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INTRODUCTION

Education plays a vital role in improving the quality of a nation's human resources, the success of which is largely determined by the performance of teachers as the vanguard of the learning process. Teachers do not merely serve as conveyors of subject matter but also as agents in shaping the character and civilization of the nation; therefore, improving teacher performance is imperative. Although the government has undertaken various initiatives such as curriculum reform, the development of teaching methods, and the provision of learning resources, the effectiveness of these policies heavily depends on the level of teacher motivation and performance. Teacher performance itself is influenced by various factors, both internal and external, including school leadership and school culture that can create a conducive and motivating work environment (Elfira et al., 2024). However, reality shows that the quality of education in Indonesia remains relatively low, as reflected in the results of the 2018 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) conducted by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), in which Indonesia ranked 72nd out of 77 participating countries (Mardiah MZ et al., 2025). The data indicates that students' literacy, numeracy, and science skills remain below the international average; therefore, strategic measures focused on improving teacher motivation and performance are essential as a fundamental step toward enhancing the quality of national education.

At the regional level, Jepara Regency has a substantial number of educators and exhibits an interesting dynamic in the distribution between public and private schools. According to 2025 Dapodikdasmen data, the number of teachers in Jepara Regency stands at approximately 12,257, comprising 3,254 teachers in public schools and 9,003 teachers in private schools. This composition indicates that the majority of educators are in the private sector, thereby underscoring that private schools play a highly strategic role in supporting the delivery of education in the

PRINCIPAL LEADERSHIP, SCHOOL CULTURE, AND TEACHER PERFORMANCE: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF ACHIEVEMENT MOTIVATION IN PRIVATE SCHOOLS IN JEPARA

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This study aims to analyze the influence of school principal leadership and school culture on teacher performance, with achievement motivation as a mediating variable, in private schools in Jepara Regency.

Research Design & Methods: This study employs a quantitative approach with an exploratory research design. The population consisted of 9,003 teachers from private schools in Jepara Regency. Using the Slovin formula with a 5% margin of error, a sample of 383 teachers was obtained. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire and analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to test the direct and indirect relationships among the variables.

Findings: The results indicate that school culture and principal leadership have a positive and significant influence on teacher performance. Both variables also significantly influence achievement motivation. Furthermore, achievement motivation has the strongest influence on teacher performance and significantly mediates the relationship between principal leadership, school culture, and teacher performance. However, the moderating effects tested in this study were not significant.

Contributions: This study contributes to the development of the educational management literature by providing empirical evidence on the integrative role of organizational and psychological factors in enhancing teacher performance, particularly in the context of private schools.

Novelty: The novelty of this research lies in the integration of principal leadership and school culture with achievement motivation as mediating variables in a comprehensive analytical model, as well as its empirical focus on private schools in Jepara Regency, an area that remains under-explored.

Keywords: Principal Leadership; School Culture; Achievement Motivation

JEL codes: I21; I25; M12

Article type: research paper

region. This dominance not only reflects the high level of community participation in education through private institutions but also indicates that the quality of education in Jepara is significantly influenced by the performance of teachers in private schools. Therefore, improving teacher performance in this sector is a critical and urgent issue that demands attention. Teachers in private schools are expected to possess optimal pedagogical, professional, and social competencies, as well as strong personal qualities, in order to provide high-quality and competitive educational services. Furthermore, the challenges faced by private schools—such as limited resources, variations in school management quality, and disparities in facility support—further underscore the need for systematic efforts to improve teacher performance.

One of the key factors influencing teacher performance is the leadership of the school principal, who plays a strategic role in setting policy direction, creating a conducive work environment, and motivating teachers to enhance their professionalism. Effective leadership, particularly transformational and instructional leadership, has been proven to significantly enhance teachers' commitment, job satisfaction, and performance (Hardiyana, 2024). Furthermore, the principal's leadership also plays a role in establishing a support system that encourages teachers to continue developing professionally. Specifically, instructional leadership not only directly influences teacher performance but also builds teachers' self-efficacy, which is a critical factor in improving the quality of instructional delivery. This aligns with the findings of Mardhiah MZ et al., (2025) who demonstrated that strong and effective school leadership can boost teachers' confidence in performing their duties, thereby positively impacting teacher performance.

