



## Transformational Leadership and Positive Discipline Culture in Indonesian Public Primary Schools: A Predictive Association Study

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**Abstract:** Despite growing policy emphasis on positive discipline in Indonesian schools, empirical evidence on leadership predictors of discipline culture remains limited. This study examines whether principals' transformational leadership is associated with positive discipline culture in Indonesian public primary schools. Using a quantitative ex post facto (correlational) survey design, data were collected from 130 teachers across 20 public primary schools using proportionate stratified random sampling to ensure school-level representation. Teachers completed validated Likert-scale questionnaires measuring transformational leadership (36 items;  $\alpha = .975$ ) and positive discipline culture (36 items;  $\alpha = .975$ ). Simple linear regression indicated that transformational leadership significantly predicted positive discipline culture ( $R^2 = .579$ ;  $B = 0.718$ ;  $p < .001$ ), representing a large effect size ( $f^2 = 1.375$ ). This study contributes district-level evidence positioning positive discipline culture as a proximal organizational outcome sensitive to transformational leadership behaviors. Implications for principal professional development, leadership coaching, and district-level supervision are discussed. The cross-sectional, self-report design limits causal inference and generalizability.

**Abstrak:** Meskipun kebijakan disiplin positif semakin ditekankan di sekolah Indonesia, bukti empiris tentang prediktor kepemimpinan terhadap budaya disiplin masih terbatas. Penelitian ini menguji apakah kepemimpinan transformasional kepala sekolah berhubungan dengan budaya disiplin positif di SD negeri Indonesia. Menggunakan desain survei kuantitatif ex post facto (korelasional), data dikumpulkan dari 130 guru di 20 SD negeri dengan stratified random sampling proporsional untuk memastikan representasi antar-sekolah. Guru mengisi kuesioner Likert valid mengukur kepemimpinan transformasional (36 item;  $\alpha = 0,975$ ) dan budaya disiplin positif (36 item;  $\alpha = 0,975$ ). Regresi linear sederhana menunjukkan kepemimpinan transformasional memprediksi budaya disiplin positif secara signifikan ( $R^2 = 0,579$ ;  $B = 0,718$ ;  $p < 0,001$ ), menunjukkan effect size besar ( $f^2 = 1,375$ ). Penelitian ini menyumbang bukti tingkat-kecamatan yang memposisikan budaya disiplin positif sebagai outcome organisasi proksimal yang sensitif terhadap kepemimpinan transformasional. Implikasi untuk pengembangan profesional kepala sekolah, coaching kepemimpinan, dan supervisi pendidikan dibahas. Desain cross-sectional dan self-report membatasi inferensi kausal.

## A. Introduction

Across education systems, there has been a global shift from punitive, exclusionary discipline toward approaches that emphasize relationships, responsibility, and student development. Restorative practices and other preventive approaches are increasingly implemented to improve school climate and reduce harmful disciplinary outcomes, particularly when applied as whole-school systems rather than isolated classroom strategies (Lodi et al., 2021; Zakszeski & Rutherford, 2021; Samimi et al., 2023). Evaluations of these initiatives further highlight that sustained leadership support is essential to achieve meaningful changes in discipline and school climate (Gregory et al., 2022). This shift is reinforced by meta-analytic evidence linking exclusionary discipline to negative behavioral and academic outcomes, as well as persistent inequities in its application across student groups (Gerlinger et al., 2021; Gilleskie & Li, 2022; Zinsser et al., 2022; Weeks & Sullivan, 2024).

Despite these global developments, empirical challenges remain evident, particularly in primary education contexts where discipline practices shape early student experiences of belonging and behavioral expectations. In Indonesia, policy reforms such as Kurikulum Merdeka emphasize character development and supportive learning environments aligned with positive discipline principles (Kemendikbudristek, 2022a; Kemendikbudristek, 2022b). However, implementation gaps persist. Data from the Indonesian Child Protection Commission indicate that 861 cases of school-related violence were recorded between January and August 2023, including physical, psychological, and sexual violence, as well as bullying (KPAI, 2023). Furthermore, annual reports consistently document over 2,000 child rights violations across sectors, with education representing a significant proportion (KPAI, 2024). These findings suggest that punitive disciplinary practices remain prevalent, highlighting a critical gap between policy intentions and school-level realities.

