

Transformational School Leadership in Enhancing School Effectiveness: A Systematic Literature Review

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Abstract

This study aims to examine how transformational school leadership influences school effectiveness by conducting a systematic literature review. The research utilized the PRISMA framework to ensure a rigorous and transparent methodology, screening 626 studies and selecting six articles that met defined inclusion criteria. The review reveals that transformational leaders play a vital role in building a positive school culture, enhancing teaching quality, and increasing student achievement. Key findings show that transformational leadership encourages collaboration, sparks innovation, and tackles contextual challenges such as limited resources and resistance to change. By synthesizing the current literature, this study identifies gaps and offers insights into combining transformational leadership with other models to maximize impact. The results emphasize the significance of leadership practices in fostering supportive, innovative, and effective educational environments.

Keywords: Collaboration; Innovation; Leadership; School effectiveness

Introduction

In today's rapidly changing educational landscape, effective school leadership is crucial for fostering environments where both teachers and students can thrive (Lee-Piggott, 2020; Najid, 2022). Schools face numerous challenges, including increasing diversity, technological advancements, and heightened accountability measures. Addressing these challenges requires leadership that not only manages administrative tasks but also inspires and motivates all stakeholders towards a shared vision of success (Doulougeri et al., 2024; Aguilar & Soques, 2015; Gaskell & Mills, 2014; Bawa'aneh, 2021; Metruk, 2022).

Transformational school leadership emerges as a dynamic and influential approach that significantly impacts school culture and effectiveness (Nir & Piro, 2016; Campbell et al., 2019; Tusianah et al., 2023). This leadership style is characterized by principals and educational leaders who inspire, motivate, and intellectually stimulate their staff. Transformational leaders go beyond traditional managerial roles by fostering an environment of trust, encouraging professional growth, and developing a collective vision for the school's future. They focus on individualizing support, challenging existing practices, and promoting innovation to enhance educational outcome (Hadi et al., 2024; Wilson Heenan et al., 2024; Rashwan & Ghaly, 2022).

By promoting values such as collaboration, unity of purpose, and continuous professional development, transformational leaders cultivate a supportive and inclusive school culture (Wang et al., 2024; Dugan, 2012). This positive culture is essential for creating an environment where educators feel valued and empowered to

contribute meaningfully. Teachers under transformational leadership often experience increased motivation, job satisfaction, and a stronger commitment to the school's goals. This supportive environment not only enhances teacher performance but also positively influences student achievement and overall school effectiveness.

Recent literature underscores the significant influence of transformational school leadership on shaping positive school culture and enhancing school effectiveness. Studies have consistently demonstrated that transformational leadership practices lead to increased teacher motivation, job satisfaction, and collective efficacy (Maheshwari, 2022; Anderson, 2008; Berkovich & Hassan, 2023). For instance, research indicates that transformational leadership enhances teachers' belief in their ability to achieve educational goals, which is mediated by a strong school culture and collaborative practices.

Despite these positive findings, practical challenges exist. The success of transformational leadership often depends on addressing obstacles such as resource limitations, resistance to change, and the need for strong interpersonal relationships. Moreover, there is a growing recognition of the potential benefits of integrating transformational leadership with other models, such as distributed leadership, to maximize impact.

While the benefits of transformational leadership are well-documented, gaps remain in understanding the specific mechanisms through which it affects school culture and effectiveness. Questions persist about how contextual factors such as cultural differences, organizational structures, and educational policies—influence the implementation and outcomes of transformational leadership practices. Furthermore, the interplay between transformational leadership and other leadership models is not fully explored.

Given these gaps, a systematic literature review is necessary to synthesize existing research and provide a comprehensive understanding of the role of transformational school leadership (Li & Karanxha, 2022; Wilson Heenan et al., 2023). This review will help identify patterns, contradictions, and areas lacking sufficient evidence, thereby informing future research and practice. By critically analyzing the current body of literature, we aim to uncover how transformational leadership can be effectively leveraged to shape positive school culture and enhance school effectiveness across diverse educational settings.