School culture is also a key factor in shaping a conducive work environment and academic climate, thereby playing a significant role in supporting overall teacher performance (Leithwood & Sun, 2018). School culture encompasses the values, norms, and practices that develop within the school environment, influencing the behavior, interactions, and work practices of the entire school community. A positive, collaborative, and innovative culture not only fosters teacher professional development but also enhances collaboration, creativity, and commitment toward achieving educational goals (Erdoğan et al., 2024; Hilga & Wibowo, 2025; Qi et al., 2025). Conversely, a less conducive school culture can hinder teachers' productivity and creativity in carrying out their duties. Therefore, synergy between the principal's leadership and school culture is the key to creating an environment that can optimally enhance teacher performance.

Principal leadership and school culture have been extensively studied as factors influencing teacher performance; however, most research still treats these two variables as direct factors without considering the role of psychological factors as mediators. One important factor with the potential to serve as a mediator is achievement motivation—that is, an individual's internal drive to achieve certain standards of excellence, as reflected in effort, perseverance, and responsibility in their work. Teachers with high achievement motivation tend to demonstrate more optimal performance compared to those with low motivation (Hardiyana, 2025). In this context, achievement motivation serves as an essential mediator because it bridges the influence of principal leadership and school culture on teacher performance. This motivation reflects the teacher's internal drive to achieve success and continuously improve their performance. Several studies indicate that achievement motivation can strengthen the relationship between leadership and organizational culture with individual performance, thereby having a more significant impact on work outcomes (Lolowang et al., 2019; Prayoga et al., 2024).

However, despite the growing body of literature on principal leadership, school culture, and teacher performance, there remains a significant research gap in understanding how these organizational factors interact with psychological mechanisms particularly achievement motivation as a mediating variable within the context of private elementary schools in Indonesia. Previous studies have largely examined these variables in isolation or focused on direct relationships, thereby limiting a comprehensive understanding of the indirect pathways through which leadership and school culture influence teacher performance (Hallinger & Heck, 2010; Nguyen et al., 2021). Moreover, empirical evidence that specifically addresses this integrated model in regions with a high proportion of private school teachers, such as Jepara Regency, is still scarce. This gap highlights the need for a more holistic analytical approach that combines organizational and psychological perspectives to better explain variations in teacher performance (Haw et al., 2024).

Based on this, this study specifically aims to analyze the influence of principal leadership and school culture on teacher performance with achievement motivation as a mediator. The novelty of this study lies in the integration of organizational factors namely, principal leadership and school culture with psychological factors, specifically achievement motivation, within a comprehensive analytical framework, as well as its empirical contribution to the context of elementary education, which has been relatively limited in previous research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Teacher Performance

Teacher performance is a key indicator in determining the success of the learning process and the overall quality of education. Teacher performance not only reflects the visible outcomes in the classroom but also encompasses the entire professional process, including lesson planning, instruction delivery, assessment of learning outcomes, and reflection aimed at the continuous improvement of learning quality. In the context of modern

education, teacher performance also involves the ability to integrate technology, differentiate instruction, and respond to the diverse needs of students. Conceptually, teacher performance can be understood as the result of a combination of pedagogical, professional, social, and personal competencies possessed by teachers. This aligns with research by which states that teacher performance is influenced by individual factors (such as motivation, commitment, and competence) as well as organizational factors (such as principal leadership and school culture). The study emphasizes that strong organizational support can enhance teachers' effectiveness in carrying out their duties.

Teacher performance is also closely linked to psychological well-being and the work environment. A study by Collie (2021) shows that a supportive work environment—including transformational leadership and positive workplace relationships—can enhance teachers' well-being, which ultimately has a significant impact on improved performance. Teachers with high levels of well-being tend to be more productive, creative, and capable of managing their classrooms effectively. Additionally, emotional factors such as job satisfaction and work engagement have a direct influence on the quality of instruction provided by teachers. Teachers with high levels of work engagement demonstrate greater dedication, enthusiasm, and focus in the learning process (Klusmann et al., 2021).

Toropova et al., (2021) assert that the quality of teacher performance is also influenced by structural working conditions such as workload, class size, and administrative support. Their research findings indicate that unsupportive working conditions can reduce teacher effectiveness, even when teachers possess high levels of competence. According to the OECD (2019) perspective, as outlined in the TALIS (Teaching and Learning International Survey) report, teacher performance is significantly influenced by opportunities for continuous professional development. Teachers who actively participate in training and professional development tend to employ more innovative and effective teaching practices.

