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Transformational Leadership in Building a Collaborative School Culture

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ABSTRACT

The development of collaborative school culture has become an increasingly important challenge in the Society 5.0 era, as educational institutions are expected to foster teacher engagement, professional collaboration, and organizational effectiveness beyond academic achievement. Transformational leadership provides a theoretical framework for understanding how leaders influence organizational values, empower teachers, and establish shared commitments; however, the mechanisms through which this leadership approach builds collaborative school culture remain insufficiently synthesized. This study aims to analyze the role of transformational leadership in developing collaborative school culture, particularly its underlying mechanisms and implementation challenges. A Systematic Literature Review (SLR) was conducted on ten selected articles published between 2021 and 2026, identified through Google Scholar and Scopus-indexed sources using predefined selection criteria. The findings reveal that transformational leadership promotes a collaborative culture through shared vision, inspirational motivation, teacher empowerment, and supportive participatory environments. These practices strengthen communication, professional collaboration, and school-community engagement, contributing to teacher motivation, learning quality, and organizational effectiveness. Nevertheless, resistance to change, limited resources, and administrative burdens remain significant barriers to implementation. This study concludes that transformational leadership serves as an organizational mechanism for institutionalizing collaboration. It recommends strengthening teacher empowerment, participatory decision-making, and shared leadership practices to achieve sustainable school improvement.

INTRODUCTION

The increasing complexity of global educational challenges has placed considerable pressure on schools to establish organizational environments that are adaptive, innovative, and collaborative (Farhillah et al. 2026). In the Society 5.0 era, educational institutions are no

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longer expected to focus exclusively on academic achievement but must also cultivate organizational cultures that encourage active participation, shared responsibility, and professional collaboration among members of the school community (Lagrutta et al. 2025). However, establishing such a culture requires more than formal organizational structures and administrative policies; it demands leadership capable of mobilizing human resources, developing collective commitment, and facilitating meaningful organizational change (Mahisa 2022; Robbins and Judge 2008). Transformational leadership represents a relevant approach because it emphasizes the transformation of organizational values, attitudes, and behaviors toward a more cohesive, participatory, and supportive working environment (Winata et al. 2025). Within schools, the absence of effective leadership practices that encourage trust, shared vision, teacher empowerment, and collective engagement may hinder the development of a sustainable collaborative culture. Consequently, transformational leadership becomes increasingly important in addressing the organizational challenges of contemporary education, particularly in strengthening collaboration as a foundation for improving educational quality.

Academic literature on transformational leadership in education has developed along several interconnected research trajectories. First, studies have examined the relationship between transformational leadership and collaborative school culture, demonstrating its contribution to teamwork, active participation, and shared commitment to educational improvement (Azmaniar et al. 2025; Kuswaeri 2016). Second, research has investigated its influence on human resource development, teacher performance, and organizational quality (Rivai 2022; Rahmawati et al. 2026) Third, studies have explored its contribution to employee performance and the achievement of organizational objectives (Sulastri and Azmi 2023; Widayati and Rahardjo 2017; Bustomi et al. 2024). Despite these contributions, existing studies tend to examine transformational leadership in isolation, with separate organizational outcomes, leaving the mechanisms by which its leadership dimensions translate into collaborative school culture insufficiently integrated. Previous literature reviews have also concentrated primarily on broader school performance, staff outcomes, and educational leadership systems. For example, (Heenan et al. 2023) synthesized 15 international studies published between 2012 and 2022 concerning transformational school leadership and its implications for staff and school culture in primary education, whereas (Toprak et al., 2023; Assingkily & Mesiono, 2019) examined transformational school leadership within a centralized educational system. Although these studies provide important theoretical insights, they do not explicitly position collaborative school culture as the primary analytical focus, particularly in the Indonesian educational context. Furthermore, the relationship between the four dimensions of transformational leadership and the organizational processes underlying collaboration warrants systematic examination (Harefa et al., 2026). This gap indicates the need for a more focused synthesis that integrates leadership dimensions, collaborative mechanisms, and contextual challenges in educational institutions.

