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Transformational Leadership and Team Synergy in Improving Communication and Collaboration in Educational Settings

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the impact of transformational leadership on team synergy, communication, and collaboration in educational environments. The purpose of the research is to examine how transformational leadership enhances team dynamics by fostering trust, communication, and participatory decision-making among teachers and staff. Utilizing a qualitative phenomenological methodology, in-depth interviews were conducted with school leaders, teachers, and administrative staff, complemented by participatory observation and document analysis. The results reveal that transformational leadership significantly improves collaboration by encouraging open communication and empowering team members to take initiative. Teachers reported feeling more motivated to innovate in their teaching methods and engage in interdisciplinary collaboration. However, challenges such as staff resistance and limited resources hindered the full adoption of collaborative practices in some schools. The study also highlights varying levels of team participation, which indicates that the effectiveness of transformational leadership depends on the leader's ability to engage all team members. The major conclusion of the study is that transformational leadership positively influences team synergy through enhanced trust and collaborative problem-solving. The findings provide important practical insights for educational leaders, suggesting that transformational leadership fosters a more inclusive and innovative school environment. This research contributes to the field by emphasizing the need for flexible leadership approaches that adapt to team dynamics and the critical importance of institutional support and resources to fully realize the benefits of transformational leadership in educational settings.

Keywords: Transformational Leadership in Education, Team Synergy and Communication, Collaboration in Educational Teams, Trust and Team Dynamics, Participatory Decision-Making in Schools.

INTRODUCTION

Transformational leadership has gained widespread attention in research for its ability to inspire change and innovation in various sectors, including education. Transformational leadership not only plays a crucial role in promoting innovation in schools by creating a vision of the future, building a culture of collaboration, and empowering individuals to become leaders, but it has also been shown to contribute to product and process innovation in higher education institutions through increased knowledge sharing and team collaboration (Al-Husseini et al., 2019), as well as inspiring innovative work behaviors among employees through motivation to learn and creativity in solving problems (Afsar & Umrani, 2019). Other research has also shown that transformational leadership plays an important role in improving innovation and performance through better management of team collaboration (Jiang & Chen, 2018).

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Transformational leadership can improve the quality of internal team work and facilitate collaboration between teams by creating better synergies through effective communication and coordination, especially within geographically dispersed teams (Eisenberg et al., 2019). Additionally, this leadership plays an important role in strengthening teamwork and creating a collaborative environment that can improve team performance through the development of emotional engagement and deeper cooperation (0h, 2023). Other studies show that transformational leadership also plays a role in encouraging knowledge sharing within teams, which significantly increases innovation in teamwork through better collaboration (Jiang & Chen, 2018).

Additionally, many studies show that transformational leadership plays a key role in improving team collaboration and communication. For example, research by Eisenberg et al. (2019) shows that transformational leadership is effective in reducing the negative effects of geographically dispersing teams, and facilitating better team communication, ultimately improving team performance (Eisenberg et al., 2019). In addition, research by Oh (2023) found that strong communication in transformationally led teams plays an important role in improving team cohesion, which has a positive impact on team performance (Oh, 2023). Other research by Jiang and Chen (2018) also shows that transformational leadership supports knowledge sharing within teams, which facilitates innovation through better collaboration (Jiang & Chen, 2018).

Although much research has been conducted on the impact of transformational leadership in improving collaboration and communication across different sectors, there is still little deep understanding of how this leadership affects team synergy in educational settings. In particular, how transformational leadership can strengthen communication and collaboration among teachers and education staff in school settings that are often faced with major challenges such as lack of resources, rigid curriculum, and complex managerial hierarchies (Negussie & Hirgo, 2023).

To fill this gap, this study aims to explore how transformational leadership can improve team synergy through better communication and collaboration in educational settings. So by applying transformational leadership principles, schools can increase cooperation between teachers and staff, thereby creating a more effective and inclusive learning environment. This study also seeks to identify specific mechanisms by which transformational leadership contributes to increased team synergy, both through the development of trust between team members, participatory decision-making, and improved communication quality (Bouwmans et al., 2017). This research is important to provide practical guidance to school leaders on how to adopt a transformational leadership style to facilitate better teamwork, which in turn can improve educational outcomes.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a qualitative phenomenological research design to explore the subjective experiences of school leaders, teachers, and administrative staff regarding how transformational leadership affects team synergy, communication, and collaboration in the educational environment. The phenomenological design was chosen because it aims to understand social phenomena (transformational leadership) from the perspective of people

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directly involved (teachers, staff, school leaders) and explore how their experiences shape the perspective of team synergy.