Teacher performance can be understood as a multidimensional construct shaped by the dynamic interaction between individual competencies, organizational factors, psychological conditions, and the surrounding work environment. Optimal performance depends not only on mastery of pedagogical and professional competencies but is also influenced by effective school leadership, a conducive school culture, and adequate levels of teacher motivation and well-being. In this context, improving teacher performance must be approached holistically and sustainably through strengthening the school management system, fostering a supportive work climate, and providing relevant professional development opportunities. Furthermore, a review of the literature indicates that teacher performance is also the result of integrating various aspects such as teaching experience, participation in ongoing training, and the implementation of a valid, reliable, and data-driven performance evaluation system. With the advancement of technology, the utilization of digital and analytics-based evaluation systems presents a strategic opportunity to enhance objectivity, transparency, and efficiency in teacher performance assessment. Therefore, the transformation of teacher performance in the era of modern education demands a comprehensive, adaptive, and innovation-based approach to support the continuous improvement of educational quality.

Principal Leadership

Principal leadership is one of the key factors determining the effectiveness of the school organization as well as the success of the learning process. In the context of modern education, principals serve not only as administrators but also as instructional leaders who actively direct, guide, and evaluate classroom teaching practices. More broadly, school principal leadership can be understood as the ability to direct, manage, and empower all school resources—including teachers, students, and staff—to achieve educational visions and goals. This strategic role encompasses the ability to establish the school's vision and mission, foster a positive academic culture, and ensure that the quality of the teaching and learning process operates optimally.

In an academic context, school principal leadership is often examined through various leadership styles, such as transformational and adaptive leadership. Transformational leadership is characterized by the principal's ability to motivate and inspire teachers and staff to achieve shared goals through a clear vision and continuous improvement. Through this leadership style, the principal is able to foster a positive organizational culture, thereby significantly impacting the improvement of teachers' and staff members' performance in general (Aini et al., 2024; Iskandar & Hasbi, 2024). Consistent with this, Leithwood et al., (2020) state that school leadership has an indirect yet significant influence on student learning outcomes through the enhancement of teachers' capacity and performance. Effective leadership is capable of creating a conducive work environment, boosting teacher motivation, and fostering professional collaboration within the school setting, which ultimately contributes to improved learning quality.

One leadership approach that has garnered significant attention is transformational leadership. This leadership style is characterized by a school principal's ability to inspire teachers, build commitment to a shared vision, and foster innovation in learning, thereby positively impacting teacher performance through increased work motivation and job satisfaction. School principals who adopt this style tend to be able to create a dynamic work environment that is adaptable to change (Sutarjo et al., 2022). Instructional leadership is also a crucial dimension in improving educational quality, emphasizing the principal's direct involvement in academic aspects—

such as academic supervision, curriculum development, teacher performance evaluation, and providing feedback to teachers—which can significantly enhance the quality of learning (Hallinger, 2018).

The effectiveness of a principal's leadership is also determined by managerial skills, data-driven decision-making, and the management of human resources within the school. Principals who can effectively balance instructional and managerial leadership will be more effective in improving teacher performance and student learning outcomes (Grissom et al., 2021). Principal leadership also focuses on learning aspects, particularly in improving student literacy and numeracy, which are major challenges in the era of globalization. By actively leading the learning process and creating a supportive environment, principals contribute to improving students' basic skills as the primary foundation for educational success (Nisak et al., 2025).

School Culture

School culture is a set of values, norms, beliefs, customs, and practices shared by the entire school community that consistently influences patterns of behavior, social interaction, and decision-making within the educational organization. This culture is not only shaped by formal policies but also develops through traditions, customs, and interpersonal relationships formed in the daily life of the school. Thus, school culture or the school's organizational culture serves as the primary guide for all members of the school community in carrying out both educational and administrative activities. Furthermore, school culture plays a fundamental role in creating a conducive work environment, which ultimately influences teacher motivation, performance, job satisfaction, and the overall quality of learning.

