

The Impact of Principal's Leadership Style on Teachers' Work Ethic and Professional Competence

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Abstract: The Influence Of The Principal's Leadership Style On The Work Ethic And Professional Competence Of Teachers. Objectives: This study investigates the influence of the principal's leadership style on the work ethic and professional competence of teachers in selected schools. The research focuses on three leadership styles: transformational, transactional, and democratic, analyzing their respective impacts on teacher performance. **Methods:** A quantitative approach was employed, using a survey method to collect data from 100 teachers at Kabupaten Sleman Yogyakarta. Correlation and regression analyses were conducted to examine the relationships between leadership styles and the two dependent variables: teacher work ethic and professional competence. **Findings:** The findings reveal that transformational leadership has the strongest positive effect on both work ethic and professional competence, with significant correlations and high regression values. Democratic leadership also showed a positive influence, promoting collaboration and teacher empowerment. However, transactional leadership had a comparatively weaker impact, focusing primarily on short-term compliance rather than fostering long-term growth. **Conclusion:** These results suggest that school principals should adopt transformational and democratic leadership styles to enhance teacher performance and create a motivating and supportive work environment. This research contributes to the broader understanding of educational leadership and its role in shaping teacher behavior, offering practical recommendations for improving school leadership practices.

Keywords: principal leadership style, transformational leadership, transactional leadership.

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■ INTRODUCTION

The role of a school principal is fundamental in shaping the overall performance and development of educators within an educational institution. As the leader of a school, the principal is responsible for setting the tone and environment in which educators operate, influencing their work ethic, professional competence, and ultimately, student outcomes. The relationship between the principal and educators is a pivotal factor in determining the success of an educational institution, as it affects both individual and

collective efforts within the school. A leadership of the school head style plays a crucial role in determining how effectively a school functions and how motivated its educators are to perform their duties at the highest level (Zulyadi et al., 2023).

In the context of a school, leadership is the capacity to direct, impact, and assist teachers in their professional capacities. A successful school leader creates an atmosphere that motivates teachers to keep improving, coordinate their work with the school's objectives, and nurture a culture of excellence. Influencing the educational

procedures and results in the school is another aspect of the head of school's leadership responsibilities. The principal's position becomes even more crucial in schools that are dealing with issues like poor teacher motivation or professional troubles adjusting to current pedagogical methods. For example, schools with high teacher turnover or those in poor areas need a leadership style that encourages a long-term commitment to progress in addition to meeting urgent operational demands.

Because it emphasizes motivating and enabling educators to overcome obstacles and beyond expectations, a transformational leadership style is especially pertinent in these kinds of situations. By fostering a common vision for the school, this strategy motivates educators to take an active role in innovation and problem-solving. Likewise, democratic leadership is beneficial in encouraging teamwork and shared accountability, giving instructors who might otherwise feel disengaged a feeling of community and ownership (Santi et al., 2023). However, transactional leadership may not be sufficient in settings that demand greater motivation and professional development, even though it is good at upholding order and guaranteeing compliance. Therefore, in order to achieve significant and long-lasting educational changes, leadership styles must be customized to the unique problems of the school. As professionals, educators want a leader who can encourage, inspire, and push them to reach their greatest potential.

The leadership of the school head style significantly impacts the work ethic and professional competence of educators. Work ethic refers to the level of commitment, dedication, and effort educators bring to their roles. It includes their attitudes toward responsibility, their approach to teaching, and their willingness to go above and beyond for their students. Professional competence, on the other hand, involves the knowledge, skills, and abilities required to

perform their teaching duties effectively. It encompasses pedagogical skills, subject matter expertise, and the ability to manage classrooms efficiently. Together, work ethic and professional competence form the foundation for effective teaching and are crucial for achieving high student outcomes (Agustin et al., 2022).

