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The Influence of Principals' Instructional Leadership, Work Motivation, and School Culture on Elementary School Teachers' Performance in Mranggen District, Demak Regency

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the influence of principals' instructional leadership, work motivation, and school culture on the performance of elementary school teachers in Dabin III, Mranggen District, Demak Regency. The study employed a quantitative approach with an ex post facto design. The population consisted of 139 teachers, and 103 teachers were selected as the sample using proportional random sampling. Data were collected through questionnaires, interviews, and documentation, and were analyzed using descriptive statistics, multiple linear regression, and coefficient of determination analysis. The findings revealed that principals' instructional leadership, work motivation, school culture, and teacher performance were all categorized as very high. Simultaneously, instructional leadership, work motivation, and school culture had a significant effect on teacher performance. Partially, principals' instructional leadership and school culture had a positive and significant effect on teacher performance, whereas work motivation did not have a significant effect. Among the independent variables, principals' instructional leadership was the most dominant factor influencing teacher performance. The coefficient of determination showed that 56.8% of the variance in teacher performance could be explained by the three independent variables. These findings indicate that improving teacher performance requires strengthening instructional leadership and developing a positive school culture.

1. Introduction

Education serves as a fundamental pillar of national development, as it enables individuals to develop knowledge, skills, character, and social capacities necessary for contributing to society. In the context of elementary schools, the quality of education is largely determined by the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process in the classroom. Therefore, teachers occupy a strategic position as the

primary agents of instruction and key determinants of educational quality at the school level. Teacher performance plays a crucial role in shaping the effectiveness of learning, the achievement of educational goals, and students' academic outcomes. From an educational management perspective, teacher performance is not solely influenced by individual competence but is also shaped by school leadership, work motivation, and school culture within the educational organization (Achmadi et al., 2023; Aqib, 2020; Ismail et al., 2024; Pianda, 2022).

Teacher performance has become a critical issue, as teachers are expected not only to deliver instruction but also to plan, evaluate, and continuously improve the learning process. Teachers with high performance are more capable of managing classrooms effectively, adapting instructional strategies, and creating meaningful learning experiences for students. Conversely, suboptimal teacher performance may lead to ineffective instruction and low student achievement. Therefore, improving teacher performance should be viewed as a strategic priority that requires support from leadership, work systems, and a healthy and productive school culture (Rorimpandey & Widdy, 2020; Hafidulloh & Mochklas, 2021; Sedarmayanti, 2022).

One of the key factors influencing teacher performance is principals' instructional leadership. Instructional leadership positions principals not merely as administrative managers but as leaders of learning who guide, facilitate, monitor, and evaluate instructional processes in schools. Effective instructional leadership enables principals to establish clear learning visions, strengthen academic supervision, promote teacher professional development, and create a school environment oriented toward instructional quality. In this framework, instructional leadership becomes a critical determinant of teacher performance, as teachers require consistent direction, support, and feedback from school leaders (Usman, 2020; Bush, 2023; Hatta, 2024; Sapitri, 2024).

Empirical studies support the relationship between instructional leadership and teacher performance. Principals who actively engage in supervision, coaching, and instructional improvement tend to enhance teachers' professional practices. Aslam et al. (2022) found that instructional leadership contributes significantly to improving teacher performance. Similarly, other studies indicate that leadership dimensions play a vital role in optimizing teacher performance when accompanied by effective communication, work support, and a strong orientation toward instructional quality (Aslam et al., 2022; Kustini et al., 2025).

In addition to leadership, work motivation is an essential internal factor that determines teacher performance. Work motivation refers to the driving force that generates enthusiasm, direction, and persistence in performing tasks. Teachers with high motivation tend to demonstrate strong commitment, responsibility, and dedication in carrying out instructional duties. Motivation may arise from intrinsic factors, such as professional calling and job satisfaction, as well as extrinsic factors, including rewards, leadership support, work climate, and career development opportunities (Dewi, 2021; Hasibuan, 2021; Mangkunegara & Prabu, 2021; Uno, 2023).

The relationship between work motivation and teacher performance has also been widely supported by empirical evidence. Iba et al. (2021) found that motivation significantly influences teacher performance alongside organizational culture, work environment, and job satisfaction. Likewise, Suheri et al. (2021) emphasized that work motivation plays a crucial role in improving teacher performance and can be strengthened through professional development programs. These findings suggest that highly motivated teachers tend to be more disciplined, adaptive, and committed to achieving optimal work outcomes compared to those with lower motivation (Iba et al., 2021; Suheri et al., 2021).