A positive school culture is characterized by strong collaboration among teachers, open communication, trust, and a focus on innovation and continuous improvement. In this context, school culture serves as a social mechanism capable of directing individual behavior toward the achievement of organizational goals. According to Yilmaz and Tore (2025), a strong and supportive organizational culture can enhance individual commitment and performance by creating a work environment that fosters engagement and job satisfaction. A school culture that supports professional learning (professional learning culture) makes a significant contribution to improving the quality of teaching. Teachers working in a collaborative environment tend to be more open to the exchange of ideas, shared reflection, and the development of innovative teaching practices. This aligns with research by Kalkan et al., (2020) which shows that a positive school culture directly influences school effectiveness and teacher performance through increased collaboration and organizational commitment.

School culture also plays a role in shaping teachers' job satisfaction and motivation. A harmonious, supportive work environment that values individual contributions can enhance teachers' sense of belonging and commitment to the organization. Favorable working conditions and organizational culture significantly contribute to teachers' job satisfaction, which ultimately leads to improved performance (Toropova et al., 2021). School culture has a direct relationship with teacher performance through the mediation of psychological variables such as motivation and organizational commitment. A culture that encourages innovation, openness, and recognition of achievements will improve teachers' productivity and work quality.

Achievement Motivation

Achievement motivation is an internal drive that guides individuals to achieve certain standards of excellence through consistent effort, commitment, and top performance. This concept is rooted in the theory of needs proposed by McClelland, which emphasizes that individuals with a high level of achievement motivation (need for achievement) tend to set challenging goals, take responsibility for their work outcomes, and are oriented toward achievement and performance feedback. In educational and professional contexts, achievement motivation is a crucial factor that not only drives individuals to achieve optimal learning outcomes but also enhances quality, work productivity, and engagement in various academic and non-academic activities.

Within the world of education, teachers' achievement motivation plays a crucial role in enhancing the quality of learning. Teachers with high achievement motivation tend to exhibit proactive and innovative work behaviors, as well as a strong commitment to their duties and responsibilities. They are also more open to change, capable of developing creative teaching strategies, and demonstrate perseverance in addressing classroom challenges (Herniati et al., 2023). Achievement motivation is also considered a key element in effective learning processes and the attainment of competencies. This motivation can be influenced by various factors such as teaching methods, the learning environment, teacher support, and educational programs designed to drive performance improvement—for example, Project-Based Learning (PBL), which has been proven to enhance students' problem-solving skills and overall academic achievement (Yuliani et al., 2024).

Achievement motivation is influenced not only by internal factors but also by external factors such as the principal's leadership, organizational culture, and the school's work climate. A supportive work environment, recognition of achievements, and opportunities for professional growth can strengthen teachers' achievement motivation. Research by Toyib et al., (2025) shows that effective leadership and a positive school culture have a significant influence on increasing teachers' motivation to achieve, which ultimately leads to improved performance. Within the framework of Self-Determination Theory, it is emphasized that intrinsic motivation,

including the motivation to achieve, will develop optimally in individuals who receive support for basic psychological needs such as autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 1985).

Theoretical Framework and Hypotheses

This study integrates three main variables:

- Independent Variables (X): Principal Leadership (X1) and School Culture (X2)
- Mediating Variable (M): Achievement Motivation
- Dependent Variable (Y): Teacher Performance

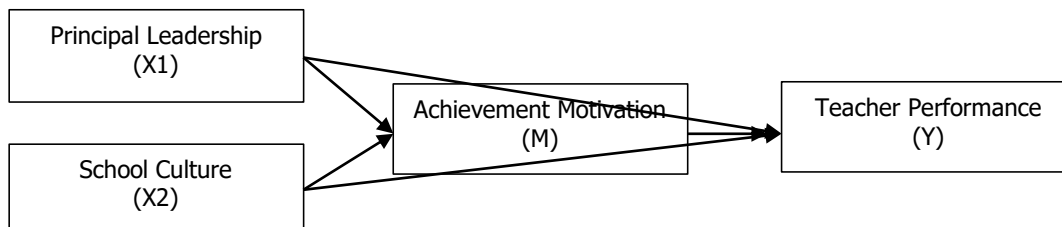


Figure 1. Theoretical Framework

Based on the conceptual framework, the hypotheses in this study are formulated as follows:

- a. Direct Effects
 - H1: Principal leadership has a positive and significant effect on teacher performance.
 - H2: School culture has a positive and significant effect on teacher performance.
 - H3: Principal leadership has a positive and significant effect on teachers’ achievement motivation.
 - H4: School culture has a positive and significant effect on teachers’ achievement motivation.
 - H5: Achievement motivation has a positive and significant effect on teacher performance.
- b. Indirect Effects
 - H6: Achievement motivation mediates the effect of the principal’s leadership on teacher performance.
 - H7: Achievement motivation mediates the effect of school culture on teacher performance.