A school principal can employ various leadership styles, each with different effects on educators' performance. Commonly discussed leadership styles in educational research include transformational, transactional, autocratic, and democratic approaches. Each of these styles offers distinct methods of engaging with educators, influencing their motivation, work ethic, and professional competence. Previous studies have highlighted the significant impact of transformational and democratic leadership on teachers' work ethic and professional development.

Research by (Agustin et al., 2022) emphasizes that transformational leadership, characterized by vision, inspiration, and intellectual stimulation, significantly enhances teacher motivation and encourages professional growth. Transformational principals foster a culture of innovation and shared goals, which helps teachers align their efforts with school objectives. Similarly, a study by (Kushendratno et al., 2023) found that transformational leadership positively correlates with teacher satisfaction and commitment, which are crucial components of a strong work ethic. This leadership style empowers educators, helping them overcome challenges and adopt new teaching strategies to improve their professional competence.

On the other hand, democratic leadership, which emphasizes participation and collaboration, has also been linked to positive outcomes. According to Bush and Glover (2014), democratic leaders create an inclusive environment where teachers feel valued and supported, which boosts their morale and

dedication. This style encourages collective problem-solving and continuous learning, enhancing teachers' ability to adapt to modern pedagogical demands (Santi et al., 2023). These findings provide a strong theoretical foundation for exploring how different leadership styles affect teachers' work ethic and professional competence in the current study.

Transformational leadership is one of the most researched and highly regarded leadership styles in education. Transformational leaders inspire their followers to exceed expectations by creating a vision, fostering an environment of innovation, and providing individualized support to help educators grow both personally and professionally. In schools, transformational principals often create a sense of purpose and direction, motivating educators to invest more effort into their work and encouraging them to pursue professional development. Under such leadership, educators are more likely to demonstrate a high level of commitment to their work and continuously seek to improve their teaching skills (Kushendratno et al., 2023).

In contrast, transactional leadership focuses on a system of rewards and penalties. Transactional leaders set clear goals and expectations and provide rewards for meeting those goals or penalties for failing to do so. In a school setting, this leadership style may motivate educators to meet specific performance targets, but it may not foster the same level of intrinsic motivation or professional growth as transformational leadership. Educators may perform well when rewards are offered, but the development of long-term professional competence may be limited since the emphasis is often on short-term achievements rather than continuous improvement.

Autocratic leadership is a style characterized by centralization of authority and decision-making power in the hands of the leader. In schools where autocratic leadership is

practiced, principals may make decisions without consulting educators and expect strict adherence to rules and policies. This leadership style can lead to a rigid working environment where educators have limited autonomy, which can stifle creativity and reduce motivation. Educators under autocratic leaders may exhibit compliance but often lack the enthusiasm to go beyond basic expectations, which may negatively impact their work ethic and professional competence (Narullita et al., 2022).

Democratic leadership, on the other hand, emphasizes collaboration and shared decision-making. Principals who adopt a democratic leadership style involve educators in key decisions related to school policies, curriculum development, and teaching strategies. This inclusive approach fosters a sense of ownership and responsibility among educators, which can enhance their work ethic and encourage professional growth. When educators feel their opinions are valued and they are part of the decision-making process, they are more likely to be motivated to contribute to the school's success and invest in their own professional development.

Studies by (Gelisa, Wadud, et al., 2023) highlight the benefits of democratic leadership in promoting a culture of collective responsibility within schools. Their research indicates that teachers under democratic leadership are more engaged in school improvement initiatives and are better equipped to innovate in their teaching methods. Similarly, a study by (Narullita et al., 2022) found that shared decision-making leads to higher job satisfaction and work commitment, both of which are integral components of a strong work ethic. This approach allows teachers to feel supported and included, fostering an environment where they can thrive professionally.

Moreover, (Zulyadi et al., 2023) note that democratic leadership positively impacts professional competence by encouraging collaborative learning among teachers. By

involving educators in discussions about curriculum reforms and teaching practices, principals help build a professional learning community that emphasizes continuous improvement. This shared focus on development ensures that teachers stay updated with educational trends and best practices, enhancing their overall competence. These findings strengthen the theoretical underpinnings of the present study by showcasing the link between democratic leadership and teachers' professional and ethical development.