Another important factor influencing teacher performance is school culture. School culture reflects the values, norms, beliefs, habits, and practices shared within the school community, shaping the behavior of all its members. A positive school culture fosters a conducive working environment, strengthens collaboration among teachers, enhances a sense of belonging, and promotes commitment to educational quality. In contrast, a weak school culture may reduce motivation, hinder innovation, and negatively affect teacher performance. Thus, school culture is not merely a social backdrop but a powerful force shaping teachers' professional behavior (Schein & Schein, 2022; Mardapi, 2023; Widodo & Nurhayati, 2022; Zamroni, 2022).

Empirical research also highlights the role of school culture in influencing teacher behavior and performance. Wulandari and Nugroho (2020) emphasized that school organizational culture directs work climate and behavior within educational institutions. Saragih and Suhendro (2020) found that teacher work culture is closely related to teacher commitment, which in turn affects performance. Furthermore, Iba et al. (2021) demonstrated that organizational culture, together with motivation and job satisfaction, is associated with teacher performance. These findings indicate that school culture serves as an important contextual factor that can either strengthen or weaken teacher performance, depending on the quality of shared values and practices (Wulandari & Nugroho, 2020; Saragih & Suhendro, 2020; Iba et al., 2021).

Conceptually, teacher performance refers to the outcomes achieved by teachers in carrying out their professional duties effectively and efficiently. It encompasses planning, implementing, and evaluating instruction, managing classroom activities, and engaging in continuous professional development. As such, teacher performance is a key indicator of educational quality, as it directly influences the effectiveness of teaching and student learning outcomes (Achmadi et al., 2023; Hafidulloh & Mochklas, 2021; Pianda, 2022; Rorimpandey & Widdy, 2020). Teacher performance is shaped by both internal factors—such as competence, motivation, and commitment and external factors, including instructional leadership, school culture, organizational climate, and supervision (Iba et al., 2021; Ismail et al., 2024; Pratiwi & Shabrina, 2021).

Despite extensive studies on these variables, the empirical condition in Dabin III, Mranggen District, Demak Regency, indicates that teacher performance remains a concern. Based on preliminary data from the 2025 Education Report Card, several

indicators of learning quality such as student numeracy, teacher reflection support, and resource utilization are still relatively low. Additionally, interviews with supervisors and teachers reveal issues related to instructional supervision, teacher involvement in decision-making, recognition of teacher performance, workload, communication, and managerial support. These conditions suggest that teacher performance problems cannot be explained solely by individual competence but must be analyzed in relation to instructional leadership, work motivation, and school culture.

Based on the theoretical and empirical review, it can be argued that instructional leadership provides direction and professional support, work motivation drives teachers' internal engagement, and school culture shapes the organizational environment in which teachers operate. These three variables are interconnected and collectively influence teacher performance (Achmadi et al., 2023; Bush, 2023; Pianda, 2022; Uno, 2023; Widodo & Nurhayati, 2022). Therefore, this study aims to examine the influence of principals' instructional leadership, work motivation, and school culture on elementary school teachers' performance in Dabin III, Mranggen District, Demak Regency. The findings are expected to contribute both theoretically to the field of educational management and practically to the development of strategies for improving teacher performance.

2. Methodology

This study employed a quantitative approach with a causal associative research type. The quantitative approach was chosen because the study aims to examine the effects of principals' instructional leadership, work motivation, and school culture on teacher performance objectively through statistical analysis. The research design used was *ex post facto*, as the variables under investigation naturally exist within the school context and are not manipulated by the researcher. Through this design, the study seeks to explain causal relationships among variables based on existing empirical conditions (Creswell & Creswell, 2022; Sugiyono, 2025). The study was conducted in public elementary schools within Dabin III, Mranggen District, Demak Regency, covering a total of 12 schools. The research was carried out from the proposal development stage in April 2025 until the thesis examination in May 2026. The selection of the research site was based on its relevance to the research focus, particularly regarding principals' instructional leadership, work motivation, school culture, and teacher performance.