METHODS

This study employs a quantitative approach with an exploratory research design to examine the influence of school principal leadership and school culture on teacher performance, with achievement motivation serving as a mediating variable. The study was conducted in private schools in Jepara Regency. The study population consists of all teachers in Jepara Regency. Based on data from Dapodikdasmn, the total number of teachers in Jepara Regency is approximately 12,257, consisting of 3,254 teachers in public schools and 9,003 teachers in private schools. Since this study focuses on private schools, the target population is limited to the 9,003 teachers working in private educational institutions.

To determine the sample size, this study used the Slovin formula with a 5% margin of error (e = 0.05), as follows:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{9.003}{1 + 9.003(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = 383$$

Notes:

n = sample size

N = population size (9,003 teachers)

e = margin of error (0.05)

Thus, the required sample size for this study is approximately 383 teachers from private schools in Jepara Regency.

The sampling technique used was purposive sampling, with criteria including teachers who are actively teaching at private schools and have at least one year of teaching experience. The selected sample is expected to adequately represent the characteristics of the population. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire distributed to respondents. The instrument measured four main variables: principal leadership, school culture, achievement motivation, and teacher performance. Each variable was operationalized into several

indicators and measured using a Likert scale. The data analysis technique used was Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to test direct and indirect relationships among variables. The mediating role of achievement motivation was tested to determine whether it significantly influences the relationship between principal leadership, school culture, and teacher performance. Prior to hypothesis testing, the data were tested for validity and reliability to ensure the accuracy and consistency of the instruments. This methodological approach allows for a comprehensive examination of both direct and indirect relationships among variables, thereby effectively addressing the research problem related to the determinants of teacher performance

RESULT

Characteristics of Respondents

This study involved 383 teachers from private schools in Jepara Regency. The characteristics of respondents are presented based on gender, age, education level, and teaching experience.

Table 1. Respondent Characteristics

Characteristics	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	142	37.1%
	Female	241	62.9%
Age	< 30 years	98	25.6%
	30–40 years	156	40.7%
	> 40 years	129	33.7%
Education Level	Bachelor (S1)	310	81.0%
	Master (S2)	73	19.0%
Teaching Experience	< 5 years	85	22.2%
	5–10 years	147	38.4%
	> 10 years	151	39.4%

It appears that the majority of respondents were female teachers (62.9%), while male teachers accounted for 37.1%. This indicates that female educators dominate the teaching staff at private schools in Jepara Regency. In terms of age distribution, the majority of respondents were in the 30–40 age group (40.7%), followed by those over 40 years old (33.7%), and those under 30 years old (25.6%). This indicates that the sample consists primarily of individuals in their productive and mature years, which are typically associated with greater stability and professional experience.

Regarding educational background, the majority of respondents held a Bachelor's degree (81.0%), while only 19.0% held a Master's degree. This reflects that a Bachelor's degree remains the dominant qualification among private school teachers, although the majority have pursued higher education, which can positively contribute to teaching quality and professional competence. Furthermore, regarding teaching experience, the majority of respondents had more than 10 years of experience (39.4%), followed by those with 5–10 years of experience (38.4%), and a small proportion with less than 5 years of experience (22.2%). This distribution indicates that the sample is relatively experienced, with the majority of teachers having spent a considerable amount of time in the profession.

Overall, these findings indicate that the respondents in this study were predominantly experienced female teachers with bachelor's degrees and substantial teaching experience. This profile suggests that the sample is appropriate and relevant for assessing teacher performance, as it reflects individuals who are actively engaged in the educational process and have sufficient professional exposure.

Measurement Model Analysis (Outer Model)

Internal Consistency Reliability

Internal consistency reliability was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha and Composite Reliability (CR) to measure the extent to which the indicators of each construct consistently measure the same latent variable.