Conceptually, positive discipline should be understood not merely as a set of techniques but as a school-wide cultural construct shaped by shared beliefs, consistent routines, and collective teacher practices. It encompasses restorative approaches to conflict resolution, student participation in rule-making, internalization of values, and the creation of a safe and supportive learning environment (Lodi et al., 2021; Zakszeski & Rutherford, 2021; Gregory et al., 2022). As such, the successful implementation of positive discipline depends on organizational coherence and alignment among school actors. Within this framework, leadership becomes a critical mechanism for shaping and sustaining discipline culture at the institutional level.

Existing literature has consistently identified leadership—particularly transformational leadership as a key driver of school culture and organizational change. Transformational leadership is characterized by behaviors such as articulating a compelling vision, modeling ethical conduct, fostering professional learning, and providing individualized support (Li & Karanxha, 2022; Heenan et al., 2023). Evidence from systematic reviews and meta-analyses suggests that leadership influences school outcomes through

indirect pathways involving teacher motivation, collective efficacy, and school culture (Cogaltay & Boz, 2023; Wu & Shen, 2022; Karadag & Sertel, 2025). Moreover, theoretical perspectives indicate that transformational leadership may shape discipline culture through mechanisms such as role modeling, shared vision building, professional reflection, and differentiated support (Shramko et al., 2023; Hollands et al., 2022; Altemose, 2025; Khan, 2025; Menon, 2025).

However, significant research gaps remain. First, existing studies in Indonesia tend to focus on distal outcomes such as student achievement, teacher performance, or general school culture, while discipline culture is rarely examined as a central organizational construct (Effendi, 2022; Nursita et al., 2023). Second, many studies rely on qualitative or single-site designs, limiting generalizability across diverse school contexts (Anggraini et al., 2024). Third, international findings on leadership and discipline may not be directly applicable to Indonesia due to its collectivist culture, high power distance, and centralized education system (Hofstede, 2001; Mangundjaya, 2019). Finally, district-level quantitative evidence involving multiple schools remains scarce, creating a need for more robust empirical investigations.

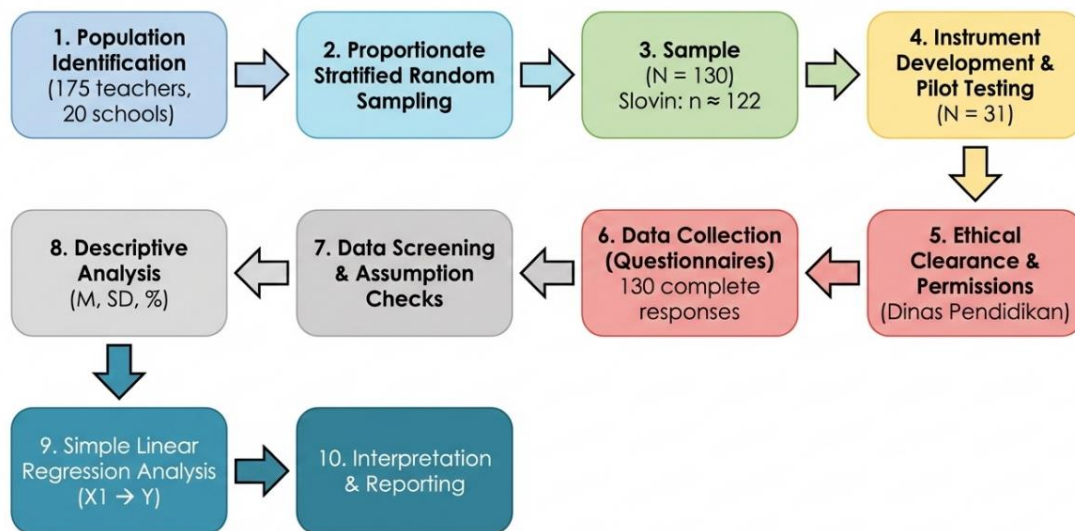
This study addresses these gaps by offering several key contributions. First, it provides district-level, multi-school quantitative evidence on the relationship between transformational leadership and positive discipline culture, capturing variation across 20 public primary schools. Second, it positions positive discipline culture as a proximal organizational outcome, enabling a more direct examination of leadership effects compared to distal outcomes such as student achievement (Wu & Shen, 2022). Third, it contextualizes transformational leadership theory within Indonesian primary education, contributing to the cross-cultural validation of leadership frameworks in collectivist settings where cultural norms may amplify leadership influence (Kaur & Noman, 2015; Kaur & Noman, 2020).

