THE INFLUENCE OF PRINCIPAL'S ROLE AND ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT ON TEACHERS' WORK MOTIVATION IN PUBLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

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Abstract	This study aims to examine the influence of the principal's role and organizational commitment on teachers' work motivation in public elementary schools in Boja District, Kendal Regency. Employing a quantitative approach with an ex post facto survey design, data were collected from 103 teachers selected through stratified random sampling from a total population of 138 teachers across 16 public elementary schools. The primary data source comprised teacher responses to validated Likert-scale questionnaires measuring three variables: the principal's role, organizational commitment, and teacher work motivation. Data analysis, conducted using SPSS 26, included Pearson product-moment correlation to assess the strength of bivariate relationships, simple linear regression to evaluate the individual influence of each independent variable, and multiple linear regression to examine their combined effect. Hypothesis testing was performed at a significance level of $\alpha = 0.05$ to determine the statistical validity of each relationship. The results indicated that the principal's role had a significant positive influence on teacher motivation, accounting for 22.7% of the variance, while organizational commitment had a slightly greater influence, contributing 24.4%. When analyzed simultaneously, both variables explained 32.8% of the variance in teacher motivation, demonstrating a moderately strong and statistically significant combined effect. These findings underscore the importance of enhancing school leadership and cultivating organizational commitment as strategic efforts to improve teacher motivation—an essential factor in sustaining teacher performance and advancing educational outcomes.
Keywords	Organizational Commitment, Principal's Role, Teachers' Work Motivation.

INTRODUCTION

Work motivation is a fundamental factor influencing professional productivity and effectiveness, particularly in the field of education. Teachers, as the central figures in delivering and shaping educational experiences, rely heavily on their motivation to carry out their responsibilities effectively. Motivated teachers are more likely to demonstrate improved performance, creativity, and commitment to their profession, all of which are essential for enhancing the quality of learning and student outcomes (Suwenti et al., 2024; Robbins & Judge, 2024). Motivation in this context serves not only as a personal driver but also as a strategic resource in achieving broader educational goals.

In recognition of the importance of teacher motivation, the Indonesian government has emphasized its role through various policy frameworks. One such policy is Government Regulation No. 19 of 2017, which serves as an amendment to Regulation No. 74 of 2008 concerning teachers. This regulation underscores the expectation that educators uphold a high standard of professional conduct, including maintaining strong work motivation. The regulation implies that teacher motivation is not merely a personal matter but a professional obligation tied to the delivery of quality education and the advancement of national education objectives.

However, despite these clear policy directives, the reality within public elementary schools, particularly in the Boja District of Kendal Regency, reveals a persistent gap between policy expectations and the actual conditions on the ground. Preliminary survey data indicate that the intrinsic motivation of teachers averages around 69%, while their extrinsic motivation stands at approximately 62%. Both figures fall below the ideal benchmark of 70%, which is considered a minimum indicator of high work motivation. These statistics point to a pressing issue: a substantial portion of the teaching workforce is not operating at optimal motivational levels, which may significantly hinder the successful implementation of educational initiatives and reforms. This mismatch between policy ambition and field reality forms the core academic concern of this study.

What remains unclear and thus forms the impetus for this research is what underlying factors contribute to this motivational gap. While the government has emphasized teacher empowerment and professional development, little is known about how internal school dynamics, leadership practices, and organizational culture impact teacher motivation on a daily basis. Are principals providing the kind of support that inspires teachers? Does the school environment foster a sense of commitment and purpose? Understanding these factors is essential for narrowing the gap between policy and practice. Therefore, this study seeks not only to diagnose the problem but also

to explore how key organizational variables such as the principal's role and teachers' organizational commitment may serve as levers for improving work motivation and, by extension, the quality of education.

This discrepancy between expected and actual motivation levels calls for a closer examination of the factors influencing teacher motivation in the region. The relatively low scores in intrinsic and extrinsic motivation suggest that both internal satisfaction and external rewards may be insufficient or inadequately managed. Consequently, efforts to enhance educational quality in Boja District must include targeted strategies to strengthen teacher motivation. This could involve leadership support, improvements in the work environment, professional development opportunities, and the cultivation of a positive school culture that aligns with teachers' values and aspirations (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Herzberg, 2020). Addressing these motivational gaps is critical to ensuring the sustained effectiveness of teachers and the achievement of long-term educational goals.