This study aims to comprehensively examine how transformational leadership contributes to the development of a collaborative organizational culture in educational institutions through a Systematic Literature Review (SLR). Specifically, it seeks to synthesize recent empirical findings on the conceptual foundations, leadership practices, organizational mechanisms, and implementation challenges of transformational leadership in fostering school collaboration. Rather than merely identifying the relationship between

transformational leadership and organizational effectiveness, this study investigates how specific leadership practices foster a shared vision, teacher empowerment, professional interaction, collective decision-making, and shared responsibility in school environments. The review also examines the organizational and contextual conditions that facilitate or constrain the development of a collaborative culture. By integrating findings from relevant empirical studies, this research seeks to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the processes through which transformational leadership shapes collaborative values and practices in educational institutions. The study is expected to contribute theoretically by extending understanding of transformational leadership beyond individual and organizational performance outcomes to the development of a collaborative organizational culture. Practically, its findings are expected to provide insights for educational leaders in designing leadership strategies that strengthen teacher participation, professional collaboration, and sustainable school improvement, particularly in the context of educational transformation in the Society 5.0 era.

The central argument of this study is that transformational leadership functions as an organizational mechanism through which individual commitment is transformed into shared organizational values, collective behaviors, and sustainable collaborative practices. This argument emphasizes that the contribution of transformational leadership to school collaboration cannot be understood merely through the existence of a leadership style but must be examined through the specific mechanisms associated with its four core dimensions: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. Idealized influence establishes trust, credibility, and shared commitment among school members; inspirational motivation develops a common vision and collective organizational purpose; intellectual stimulation encourages knowledge exchange, innovation, and collaborative problem-solving; while individualized consideration strengthens interpersonal relationships, professional support, and individual participation. These dimensions are interconnected in shaping organizational norms characterized by open communication, mutual assistance, participatory decision-making, and professional collaboration. The study therefore argues that collaborative school culture emerges when transformational leadership practices become embedded in everyday organizational interactions rather than remaining limited to formal policies or temporary initiatives. By synthesizing empirical evidence, this study examines the extent to which these proposed mechanisms are supported by prior research and identifies the contextual factors that influence their implementation. Accordingly, transformational leadership is understood not merely as an approach to improving individual performance but as a strategic organizational process for institutionalizing collaboration and strengthening schools' collective capacity to achieve sustainable educational improvement.

RESEARCH METHODS

The data collection method used in this study is a Systematic Literature Review (SLR), a research method that identifies, evaluates, and interprets findings related to the research topic to answer the research questions posed (Kitchenham et al., 2009). Metode *Systematic Literature Review* (SLR): The Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method is a systematic, explicit, and reproducible approach to identifying, evaluating, and synthesizing research findings and expert opinions in a structured manner (Norlita et al., 2023). The literature

review aims to provide a comprehensive theoretical understanding and to build a strong argument based on highly credible sources (Fitriah & Fitriatin, 2025). To ensure procedural transparency, this study operationalizes its SLR design around six explicit components: (1) research design (a qualitative SLR following the PRISMA flow), (2) research questions, (3) search strategy (database, keywords, and publication window), (4) inclusion/exclusion criteria, (5) quality assessment, and (6) data extraction and synthesis. The operational steps used in this study are as follows:

The first step, formulating the research questions, is based on the requirements of the selected topic. The following are the research questions for this study:

RQ1: How is the concept of transformational leadership defined and implemented in the context of school education?

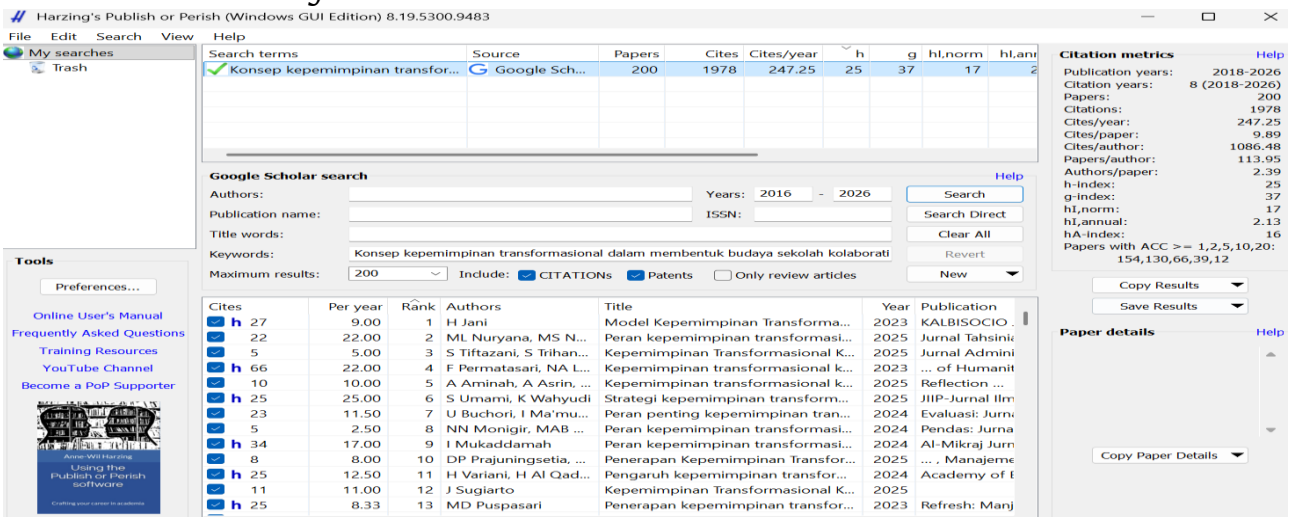
RQ2: What role does transformational leadership play in shaping a collaborative school culture, according to the findings of empirical literature?