Methodology

This article uses a comprehensive overview of their systematic literature review (SLR) methodology, emphasizing its structured and transparent nature for evaluating and synthesizing existing research (Nooh, 2021; Phillips et al., 2024; Turan & Yilmaz, 2024). They utilize the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) framework as a foundation, ensuring clarity and rigor throughout the process. The research questions (RQs) were meticulously crafted to align with the study's objectives, followed by a systematic search strategy using Scopus database, tailored keyword strings, and Boolean operators to ensure a comprehensive yet focused dataset (Suyo-Vega et al., 2022). The identification phase involved collecting a broad spectrum of studies while removing duplicates, and the screening process entailed a hierarchical review of titles, abstracts, and full texts against predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria.

Prisma

This comprehensive review was guided by the PRISMA publication standard (Stracke et al., 2023; Samala et al., 2023). PRISMA helps authors define inclusion and exclusion criteria, develop RQ that facilitate systematic reviews, and try to sift through an enormous quantity of scientific literature in a short period of time

(Sharma & Bhattarai, 2022). In the current case, the authors' thorough keyword searches on the Transformational School Leadership were directed by PRISMA. After that, authors classified the data for use in teaching quality.

Identification

The process of identification is employed to enhance the essential keywords. This is significant since the identification process increases the likelihood that added relevant research will be located for the review. Following the selection of a few keywords, related terms are located by searching dictionaries, thesaurus, encyclopedias, and past research. During the creation of the search strings for the databases of Scopus all relevant phrases were chosen as presented in Table 1. During the first stage of the systematic review process, 1.114 publications were successfully extracted from the databases for the current study.

Table 1. Search String

Database	Criteria	Search String
Scopus	Title	Transformational AND School AND Leadership OR Culture
	Year	2000-2024
	Subjektif Area	Sosial Science
	Document	Artikel Journal
	Language	English

Screening

The aim of the screening process is to ensure that the materials being collected for a potentially relevant study are appropriate for the chosen research topic or topics. A frequent content-related criterion used in the screening process involves categorizing research materials according to the role of transformational leadership enhance school effectiveness through the creation of a collaborative and innovative culture, while also supporting professional development and individual well-being within the educational environment. The list of papers that were searched during this phase will be reviewed to remove any duplicates. After publications were eliminated in the first screening stage, 626 publications were chosen for review in the second screening stage based on the investigation's exclusion and inclusion criteria as presented in Table 2. This criterion was selected before any others since helpful guidance can usually be found in research articles. It also includes meta- synthesis, book analyses, book series, and book reviews.

Table 2. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Criteria	Inclusion	Exclusion
Language	English	Non-English
Time	2000-2026	Before 20000

Type	Article Journal	Non-Article Journal
Subject	Sosial Science-Education	Non-Social science
Publication Stage	Final	In-press

Eligibility

There are 28 items ready for the eligibility phase, which is the third step. At this phase, the titles and main points of each article were carefully examined to make sure the articles met the inclusion requirements and the goals of the current study. 22 articles were therefore eliminated because they were either out of field, their full text access articles were not substantiated by empirical data, or their titles had no bearing on the purpose of the study. At last, 6 articles are accessible for examination as presented in Figure 1.