Based on this framework, the present study is guided by two research questions: (1) Is principals' transformational leadership significantly associated with positive discipline culture in public primary schools?, and (2) How strong is the predictive contribution of transformational leadership to positive discipline culture?. Accordingly, this study aims to examine the predictive relationship between principals' transformational leadership and positive discipline culture using teacher perceptions across multiple schools. By doing so, it contributes both empirically through district-level evidence and practically by informing leadership strategies to support the institutionalization of positive discipline aligned with national education reforms.

## **B. Method**

### **Research Design**

This study employed a quantitative, ex post facto (correlational) survey design to examine the association between principals' transformational leadership (X1) and positive discipline culture (Y). No intervention was administered; instead, teachers' perceptions of the existing conditions in their schools were measured at one point in time.



**Figure 1.** Research Flow Diagram

Figure 1 illustrates the research flow, starting from population identification to data interpretation. The procedure includes proportionate stratified random sampling, instrument development and pilot testing, ethical clearance, data collection, data screening and assumption checks, followed by descriptive and regression analyses, and concluding with interpretation and reporting of findings.

### Setting and Participants

The study was conducted in public primary schools in Tanggunharjo District, Grobogan Regency, Indonesia, during the 2025/2026 academic year. The population consisted of 175 teachers from 20 schools. A sample of 130 teachers was selected using proportionate stratified random sampling to ensure representation across schools. The sample size exceeded the minimum requirement based on a 5% margin of error, allowing for potential incomplete responses while maintaining adequate statistical power. To further verify sample adequacy, a post hoc power analysis using G\*Power 3.1 (Faul et al., 2009) indicated that the statistical power exceeded .99, confirming that the sample was sufficient to detect the observed effect size.

### Measures

Data were collected using closed-ended Likert-scale questionnaires (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). Several items were negatively worded and reverse-scored during data processing to reduce response-pattern bias. The instruments were developed as multi-indicator measures aligned with the study constructs, and total scores were computed by summing item responses (after reverse-scoring where applicable).

**Table 1.** Instrument Blueprint by Dimension

Variable	Dimension	Theoretical Basis	Indicators	Items
Transformational Leadership (X1)	Idealized Influence	Bass & Avolio (1994)	Role modeling, integrity, consistency	9
	Inspirational Motivation	Bass & Avolio (1994)	Vision articulation, optimism, meaning-building	9
	Intellectual Stimulation	Bass & Avolio (1994)	Innovation encouragement, tolerance for mistakes	9
	Individualized Consideration	Bass & Avolio (1994)	Needs attention, recognition, empowerment	9
<b>Total X1</b>				<b>36</b>
Positive Discipline Culture (Y)	Restorative Approach	Lodi et al (2021)	Dialogue, repair, reintegration	9
	Student Participation	Zakszeski & Rutherford (2021)	Rule involvement, peer mediation, ownership	9
	Value Internalization	Samimi et al (2023)	Self-regulation, awareness, choice understanding	9
	Positive Learning Environment	Gregory et al (2022)	Safety, respect, supportive climate	9
<b>Total Y</b>				<b>36</b>

Transformational leadership (X1) was measured using a 36-item instrument covering four dimensions: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration, reflecting leadership behaviors related to vision, role modeling, innovation, and teacher support. Positive discipline culture (Y) was also measured using 36 items encompassing four dimensions: restorative approach, student participation, value internalization, and positive learning environment, representing school-wide practices that promote constructive, relationship-based discipline. Higher scores indicated stronger perceived transformational leadership and a more developed positive discipline culture.

### Validity and Reliability

Instrument testing was conducted prior to the main data collection using a pilot group of 31 teachers outside the main sample. Item validity was assessed using Pearson product-moment correlations at a 5% significance level ( $r_{table} = 0.355$ ), with all items for both transformational leadership (X1) and positive discipline culture (Y) meeting the validity criteria. Internal consistency reliability was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha, indicating very high reliability for transformational leadership ( $\alpha = 0.975$ ) and positive discipline culture ( $\alpha = 0.975$ ). Content validity was established through expert judgment involving two educational psychology specialists and one school management expert to

ensure alignment between items and construct definitions. The instruments were adapted from established theoretical frameworks, with transformational leadership based on Bass & Avolio (1994) Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) adapted to the Indonesian primary school context, and positive discipline culture derived from restorative practices literature (Lodi et al., 2021; Zakszeski & Rutherford, 2021) and positive discipline frameworks (Samimi et al., 2023). Instrument development was completed in 2024, followed by pilot testing in early 2025.