RQ3: What are the main challenges and limitations of implementing transformational leadership in fostering a collaborative culture in schools?

Search strategy and inclusion/exclusion criteria: In the second stage, the search was conducted in the Google Scholar database via the "Publish or Perish" application. The keywords used included combinations of terms such as "transformational leadership concepts," "organizational culture," "the role of transformational leadership," "fostering a collaborative culture," and "the challenges." At this stage, we considered the predetermined inclusion criteria, namely the relevance of the theme and articles published within a 5-year timeframe (2021–2026). A total of 200 articles were identified in the initial stage. Below is an image of the journal search using Publish or Perish:

Figure 1.

Literature Search Using Publish or Perish



Step 3: After conducting the search, screen the journal articles by removing duplicates, articles outside the specified time frame, and those irrelevant to the discussion. This screening process is known as Quality Assessment (QA). The purpose of Quality Assessment is to

evaluate the quality of the previously collected literature sources. The evaluation is based on the following criteria:
QA1: Was this journal article published between 2021 and 2026?
QA2: Is the journal article relevant to the research conducted?
QA3: Does the article offer recommendations or practical implications for educational development?
For each article, the answers to each of the questions above will be rated as "yes (Y)" or "no (X)".

Table 1.
Quality Assessment Results

No	Article Details	Title	QA1	QA2	QA3
1	John Michael V. Sasan, Gemma R. Escultor, Vahid Norouzi Larsari. International Journal of Social Service and Research. 2023.	The Impact of Transformational Leadership on School Culture	Y	Y	Y
2	Syaza Tiftazani, Syunu Trihantoyo, Erny Roesminingsih, Amrozi Khamidi. Jurnal Administrasi Pendidikan Islam. 2025.	Transformational Leadership of School Principals in Building an Educational Organizational Culture	Y	Y	Y
3	Amal Purnomo, Bebet Adi Wibawa, Soedjono. Jurnal Pendidikan Tambusai. 2025.	Principal Leadership in Developing a Collaborative Culture at SMKN 1 Wirosari, Grobogan	Y	Y	Y
4	Ratna, Besse Herlina, Hj. Syamsinar, Marlina Abbas, Juniati, Nursaidah, Bayani, Rahma Darwis, Susanti Gunawan. Kelola: Journal of Islamic Education Management. 2025	The Principal's Leadership in Developing a Collaborative Culture at SMKN 1 Wirosari, Grobogan	Y	Y	Y
5	Mohammed Alzoraiki, Abd Rahman Ahmad, Ali Ateeq, Marwan Milhem. Frontiers in Education. 2024.	The Role of Transformational Leadership in Enhancing School Culture and Teaching Performance in Yemeni Public Schools	Y	Y	Y
6	Anila Koli Plaku, Klodiana Leka. Frontiers in Education. 2025.	The Role of Leaders in Shaping School Culture	Y	Y	Y

