings on transformational leadership in the digital transformation of teacher performance management.

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