The population in this study is school leaders, teachers, and administrative staff in educational institutions who are known to implement transformational leadership practices. Given the qualitative nature of this study, the purposive sampling technique will be used to select participants who have direct experience and are relevant to the phenomenon being studied.

Inclusion criteria:

- 1. School leaders are known to apply transformational leadership styles.
- 2. Teachers and administrative staff who have worked for a minimum of 3 years under transformational leadership.
- 3. Educational institutions that have implemented significant innovation or change through this leadership practice.

Sample Size: Approximately 15-20 participants will be interviewed in-depth, including school leaders, teachers, and administrative staff. This number was chosen based on the consideration that the qualitative method seeks data *richness rather than* sample size *and until it reaches a saturation point*, where no new information emerges from additional interviews.

In this qualitative approach, the main instrument is the researcher himself. Researchers will use semi-structured interviews and participatory observations to collect in-depth data on participants' experiences, perceptions, and interpretations of transformational leadership and its impact on team synergy.

- 1. Semi-Structured Interview Guide: This guide contains a list of open-ended questions designed to guide conversations but still allow for in-depth exploration. The questions will cover topics such as:
 - 1. How would you describe a principal's leadership style?
 - 2. How does transformational leadership impact communication and collaboration on your team?
 - 3. Do you see a change in team synergy after this leadership implementation?
- 2. Participatory Observation: Researchers will conduct observations in the school environment, especially during team meetings, collaborative discussions, and interactions between team members. Researchers will record interactions between individuals, communication patterns, and how transformational leadership is applied in daily practice.

The research procedure goes through several Phases

- a. Recruitment Phase and Research Ethics:
- ✓ Identifikasi dan Rekrutmen Partisipan: Pemimpin sekolah dan institusi yang dianggap menerapkan kepemimpinan transformasional akan dihubungi untuk berpartisipasi dalam penelitian ini. Setelah mendapatkan persetujuan dari pihak sekolah, peneliti akan merekrut guru dan staf administrasi yang relevan dengan kriteria penelitian.
- ✓ Informed Consent: Semua partisipan akan diberi informasi terperinci tentang tujuan penelitian, metode, hak mereka sebagai partisipan, serta privasi dan

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kerahasiaan. Peneliti akan mendapatkan persetujuan tertulis dari semua partisipan sebelum wawancara atau observasi dilakukan.

b. Fase Pengumpulan Data:

- ✓ Wawancara Mendalam: Peneliti akan melakukan wawancara mendalam yang berlangsung selama 60-90 menit dengan setiap partisipan. Wawancara akan direkam (dengan persetujuan partisipan) dan kemudian ditranskrip untuk analisis lebih lanjut. Wawancara dilakukan baik secara tatap muka maupun daring, tergantung pada kenyamanan partisipan.
- ✓ Observasi Partisipatif: Peneliti akan terlibat dalam kegiatan sehari-hari di sekolah selama 1-2 minggu untuk mengamati bagaimana kepemimpinan transformasional diterapkan dalam interaksi tim. Peneliti akan mencatat dinamika kelompok, pola komunikasi, dan kolaborasi yang terjadi dalam lingkungan pendidikan.
- ✓ Dokumentasi Pendukung: Selain wawancara dan observasi, dokumen-dokumen pendukung seperti laporan rapat, kebijakan sekolah, atau dokumen yang berkaitan dengan penerapan kepemimpinan transformasional akan dikumpulkan sebagai data tambahan.

c. Fase Analisis Data:

- ✓ Transkripsi dan Pengkodean Data: Setelah wawancara ditranskrip, peneliti akan melakukan analisis data dengan metode analisis tematik. Proses pengkodean akan melibatkan identifikasi tema-tema utama yang muncul dari data, seperti pengaruh kepemimpinan pada komunikasi, kolaborasi tim, dan peran kepala sekolah dalam memfasilitasi inovasi.
- ✓ Analisis Tematik: Setelah pengkodean dilakukan, peneliti akan mengkategorikan data ke dalam tema-tema yang relevan, seperti "komunikasi efektif", "keterlibatan tim", dan "kepemimpinan inspiratif". Tema-tema ini akan dianalisis lebih lanjut untuk memahami pola dan hubungan yang ada dalam data.
- ✓ Triangulasi Data: Untuk memastikan validitas temuan, triangulasi akan dilakukan dengan membandingkan data dari wawancara, observasi, dan dokumen-dokumen pendukung. Ini akan membantu memastikan bahwa interpretasi data konsisten dan akurat.