7	Abd Hapid. Jurnal Kepengawasan, Supervisi dan Manajerial. 2024.	The Influence of Transformational Leadership Style on a Positive School Culture	Y	Y	Y
8	Jacqueline Kareem, Harold Andrew Patrick, Nepoleon Prabakaran, et al. Frontiers in Education. 2023.	Transformational Educational Leaders Inspire School Educators' Commitment	Y	Y	Y
9	Aminah, Asrin, Mansur Hakim, Muhammad Mustari, Sudirman Wilian. Reflection Journal. 2025.	The Principal's Transformational Leadership in Improving the Quality of Education at SMPN 1 Mataram	Y	Y	Y
10	Herlin Variania, Hanif Al Qadrib, Nellitawati. Academy of Education Journal. 2024.	The Influence of Transformational Leadership on Human Resource Development in an Educational Institution	Y	Y	Y

Data extraction and synthesis: a search on the Publish or Perish application yielded 200 journal articles on Google Scholar, from which 7 relevant articles that met the inclusion criteria were selected. To broaden international coverage and strengthen the quality tier of the reviewed evidence, a supplementary manual search was subsequently conducted directly on Google Scholar and Scopus-indexed journal websites using the same keywords and 2021–2026 publication window; this supplementary search, screened against the same three-item quality assessment (QA1–QA3), yielded 3 additional articles, bringing the final sample to 10 articles. Only articles that were appropriate, valid, and aligned with the study's objectives were included in the analysis. Subsequently, findings from various studies were critically and comprehensively synthesized to provide precise and objective answers to the research questions. This process yielded a deep understanding of the topic under investigation.

Of the 200 articles identified through the database search, a screening and evaluation process was conducted based on thematic relevance and publication years ranging from 2021 to 2026. Following the screening and quality assessment stages, 7 articles that met the criteria were retained. To broaden the evidence base, 3 additional articles were incorporated through a supplementary manual search using the same quality assessment criteria (see Methods above). In total, 10 articles met the inclusion criteria and were used in this study

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The next step is to address the research question (RQ) based on the 10 articles that have been selected as meeting the inclusion criteria.

RQ1: How is the concept of transformational leadership defined and implemented in the context of school education?

Transformational leadership is a leadership style based on influence and change, implemented through the 4I model and practices of school empowerment (Plaku & Leka,

2025). The 4I's refer to Idealized Influence, Inspirational Motivation, Intellectual Stimulation, and Individualized Consideration (Ratna et al., 2025).

Table 2.
Transformational Leadership and Human Resource Performance

No	Characteristics of Transformational Leadership	Positive Impact on Human Resources	Implementation Example
1	Idealized Influence	Building respect and trust	Leaders serve as role models for teachers and staff
2	Inspirational Motivation	Boosting morale and work motivation	A clear and inspiring vision
3	Intellectual Stimulation	Fostering creativity and innovation	Professional development discussions and training
4	Individualized Consideration	Providing personal attention and support	Support and coaching for teachers in need

In the context of school education, this concept is put into practice through the principal's behavior as a role model, inspiring a shared vision, encouraging teacher innovation, individual development, professional development, mentoring, and professional collaboration, as well as providing personalized attention to foster a collaborative and professional culture (Alzoraiki et al. 2024). This implementation has proven effective in improving the quality of Islamic education by fostering strong, adaptive, and student-centered school leadership (Aminah et al. 2025)

Transformational leadership in the context of school education serves not only as a leadership style that emphasizes vision and change, but also as an approach that encourages active participation, effective communication, innovation, and the ongoing professional development of teachers (Hapid 2024; Kareem et al. 2023; Tiftazani et al. 2025). Through these practices, the principal serves as a facilitator of change who is able to foster the engagement of the entire school community in a more collaborative and productive manner, thereby creating a learning environment that supports both individual growth and the advancement of the educational institution (Hapid 2024; Kareem et al. 2023; Tiftazani et al. 2025)

Transformational leadership is also understood as an approach that emphasizes the development of collective commitment through a clear vision, leadership support, and the creation of a work environment conducive to the growth of the school community (Sasan et al., 2023). In practice, school principals play a crucial role in setting the direction for change, fostering a sense of community, and creating opportunities for teachers and students to thrive through support, motivation, and opportunities to innovate (Sasan et al. 2023; Purnomo et al. 2025). Thus, transformational leadership is not only focused on changing leaders' behavior, but also on strengthening the school's organizational capacity so that it can operate in a more adaptive, collaborative, and sustainable manner (Purnomo et al., 2025).

RQ2: What role does transformational leadership play in shaping a collaborative school culture, according to the findings of empirical literature?