In this research, we aim to explore the influence of the leadership of the school head style on two critical aspects of educator performance: their work ethic and their professional competence. Specifically, we seek to understand which leadership styles are most effective in promoting a strong work ethic among educators and enhancing their professional competence. By identifying the leadership behaviors that have the most significant impact, this study can offer valuable insights for school principals and policymakers looking to improve educational outcomes through effective leadership practices (Maryati et al., 2020).

Research on the relationship between leadership styles and educator performance has yielded various findings. Some studies suggest that transformational leadership is the most effective in enhancing educator motivation and professional competence, while others point to the importance of democratic leadership in fostering collaboration and shared responsibility. However, there is also evidence that transactional leadership, when used appropriately, can lead to improved performance in certain contexts, especially when clear goals and rewards are in place. Therefore, understanding the nuances of how each leadership style influences educator behavior is essential for developing leadership training programs and improving school management practices.

In addition to examining leadership styles, this study also considers the broader context in which leadership takes place. Factors such as school culture, educator demographics, and the external pressures faced by schools can also influence how leadership styles are received and how they affect educator performance. For example, in schools where educators face high levels of stress due to external accountability measures, such as standardized testing, certain leadership styles may be more effective than others in maintaining educator morale and motivation. Similarly, the level of experience and professional development needs of educators may also play a role in determining how they respond to different leadership approaches.

Through this research, we aim to contribute to the existing body of knowledge on educational leadership by providing a comprehensive analysis of the relationship between principal leadership styles and educator performance. Our findings will have implications not only for school principals but also for policymakers and educational leaders tasked with improving educator quality and student outcomes. By identifying the leadership styles that have the most positive impact on educator work ethic and professional competence, we hope to provide practical recommendations for leadership development in schools (Gelisa, Wadud, et al., 2023).

The purpose of this study is to specifically examine the influence of transformational, transactional, and democratic leadership styles on teachers' work ethic and professional competence. By focusing on these three leadership styles, the research aims to provide a nuanced understanding of how different approaches to leadership shape the motivation, dedication, and professional development of educators.

Transformational leadership is explored for its potential to inspire and empower teachers to

achieve beyond expectations through vision, intellectual stimulation, and individualized support. Transactional leadership is analyzed to understand its emphasis on structured systems of rewards and penalties and its impact on maintaining performance standards and accountability. Democratic leadership is investigated for its collaborative and inclusive approach, which fosters shared decision-making and collective responsibility among teachers.

By addressing these specific leadership styles, this study seeks to identify which approach is most effective in enhancing teacher work ethic and professional competence in the current educational context. This focus provides clarity to the research objective and ensures that the findings will be directly applicable to improving leadership practices in schools.

■ **METHOD**

This study employed a quantitative research design, utilizing a structured questionnaire as the primary instrument for data collection. The research focused on three key variables: leadership style (transformational, transactional, and democratic), teacher work ethic, and professional competence. A purposive sampling technique was used to select 100 teachers with a minimum of three years of teaching experience, ensuring that respondents had sufficient exposure to various leadership styles. Efforts were made to balance the sample across different school settings to enhance generalizability.

Data collection was conducted through both online and in-person distribution of the questionnaire. Online distribution utilized a secure survey platform, with access links shared via email and messaging applications, and reminders sent to ensure a high response rate. In-person distribution involved handing out printed questionnaires during teacher meetings, with guidance provided on how to complete them. On average, respondents required 20–30 minutes to complete the questionnaire.

The questionnaire, developed based on validated instruments from previous studies, included three sections. The first section assessed leadership styles using 25 items divided into three dimensions: transformational leadership (10 items, e.g., inspirational motivation and individualized consideration), transactional leadership (8 items, e.g., reward systems and corrective feedback), and democratic leadership (7 items, e.g., collaboration and shared decision-making). The second section measured teacher work ethic with 15 items covering indicators like punctuality, dedication, and accountability. The final section evaluated teacher professional competence with 12 items focusing on pedagogical knowledge, teaching strategies, and assessment skills.