Table 2. Internal Consistency Reliability

	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability
Principal Leadership	0.912	0.931
School Culture	0.895	0.921
Achievement Motivation	0.903	0.928
Teacher Performance	0.917	0.935

All variables showed Cronbach's alpha values above the recommended threshold of 0.70, indicating a high level of internal consistency among the measurement items. Specifically, Teacher Performance showed the highest reliability (0.917), followed by Principal Leadership (0.912), Achievement Motivation (0.903), and School Culture (0.895). Similarly, the Composite Reliability (CR) values for all constructs exceeded 0.70, confirming that each construct possesses strong reliability and is capable of consistently measuring the intended latent variables. Teacher Performance again recorded the highest CR value (0.935), followed by Principal Leadership (0.931), Achievement Motivation (0.928), and School Culture (0.921). These results indicate that all constructs used in this study are highly reliable, meaning that the indicators within each variable are stable and consistent in measuring their respective concepts. Therefore, the measurement model meets the criteria for internal consistency reliability and is suitable for further analysis.

Convergent Validity

Convergent validity is assessed using the Average Variance Extracted (AVE), which reflects the extent to which a construct explains the variance of its indicators. An AVE value greater than 0.50 indicates that the construct explains more than half of the variance of its indicators, thereby demonstrating adequate convergent validity.

Table 3. Convergent Validity

	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Principal Leadership	0.658
School Culture	0.641
Achievement Motivation	0.663
Teacher Performance	0.672

All variables have AVE values exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.50, indicating that each construct has good convergent validity. This means that the indicators used to measure each variable are sufficiently correlated and effectively represent the underlying construct. Among these variables, Teacher Performance has the highest AVE value (0.672), followed by Achievement Motivation (0.663), Principal Leadership (0.658), and School Culture (0.641). These results indicate that all constructs are able to explain a significant portion of the variance in their respective indicators. These findings confirm that the measurement model meets the criteria for convergent validity, indicating that all constructs are well-established and suitable for further analysis in a structural equation model.

Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity was assessed using the Fornell-Larcker criterion, which compares the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each construct with the correlation between constructs. A construct is considered to have good discriminant validity if the square root of its AVE is greater than its correlation with other constructs.

Table 4. Discriminant Validity

	Principal Leadership	School Culture	Achievement Motivation	Teacher Performance
Principal Leadership	0.811			
School Culture	0.652	0.801		
Achievement Motivation	0.689	0.673	0.814	
Teacher Performance	0.701	0.688	0.732	0.820

The diagonal values (implicitly shown in bold as the square roots of AVE) for each construct are higher than the corresponding interconstruct correlation values in the same row and column. For example, Principal Leadership has an AVE square root of 0.811, which is higher than its correlations with School Culture (0.652), Achievement Motivation (0.689), and Teacher Performance (0.701). Similarly, School Culture (0.801), Achievement Motivation (0.814), and Teacher Performance (0.820) each exhibit AVE values that exceed their correlations with other constructs. This indicates that each construct is empirically distinct and captures phenomena not represented by other constructs in the model. These results confirm that the measurement model meets the Fornell-Larcker criteria, indicating good discriminant validity. This implies that all constructs in the study are sufficiently unique and do not overlap significantly, thereby supporting the model's validity for further structural analysis.

Structural Model Analysis (Inner Model)

Path Coefficient and Significance Testing

Hypothesis testing in this study was conducted using the bootstrapping method to evaluate the significance

of path coefficients in the structural model. The assessment was based on a t-statistic (> 1.96) and a p-value (< 0.05).

Table 5. Path Coefficient and Significance Testing

	Original Sample (O)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values	Result
Principal Leadership → Teacher Performance	0.285	4.112	0.001	Supported
School Culture → Teacher Performance	0.263	3.875	0.000	Supported
Principal Leadership → Achievement Motivation	0.412	6.201	0.000	Supported
School Culture → Achievement Motivation	0.378	5.842	0.002	Supported
Achievement Motivation → Teacher Performance	0.356	5.214	0.000	Supported

All hypothesized relationships were statistically significant, as indicated by t-statistics greater than 1.96 and p-values below 0.05. This means that all hypotheses proposed in the structural model were supported.