Population and Sample

The population of this study consisted of all teachers in public elementary schools in Dabin III, Mranggen District, totaling 139 teachers. The sample was determined using proportional random sampling to ensure that each school was represented proportionally based on the number of teachers. The sample size was calculated using the Slovin formula with a 5% margin of error, resulting in 103 teachers as respondents. Thus, the sample adequately represents the population and allows for

more accurate analysis of relationships among variables (Arikunto, 2020; Sugiyono, 2025).

Research and Operational Definitions of Variables

This study includes one dependent variable and three independent variables. The dependent variable is teacher performance (Y), while the independent variables consist of principals' instructional leadership (X1), work motivation (X2), and school culture (X3). These variables were selected based on their theoretical and empirical relevance to improving teacher performance in elementary schools. Teacher performance is defined as the outcomes achieved by teachers in carrying out their professional duties, including lesson planning, instructional implementation, student assessment, and continuous professional development. This definition positions teacher performance as a manifestation of teachers' competence, responsibility, and effectiveness in performing instructional roles (Pianda, 2022).

Principals' instructional leadership refers to the ability of school principals to establish learning goals, manage instructional programs, create a supportive learning environment, conduct academic supervision, and promote teacher professional development. In this context, principals act as instructional leaders who directly influence the quality of teaching and learning processes (Usman, 2020; Sapitri, 2024). Work motivation is defined as internal and external drives that encourage teachers to perform their duties earnestly, reflected in intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, and goal orientation. It serves as a psychological force influencing teachers' enthusiasm, persistence, and commitment to achieving instructional and organizational goals (Uno, 2023; Sedarmayanti, 2022).

School culture refers to the values, norms, beliefs, traditions, and social interaction patterns that develop within the school environment. It is reflected in shared values, traditions and symbols, performance expectations, leadership and role modeling, collaboration and social relationships, as well as the physical and psychological environment of the school. School culture is understood as an organizational context shaping work behavior, social interaction, and professional habits of school members (Schein & Schein, 2022). Conceptually, the relationships among variables are framed within educational management theory, which posits that principals' instructional leadership, work motivation, and school culture are organizational and psychological factors that collectively influence teacher performance. This framework emphasizes that improving teacher performance depends not only on individual capacity but also on leadership systems and organizational culture within schools (Suharto & Wahab, 2022).

Research Instrument

The research instrument used was a structured questionnaire with a five-point Likert scale: strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree. The instrument was developed based on operational indicators of each research variable. The use of a closed-ended questionnaire facilitates structured measurement of respondents'

perceptions and enables quantitative data analysis (Arikunto, 2020; Sugiyono, 2025). The instrument consisted of 36 items for teacher performance, 36 items for principals' instructional leadership, 42 items for work motivation, and 36 items for school culture. All items were designed to capture respondents' perceptions quantitatively.

Validity and Reliability Testing

Prior to the main study, the instrument was pilot-tested on 30 respondents outside the research sample. Validity testing included content validity through expert judgment and construct validity using Pearson Product Moment correlation. The results showed that all items across the four variables had correlation values higher than the critical value ($r\text{-table} = 0.361$), indicating that all items were valid (Arikunto, 2020; Sugiyono, 2025). Reliability testing was conducted using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient. The results showed reliability coefficients of 0.985 for instructional leadership, 0.980 for work motivation, 0.987 for school culture, and 0.972 for teacher performance. All values exceeded the threshold of 0.70, indicating that the instruments were highly reliable and suitable for use in the study (Creswell & Creswell, 2022).

Data Collection Techniques

Data were collected through questionnaires, interviews, and documentation. The questionnaire served as the primary method for obtaining quantitative data from respondents. Semi-structured interviews were used as a supporting method to gain deeper insights into instructional leadership, work motivation, school culture, and teacher performance. Documentation was used to complement and validate the data obtained from questionnaires and interviews. The combination of these methods enhances data richness and strengthens validity through triangulation (Creswell & Creswell, 2022; Sugiyono, 2025).

Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis was conducted in three stages: descriptive analysis, assumption testing, and inferential analysis. Descriptive analysis was used to describe the condition of each variable through mean, standard deviation, minimum score, maximum score, and categorical classification. Assumption testing included tests of normality, linearity, multicollinearity, and heteroscedasticity to ensure that the data met the required assumptions before hypothesis testing. After meeting all assumptions, hypothesis testing was conducted using multiple linear regression analysis with the assistance of SPSS software. This analysis was used to examine both partial and simultaneous effects of principals' instructional leadership, work motivation, and school culture on teacher performance. The contribution of independent variables to the dependent variable was measured using the coefficient of determination (Creswell & Creswell, 2022; Sugiyono, 2025).

