Vol. 4, No. 3, September 2026, pp. 2682-2689
INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF
POST AXIAL
FUTURISTIC TEACHING AND LEARNING
https://journal.amorfati.id/index.php/postaxial||ISSN 3025-7549

Transformational Leadership and Organizational Culture on Teachers' Innovative Work Behavior in Kesesi Elementary Schools, Pekalongan Regency

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Article History:
Received:
11-07-2026
Revised:
07-08-2026
Accepted:
09-09-2026

Keywords:
Elementary school; Innovative work behavior; Organizational culture; Teacher; Transformational leadership

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Abstract:
Teachers' innovative work behavior is an important prerequisite for improving the quality of learning, yet it depends heavily on the leadership and cultural context of the school. This study aimed to examine the effect of principals' transformational leadership and organizational culture on teachers' innovative work behavior. A quantitative associative approach was employed, using a questionnaire administered to 186 elementary school teachers in Kesesi District, Pekalongan Regency. The data were analyzed with descriptive statistics, a linearity test, Pearson correlation, and simple linear regression (F-test, t-test, and coefficient of determination) using SPSS. The descriptive results showed that transformational leadership (M = 133.66), organizational culture (M = 187.90), and innovative work behavior (M = 149.46) were mostly in the high to very high categories. Transformational leadership correlated positively with innovative work behavior ($r = 0.470$, $p < 0.01$) and had a significant effect ($F = 52.041$; $t = 7.214$; $p < 0.001$), explaining 22.0% of its variance. Organizational culture showed a stronger positive correlation ($r = 0.573$, $p < 0.01$) and a significant effect ($F = 90.070$; $t = 9.491$; $p < 0.001$), explaining 32.9% of the variance. These findings indicate that teachers' innovative work behavior increases when principals articulate an inspiring vision and provide individualized support, and when the school shares values and norms that welcome new ideas. Elementary schools are therefore encouraged to strengthen principals' transformational leadership and to cultivate an innovation-supportive organizational culture.

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Introduction (مقدمة)

Schools are required to continuously adapt their teaching practices to changing curricula,

technologies, and learner characteristics. Under these conditions, teachers can no longer rely on routine practice alone; they are expected to generate, promote, and apply new ideas in their work. This capacity is commonly referred to as innovative work behavior, defined as the intentional creation, introduction, and application of new ideas within a work role, group, or organization (Janssen, 2000). It typically unfolds through idea exploration, idea generation, idea championing, and idea implementation (De Jong & Den Hartog, 2010). A review of the literature indicates that teachers' innovative behavior is shaped by both individual and contextual factors, among which the support of school leaders is prominent (Thurlings, Evers, & Vermeulen, 2015). Indonesian studies likewise treat innovative work behavior as important for teachers and education personnel, and report that principals' leadership and work motivation are related to teachers' innovative behavior (Hardianto, Hidayat, & Zulkifli, 2021; Setyaningrum, Taufiqulloh, & Habibi, 2024).

The principal is the most influential contextual actor in this regard. Transformational leadership, which consists of idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration, encourages followers to exceed expectations and to question established ways of working (Bass & Riggio, 2006). In educational settings, a meta-analytic review has associated transformational school leadership with positive outcomes at the teacher and organizational levels (Leithwood & Sun, 2012). More generally, leader behavior and a supportive work climate have been identified as determinants of individual innovation in the workplace (Scott & Bruce, 1994). Studies in Indonesian elementary schools point in the same direction: principals' transformational leadership was positively related to teacher innovation in public elementary schools in Bukittinggi (Haestetika, Marsidin, Anisah, & Sulastri, 2023) and to teacher performance (Bahtiar, Nur, & Arhesa, 2026; Wote & Patalatu, 2019), a literature review concludes that it improves teacher performance in elementary schools (Elviliza, Yulita, Gistituati, Rusdinal, & Nellitawati, 2025), and a systematic review associates it with learning innovation and educational quality (Nellitawati & Ginanjar, 2026). Principal leadership has also been found to be related to teacher innovativeness (Khodijah, Patras, & Julaeha, 2024). Evidence outside schools is less consistent: a study of Islamic bank employees found no significant effect of transformational leadership on innovative work behavior (Wardhani & Gulo, 2017), whereas a study of employees in an Industry 4.0 context reported positive effects of transformational leadership and organizational climate (Asbari, Santoso, & Purwanto, 2019).