d. Fase Validasi dan Member Checking:

✓ Member Checking: Setelah analisis data awal dilakukan, peneliti akan menghubungi partisipan untuk melakukan member checking, yaitu meminta mereka untuk memverifikasi apakah hasil interpretasi peneliti sesuai dengan pengalaman mereka. Hal ini akan membantu meningkatkan kredibilitas temuan.

e. Fase Pelaporan:

- ✓ Penyusunan Laporan: Hasil penelitian akan disusun dalam bentuk laporan yang kaya akan narasi kualitatif, yang mencakup kutipan langsung dari partisipan, deskripsi tematik mendalam, serta interpretasi menyeluruh tentang bagaimana kepemimpinan transformasional memengaruhi sinergi tim.
- ✓ Penyebaran Temuan: Temuan ini akan dipresentasikan kepada pihak-pihak yang berkepentingan, termasuk pimpinan sekolah dan pengambil keputusan di bidang

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pendidikan. Diskusi terkait implikasi praktis bagi kepemimpinan di sekolah akan menjadi bagian penting dari laporan akhir.

RESEARCH RESULTS

In-depth interviews with school leaders, teachers, and administrative staff revealed some key findings regarding the impact of transformational leadership on team synergy, communication, and collaboration in educational settings. The participants consistently reported that:

- Increased Collaboration and Trust: The majority of respondents stated that
 transformational leadership fosters a culture of trust and open communication,
 allowing teachers and staff to work more collaboratively. Some teachers note that
 their leaders encourage participation in the decision-making process, leading to
 more cohesive and cohesive teams.
- 2. Empowerment and Motivation: The interviews also revealed that transformational leaders inspire and empower team members to take initiative and contribute to school-wide innovation. Teachers expressed feeling more motivated to try new teaching methods and collaborate on interdisciplinary projects as a result of the support and encouragement from their leaders.
- 3. Challenges in Implementation: While the impact of transformational leadership is generally positive, some participants mentioned challenges in translating this leadership style into tangible results. In some schools, resistance from certain staff members and a lack of resources hinder the full adoption of collaborative practices. During the observational phase, which involves attending meetings, discussions, and team interactions over a two-week period, the following patterns are observed:
- 1. Effective Communication: Teams led by transformational leaders demonstrate strong communication dynamics. Team meetings often begin with the leader providing an inspirational message or vision for an upcoming project, followed by an open discussion where all team members feel comfortable voicing their opinions. These sessions are characterized by active listening and constructive feedback, indicating a high level of engagement.
- 2. Collaborative Problem Solving: In teams where transformational leadership is prominent, collaborative problem-solving is proven. Leaders often facilitate group discussions that encourage team members to brainstorm solutions together. This results in faster decision-making and more innovative solutions to school-related challenges, such as curriculum development and student engagement strategies.
- 3. Various Levels of Participation: However, it is noted that not all teams show the same level of synergy. In some cases, certain team members remain passive during meetings, which suggests that while transformational leadership is present, its effectiveness depends on individual team dynamics and the leader's ability to engage all participants.

Analysis of school documents such as meeting reports, school policies, and minutes from collaborative sessions provides further insights:

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- 1. Consistent Focus on Innovation: Documents from schools with transformational leadership demonstrate a consistent focus on innovation and continuous improvement. The report shows regular discussions on how to implement new teaching strategies, technology integration, and interdisciplinary collaboration.
- 2. Formal structure for collaboration: In schools with strong transformational leaders, formal structures for collaboration are evident. For example, there is a scheduled "collaboration day" where teams are encouraged to work on projects together. Meeting minutes show a focus on feedback loops, where teachers and staff reflect on their progress and adjust their strategies based on peer feedback.
- 3. Lack of Documentation in Some Cases: In contrast, schools that struggle with implementing transformational leadership exhibit less formal documentation of collaborative efforts. Meeting minutes are rare, and there is little evidence of structured collaboration or innovative practices recorded, suggesting that leadership efforts are not fully realized in day-to-day practice



DISCUSSION

Although previous research has shown the effectiveness of transformational leadership in various sectors, including education, the literature has shown gaps in understanding how transformational leadership specifically improves team synergy in educational settings. Notably, there is limited knowledge of how transformational leadership strengthens communication and collaboration among teachers and administrative staff, especially in schools that face structural challenges such as limited resources and rigid curricula.