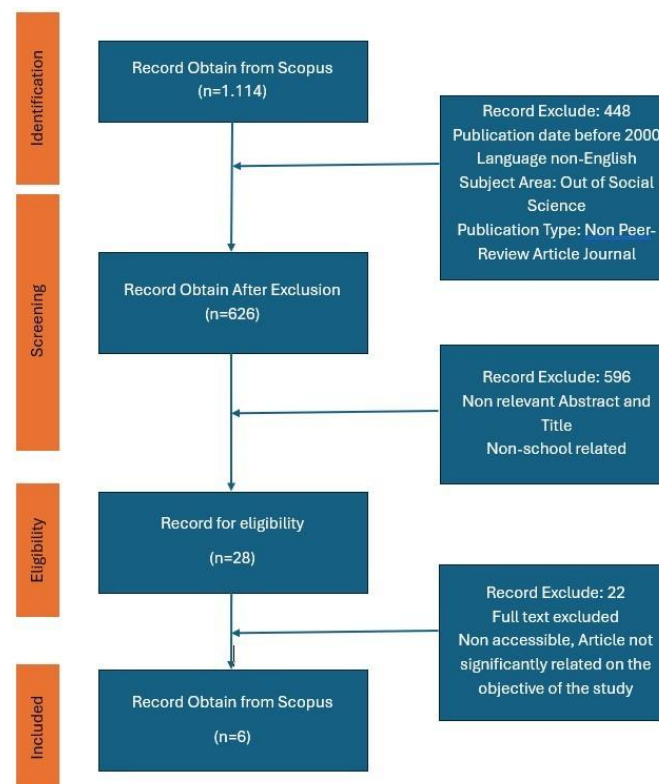


Figure 1. Prisma Flow

Results and Discussion

General Information of Selected Studies

The selected studies explore the implementation and impact of transformational leadership in various educational settings across different countries. These studies were conducted in diverse contexts, including

Ireland, Malaysia, Türkiye, Yemen, Germany, the United Kingdom, and Jordan. This geographical variation highlights the global relevance of transformational leadership in addressing challenges in education. Each study focuses on distinct aspects of transformational leadership. For example, the study by [Wilson Heenan et al \(2024\)](#), examines how transformational leadership manifests in Irish primary schools, emphasizing its benefits and challenges. Similarly, [Veeriah et al \(2017\)](#), investigate the relationship between transformational leadership and school culture in Malaysia's primary cluster schools, offering a longitudinal perspective on leadership practices. Meanwhile, Çakır & Özgenel (2024), delve into the mediating role of school culture in enhancing school happiness in Türkiye, highlighting the interplay between leadership and emotional well-being in schools.

Other studies emphasize the contextual challenges and opportunities of transformational leadership. (Alzoraiki et al., [Tahun]) focus on Yemeni public schools, examining how transformational leadership enhances teaching performance and school culture amidst socio- political instability. In Germany and the UK, explore the role of transformational leadership in fostering deeper learning and innovative school practices, addressing the demands of 21st-century education. Additionally, assess how headteachers' transformational leadership influences teacher job satisfaction in Malaysian and Jordanian schools, linking effective leadership to improved organizational outcomes.

Table 3. General Information of selected studies

No	Article	Title	Country
1	[12]	Enactment of Transformational School Leadership Insights from Primary School and System Leaders	Ireland
2	[28]	Teachers' Perception on the Relationships Between Transformational Leadership and School Culture I Primary Cluster Schools	Malaysia
3	[29]	The Relationship Between Transformational Leadership and School Happiness: The Mediator Role of School Culture	Türkiye
4	[30]	The Role of Transformational Leadership in Enhancing School Culture and Teaching Performance in Yemeni Public Schools	Yemen
5	[31]	Transformational Leadership for Deeper Learning: Shaping Innovative School Practices for Enhanced Learning	Germany, UK
6	[32]	Why Teacher Job Satisfaction Matters: Strengthening Headteachers' Transformational Leadership in Sustainable Development Education	Malaysia, Jordan

Transformational Leadership and Its Impact on School Effectiveness

Define abbreviations and acronyms the first time they are used in the text, even after they have been defined in the abstract. Abbreviations such as IEEE, SI, MKS, CGS, sc, dc, and rms do not have to be defined. Do not use abbreviations in the title or heads unless they are unavoidable. Transformational leadership has emerged as a critical factor in driving school effectiveness. This leadership style emphasizes inspiring and motivating educators to achieve higher levels of performance, fostering a culture of collaboration, and driving student

achievement through innovative practices. This review explores how transformational leadership influences three key dimensions of school effectiveness: quality teaching, student achievement, and school culture.