Besides leadership, organizational culture is another contextual factor. Organizational culture is the set of shared values, beliefs, and norms that guides how members think and act (Schein, 2010; Robbins & Judge, 2013). A school culture that values collaboration, openness to change, and appreciation of new ideas gives teachers both the legitimacy and the psychological safety to experiment. Leaders play a central role in creating and embedding culture (Schein, 2010); leadership and culture are therefore related yet distinct contextual conditions, and both are expected to influence teachers' innovative work behavior. Indonesian studies show that organizational or school culture is positively associated with teacher performance in elementary schools (Antika & Isyanto, 2024; Hermawan, Miyono, & Abdullah, 2022; Komarudin, 2018; Turrofiah, Suriswo, & Fristiananingrum, 2026) and at other school levels (Habibi, 2013; Prayoga & Yuniati, 2019), and that culture and principal leadership are both related to teacher performance (Agung & Subroto, 2010; Noorsanti, Zamroni, & Salehudin, 2023). Among elementary school teachers in Labuhan Batu, organizational culture also had a direct positive effect on innovative behavior (Siregar, Wow, & Hambali, 2023), and principals' transformational leadership has been examined as a driver of school culture development in elementary schools (Thoha, Kundofir, & Fatimah, 2026).

Despite these theoretical arguments, empirical evidence from the elementary school context is still needed to show how strongly each of the two variables is related to teachers' innovative work behavior. Elementary school teachers in particular work closely with a single class

throughout the day and depend on the principal and the school's shared norms for direction, resources, and support. Evidence from Kesesi District, Pekalongan Regency, however, remains limited. This study therefore aimed to (1) describe the levels of principals' transformational leadership, organizational culture, and teachers' innovative work behavior among elementary school teachers in Kesesi District; (2) examine the effect of principals' transformational leadership on teachers' innovative work behavior in Kesesi District; and (3) examine the effect of organizational culture on teachers' innovative work behavior. The hypotheses were: H1, principals' transformational leadership has a positive and significant effect on teachers' innovative work behavior; and H2, organizational culture has a positive and significant effect on teachers' innovative work behavior.

Method (منهج)

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative approach with an associative (causal-explanatory) design to test the effect of two independent variables, namely principals' transformational leadership (X1) and organizational culture (X2), on one dependent variable, namely teachers' innovative work behavior (Y) (Sugiyono, 2019).

Participants

The participants were 186 elementary school (SD) teachers in Kesesi District, Pekalongan Regency, Central Java, Indonesia. All 186 questionnaires were returned and analyzed (N = 186).

Instruments

Data were collected through a closed-ended questionnaire with a Likert-type response scale, and respondents rated their principal (X1 and X2) and their own innovative behavior (Y). The observed score ranges were 36–150 for transformational leadership, 69–210 for organizational culture, and 81–180 for innovative work behavior. For descriptive purposes, scores on each variable were divided into five equal-interval categories: very low, low, fairly high, high, and very high.

Data Analysis

The analysis was conducted in SPSS in three stages. First, descriptive statistics (minimum, maximum, mean, and standard deviation) and frequency distributions by category were computed for each variable. Second, a linearity test (ANOVA) and the Pearson product-moment correlation were used to examine the relationship between the independent variables and Y. Third, simple linear regression was used to test the hypotheses, using the F-test (model significance), the t-test (significance of the regression coefficient), and the coefficient of determination (R^2) (Ghozali, 2018). The significance level was set at 0.05.

Result (نتائج)

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 summarizes the descriptive statistics of the three variables. The mean of each variable lies in the upper part of its possible range: transformational leadership averaged 133.66 (89.1% of the maximum observed score of 150), organizational culture 187.90 (89.5% of 210), and innovative work behavior 149.46 (83.0% of 180).

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of research variables

Variable	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Deviation
Transformational	186	36.00	150.00	133.66	17.69

Variable	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Deviation
leadership (X1)					
Organizational culture (X2)	186	69.00	210.00	187.90	21.47
Innovative work behavior (Y)	186	81.00	180.00	149.46	20.30

Source: Primary data processed with SPSS.

The distribution of respondents by category is presented in Table 2 and Figure 1. Most teachers in Kesesi District perceived their principal's transformational leadership as high or very high (28.49% + 68.28% = 96.77%), and the same applies to organizational culture (31.18% + 65.05% = 96.23%). Teachers' innovative work behavior was more evenly spread: 68.81% of the teachers were in the high or very high categories, 22.04% were in the fairly high category, and 9.14% were in the low or very low categories.