One of the critical factors influencing teacher motivation is the role of the school principal. Principals are expected to serve not only as administrative managers but also as instructional leaders and agents of school development (Gurley et al., 2015). Research shows that effective principals inspire teacher engagement, foster positive school culture, and create conditions conducive to high performance (Leithwood et al., 2020; Sarmini et al., 2023). However, preliminary data from the Boja District reveals that while principals perform well in their managerial roles (mean score of 70%), their performance as instructional leaders and school developers is weaker (52% and 57%, respectively). This gap suggests a limited impact of leadership on teacher motivation in practice.

Another critical variable influencing teacher motivation and overall job performance is organizational commitment. Organizational commitment refers to a teacher's emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in their school or educational institution. Meyer and Allen (1991), in Mardanov (2020), conceptualized this commitment through their well-known three-component model: affective commitment (emotional attachment), continuance commitment (perceived cost of leaving), and normative commitment (sense of obligation to remain). Research has consistently shown that all three components are positively associated with key workplace outcomes such as job satisfaction, motivation, and performance (Herzberg, 2020; Mardanov, 2020). In the context of schools, strong organizational commitment can foster greater teacher retention, improved collaboration, and more consistent efforts to achieve educational goals.

Despite the theoretical and practical significance of organizational commitment, local data from public elementary schools in the Boja District reveal concerning trends. Recent surveys suggest that none of the three dimensions of commitment—affective, continuance, or normative—surpassed the 70% threshold typically associated with high commitment levels. This shortfall indicates that many teachers may feel only a moderate connection to their institutions, potentially undermining their willingness to invest sustained effort or remain in their roles long-term. Low levels of organizational commitment can also weaken collegial relationships and diminish collective motivation to improve school performance. Therefore, strategies to strengthen teachers' organizational commitment—such as inclusive leadership practices, shared decision-making, and recognition of teacher contributions—are essential for cultivating a more engaged and motivated workforce (Nkechi & Chinyere, 2025; Devos et al., 2014).

International and local research consistently affirms that both leadership and organizational commitment significantly affect teacher motivation. For instance, Khasawneh (2024) found that transformational leadership significantly influenced teacher motivation in public schools in Pakistan. In Indonesia, Ratmini et al. (2019) revealed that organizational commitment acted as a mediating variable between school leadership and teacher performance in Singaraja. (Lubis, 2024) also emphasized the critical role of school climate—shaped largely by the principal's leadership—in fostering teachers' work motivation.

Similarly, Biabi et al. (2025) conducted a study in East Java, which concluded that principal managerial competence and supportive work culture together contribute significantly to enhancing teacher engagement and intrinsic motivation. Meanwhile, Tarigan & Nurmiati (2024) highlighted that leadership style and organizational commitment were strong predictors of teacher job satisfaction and performance in rural Indonesian schools, emphasizing the compounded influence of internal organizational dynamics.

Despite these findings, few studies have directly examined the combined effect of principal leadership and organizational commitment on teacher motivation in rural or semi-urban public elementary schools, particularly in Boja District, Kendal Regency, Central Java. Most previous research has either focused on one factor in isolation or been conducted in urban settings. Therefore, this study seeks to fill the empirical gap by simultaneously analyzing the influence of the principal's role and organizational commitment on teacher motivation using a comprehensive statistical approach. It contributes to the literature by offering localized insights while reinforcing the broader

theoretical framework linking leadership, commitment, and motivation. This research aims not only to confirm existing theories but also to inform school policy and leadership training in underrepresented educational contexts.

Despite this theoretical consensus, there remains a discrepancy between theory and practice in many schools. Teachers in Boja District, though operating under policy frameworks promoting motivation and performance, are still hindered by gaps in leadership quality and institutional commitment. This practical gap highlights the academic urgency of investigating how these two variables, principal's role and organizational commitment, jointly affect work motivation in real school settings. This research holds significance both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, it enriches the existing body of literature on teacher motivation by exploring the issue within the specific context of Indonesian public elementary schools. By examining how leadership and organizational commitment interact to influence motivation, this study adds comparative and contextual depth to our understanding of organizational behavior in education. Practically, the findings offer valuable insights for policymakers, educational supervisors, and school principals in designing effective strategies to enhance teacher motivation. Strengthening leadership practices and fostering stronger organizational commitment are critical steps toward improving teacher performance and, ultimately, the quality of education.

Accordingly, this research aims to: (1) examine the influence of the principal's role on teachers' work motivation; (2) assess the effect of organizational commitment on teachers' work motivation; and (3) determine the combined influence of the principal's role and organizational commitment on teachers' work motivation in public elementary schools in Boja District.