Quality Teaching

Transformational leaders play a pivotal role in enhancing the quality of teaching by supporting professional development and fostering innovation among teachers. Leaders who prioritize intellectual stimulation encourage teachers to explore creative teaching strategies and adapt to diverse classroom needs. For example, by promoting collaboration, teachers are empowered to co-design interdisciplinary learning units that integrate traditional and digital methodologies (Wilson Heenan et al., 2024). indicate that school leaders who adopt transformational leadership styles have a broader vision and focus on systemic factors such as teacher collaboration, assessment regulations, and effective use of time and space in schools. This collaborative approach not only enriches the teaching experience but also ensures that teachers are better equipped to meet the varied learning needs of their students.

Moreover, transformational leadership enhances teacher motivation and engagement. Inspirational motivation, a key component of transformational leadership, fosters a sense of purpose and commitment among teachers. Leaders who clearly articulate a shared vision inspire teachers to align their efforts with the broader goals of the school, leading to improved instructional quality (Veeriah et al., 2017). This sense of alignment and purpose encourages teachers to go beyond traditional methods, experimenting with innovative teaching techniques that enhance student learning outcomes.

Student Achievement

Transformational leadership directly impacts student achievement by creating a vision for success and fostering an improved learning environment. Leaders who focus on setting high expectations and aligning teacher efforts with student goals create an environment where academic excellence thrives. Transformational leaders establish a shared vision, ensuring that all stakeholders including teachers, students, and parents work collaboratively towards achieving academic success (Wilson Heenan et al., 2024; Rashwan & Ghaly, 2022). This shared vision fosters a sense of accountability and focus, which is reflected in improved student performance. Additionally, transformational leaders drive systemic changes in teaching methodologies that enhance student engagement and outcomes. For example, leaders who emphasize intellectual stimulation encourage the integration of formative assessments and hybrid learning spaces. These innovations allow for more personalized and effective learning experiences, helping students develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills. By creating an environment where students feel supported and challenged, transformational leadership ensures that learning extends beyond the classroom and prepares students for real- world challenges.

School Culture

A positive and collaborative school culture is one of the most significant outcomes of transformational leadership. Transformational leaders foster a sense of trust, mutual respect, and shared purpose among staff, students, and the wider school community. By modeling idealized influence, leaders inspire others to adopt shared values and goals, creating a cohesive and supportive environment (Wilson Heenan et al., 2024);

(Veeriah et al., 2017). This cultural transformation is essential for driving long-term improvements in school effectiveness.

Moreover, transformational leaders excel in navigating and managing change, which is crucial in today's dynamic educational landscape. They empower teams to embrace new challenges and foster resilience, especially in schools operating in socio-political or economically challenging contexts. For instance, in schools facing systemic crises, transformational leadership has been shown to cultivate adaptability and innovation, ensuring that both teachers and students can thrive despite external pressures.

School culture also acts as a mediating factor that amplifies the benefits of transformational leadership on teaching performance and student outcomes. Research has shown that a strong, positive culture enhances teacher motivation, commitment, and satisfaction, which in turn leads to better educational practices and student achievement (Çakır & Özgenel, 2024). By promoting collaboration, shared goals, and a supportive environment, transformational leaders ensure that the entire school community works together to achieve excellence.

Conclusion

Transformational leadership has proven to be a powerful approach for enhancing school effectiveness across multiple dimensions. By supporting professional development and fostering innovation, it elevates the quality of teaching. Through the establishment of a shared vision and the promotion of systemic changes, it drives student achievement. Finally, by cultivating a positive and resilient school culture, transformational leadership ensures that schools are well-equipped to navigate challenges and achieve sustained success. The findings underscore the importance of transformational leadership in creating an educational environment where both teachers and students can thrive. As schools continue to face complex challenges in an ever-changing world, the adoption of transformational leadership practices will remain essential for driving progress and ensuring that education systems are prepared for the future. By focusing on collaboration, innovation, and a shared sense of purpose, transformational leaders not only enhance school effectiveness but also contribute to the broader goal of empowering communities through education.

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