Table 2. Distribution of respondents by category, f (%)

Category	X1	X2	Y
Very low	3 (1.61)	1 (0.54)	1 (0.54)
Low	0 (0.00)	1 (0.54)	16 (8.60)
Fairly high	3 (1.61)	5 (2.69)	41 (22.04)
High	53 (28.49)	58 (31.18)	66 (35.48)
Very high	127 (68.28)	121 (65.05)	62 (33.33)
Total	**186 (100.00)**	**186 (100.00)**	**186 (100.00)**

Source: Primary data processed with SPSS.

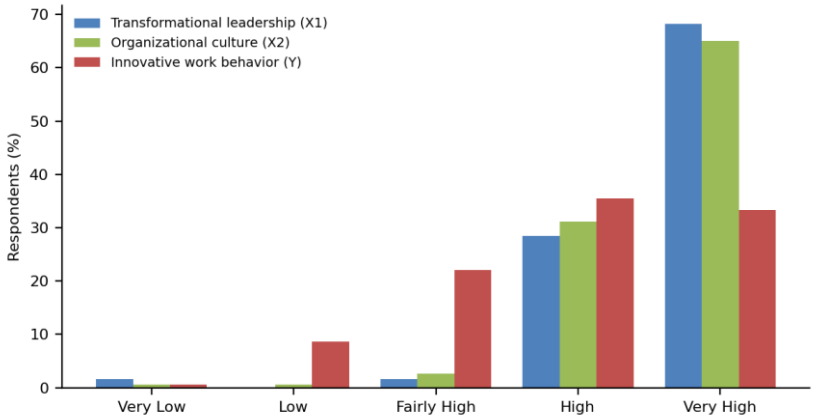


Figure 1. Percentage of respondents by category for each variable

Effect of Transformational Leadership on Innovative Work Behavior

The Pearson correlation between X1 and Y was 0.470 ($p < 0.01$, N = 186), indicating a positive relationship of moderate strength. The regression model was significant ($F(1, 184) = 52.041$; $p < 0.001$). The regression equation was $Y = 77.455 + 0.539\ X1$. The coefficient of X1 was positive and significant (B = 0.539; β = 0.470; $t = 7.214$; $p < 0.001$), so each one-point increase in transformational leadership score is associated with a 0.539-point increase in innovative work behavior score. The coefficient of determination was $R^2 = 0.220$ (adjusted $R^2 = 0.216$), meaning that transformational leadership explained 22.0% of the variance in teachers' innovative work behavior. H1 is therefore accepted.

Effect of Organizational Culture on Innovative Work Behavior

The linearity test showed a significant linear component ($F = 105.181$; $p < 0.001$) and a non-significant deviation from linearity ($F = 1.003$; $p = 0.508 > 0.05$), so the relationship between X2 and Y can be considered linear. The Pearson correlation between X2 and Y was 0.573 ($p < 0.01$, $N = 186$), a positive relationship of moderate-to-strong magnitude. The regression model was significant ($F(1, 184) = 90.070$; $p < 0.001$), with the equation $Y = 47.583 + 0.542\ X2$. The coefficient of X2 was positive and significant ($B = 0.542$; $\beta = 0.573$; $t = 9.491$; $p < 0.001$), so each one-point increase in organizational culture score is associated with a 0.542-point increase in innovative work behavior score. The coefficient of determination was $R^2 = 0.329$ (adjusted $R^2 = 0.325$), meaning that organizational culture explained 32.9% of the variance in teachers' innovative work behavior. H2 is therefore accepted. The results of both regressions are compared in Table 3.

Table 3. Results of correlation and simple linear regression on innovative work behavior (Y)

Predictor	r	R^2	Adj. R^2	F	B	β	t	Sig.
Transformational leadership (X1)	0.470	0.220	0.216	52.041	0.539	0.470	7.214	0.000
Organizational culture (X2)	0.573	0.329	0.325	90.070	0.542	0.573	9.491	0.000

Source: Primary data processed with SPSS.