Empirical literature indicates that transformational leadership plays a crucial role in fostering a collaborative school culture by encouraging teachers' active participation in decision-making, valuing individual contributions, and creating an inclusive environment based on cooperation and openness(Wilson Heenan et al. 2023; Ali Alshuhumi et al. 2025). As agents of change, school principals reinforce positive norms, enhance intrinsic motivation, and foster adaptive teamwork, thereby making schools more innovative, participatory, and focused on improving the quality of education (Tiftazani et al., 2025). In addition, transformational leadership also promotes teacher empowerment, the creation of learning communities, improved communication, and a shift in organizational behavior toward teamwork, which ultimately strengthens professional collaboration and improves staff performance in educational units (Alzoraiki et al. 2024; Variani et al. 2024).

Transformational leadership also serves as a driving force in fostering a collaborative school culture by strengthening motivation, trust, open communication, and values of togetherness, which form the foundation of interactions among teachers and between school stakeholders (Hapid 2024; Kareem et al. 2023; Ratna et al. 2025). In practice, school principals who adopt this approach not only encourage stakeholder engagement, training, and recognition, but also build a learning community that fosters stronger, more adaptable, and collaborative teamwork (Aminah et al. 2025; Tiftazani et al. 2025). Thus, transformational leadership serves as the driving force behind a collaborative and productive school culture, as it is able to unify a shared vision, strengthen professional collaboration, and improve staff performance and the overall quality of education (Ratna et al. 2025; Variani et al. 2024).

Transformational leadership is also understood as an approach that fosters a positive school culture by establishing norms of cooperation, openness, and a commitment to educational quality, thereby making relationships among teachers, staff, and students more harmonious and focused on shared goals (Sasan et al. 2023; Plaku and Leka 2025). In practice, transformational school principals not only encourage participation and empowerment, but also foster a culture of collaboration through effective communication, recognition of school community members' contributions, and the creation of an inclusive and supportive environment for learning and teamwork (Purnomo et al. 2025; Sasan et al. 2023). Thus, transformational leadership can be seen as a catalyst for fostering an adaptive and productive school culture, as it fosters motivation, strengthens professional relationships, and supports the creation of sustainable educational innovation (Plaku and Leka 2025; Purnomo et al. 2025).

RQ3: What are the main challenges and limitations of implementing transformational leadership in fostering a collaborative culture in schools?

The implementation of transformational leadership in fostering a collaborative culture in schools still faces a number of challenges, particularly teacher resistance to change, limited resources, rigid bureaucracy, and a lack of training support, all of which can undermine the implementation of the transformational dimension at the school level (Ratna et al. 2025; Plaku and Leka 2025; Aminah et al. 2025). In addition, obstacles also arise from conventional ways of thinking, infrastructure limitations in underdeveloped areas, and misunderstandings

among teachers that can hinder the development of solid and sustainable cooperation (Ratna et al. 2025). This indicates that the success of transformational leadership depends not only on the leader's abilities, but also on the school's cultural readiness, systemic support, and the collective commitment of the entire school community to consistently implement change (Hapid 2024; Plaku and Leka 2025).

In addition to these structural challenges, implementing transformational leadership also requires significant time, energy, and consistency, as a collaborative culture cannot be built overnight but rather through a long-term process that demands sustained commitment from leaders and the school community (Sasan et al. 2023; Kareem et al. 2023). Its effectiveness is also greatly influenced by the leader's ability to maintain the direction of change, manage coordination among stakeholders, and ensure that the strategy remains consistent despite workload pressures, time constraints, and the dynamics of the school organization (Alzoraiki et al. 2024; Purnomo et al. 2025). On the other hand, low teacher motivation, a weak organizational culture, and a high degree of dependence on the quality of leaders indicate that the success of transformational leadership requires a strong support system, ongoing guidance, and a supportive school environment so that change can be sustained over the long term (Tiftazani et al. 2025; Variani et al. 2024).