- Principal Leadership has a positive and significant effect on Teacher Performance ($\beta = 0.285$, $t = 4.112$). These findings indicate that effective leadership practices by the principal play a crucial role in enhancing teacher performance. The higher the quality of leadership, the higher the level of teacher performance achieved.
- School Culture also has a positive and significant influence on Teacher Performance ($\beta = 0.263$, $t = 3.875$). This indicates that a supportive and conducive school culture contributes to improved teacher performance. Although its influence is slightly lower than that of the principal's leadership, school culture remains an important factor in shaping performance.
- Principal leadership exhibits a strong positive influence on Achievement Motivation ($\beta = 0.412$, $t = 6.201$), which is the highest coefficient among all relationships. This implies that leadership is a key driver in fostering teachers' motivation to achieve, highlighting the principal's strategic role in promoting professional growth and goal-oriented behavior.
- School Culture significantly influences Achievement Motivation ($\beta = 0.378$, $t = 5.842$). This finding indicates that a positive organizational environment not only directly supports performance but also enhances teachers' internal motivation to achieve.
- Achievement Motivation has a positive and significant influence on Teacher Performance ($\beta = 0.356$, $t = 5.214$). These results confirm that teachers with higher motivation tend to demonstrate better performance, emphasizing the importance of intrinsic factors in achieving optimal work outcomes.

Overall, the research findings indicate that Principal Leadership and School Culture influence Teacher Performance both directly and indirectly through Achievement Motivation. Among these predictors, Achievement Motivation plays a crucial role as a mediating variable, strengthening the relationship between leadership, the organizational environment, and teacher performance. These findings support the proposed structural model and highlight the importance of organizational and psychological factors in improving teacher performance.

Mediation Effect

The mediating effect in this study was examined using the bootstrapping method to assess the indirect relationship between variables via Achievement Motivation. The significance of the mediating effect was determined based on the t-statistic (> 1.96) and the p-value (< 0.05).

Table 6. Mediating Effect

	Original Sample (O)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values	Result
Principal Leadership → Motivation → Performance	0.147	3.982	0.000	Supported
School Culture → Motivation → Performance	0.135	3.754	0.000	Supported

All indirect effects were statistically significant, as indicated by t-statistics greater than 1.96 and p-values below 0.05. This confirms that Achievement Motivation acts as a significant mediating variable in the model. Specifically, the indirect effect of Principal Leadership on Teacher Performance through Achievement Motivation is positive and significant ($\beta = 0.147$, $t = 3.982$). This indicates that effective principal leadership not only directly improves teacher performance but also enhances it indirectly by increasing teachers' motivation to achieve. In other words, part of the leadership's influence is transmitted through motivational factors. Similarly, School Culture also has a positive and significant indirect effect on Teacher Performance through Achievement

Motivation ($\beta = 0.135$, $t = 3.754$). This indicates that a supportive school environment fosters higher achievement motivation among teachers, which in turn leads to better performance outcomes.

Overall, these findings indicate that Achievement Motivation plays a significant mediating role in strengthening the relationship between Principal Leadership, School Culture, and Teacher Performance. The presence of significant direct and indirect effects suggests partial mediation, meaning that both Principal Leadership and School Culture influence Teacher Performance both directly and indirectly through Achievement Motivation. These results highlight the importance of considering psychological factors, particularly motivation, as a key mechanism through which organizational factors influence teacher performance.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study confirm that the dynamics of teacher performance cannot be separated from the complex interaction between organizational structural factors and individual psychological factors. Teacher performance is not merely the result of policies or systems implemented in schools, but also a reflection of how teachers perceive their work environment and the extent to which they possess an internal drive to excel. Thus, a holistic approach is essential for understanding and improving the quality of teacher performance.

A conducive school culture has proven to be a vital foundation in shaping teachers' work behavior. A school environment characterized by values of collaboration, openness, mutual respect, and a focus on educational quality can foster a work climate that encourages teachers to innovate and contribute optimally. From the perspective of organizational culture theory, the values and norms that develop within an institution are internalized by organizational members and subsequently influence their attitudes and actions at work (Bozkurt, 2023). This finding aligns with recent research indicating that a positive school culture contributes to enhanced professional collaboration, organizational commitment, and the effectiveness of teachers' instruction (Hermawan & Aswan, 2025; Windasari et al., 2023).