### Data Collection Procedure and Ethics

This study was conducted following ethical research guidelines for social science research involving human participants. Prior to data collection, research permission was obtained from the District Education Office of Tanggungharjo (Research Permit Letter from the Tanggungharjo Sub-District Education Office). Informed consent was obtained from all participants, who were informed about: (a) the voluntary nature of participation with right to withdraw without consequence, (b) confidentiality and anonymity of responses (no identifying information collected), (c) data use limited to research and educational purposes only, and (d) secure data storage protocols. Questionnaires were distributed to participating teachers with support from school representatives. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, that participation was voluntary, and that responses would be kept confidential and used only for research purposes.

All 130 returned questionnaires were screened for completeness and response quality. No missing data were identified; all questionnaires had complete responses across all 72 items. No imputation or deletion procedures were necessary. Response patterns were examined for straight-lining or invariant responding; no questionnaires were excluded based on response quality criteria.

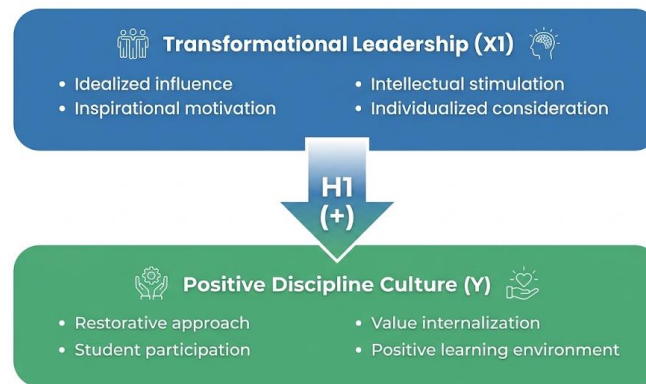
### Data Analysis

Data analysis was performed using SPSS version 26 with a significance level of 0.05. Descriptive statistics were computed for each variable. Assumption checks included Shapiro-Wilk tests for normality and a test for linearity between X1 and Y. The main hypothesis (H1) was tested using simple linear regression (X1 predicting Y). The model was evaluated using the regression coefficient (b), t-test, F-test (ANOVA), and the coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ).

Following Cohen (1988), effect size  $f^2$  was calculated as  $R^2/(1-R^2)$  to supplement the coefficient of determination. Although simple linear regression with one predictor precludes multicollinearity, VIF and tolerance values were computed and reported following methodological transparency standards.

## C. Result

Based on the theoretical framework of transformational leadership and positive discipline, this study proposes a conceptual model illustrating the predictive relationship between leadership behaviors and school discipline culture, as presented in Figure 2.



**Figure 2.** Transformational Leadership and Positive Discipline Culture Framework

The framework conceptualizes transformational leadership as a multidimensional construct comprising idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration, which collectively influence the development of positive discipline culture reflected in restorative practices, student participation, value internalization, and supportive learning environments.

### Descriptive Statistics

Prior to hypothesis testing, descriptive statistics were computed to characterize the distribution of the study variables. Table 2 presents descriptive statistics for transformational leadership and positive discipline culture.

**Table 2.** Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables (N = 130)

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Transformational Leadership (X1)	130	56	164	111.30	22.30
Positive Discipline Culture (Y)	130	47	159	108.81	21.04

As shown in Table 2, teachers generally reported moderate-to-high levels of transformational leadership (M = 111.30, SD = 22.30) and positive discipline culture (M = 108.81, SD = 21.04). The standard deviations indicate meaningful variability in perceptions across teachers and schools.

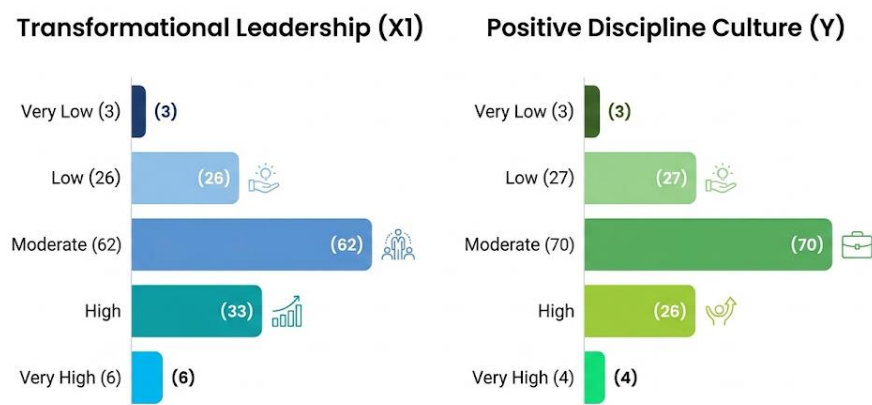
To provide additional context on how teacher perceptions were distributed across categories, Table 3 summarizes the frequency distribution for both variables.