Research Ethics

This study adhered to ethical research principles, including obtaining respondents' consent to participate, ensuring the confidentiality of respondents' identities, and using the data solely for academic purposes. Ethical considerations were carefully maintained throughout the research process to protect participants' rights and privacy. However, the survey method using questionnaires has limitations, as it relies heavily on respondents' honesty and subjectivity. Therefore, questionnaire data were supported by interviews and documentation to enhance the validity and reliability of the findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2022).

3. Results and Discussion

This study involved 103 public elementary school teachers in Dabin III, Mranggen District, Demak Regency. Descriptive analysis was conducted to examine general trends in the variables of principals' instructional leadership, work motivation, school culture, and teacher performance. The results indicate that all variables have high mean scores, with standard deviations relatively smaller than their respective means. This suggests that the data are relatively homogeneous and that respondents' perceptions are fairly consistent. Overall, all variables fall into the *very high* category, as summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Research Variables

Variable	Items	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Instructional Leadership	36	103	141.00	175.00	153.5340	8.57472
Work Motivation	42	103	164.00	196.00	174.4272	6.96575
School Culture	36	103	141.00	177.00	152.8738	9.14232
Teacher Performance	36	103	141.00	176.00	153.0485	9.70080

Source: SPSS output, 2026.

Based on Table 1, the high score of instructional leadership reflects strong implementation across its key indicators, including the principal's role in setting clear instructional goals, supervising teaching and learning processes, and providing feedback for teacher improvement. More specifically, the high mean score suggests that indicators such as (1) formulation and communication of instructional vision, (2) systematic academic supervision, and (3) continuous professional guidance for teachers are consistently perceived as being effectively implemented. These indicators directly represent the operational dimensions measured in the research instrument and explain why instructional leadership emerges as a strong variable in the descriptive analysis.

Similarly, the high level of work motivation indicates that teachers demonstrate strong internal and external motivational dimensions, such as achievement orientation, commitment to tasks, and responsibility toward teaching duties. At the indicator level, this finding reflects high scores in dimensions such as intrinsic motivation (e.g., personal responsibility and teaching commitment), extrinsic

motivation (e.g., recognition and work environment support), and persistence in completing instructional tasks. However, although these indicators are descriptively strong, their contribution to performance needs to be further examined in the regression analysis.

The high score of school culture suggests the presence of supportive norms, collaboration among teachers, and shared values within the school environment. This result is closely related to key indicators such as collegial collaboration, shared vision and values, discipline norms, and a supportive working climate. These dimensions indicate that the organizational environment provides a conducive context for teaching and learning activities. Meanwhile, teacher performance reflects strong achievement across instructional planning, classroom implementation, and evaluation practices as measured in the study instrument. In particular, the high score represents strong performance in indicators such as lesson planning (RPP preparation), classroom management, implementation of student-centered learning, and learning evaluation practices.

Work motivation has the highest mean score (174.4272), while school culture has the lowest (152.8738), although all variables remain within the very high category. This indicates that overall respondents perceive each variable positively within the research context. The largest standard deviation is found in teacher performance (9.70080), indicating relatively greater variation in respondents' perceptions. Conversely, work motivation shows the smallest standard deviation, suggesting it is the most stable variable among respondents and reflects relatively consistent responses across individuals. The categorization of each research variable based on its empirical mean and predefined interval criteria is presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Category of Variable Scores

Variable	Very High Interval	Empirical Mean	Category
Instructional Leadership	145–180	153.53	Very High
Work Motivation	169–210	174.43	Very High
School Culture	145–180	152.87	Very High
Teacher Performance	145–180	153.05	Very High

Source: SPSS output, 2026.

Table 2 shows that all variables fall within the very high category. This indicates that principals are perceived to have implemented instructional leadership effectively, teachers demonstrate very high work motivation, school culture is strong, and teacher performance is also at a very high level. When examined from the indicator perspective, these categories confirm that most respondents consistently rate high on specific dimensions such as instructional supervision, teacher collaboration, and commitment to teaching tasks. This alignment between empirical scores and operational indicators strengthens the construct validity of the measured variables. However, since the data are perception-based, these findings should be interpreted cautiously due to the potential for response bias.

Prior to hypothesis testing, classical assumption tests were conducted. The normality test using Kolmogorov–Smirnov yielded a significance value of 0.039.