To ensure content validity, the questionnaire underwent expert validation by three education researchers, whose feedback was incorporated into refining the items. A pilot test with 30 teachers outside the sample confirmed reliability, with Cronbach's Alpha values demonstrating high internal consistency: transformational leadership (0.85), transactional leadership (0.82), democratic leadership (0.84), teacher work ethic (0.86), and professional competence (0.88).

Data analysis included both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics summarized means and standard deviations, while correlation analysis explored relationships between leadership styles, work ethic, and professional competence. Linear regression analysis determined the contribution of each leadership style to teacher outcomes. Assumptions for regression, such as multicollinearity, were tested and satisfied, with Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values below 10. The F-test assessed overall model significance, and R^2 values quantified the explanatory power of leadership styles on the dependent variables. These analyses provided insights into both the strength of relationships and the predictive power of leadership styles in shaping teacher work ethic and professional competence.

■ RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the results of the analysis on how different leadership styles transformational, transactional, and democratic affect teacher work ethic and professional competence. The findings are then linked with relevant literature and theories, including Transformational Leadership Theory and Transactional Leadership Theory, to offer a comprehensive understanding of the results.

Additionally, practical implications for school leaders are discussed, providing actionable recommendations based on the research findings.

Descriptive Statistics Table (Mean and Standard Deviation)

This table describes the descriptive statistics of the leadership style, work ethic, and professional competence variables.

Variable	N (Sample Size)	Mean	Standard Deviation (SD)
Transformational Leadership Style	100	4.5	0.45
Transactional Leadership Style	100	3.8	0.65
Democratic Leadership Style	100	4.2	0.50
Teacher Work Ethic	100	4.3	0.48
Teacher Professional Competence	100	4.1	0.52

The table provides descriptive statistics for the variables analyzed in the study, including the principal's leadership styles (transformational, transactional, and democratic), teacher work ethic, and teacher professional competence. The sample size for each variable is 100, indicating that data was collected from 100 teachers. The mean scores reflect the average perception of each leadership style and its influence on teacher work ethic and professional competence.

The transformational leadership style received the highest mean score of 4.5 with a standard deviation of 0.45, suggesting that most teachers perceive this leadership style positively and consistently. Democratic leadership follows with a mean of 4.2 and a standard deviation of 0.50, indicating a slightly lower but still favorable perception of this leadership style. Transactional leadership scored the lowest, with a mean of 3.8 and a higher standard deviation of 0.65, pointing

to greater variability in teacher experiences with this leadership style.

In terms of teacher outcomes, the mean score for teacher work ethic is 4.3 with a standard deviation of 0.48, while teacher professional competence has a mean score of 4.1 with a standard deviation of 0.52. These results suggest that teachers generally demonstrate strong work ethics and professional competence, but there is slightly more variability in their professional competence compared to work ethic. The overall results highlight the positive impact of transformational and democratic leadership on teacher performance.

Pearson Correlation Table (r)

This table shows the Pearson correlation coefficients between the principal's leadership styles and teacher work ethic and professional competence.

Variable	Work Ethic (r)	Professional Competence (r)
Transformational Leadership Style	0.75	0.78
Transactional Leadership Style	0.55	0.48
Democratic Leadership Style	0.68	0.70

The table presents the Pearson correlation coefficients (r) between three principal leadership styles transformational, transactional, and democratic and two key teacher outcomes: work ethic and professional competence. The correlation values range between -1 and 1, where positive values indicate a positive relationship between the variables. Higher correlation values suggest a stronger relationship.

The **transformational leadership style** shows the strongest correlations with both teacher work ethic ($r = 0.75$) and professional competence ($r = 0.78$). These high values indicate that as transformational leadership increases, there is a significant positive increase in teachers' work ethic and their professional competence. This suggests that principals who inspire, motivate, and support their teachers can greatly enhance teacher performance in both areas.