Discussion

This discussion demonstrates that transformational leadership in the school context is no longer understood merely as a general leadership style, but rather as an approach with a clear conceptual structure through the 4I model: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration, as originally formulated in (Bass and Avolio's (1994) Full Range Leadership Theory· These findings confirm that the definition of transformational leadership in the analyzed literature aligns with the view that school leaders must be able to serve as role models, communicate a meaningful vision, stimulate creative thinking, and provide personalized attention to the school community(Mnzile & Ceylan, 2026). This is consistent with Toprak (Toprak et al., 2023), who found that transformational school leadership functions as a coherent set of behaviors rather than isolated traits, particularly within centralized education systems similar to Indonesia's. The operationalization of this concept is also evident in the principal's practices, such as providing strategic direction, training, mentoring, and empowering teachers, ensuring that transformational leadership is not merely theoretical but manifests as observable behavior in the school's daily life. These findings reinforce the understanding that the successful implementation of transformational leadership depends heavily on the leader's ability to translate a vision into actions that build the capacity of both individuals and the school organization.

In terms of its role in fostering a collaborative culture, the literature review indicates that transformational leadership strengthens social relationships, participation, trust, and open communication among school community members. Transformational school principals serve not only as guides but also as catalysts, encouraging teachers and staff to engage in decision-making, share knowledge, and work within a mutually supportive learning community. This pattern aligns with findings that a collaborative culture in schools emerges when leaders are able to establish shared goals, reinforce the value of cooperation, and provide

space for teacher innovation within a psychologically safe environment, consistent with Robbins and Judge's (2008) view of organizational culture as a set of shared meanings that shape members' interactions. It also corroborates the international synthesis by (Wilson Heenan et al.2023), who found that transformational school leadership's most consistent impact across 15 primary-school studies was an enhanced, more collaborative school culture rather than isolated performance gains. Thus, transformational leadership contributes not only to improved individual performance but also to the creation of a more positive, adaptive, and collaborative organizational climate. Implicitly, a collaborative culture is not a byproduct but one of the primary outcomes of transformational leadership consistently implemented within the school ecosystem.

However, this discussion also underscores that the implementation of transformational leadership faces quite complex constraints at the personal, organizational, and systemic levels. Resistance to change, resource constraints, rigid bureaucracy, heavy workloads, time constraints, and reliance on the quality of leaders are recurring factors in the literature, indicating that transformational leadership requires supportive conditions that are far from straightforward. Furthermore, fostering a collaborative culture is a long-term process; thus, its success cannot be measured by short-term interventions but rather by the consistency of practices, ongoing mentoring, and sustained systemic support. These findings align with the literature emphasizing that leaders' capacity, cross-organizational coordination, and organizational cultural maturity are critical prerequisites for genuine school transformation. Therefore, future research should expand its focus not only on how transformational leadership is defined and its impact on collaboration but also on the most effective implementation strategies across various school contexts, including schools with limited infrastructure, resources, and institutional support. This study has several limitations, including the limited number of articles analyzed and the restriction to publications from 2021–2026. In addition, this study only focused on educational institutions, so the findings may not fully represent transformational leadership practices in other organizational contexts.

The findings of this study reveal a shift in focus compared to previous research, which generally viewed transformational leadership as a factor in improving teacher performance, organizational effectiveness, or work motivation. Through a Systematic Literature Review approach, this study demonstrates that transformational leadership also plays a strategic role in building a collaborative school culture characterized by strengthened communication, participation, and a professional learning community. Thus, this study makes a scientific contribution by broadening the perspective on transformational leadership, not only as a managerial tool but also as the foundation of an adaptive and sustainable school organizational culture.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the results of a systematic literature review of the analyzed articles, it can be concluded that transformational leadership plays a crucial role in fostering a collaborative school culture. The concept of transformational leadership developed by Bass and Avolio is implemented in an educational context through the development of a shared vision, teacher empowerment, work motivation, and the creation of a supportive and participatory school

environment. Various empirical findings indicate that transformational leadership can enhance cooperation among school community members, strengthen professional culture, and foster a positive school climate focused on improving educational quality.

The implementation of transformational leadership in fostering a collaborative culture also faces various challenges, such as resistance to change, limited resources, the heavy administrative burden on school principals, and the need for commitment and consistency in its implementation. Therefore, the success of implementing transformational leadership does not only depend on the capacity of school leaders but also requires organizational support, conducive educational policies, and the active participation of the entire school community. Thus, transformational leadership can serve as a strategic approach in creating a sustainable and adaptive collaborative school culture that aligns with educational developments. Future research is expected to examine the implementation of transformational leadership in greater depth through an empirical approach across various levels and different school contexts. Additionally, future studies may also explore strategies for strengthening a collaborative culture relevant to educational transformation in the Society 5.0 era

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