Interviews and observations in this study show that transformational leadership significantly increases trust and collaboration within the team. These findings are in line with research conducted by Panicker which shows that transformational leadership

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increases trust in leaders and team members, which ultimately strengthens team collaboration and collective efficacy (Panicker & Lee, 2019).

Furthermore, this study shows that the variation in team member participation levels is influenced by the leader's ability to effectively engage all team members. Research conducted by Jiang and Chen supports these findings by showing that transformational leadership can improve team innovation through knowledge sharing mediated by normanorma kerja sama tim, tetapi efeknya bervariasi tergantung pada seberapa baik pemimpin mengelola dinamika tim(Jiang & Chen, 2018).

In addition, the research of Le & Lei (2018) highlights that disclosure-based trust and reliance-based trust play an important role in mediating the influence of transformational leadership on the knowledge sharing process, which correlates with better collaboration outcomes (Le & Lei, 2018).

Thus, the results of this study fill the gap by expanding our understanding of how transformational leadership affects team synergy in the context of education. The study emphasizes that while transformational leadership can significantly increase collaboration and participation, full success depends heavily on leaders' ability to tailor their approach to engaging all team members. These findings provide important insights for school leaders on the importance of building trust and creating an environment that supports the active participation of all team members.

The results of this study show that transformational leaders effectively empower their team members, motivate them to take initiative and contribute to school-wide innovation. These findings are consistent with research that emphasizes that transformational leadership not only creates an environment conducive to innovation, but also empowers team members to think creatively and take risks in an effort to achieve organizational goals (Sueb & Sopiah, 2023). Further, the study confirms that transformational leadership strengthens the creative self-efficacy of team members, so they feel more confident to experiment with new teaching techniques and collaborate across departments. This is in line with research by Chaubey et al. (2019), which showed that creative self-efficacy acts as a mediator in the relationship between transformational leadership and individual creativity, reinforcing the contribution to team innovation (Chaubey et al., 2019).

In addition, this research bridges the gap in understanding how transformational leaders can foster individual creativity in environments with limited resources. The findings from Bosselut et al. (2020) highlight that support for innovation provided by transformational leaders mediates the relationship between motivation and creativity of team members, further reinforcing the importance of the leader's role in driving innovation in an environment where resources may be limited (Bosselut et al., 2020). Overall, this research makes an important contribution by showing how transformational leadership not only promotes team collaboration, but also encourages team members to be more creative and proactive, even in challenging conditions

The results of this study identify an important gap related to the lack of understanding of the challenges faced by schools in fully implementing transformational leadership. The findings show that while transformational leadership generally has a

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positive impact, barriers such as resistance from staff members and limited resources often hinder its full realization. This is in line with recent research by Corbin et al. (2023), which emphasizes that while transformational leadership can reduce burnout and improve personal achievement among school staff, implementation challenges such as a lack of strategic support can increase stress levels and hinder the successful implementation of new policies (Corbin et al., 2024).

Furthermore, challenges in resource allocation and resistance from staff are also confirmed by Sasan et al. (2023), who found that the transformation of school culture through leadership transformasional sering kali terhambat oleh kurangnya dukungan institusional dan sumber daya untuk teacher training and staff development. This research emphasizes the need for investment in professional development and ongoing training to ensure the successful implementation of transformational leadership in schools (Sasan, 2023). Thus, this study adds important insights that to address these challenges, stronger support structures are needed, including better resource allocation and more comprehensive training programs for all staff members, to improve the readiness and effectiveness of the implementation of transformational leadership.

This study fills gaps related to contextual and structural challenges in the educational environment, particularly in the application of transformational leadership. The findings suggest that while transformational leadership has great potential to strengthen team synergy, its effectiveness is often mediated by factors such as institutional support, resource availability, and specific team dynamics. Recent research also highlights that without proper structural support, the benefits of transformational leadership are difficult to fully realize.

Luyten & Bazo (2019) found that transformational leadership in the context of education is only effective when supported by professional learning communities and learning opportunities for teachers. Without a structure that supports collaboration and professional development, transformation in teaching practice is difficult to achieve (Luyten & Bazo, 2019). Furthermore, research by Navaridas-Nalda et al. (2020) shows that contextual variables such as school size and complexity also play an important role in determining the success of transformational leadership. Schools that have a formal structure for collaboration and a good digital culture are more successful in adopting leadership transformation compared to schools that do not have those resources (Navaridas-Nalda et al., 2020). These findings confirm that context greatly influences the effectiveness of transformational leadership. Institutional support and adequate resources are essential prerequisites for the full benefits of this leadership style to be realized in an educational setting.