For **democratic leadership**, the correlations are also strong but slightly lower, with a work ethic correlation of $r = 0.68$ and professional competence correlation of $r = 0.70$. This implies that democratic leadership, which involves shared decision-making and collaboration, also positively affects teachers' performance, though not as strongly as transformational leadership. **Transactional**

leadership, on the other hand, has the weakest correlations, with $r = 0.55$ for work ethic and $r = 0.48$ for professional competence. This suggests that while transactional leadership, which relies on rewards and penalties, can influence teacher outcomes, it is less effective compared to transformational and democratic styles.

Linear Regression Table

This table shows the results of the linear regression analysis between the principal's leadership style (independent variable) and teacher work ethic and professional competence (dependent variables).

The linear regression table provides insights into the influence of different principal leadership styles on teacher work ethic and professional competence. The values in the table represent how much each leadership style (independent variable) impacts the dependent variables (teacher work ethic and professional competence). The **B** coefficient shows the strength of the relationship, while the **t-value** and **p-value** indicate the statistical significance of these relationships.

Linear Regression - Teacher Work Ethic

Independent Variable	B	t-value	p-value
Transformational Leadership Style	0.58	6.42	0.000
Transactional Leadership Style	0.32	3.56	0.002
Democratic Leadership Style	0.46	5.13	0.000

For **teacher work ethic**, the results indicate that **transformational leadership** has the strongest positive impact, with a B value of 0.58, a t-value of 6.42, and a highly significant p-value of 0.000. This means that transformational leadership significantly increases teacher work ethic. **Democratic leadership** also has a notable positive effect ($B = 0.46$, $t = 5.13$, $p = 0.000$), indicating that a collaborative

leadership style improves teacher work ethic, though slightly less than transformational leadership. **Transactional leadership**, with a B value of 0.32, also positively influences teacher work ethic, but its impact is weaker compared to the other styles ($t = 3.56$, $p = 0.002$).

Linear Regression - Teacher Professional Competence

Independent Variable	B	t-value	p-value
Transformational Leadership Style	0.60	7.02	0.000
Transactional Leadership Style	0.28	2.89	0.005
Democratic Leadership Style	0.49	5.56	0.000

For **teacher professional competence**, the results are similar. **Transformational leadership** has the strongest influence, with a B value of 0.60, $t = 7.02$, and $p = 0.000$, showing that this leadership style significantly boosts teacher professional competence. **Democratic leadership** follows with a B value of 0.49, $t = 5.56$, and $p = 0.000$, indicating that a democratic approach also enhances professional competence, though less than transformational leadership. **Transactional leadership**, with a B

value of 0.28 ($t = 2.89$, $p = 0.005$), has the weakest but still significant impact on professional competence. This suggests that while transactional leadership can improve competence, it is less effective than transformational and democratic approaches.

F-Test Table for Regression

This table displays the F-test results for regression analysis to test the significance of the model.

Model	F-value	p-value
Teacher Work Ethic	12.87	0.000
Teacher Professional Competence	14.26	0.000

The F-test table for regression analysis helps determine whether the overall regression model is statistically significant in predicting the dependent variables, which in this case are **teacher work ethic** and **teacher professional competence**. The **F-value** for teacher work ethic is 12.87 with a p-value of 0.000, indicating that the regression model is highly significant, and the leadership styles of the principal significantly explain the variation in teacher work ethic.

Similarly, the **F-value** for teacher professional competence is 14.26, with a p-value of 0.000, also confirming that the model significantly predict changes in teachers' professional competence.

R² (Coefficient of Determination) Table

This table shows the contribution of the principal's leadership style to teacher work ethic and professional competence based on the R² value.