Although this value is slightly below 0.05, the Normal P–P Plot shows that residuals are distributed along the diagonal line, indicating approximate normality. Linearity testing shows that the deviation from linearity values for instructional leadership, work motivation, and school culture are 0.133, 0.098, and 0.116, respectively (all > 0.05), indicating linear relationships with teacher performance. Multicollinearity testing shows tolerance values of 0.605, 0.625, and 0.535, and VIF values of 1.654, 1.601, and 1.869, respectively. These results confirm the absence of multicollinearity. The heteroscedasticity test indicates that residuals are randomly distributed without a clear pattern, suggesting no heteroscedasticity. Therefore, the regression model satisfies all assumptions.

The regression equation is: $Y = 19.664 + 0.610X_1 - 0.102X_2 + 0.377X_3$. This equation indicates that instructional leadership and school culture have positive effects on teacher performance, while work motivation has a negative coefficient. The positive and significant effect of instructional leadership ($\beta = 0.610$; $p = 0.000$) indicates that improvements in key dimensions such as goal setting, instructional supervision, and professional support for teachers are directly associated with higher teacher performance. More specifically, indicators such as the principal's ability to conduct structured classroom supervision, provide constructive feedback, and align instructional goals with curriculum standards contribute directly to improvements in teacher performance indicators, including lesson planning quality, classroom management effectiveness, and student assessment practices. This shows a clear linkage between leadership indicators (X_1) and performance indicators (Y).

Similarly, the significant effect of school culture ($\beta = 0.377$; $p = 0.000$) suggests that indicators such as collegial collaboration, shared values, and a supportive work environment contribute meaningfully to enhancing teachers' instructional effectiveness. At the operational level, dimensions such as collaborative planning among teachers, adherence to shared school norms, and mutual support in instructional practices create conditions that strengthen teacher performance indicators, particularly in implementing consistent teaching strategies and improving classroom engagement.

In contrast, work motivation does not have a significant effect ($p = 0.376$). This finding indicates that although teachers report high levels of motivation, these motivational dimensions do not necessarily translate directly into measurable improvements in performance. From an indicator perspective, dimensions such as responsibility, commitment, and achievement orientation are indeed high; however, these indicators may function as internal dispositions that require reinforcement through external factors (e.g., leadership practices and school systems) before they can significantly influence observable performance indicators such as instructional delivery and evaluation. The F-test result shows $F = 45.781$ with $p = 0.000$, indicating that all independent variables simultaneously have a significant effect on teacher performance. The results of this analysis are presented in Table 3 below.

Table 3. Dominant Variables

Variable	Standardized Beta	Description
Instructional Leadership	0.610	Most dominant
Work Motivation	0.102	Not significant
School Culture	0.377	Significant

Based on Table 3, instructional leadership is the most dominant variable ($\beta = 0.610$), followed by school culture ($\beta = 0.377$), while work motivation has the lowest and non-significant value ($\beta = 0.102$). This dominance indicates that leadership practices reflected in key indicators such as instructional supervision, feedback provision, and alignment of teaching goals have the strongest influence on teacher performance. In particular, the dominance of instructional leadership confirms that indicators such as supervision intensity, feedback quality, and professional coaching play a crucial role in shaping teacher performance indicators, especially in planning, implementation, and evaluation of learning. Although school culture also shows a significant effect, its contribution is relatively lower, suggesting that collaborative norms and shared values function as reinforcing factors. This implies that cultural indicators such as teamwork and shared commitment act as enabling conditions that strengthen, rather than independently determine, teacher performance outcomes. Meanwhile, the low and non-significant coefficient of work motivation indicates that motivational indicators alone may not be sufficient to produce meaningful improvements. This suggests that high scores on motivation indicators need to be supported by strong organizational systems to be translated into observable performance improvements.

The R Square value of 0.581 shows that 58.1% of the variance in teacher performance is explained by instructional leadership, work motivation, and school culture. This indicates that the combined contribution of leadership indicators (e.g., supervision and feedback), cultural indicators (e.g., collaboration and shared norms), and motivational indicators explains a substantial proportion of variation in teacher performance indicators measured in this study. Overall, the regression model is adequate in explaining variations in teacher performance. Importantly, the results demonstrate that teacher performance is more strongly associated with organizational and leadership-related indicators than with individual motivational factors. This finding confirms that indicators embedded within school management practices particularly instructional leadership and school culture play a more decisive role in shaping teacher performance compared to internal motivational indicators alone, thereby highlighting the importance of strengthening school-level systems to improve educational outcomes.