**Table 3.** Category Distribution of Study Variables (N = 130)

Variable	Category	n	%
Transformational Leadership (X1)	Very Low	3	2.3
	Low	26	20.0
	Moderate	62	47.7
	High	33	25.4
	Very High	6	4.6
Positive Discipline Culture (Y)	Very Low	3	2.3
	Low	27	20.8
	Moderate	70	53.8
	High	26	20.0
	Very High	4	3.1

Table 3 shows that most teachers perceived transformational leadership and positive discipline culture at the moderate level. For positive discipline culture, more than half of respondents (53.8%) were in the moderate category, while 20.0% and 3.1% were in the high and very high categories, respectively. This pattern suggests that positive discipline culture was present but not uniformly strong across the sampled schools.

Score categories were determined using the following formula:  $\text{Interval} = (\text{Maximum Score} - \text{Minimum Score}) / \text{Number of Categories}$ . For transformational leadership with theoretical range 36–180:  $(180 - 36) / 5 = 28.8$  points per category. The resulting categories were: Very Low (36–64.8), Low (64.9–93.6), Moderate (93.7–122.4), High (122.5–151.2), and Very High (151.3–180). Similar calculations were applied for positive discipline culture. To visually illustrate the distribution of teacher perceptions across categories, Figure 3 presents the frequency distribution of transformational leadership and positive discipline culture.

**Figure 3.** Presents the Distribution of Respondents Across Categories for Both Variables

As shown in Figure 3, the majority of respondents are concentrated in the moderate category for both variables, suggesting that transformational leadership and positive discipline culture are present across schools but have not yet been fully institutionalized or consistently implemented.

## Assumption Checks

Assumption checks were conducted to ensure the appropriateness of parametric analysis. Table 3 summarizes the results of normality and linearity tests. Both variables were normally distributed based on the Shapiro-Wilk test ( $p > .05$ ). The relationship between X1 and Y met the linearity criterion (Sig. Linearity  $< .05$  and Sig. Deviation from Linearity  $> .05$ ).

**Table 3.** Assumption Checks (Normality and Linearity)

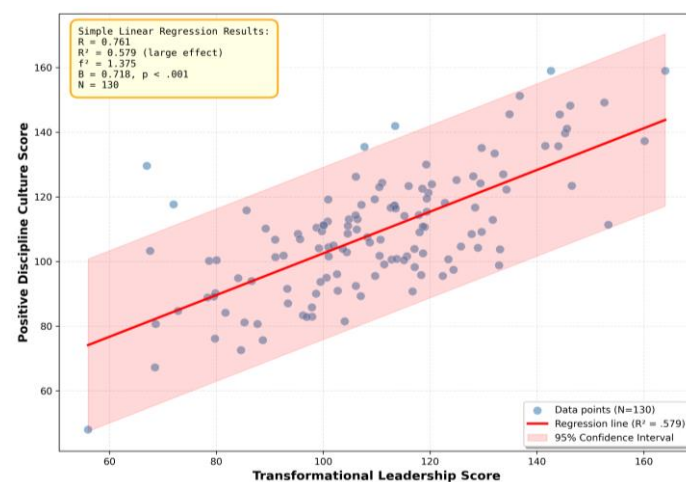
Assumption	Test	Statistic/Note	p-value	Decision
Normality (X1)	Shapiro-Wilk	-	0.153	Normal
Normality (Y)	Shapiro-Wilk	-	0.405	Normal
Linearity (X1-Y)	Test for Linearity	Linearity	$< .001$	Linear
		Deviation from Linearity	0.052	Linear

The Shapiro-Wilk tests indicated that transformational leadership ( $p = .153$ ) and positive discipline culture ( $p = .405$ ) were normally distributed. The linearity test also supported a linear relationship between the variables (Sig. Linearity  $p < .001$ ; Sig. Deviation from Linearity  $p = .052$ ), justifying the use of simple linear regression for hypothesis testing.

Although simple linear regression with a single predictor precludes multicollinearity concerns, collinearity diagnostics were computed for methodological transparency. The Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) was 1.000 and tolerance was 1.000, confirming no multicollinearity issues.