Furthermore, school culture not only impacts observable performance aspects but also plays a crucial role in shaping teachers' motivation to excel. A work environment that recognizes achievements, fosters creativity, and supports professional development will strengthen individuals' intrinsic drive to achieve better results. This aligns with McClelland's theory of achievement needs, which states that individuals with high achievement needs tend to be driven to set high work standards and strive to achieve them through consistent effort (McClelland, 1987). In an educational context, teachers in a supportive school culture will be more motivated to perform at their best because they feel valued and supported.

On the other hand, the leadership of the school principal remains a strategic element in guiding and driving the school organization toward the achievement of educational goals. Although its influence on teacher performance is not as significant as that of school culture, the principal's role as a transformational and instructional leader remains crucial in creating a shared vision, providing professional support, and ensuring the sustainability of high-quality teaching practices. Effective leadership can establish a clear direction, enhance teachers' capacity, and create working conditions that allow teachers to develop optimally (Mardalena et al., 2024; Mohamed et al., 2018). In practice, a principal who can inspire, empower, and provide constructive feedback will encourage teachers to work in a more focused and responsible manner.

The influence of leadership is also evident in fostering teachers' motivation to excel. A supportive and participatory leadership style can enhance teachers' self-efficacy, self-confidence, and commitment to their professional duties. When school principals acknowledge performance, create opportunities for dialogue, and support competency development, teachers will feel psychological support that strengthens their drive to excel. This is supported by empirical findings showing that effective leadership significantly contributes to increased teacher motivation and engagement (Suskawationo et al., 2021).

Across all the models tested, achievement motivation emerged as the most dominant determinant in explaining variations in teacher performance. This indicates that internal factors play a central role in driving individual work quality. Teachers with high achievement motivation tend to demonstrate higher levels of perseverance, responsibility, and commitment to their duties. They do not merely work to fulfill obligations but also strive to achieve higher performance standards and continuously improve themselves. These findings are consistent with McClelland's theory, which emphasizes that the need for achievement serves as the primary driver of productive, results-oriented work behavior.

The role of achievement motivation as a mediator further clarifies that the influence of school leadership and school culture on teacher performance does not occur solely through direct channels, but also through psychological mechanisms that take place within the individual. A positive organizational environment and effective leadership will enhance achievement motivation, which in turn will drive improved performance. In other words, achievement motivation serves as a bridge connecting external organizational factors with teachers' work behavior. These findings align with previous research indicating that achievement motivation strengthens the relationship between organizational factors and individual performance (Widayanto & Nugroho, 2022; Yulianto et al., 2025).

Nevertheless, the absence of a significant moderating effect suggests that the moderating variables used in this study were not able to explain the variations in the relationships among the variables in greater depth. This is likely due to the relatively homogeneous characteristics of the respondents or a lack of variation in the moderating variables, which did not result in a meaningful differentiating effect. This situation opens opportunities for future

research to explore other moderating variables, such as job satisfaction, workload, or organizational support, which have the potential to provide a more comprehensive understanding.

Overall, the findings of this study provide important implications that efforts to improve teacher performance, particularly in private schools in Jepara Regency, need to be carried out in an integrated manner by paying attention to the balance between strengthening the organizational system and developing individual psychological aspects. The creation of a positive school culture and effective principal leadership must be directed not only toward achieving organizational goals but also toward fostering teachers' sustained motivation to excel. Consequently, the educational policies designed will be more adaptive, contextually appropriate, and capable of driving comprehensive improvements in educational quality.

CONCLUSION

This study aims to analyze the influence of school principal leadership and school culture on teacher performance, with achievement motivation as a mediating variable, in private schools in Jepara Regency. The results indicate that both school culture and school principal leadership have a positive and significant influence on teacher performance, with school culture having a stronger effect. Furthermore, both variables were also found to enhance achievement motivation, which in turn emerged as the most dominant factor in determining teacher performance. Achievement motivation also served as a significant mediator, thereby strengthening the relationship between organizational factors and individual performance, although the tested moderating effect did not yield significant results. Overall, these findings confirm that improving teacher performance requires an integrative approach that combines organizational structural factors and psychological factors, while also providing a theoretical contribution to enriching educational management studies, particularly regarding the mediating role of achievement motivation in explaining the relationship between principal leadership, school culture, and teacher performance in the context of education in Indonesia.

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