The findings indicate that principals' instructional leadership has a positive and significant effect on teacher performance in public elementary schools in Dabin III, Mranggen District, Demak Regency. This suggests that principals who effectively perform instructional leadership roles are better able to guide, monitor, and direct teachers toward improving instructional quality. Theoretically, this finding reinforces the view that instructional leadership is closely aligned with the core of the educational process teaching and learning (Bush, 2023; Hatta, 2024; Sapitri, 2024; Usman, 2020). However, beyond confirming existing theory, this finding also

indicates that instructional leadership may function as a dominant structural driver that compensates for limitations in other variables, such as individual motivation. In this context, leadership does not merely support performance but actively shapes how teachers interpret and carry out their professional roles. This finding is supported by previous studies (Aslam et al., 2022; Maula & Hidayatullah, 2024; Kamalia et al., 2022). Compared to prior studies, the relatively large coefficient found in this study suggests a stronger-than-usual dependence on leadership, indicating that in this specific context, teachers' performance may be more structurally regulated rather than individually driven. This nuance provides an important extension to existing literature by highlighting contextual variability in the strength of instructional leadership effects.

The results show that work motivation does not have a significant effect on teacher performance. This finding is noteworthy, as motivation is often theoretically regarded as a key psychological determinant of work behavior. Unlike the dominant body of empirical research that consistently reports a positive and significant relationship between motivation and performance, this study presents a contradictory result that cannot be adequately explained through conventional linear assumptions. Therefore, this finding should not be interpreted merely as a lack of influence, but rather as an indication of more complex underlying mechanisms. First, when contrasted with studies that found significant effects of motivation (e.g., Vo et al., 2022; Bela et al., 2025), this result suggests that the role of motivation may be context-dependent. In highly structured school environments, where instructional processes are tightly guided by principals and institutional systems, individual motivation may become less salient as a predictor of performance. In such cases, behavioral compliance and performance outcomes may be driven more by external regulation than by internal psychological states.

Several explanations can be proposed. First, the descriptive results show that all variables, including motivation, fall into the "very high" category, indicating a potential ceiling effect. This ceiling effect is not merely a statistical artifact but has important methodological implications, as it reduces score variability and weakens the covariance structure required to detect significant relationships. Consequently, even if motivation conceptually influences performance, its statistical effect may be suppressed due to limited dispersion in the data. Second, teachers' motivation levels are likely relatively homogeneous. This homogeneity suggests that motivation does not function as a differentiating variable among respondents, thereby weakening its explanatory power in regression analysis. This condition highlights a critical limitation of *ex post facto* designs, where naturally occurring data distributions cannot be controlled, potentially leading to restricted variance and attenuated relationships among variables. Third, the teaching profession is strongly normative. Teachers may perform their duties based on professional standards, institutional expectations, and accountability systems rather than purely on intrinsic motivation. In such conditions, performance becomes structurally regulated rather than psychologically driven. This interpretation challenges traditional motivation-performance models by suggesting that, in institutional contexts such as schools, compliance with norms and systems may override individual motivational differences. Fourth, the non-significant result may also be influenced by

measurement limitations, where the motivation instrument captures general attitudes (e.g., responsibility, commitment) but may not fully reflect performance-related motivational behaviors. This raises concerns about construct validity, particularly whether the instrument adequately captures task-specific or behaviorally anchored motivation that is directly linked to performance outcomes.

From a theoretical perspective, these results can be explained through contingency theory and path-goal theory (Northouse, 2021; Yukl, 2024). However, this study extends these theories by showing that motivation alone may not be sufficient to influence performance unless supported by strong leadership structures and organizational culture. More importantly, this finding suggests a possible indirect or mediated role of motivation, where its effect on performance is activated through leadership practices or organizational conditions rather than operating as a direct predictor. This opens opportunities for future research to test mediation or moderation models involving motivation. This finding aligns with prior research (Iba et al., 2021; Suheri et al., 2021; Vo et al., 2022; Bela et al., 2025). At the same time, it contrasts with studies that found a direct effect of motivation, suggesting that the role of motivation may vary depending on context, measurement approach, and data characteristics. Thus, this study contributes to the literature by providing empirical evidence that challenges the universality of motivation-performance relationships and emphasizes the importance of contextual and methodological considerations.