METHOD

This study adopts a quantitative approach utilizing an ex post facto survey design to examine the causal relationship between independent variables—the principal's role and organizational commitment—and the dependent variable, teachers' work motivation. The quantitative method was chosen because it allows researchers to analyze statistical data systematically, objectively, and empirically. According to Sugiyono (2017), quantitative research provides measurable evidence and follows scientific procedures that are concrete, rational, and logical. The purpose of this research is to determine the extent to which the principal's leadership role and organizational commitment affect the motivation levels of public elementary school teachers in the Boja District.

The study was conducted in 16 public elementary schools in Boja District, Kendal Regency, Central Java, from September 2024 to June 2025. The target population consisted of all 138 public elementary school teachers in the district. Using Slovin's formula with a 5% margin of error, a sample of 103 teachers was selected using stratified random sampling to ensure representativeness across schools. Data collection was carried out using a structured Likert-scale questionnaire designed to assess the three research variables: (1) the principal's role (X1), (2) organizational commitment (X2), and (3) teachers' work motivation (Y). The questionnaire items were developed based on theoretical dimensions and indicators, then validated and tested for reliability. All instruments demonstrated strong internal consistency, with Cronbach's Alpha values exceeding 0.90 for all variables, indicating high reliability.

The data analysis techniques used include descriptive statistics, Pearson partial correlation, simple linear regression, multiple linear regression, hypothesis testing (t-test), and simultaneous testing (F-test) using SPSS Version 26. Normality testing was performed using the Kolmogorov–Smirnov method, confirming that the data followed a normal distribution. Partial correlation analysis was used to determine the strength of the relationship between each independent variable and the dependent variable while controlling for the other variables. Regression analysis was used to assess both the individual and combined contributions of the principal's role and organizational commitment to teacher motivation.

The conceptual framework of this research illustrates the hypothesized causal relationship between the principal's role (X1) and organizational commitment (X2) as the independent variables, and teacher work motivation (Y) as the dependent variable. The framework is visually presented below:
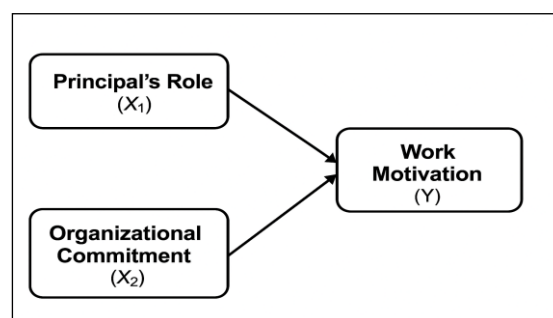
Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Based on the research objectives and theoretical foundation, three hypotheses were formulated: (1) the principal's role significantly affects teachers' work motivation; (2) organizational commitment significantly affects teachers' work motivation; and (3) the principal's role and

organizational commitment simultaneously have a significant effect on teachers' work motivation. These hypotheses guided the statistical testing process and provided a clear direction for interpreting the results within the context of leadership and organizational behavior in elementary education.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

This study aimed to investigate the influence of the principal's role and organizational commitment on teachers' work motivation in public elementary schools in the Boja District. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire from 103 teachers across 16 public schools. The findings are summarized as follows:

Influence of the Principal's Role on Teacher Work Motivation

The analysis revealed a significant relationship between the principal's role and teacher motivation. The correlation coefficient was 0.477, categorized as moderately strong. Hypothesis testing using the t-test showed a t-value of 5.449, which exceeded the critical t-table value (1.98373) at a significance level of 0.000 (< 0.05). This indicates that the principal's role has a significant positive effect on teacher motivation.

Table 1. Influence of Principal's Role on Work Motivation

Model	R	R²	t-value	Sig.	Interpretation
Principal → Motivation	0.477	0.227	5.449	0.000	Significant influence (22.7%)

Source: SPSS Output, 2025

Influence of Organizational Commitment on Teacher Work Motivation

Organizational commitment was also found to have a significant effect on teacher motivation. The correlation coefficient was 0.493, with a t-value of 5.702 and a significance level of 0.000 (< 0.05), indicating a moderate and significant positive effect.

Table 2. Influence of Organizational Commitment on Work Motivation

Model	R	R²	t-value	Sig.	Interpretation
Commitment → Motivation	0.493	0.244	5.702	0.000	Significant influence (24.4%)

Source: SPSS Output, 2025

Combined Influence of Principal's Role and Organizational Commitment

A multiple regression analysis showed that both the principal's role and organizational commitment simultaneously influence teacher motivation. The model yielded an R-value of 0.573

and an R² of 0.328, indicating that the two independent variables together explain 32.8% of the variance in teacher motivation.