Dependent Variable	R ²
Teacher Work Ethic	0.58
Teacher Professional Competence	0.61

The **R² (coefficient of determination) table** provides information on how well the independent variable (principal's leadership style) explains the variance in the dependent variables. For **teacher work ethic**, the R² value is 0.58, meaning that 58% of the variation in teacher work ethic is explained by the leadership styles of the principal. This is a substantial percentage,

indicating that leadership style plays a significant role in influencing teachers' work ethic. For **teacher professional competence**, the R² value is 0.61, showing that 61% of the variation in teachers' competence is explained by leadership style. Both R² values suggest a strong model fit, where leadership style is a key factor in determining teacher outcomes.

Validity and Reliability Test Table

This table displays the results of the validity and reliability tests to ensure the quality of the research instrument (questionnaire).

The **validity and reliability test table** provides essential information on the quality of the questionnaire used in the study. The **corrected item-total correlation** values for all

Variable	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha
Transformational Leadership Style	0.70	0.85
Transactional Leadership Style	0.65	0.82
Democratic Leadership Style	0.68	0.84
Teacher Work Ethic	0.72	0.86
Teacher Professional Competence	0.75	0.88

variables are above 0.60, indicating that each item on the questionnaire is highly correlated with the overall scale, thereby demonstrating good validity. Specifically, **transformational leadership style** has a correlation of 0.70, **transactional leadership style** has 0.65, and **democratic leadership style** has 0.68. These values suggest that the questionnaire items are appropriate for measuring the respective leadership styles.

Regarding **reliability**, the **Cronbach's Alpha** values for all variables are above 0.80, which is considered a high level of internal consistency. For **transformational leadership style**, Cronbach's Alpha is 0.85, while **transactional leadership style** has 0.82, and **democratic leadership style** has 0.84. These results indicate that the questionnaire is highly reliable for measuring the leadership styles. Similarly, the reliability for **teacher work ethic** is 0.86, and for **teacher professional competence**, it is 0.88, both of which demonstrate that the scales used to measure these teacher outcomes are reliable.

Discussion

The findings from this study highlight the crucial role that the principal's leadership style plays in shaping both the work ethic and professional competence of teachers. Through a combination of quantitative analysis, including

correlation, regression, and reliability tests, this research provides comprehensive evidence that certain leadership styles are more effective than others in influencing teacher performance. In this section, we will discuss the implications of these findings, compare them with previous studies, and explore practical recommendations for school leadership.

The Impact of Leadership Styles on Teacher Work Ethic

The results demonstrate a strong positive relationship between the **transformational leadership style** and teacher work ethic, with a correlation coefficient of 0.75. Transformational leaders are known for their ability to inspire and motivate their teams, fostering a sense of ownership and purpose among their staff. In the context of education, transformational principals are able to encourage teachers to go beyond their job descriptions, to take initiative, and to show a high level of dedication to their work. This leadership style not only sets clear goals but also provides teachers with the resources, support, and encouragement they need to reach their full potential. The linear regression analysis also showed that transformational leadership has the highest impact on work ethic, with a significant **B value of 0.58** and a p-value of 0.000, indicating that this style is highly influential in improving teacher work ethic.

This finding is consistent with previous studies in the educational leadership field. For example, research by Leithwood and Jantzi (2005) found that transformational leadership positively impacts both teacher motivation and classroom performance. Similarly, Hallinger (2003) emphasized the role of transformational leadership in creating a collaborative school culture where teachers feel valued and are driven to work harder. In light of these results, it can be argued that transformational leadership is particularly effective in promoting a strong work ethic among teachers by creating an environment of trust, innovation, and mutual respect.

Democratic leadership also emerged as a significant predictor of teacher work ethic, with a correlation of 0.68 and a regression **B value of 0.46**. Democratic leaders engage teachers in decision-making processes, promote open communication, and create a collaborative school atmosphere. When teachers are given a voice in school decisions, they are more likely to feel a sense of ownership and accountability, which in turn boosts their work ethic. The participative nature of democratic leadership empowers teachers and promotes a shared vision for school success. These results align with studies that highlight the benefits of democratic leadership in fostering commitment and enthusiasm among staff members (Bush, 2008).