Discussion (مناقشة)

The findings show that both principals' transformational leadership and organizational culture are positively and significantly related to teachers' innovative work behavior. The effect of transformational leadership is consistent with the argument that leaders who provide a compelling vision, intellectual stimulation, and individual attention create conditions in which employees dare to propose and apply new ideas (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Scott & Bruce, 1994). In elementary schools, such principals encourage teachers to rethink instructional routines, which corresponds to the idea exploration and generation stages of innovative work behavior (De Jong & Den Hartog, 2010). The result is also in line with Haestetika et al. (2023), who found that principals' transformational leadership explained 17.4% of teacher innovation in public elementary schools, a share close to the 22.0% observed here.

Organizational culture showed an even larger contribution (32.9%) than transformational leadership (22.0%). Shared values and norms shape what teachers regard as appropriate and rewarded in their daily work; when a school culture appreciates collaboration, openness to change, and new ideas, trying out new teaching methods becomes a normal and legitimate activity rather than an individual risk (Schein, 2010; Robbins & Judge, 2013). The importance of culture for teachers' innovation agrees with Siregar et al. (2023), although the direct effect they reported was smaller (5.24%), and with studies linking school culture to teacher performance (Antika & Isyanto, 2024; Hermawan et al., 2022; Komarudin, 2018; Turrofiah et al., 2026). Studies that examine leadership and culture together also report significant effects of both (Agung & Subroto, 2010; Noorsanti et al., 2023). The larger contribution suggests that the everyday norms of the school may weigh more on teachers' innovation than the style of the principal alone. This comparison should be treated cautiously, because the two variables were tested in separate regressions. Moreover, since leaders create and embed culture (Schein, 2010), part of the effect of leadership may operate through culture, an assumption that future studies could test with a mediation model.

Two points deserve attention. First, the explained variance is moderate; around 78% (X1) and 67% (X2) of the variation in innovative work behavior is attributable to other factors, such as

teachers' individual characteristics, workload, and organizational support (Thurlings et al., 2015). Work motivation, for example, has been shown to predict teacher innovation alongside transformational leadership (Haestetika et al., 2023; Setyaningrum et al., 2024), and the effect of leadership may run through motivation or job satisfaction (Bahtiar et al., 2026; Nafarin et al., 2026). Evidence from outside schools is also mixed (Asbari et al., 2019; Wardhani & Gulo, 2017), which suggests that the effect of leadership depends on context. Second, transformational leadership and organizational culture were rated high or very high by more than 96% of respondents, while innovative work behavior was lower and more varied (9.14% low or very low and 22.04% fairly high). This gap suggests that a favorable perception of leadership and culture does not automatically turn into innovation in the classroom, so schools also need to provide concrete opportunities, time, resources, and recognition for teachers' innovative initiatives. Strengthening principals' transformational leadership and teachers' competence has likewise been recommended in recent Indonesian studies (Nafarin et al., 2026; Nellitawati & Ginanjar, 2026).

This study has limitations. The two predictors were tested in separate simple regressions, so their joint and unique contributions could not be separated; future studies should apply multiple regression or structural equation modeling. The data were self-reported and cross-sectional, and the high scores may reflect a ceiling effect or social desirability. The findings are limited to elementary school teachers in Kesesi District and should be generalized with care.

Conclusion (خاتمة)

Principals' transformational leadership has a positive and significant effect on teachers' innovative work behavior ($r = 0.470$; $B = 0.539$; $t = 7.214$; $p < 0.001$; $R^2 = 0.220$), and organizational culture also has a positive and significant effect, with a larger contribution ($r = 0.573$; $B = 0.542$; $t = 9.491$; $p < 0.001$; $R^2 = 0.329$). Most teachers perceived their principal's leadership and the school's organizational culture as high or very high, whereas their own innovative work behavior was more varied. Practically, the Kesesi District education office and school supervisors should strengthen principals' transformational leadership competencies through training and mentoring, and principals should cultivate a school culture that values collaboration, openness to change, and teachers' new ideas.

Acknowledgment (شكر وتقدير)

The author would like to express sincere gratitude to all parties who have supported the completion of this research entitled *"Transformational Leadership and Organizational Culture on Teachers' Innovative Work Behavior in Kesesi Elementary Schools."* Special thanks are extended to the principals and teachers of elementary schools in Kesesi District for their participation and valuable contributions to this study. The author also gratefully acknowledges the academic supervisors for their guidance, advice, and constructive feedback throughout the research process. Finally, the author extends appreciation to everyone who has provided assistance and support, directly or indirectly, in completing this research.

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