## Simple Linear Regression

The hypothesis (H1) was tested using simple linear regression, with transformational leadership (X1) as the predictor and positive discipline culture (Y) as the outcome.



**Figure 4.** Scatterplot of Transformational Leadership and Positive Discipline Culture

Building on the visual pattern observed in Figure 4, Table 5 provides the statistical results of the regression analysis, including the model summary and ANOVA, to confirm the strength and significance of the relationship between transformational leadership and positive discipline culture.

**Table 5.** Model Summary and ANOVA for Simple Linear Regression

Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	Std. Error of the Estimate	F	p-value
1	0.761	0.579	0.576	13.706	175.923	<.001

Following the overall model significance reported in Table 5, Table 6 presents the regression coefficients, detailing the magnitude, direction, and statistical significance of the relationship between transformational leadership and positive discipline culture.

**Table 6.** Regression Coefficients for Simple Linear Regression

Predictor	B	SE	Beta	t	p-value	95% CI for B
Constant	28.888	6.123	-	4.719	<.001	[16.771, 41.005]
Transformational Leadership (X <sub>1</sub> )	0.718	0.054	0.761	13.264	<.001	[0.611, 0.825]

As shown in Table 5, the regression model was statistically significant,  $F(1, 128) = 175.923$ ,  $p < .001$ , with transformational leadership explaining 57.9% of the variance in positive discipline culture ( $R^2 = 0.579$ ), indicating substantial explanatory power. As detailed in Table 6, transformational leadership was a positive and significant predictor ( $B = 0.718$ ,  $SE = 0.054$ ,  $\beta = 0.761$ ,  $t(128) = 13.264$ ,  $p < .001$ ), with a 95% confidence interval [0.611, 0.825] excluding zero, confirming estimate stability. The effect size was large ( $f^2 = 1.375$ ), exceeding Cohen (1988) threshold, indicating strong practical significance. The regression equation  $Y = 28.888 + 0.718X_1$  further supports a positive predictive association between variables; thus, H1 was supported.

## D. Discussion

This study examined whether principals' transformational leadership predicts positive discipline culture in Indonesian public primary schools. The findings supported H1 and showed that teachers who perceived stronger transformational leadership also perceived stronger positive discipline culture. Statistically, the relationship was positive and substantial ( $R = 0.761$ ;  $R^2 = 0.579$ ;  $F(1, 128) = 175.923$ ;  $p < .001$ ), indicating that transformational leadership accounted for a considerable proportion of variance in teachers' perceptions of positive discipline culture in this district-level sample. This result is noteworthy because it suggests that leadership is not merely associated with broad organizational outcomes, but also with a more proximal cultural construct that shapes how discipline is enacted in daily school life. At the same time, the magnitude of the effect should be interpreted carefully because both variables were measured through teacher self-report, which may inflate associations through shared method variance and social desirability bias.

The size of the effect also requires interpretation in light of existing leadership research. Meta-analyses of educational leadership often report smaller effects when outcomes are distal, such as student achievement, because leadership influences those outcomes indirectly through multiple mediating processes and contextual conditions (Wu & Shen, 2022; Karadag & Sertel, 2025). By contrast, school culture and staff-related outcomes are more proximal to leadership behaviors, and systematic reviews in primary school contexts suggest that transformational leadership is closely tied to school culture and staff outcomes (Heenan et al., 2023). This helps explain why the observed association in the present study is relatively strong. Transformational leadership may exert its strongest influence when the outcome is a school-level cultural pattern that is directly shaped by principals' daily behavior, communication style, and professional support.

The present findings are consistent with broader theoretical accounts of transformational leadership as a driver of organizational learning and cultural coherence. Transformational leadership is commonly defined by behaviors that articulate a compelling vision, model ethical conduct, stimulate innovation, and provide individualized support (Li & Karanxha, 2022). When enacted consistently, these behaviors can strengthen shared norms and routines, which are central features of school culture (Heenan et al., 2023). In the context of positive discipline, such norms matter because discipline is not only a set of rules or sanctions, but a shared way of responding to student behavior. Cross-cultural syntheses also highlight teacher-level mechanisms that plausibly connect leadership to culture, particularly collective teacher efficacy, which influences whether teachers act coherently toward shared goals and whether school-wide routines are implemented consistently across classrooms (Cogaltay & Boz, 2023). Recent studies further show that transformational leadership relates to teacher outcomes through relational and motivational pathways such as trust and autonomy (Khan, 2025; Menon, 2025), both of which are relevant for sustaining positive discipline practices.