On the other hand, **transactional leadership** showed a weaker but still positive relationship with teacher work ethic ($r = 0.55$, $B = 0.32$). Transactional leaders focus on a system of rewards and punishments to manage teacher performance. While this approach may lead to short-term compliance and effort, it is less likely to foster the intrinsic motivation that is key to developing a strong work ethic. Although transactional leadership can be effective in ensuring that teachers meet basic performance standards, it may not inspire them to go above and beyond. This result is consistent with the work

of Bass and Avolio (1994), who argued that transactional leadership is less effective in motivating individuals for long-term improvement compared to transformational leadership.

The Impact of Leadership Styles on Teacher Professional Competence

The results for teacher professional competence mirrored those for work ethic, with **transformational leadership** showing the strongest correlation ($r = 0.78$) and the highest regression impact (**B = 0.60**). Professional competence refers to a teacher's ability to effectively deliver instruction, manage classrooms, and engage in continuous professional development. Transformational leaders are more likely to foster professional competence by providing opportunities for growth, promoting collaboration, and encouraging innovative teaching practices. By supporting professional development initiatives and creating a culture of continuous improvement, transformational principals help teachers refine their skills and enhance their competence. This finding is in line with the work of Kouzes and Posner (2012), who highlighted the role of transformational leaders in building organizational capacity and developing individual competencies.

The positive relationship between **democratic leadership** and teacher professional competence ($r = 0.70$, **B = 0.49**) also reflects the benefits of a collaborative leadership approach. When teachers are involved in decision-making processes and have the freedom to experiment with new ideas, they are more likely to engage in professional growth. Democratic leaders encourage teachers to share best practices, participate in peer evaluations, and contribute to curriculum development. This involvement not only boosts teachers' confidence but also helps them refine their teaching methods and improve their competence. These results are supported by previous research, which suggests

that democratic leadership enhances teachers' professional abilities by promoting a culture of shared responsibility (Blase & Blase, 1999).

In contrast, **transactional leadership** showed the weakest relationship with teacher professional competence ($r = 0.48$, $B = 0.28$). While transactional leaders may ensure that teachers meet basic competence standards, they are less likely to encourage ongoing development and innovation. The focus on rewards and penalties may lead to compliance with minimum expectations but does not promote a growth mindset or encourage teachers to explore new teaching methods. As a result, transactional leadership may be less effective in fostering professional competence. This finding is consistent with studies that emphasize the limitations of transactional leadership in promoting professional development (Burns, 1978).

Theoretical Implications

The findings of this study highlight the significant role of leadership style in influencing teacher work ethic and professional competence. Transformational leadership emerged as the most effective style for enhancing both teacher motivation and professional growth. This supports the Transformational Leadership Theory, which asserts that leaders who engage their followers with a compelling vision and individualized attention can foster high levels of commitment and performance. Transactional leadership, while effective in maintaining order and performance standards, showed weaker results in fostering long-term motivation. Democratic leadership, while positively related to teacher work ethic, did not have the same strong motivating effect as transformational leadership.

In conclusion, school principals should prioritize the development of transformational leadership skills to enhance teacher motivation and professional competence. Leadership training programs and mentorship for principals could

focus on developing transformational qualities such as emotional intelligence, inspiration, and intellectual stimulation, enabling them to effectively lead teachers and foster a high-performing educational environment.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study highlights the significant influence of the principal's leadership style on the work ethic and professional competence of teachers. Transformational leadership proved to be the most effective, inspiring teachers to exceed expectations and continuously develop their skills, followed by democratic leadership, which promotes collaboration and teacher empowerment. Transactional leadership, while useful for ensuring compliance, had a lesser impact on fostering long-term growth and motivation. These findings suggest that school leaders should prioritize transformational and democratic leadership approaches to create a supportive and motivating environment for teachers, ultimately enhancing educational outcomes.

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