CONCLUSION

Berdasarkan hasil dan pembahasan penelitian, dapat disimpulkan bahwa kepemimpinan transformasional memiliki dampak yang signifikan dalam memperkuat sinergi tim, meningkatkan komunikasi, dan mendorong kolaborasi di lingkungan pendidikan diantaranya Kepemimpinan transformasional mendorong terciptanya budaya kepercayaan dan komunikasi terbuka, yang memungkinkan kolaborasi lebih baik di antara

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guru dan staf. Kepemimpinan ini memberikan ruang bagi keterlibatan aktif dalam pengambilan keputusan, sehingga tim menjadi lebih kohesif dan bersatu. Pemimpin transformasional mampu memberdayakan anggota tim dan memotivasi mereka untuk berinovasi. Hal ini terlihat dari peningkatan inisiatif guru dalam mengembangkan metode pengajaran baru serta kolaborasi antar disiplin ilmu yang lebih intensif. Tantangan dalam Implementasi: Meskipun dampaknya umumnya positif, beberapa tantangan seperti perlawanan dari staf dan keterbatasan sumber daya menjadi hambatan dalam menerapkan kepemimpinan transformasional secara penuh. Hal ini mengindikasikan bahwa dukungan struktural dan alokasi sumber daya yang tepat sangat diperlukan untuk keberhasilan penuh. Komunikasi yang Efektif dan Pemecahan Masalah Kolaboratif: Kepemimpinan transformasional menunjukkan bahwa komunikasi yang efektif dan pemecahan masalah yang kolaboratif adalah dua pilar utama dalam keberhasilan sinergi tim. Pemimpin yang inspiratif mampu menciptakan an environment where all members feel comfortable to voice their opinions and engage in productive discussions. Flexibility in Team Dynamics: Not all teams show the same response to transformational leadership. Some team members remain passive, which highlights the need for a more flexible strategy from the leader in actively engaging each team member. Innovation and Collaboration Structures: Schools with strong transformational leadership demonstrate a focus on continuous innovation and have a formal structure for collaboration. This is reflected in the existence of scheduled collaboration days and consistent feedback mechanisms. However, schools that struggle with the implementation of this leadership show deficiencies in documentation and collaborative practices. The findings of this study highlight the significant impact of transformational leadership in improving team synergy, communication, and collaboration in an educational environment. Going forward, several key insights should shape the leadership approach in schools:

- Empowering Teams Through Trust and Collaboration: Transformational leadership
 fosters a culture of trust and open communication, which is critical to building more
 cohesive and united teams. Education leaders should continue to emphasize
 participatory decision-making and create an environment where teachers and staff
 feel empowered to collaborate.
- 2. Supporting Innovation and Motivation: Research shows that transformational leaders inspire motivation and innovation among their team members. This suggests that school leaders need to focus not only on maintaining existing processes but also on encouraging experimentation and creativity among teachers, which can lead to the development of new teaching methods and interdisciplinary projects.
- 3. Addressing Implementation Challenges: While transformational leadership has mostly had positive outcomes, challenges such as staff rejection and resource constraints must be addressed. This demonstrates the need for a better support system in schools, including professional development opportunities and strategic resource allocation to fully realize the benefits of transformational leadership.
- 4. Maintaining Effective Communication and Problem-Solving: The dynamics of effective communication and collaborative problem-solving observed under

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- transformational leadership must be maintained through regular and open discussions, and feedback mechanisms. School leaders must ensure that all team members have a voice in the decision-making process, which aids in faster problemsolving and innovation.
- 5. Adapting Leadership Approaches to Team Dynamics: Not all teams respond equally to transformational leadership. Future leadership strategies must be flexible and adaptive to the unique dynamics of each team, ensuring that even passive members are engaged and involved in the process.
- 1. Invest in Leadership Development: To maximize the potential of transformational leadership, school systems must invest in programs pengembangan kepemimpinan. Program-program ini dapat membantu para pemimpin menyempurnakan keterampilan mereka dalam melibatkan all team members, foster a supportive culture, and overcome barriers to collaboration.

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