The results can also be interpreted through the four dimensions of transformational leadership. First, idealized influence may support positive discipline culture through role modeling and norm-setting. When principals demonstrate integrity, consistency, and respectful conflict resolution, they establish implicit standards for adult-student interaction and communicate that discipline should protect relationships and student dignity. This interpretation aligns with qualitative evidence from restorative practice implementation, which suggests that leadership modeling is a critical enabler of whole-school shifts away from punitive discipline (Shramko et al., 2023), including more equity-sensitive disciplinary decisions (Welsh, 2024). Second, inspirational motivation matters because positive discipline culture requires a shared vision and sustained commitment. Restorative and positive approaches often require reframing discipline from punishment toward learning and repair, which is difficult to sustain without clear communication and coherent expectations across classrooms (Zakszeski & Rutherford, 2021; Lodi et al., 2021). Whole-school evaluations show that discipline reforms frequently require multi-year implementation and leadership support to yield meaningful effects (Gregory et al., 2022).

Third, intellectual stimulation may foster professional reflection and experimentation with new strategies. Moving away from punitive responses requires teachers to question assumptions about behavior and to adopt alternatives such as restorative conversations, community circles, or collaborative problem solving. Reviews emphasize that implementation quality varies and that professional learning and evidence use can improve outcomes (Hollands et al., 2022; Samimi et al., 2023). Related work in culturally responsive social-emotional learning also suggests that reflective adult learning is essential for sustaining supportive environments (Lim et al., 2024). Fourth, individualized consideration may strengthen positive discipline culture by helping teachers develop competence and confidence in non-exclusionary practices. Teachers differ in readiness and skill, and targeted coaching can help translate school-wide expectations into daily classroom action. Evidence suggests that teachers' openness to coaching is associated with reduced reliance on exclusionary discipline (Altemose, 2025), which is consistent with the role of trust and autonomy in transformational leadership pathways (Khan, 2025).

From the perspective of restorative practice literature, the findings support the idea that discipline reform succeeds when it becomes embedded in a coherent school culture. Systematic reviews describe restorative practices as relational routines and conflict-resolution processes that are most effective when implemented as a whole-school approach rather than as a short-term program (Lodi et al., 2021; Zakszeski & Rutherford, 2021; Vincent et al., 2023). Integrative reviews similarly emphasize that outcomes vary depending on fidelity, staff buy-in, and organizational supports (Hollands et al., 2022; Samimi et al., 2023). The present findings fit this implementation logic by suggesting that transformational leadership acts as an enabling condition for coherence and sustainability. In other words, leadership may not "cause" positive discipline directly in a simple linear way, but it creates the organizational climate in which positive discipline routines can become normalized and durable.

The Indonesian context is especially relevant for interpreting the results. Policy directions under Kurikulum Merdeka emphasize character development, responsibility, and a supportive learning climate, which align closely with positive discipline culture (Kemendikbudristek, 2022a; Kemendikbudristek, 2022b). However, implementation remains uneven. KPAI (2024) continues to document cases of violence and child rights violations in educational settings, suggesting that punitive or harmful discipline practices persist despite policy shifts. In this context, principals are positioned as key actors who translate policy intentions into school routines, professional learning priorities, and norms of interaction. Indonesian leadership studies related to character education also underscore the importance of principals' leadership behaviors in shaping implementation dynamics (Effendi, 2022). This provides a plausible explanation for why teachers' perceptions of transformational leadership and positive discipline culture are closely linked in the present study.

The findings also align with prior Indonesian studies and extend them in a more focused way. Effendi (2022) found that transformational leadership influences character

education implementation and school culture, which is consistent with the present study's emphasis on leadership as a cultural driver. Anggraini et al (2024) likewise showed that transformational leadership influences school culture development in elementary schools, although their qualitative case-study design limited generalizability. The present study adds district-level quantitative evidence across 20 schools and isolates positive discipline culture as a specific organizational outcome. Similarly, Nursita et al (2023) and Rumfot et al (2024) reported positive effects of principal leadership and school culture on teacher performance, while Yulianti et al (2025) found that transformational leadership, pedagogical competence, and school culture significantly influenced academic services. Compared with these studies, the present research contributes a more precise examination of the leadership-to-culture pathway and suggests that leadership effects may be especially strong when the outcome is culturally proximal rather than distal.