The findings reveal that school culture has a positive and significant effect on teacher performance. Theoretically, this finding is consistent with the view that school culture comprises shared values, norms, beliefs, and practices (Mardapi, 2023; Schein & Schein, 2022; Widodo & Nurhayati, 2022; Zamroni, 2022). However, this study also indicates that school culture may function as a reinforcing system that stabilizes teacher performance across individuals, particularly in contexts where individual differences (such as motivation) are less pronounced. Previous studies support this finding (Saragih & Suhendro, 2020; Iba et al., 2021; Wulandari & Nugroho, 2020; Rohyadi et al., 2025). Furthermore, the high and homogeneous scores of school culture suggest that it operates as a shared institutional norm, which not only supports performance but also reduces variability in how teachers perform their roles. This reinforces the idea that culture acts as a collective control mechanism within the organization.

The simultaneous test results indicate that all variables collectively have a significant effect on teacher performance. However, this result should be interpreted critically, as the significant simultaneous effect does not imply that all variables contribute equally. Instead, the findings suggest that the model is primarily driven by instructional leadership and school culture, while motivation contributes minimally. This imbalance highlights a structural dominance pattern, where organizational variables outweigh individual psychological variables in explaining performance outcomes. The Adjusted R Square value of 0.568 indicates that 56.8% of the variance is explained. This also implies that a substantial proportion (43.2%) of teacher performance is influenced by other factors not

included in the model, such as teacher competence, workload, job satisfaction, or external policy conditions (Nurohman et al., 2025).

The analysis identifies instructional leadership as the most dominant variable. This dominance suggests that teacher performance in this context is more strongly shaped by external organizational factors than by internal psychological factors. In other words, leadership functions as a primary lever of performance regulation within the school system. This finding is consistent with previous studies (Aslam et al., 2022; Maula & Hidayatullah, 2024; Kustini et al., 2025; Hikmah et al., 2025). However, the strong dominance observed also raises critical questions regarding teacher autonomy, as excessive reliance on leadership may limit teachers' capacity for self-directed professional growth and innovation. This issue is important for long-term sustainability of educational improvement.

The findings have both theoretical and practical implications. Theoretically, this study contributes by demonstrating that the relationship between motivation and performance is not always direct, but may be contingent upon contextual and organizational conditions. This challenges linear assumptions commonly found in motivation-performance models. Methodologically, the study highlights the potential influence of ceiling effects and homogeneous data distributions in quantitative research, which may obscure relationships between variables. Additionally, the limitations of the *ex post facto* design should be acknowledged, as it restricts causal inference and limits the ability to capture dynamic interactions among variables over time.

Practically, improving teacher performance should prioritize instructional leadership and school culture. However, interventions should also consider balancing structural support with strategies that enhance individual teacher agency and differentiated motivation. Overall, improving teacher performance requires a comprehensive approach. Future research is strongly recommended to employ longitudinal or mixed-method designs, as well as more sensitive measurement instruments, to better capture the complex and potentially non-linear relationships between motivation and performance.

4. Conclusion

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that principals' instructional leadership, work motivation, school culture, and elementary school teachers' performance in Dabin III, Mranggen District, Demak Regency are all categorized as very high. The results of the simultaneous test indicate that principals' instructional leadership, work motivation, and school culture collectively have a significant effect on teacher performance. This finding suggests that teacher performance is the result of the interaction between various organizational and individual factors within the school environment.

Partially, principals' instructional leadership has a positive and significant effect on teacher performance, indicating that the more effectively principals perform their

instructional leadership roles, the higher the level of teacher performance. School culture also has a positive and significant effect on teacher performance, meaning that a school environment characterized by strong values, norms, work habits, and a conducive climate can enhance the quality of teachers' professional practices. In contrast, work motivation does not have a significant effect on teacher performance. This result implies that, within the context of this study, teachers' work motivation does not function as an independent determinant in explaining variations in teacher performance. The study also reveals that principals' instructional leadership is the most dominant variable influencing teacher performance. Therefore, efforts to improve elementary school teachers' performance in Dabin III, Mranggen District, Demak Regency should prioritize strengthening principals' capacity as instructional leaders, accompanied by the development of a positive, collaborative school culture that is oriented toward improving the quality of teaching and learning.

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