A final explanation for the large effect size may lie in contextual characteristics of Indonesian primary schools. Indonesia's collectivist cultural orientation emphasizes harmony, authority, and group cohesion (Hofstede, 2001; Mangundjaya, 2019), which may amplify the influence of principals' leadership behaviors on teacher perceptions and practices. High power distance in educational institutions may also strengthen the authority of principals in shaping school norms (Artina et al., 2019). In addition, smaller district-level schools may facilitate more direct principal-teacher interactions, making leadership more visible in everyday practice. Nevertheless, the absence of multi-informant measures remains a limitation, and future research should triangulate teacher reports with principal perspectives, student data, classroom observations, and discipline records. Synthesizing all these considerations, the study positions transformational leadership as a proximal cultural driver rather than merely an indirect influence on distal outcomes. It suggests that leadership effects may be strongest when they are examined through culturally proximal school outcomes such as positive discipline culture, especially in collectivist contexts where authority, shared norms, and professional coherence strongly shape organizational life.

## E. Implication

The findings suggest that transformational leadership can serve as a strategic lever for strengthening positive discipline culture in primary schools across practical, policy, and theoretical dimensions. At the practical level, transformational leadership can be translated into coherent, school-wide practices through consistent role modeling of respectful behavior, articulation of a shared vision for positive discipline, structured opportunities for teacher reflection and innovation, and differentiated support tailored to teachers' needs. These actions enable principals to foster alignment between leadership behaviors and daily classroom practices, while also promoting professional learning communities, peer collaboration, and the development of standard operating procedures that institutionalize restorative approaches. At the policy level, the findings highlight the importance of integrating transformational leadership competencies into principal preparation programs, embedding discipline culture indicators within school supervision systems, and aligning

leadership practices with national education reforms emphasizing character development and supportive learning environments. Investment in sustained professional development and leadership coaching is also necessary to ensure consistency and long-term implementation of positive discipline practices across schools. Theoretically, this study contributes by positioning positive discipline culture as a proximal organizational outcome directly influenced by leadership behaviors, extending transformational leadership theory beyond traditional outcome measures. It also provides evidence supporting the relevance of cultural context in shaping leadership effectiveness, particularly in environments where authority, collective norms, and organizational coherence play a central role. Overall, the findings reinforce the idea that leadership is not only a managerial function but a cultural force that shapes how discipline is understood, enacted, and sustained within school systems.

## **F. Limitation and Suggestion for Further Research**

This study has several limitations. First, the cross-sectional ex post facto design limits causal inference and does not capture changes in leadership and discipline culture over time. Second, the use of teacher self-report questionnaires for both predictor and outcome variables may introduce common-method bias and social desirability effects, potentially inflating the observed association. Third, the study was conducted in a single district and focused only on public primary schools, limiting generalizability to other contexts. Fourth, the analysis did not include control variables such as teacher experience, school size, or training exposure, and did not account for the nested structure of teachers within schools, which may influence perceptions and violate the independence assumption of regression analysis. The absence of formal tests for common-method bias and school-level clustering further suggests that the results should be interpreted with caution.

Future research should address these limitations by employing longitudinal or mixed-method designs to capture changes over time and provide deeper insights into implementation processes. The inclusion of multi-informant data, relevant control variables, and broader analytical models incorporating mediators or moderators is also recommended to strengthen explanatory power. Additionally, multilevel modeling approaches should be applied to account for nested data structures and partition variance at teacher and school levels. Experimental or quasi-experimental designs examining leadership interventions would further enhance causal inference. Finally, future studies should incorporate statistical and procedural strategies to detect and control common-method bias, ensuring more robust and reliable findings.

## **G. Conclusion**

This study provides strong evidence that principals' transformational leadership is positively and significantly associated with positive discipline culture in public primary schools, indicating a substantial predictive relationship across multiple schools. It contributes to the literature by offering district-level empirical evidence, positioning

positive discipline culture as a proximal organizational outcome sensitive to leadership behaviors, and extending the applicability of transformational leadership theory within a collectivist and high power-distance context. Practically, the findings highlight that strengthening key leadership behaviors such as role modeling, vision articulation, professional stimulation, and individualized support can serve as a strategic lever for developing coherent, school-wide positive discipline cultures. However, given the cross-sectional design and reliance on teacher self-reports, the results should be interpreted as evidence of predictive association rather than causal impact. Overall, strengthening transformational leadership capacity among school principals represents a critical pathway for sustaining positive discipline culture and supporting student development and well-being within ongoing educational reforms.

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