Table 3. Combined Influence of Principal's Role and Organizational Commitment

Model	R	R²	t-value	Sig.	Interpretation
Principal + Commitment → Motivation	0.573	0.328	24.458	0.000	Significant joint influence (32.8%)

Source: SPSS Output, 2025

These results confirm that both the principal's leadership and the level of organizational commitment are crucial factors influencing the motivation of teachers in public elementary schools. The principal's ability to lead effectively, combined with a school culture that fosters loyalty and involvement, significantly enhances teacher enthusiasm and work performance.

Discussion

Principal Leadership and Teacher Work Motivation

The findings of this study support Hypothesis 1, which states that *the principal's role significantly affects teachers' work motivation*. The data revealed that principal leadership contributes 22.7% to teachers' work motivation in public elementary schools in the Boja District. The positive regression coefficient (0.531) indicates that the more effective the principal's leadership, the more motivated the teachers are. This result aligns with the broader literature on school leadership, particularly the transformational leadership model, which posits that principals who inspire, intellectually stimulate, and consider the individual needs of teachers foster higher levels of motivation and organizational commitment.

Underscore that transformational leadership enhances teacher performance by establishing trust, shared vision, and individualized consideration, which are pivotal for sustaining motivation and satisfaction. Principals with this leadership style are not only instructional leaders but also motivators and cultural builders within their schools, creating environments that support professional growth and psychological well-being (Azhar et al., 2025; Biabi et al., 2025).

Further supporting this, Cansoy (2018) conducted studies across different education systems and found a strong positive correlation between principal leadership and teacher job satisfaction and motivation. Their work highlights that leadership effectiveness is not context-bound; rather, it universally influences teacher attitudes and engagement levels.

Extend this finding by demonstrating that leadership behaviors, particularly those that encourage collaboration and professional autonomy, significantly predict teachers' intrinsic motivation, which is strongly linked to student achievement. Intrinsically motivated teachers tend to exhibit higher persistence, creativity, and commitment, which in turn benefits overall school performance (Yao et al., 2024).

Additionally, Naz & Rashid (2021) emphasize the impact of instructional leadership, particularly goal-setting, resource support, and curriculum monitoring, on teacher motivation and student learning outcomes in developing country contexts. Their findings suggest that principal leadership contributes not only to immediate teacher satisfaction but also to long-term professional resilience and motivation in challenging educational settings.

(Wu, 2023) further argue that emotionally intelligent leadership, which includes the ability to manage conflict, empathize with staff, and communicate effectively, leads to a more supportive work climate and enhances teacher motivation. Their empirical study in the Vietnamese context shows that emotionally responsive principals foster psychological safety and trust, key factors in maintaining high teacher morale.

In addition, Koh (2015) proposed the *School Leadership Model of Motivation*, which focuses on the role of relational trust between principals and teachers. He found that when teachers perceive their principal as competent, fair, and caring, they report higher levels of motivation and job commitment. This relationship-based leadership is essential in retaining teachers and cultivating a positive school culture.

Taken together, these findings support the assertion that principal leadership plays a pivotal role in shaping teachers' intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Leadership practices that include shared decision-making, regular feedback, recognition, and professional development opportunities can significantly influence how valued and supported teachers feel. As such, leadership development programs for school principals should emphasize not only managerial competencies but also interpersonal, emotional, and pedagogical leadership skills.

Organizational Commitment and Teacher Work Motivation

The results obtained from this study also provide empirical support for Hypothesis 2, which posits that *organizational commitment significantly affects teachers' work motivation*. The study found that organizational commitment contributes 24.4% to teacher work motivation. The positive regression coefficient (0.424) indicates a strong and meaningful relationship between a teacher's

commitment to the institution and their intrinsic motivation to perform effectively. Organizational commitment—particularly in the form of affective commitment or emotional attachment—serves as a powerful psychological driver for teachers to invest their time, energy, and creativity in their professional responsibilities.

According to (Cheng & Stockdale, 2003), the Three-Component Model of Commitment, affective commitment is the most impactful form, wherein employees identify emotionally with their institution, fostering greater job satisfaction and motivation. In education, this translates into a deeper sense of belonging, pride, and willingness to contribute to school success.

(Brezicha et al., 2020; Bogler & Somech, 2004) Found that in school systems that promote autonomy, participative decision-making, and mutual trust, teachers experience stronger organizational commitment, which in turn enhances their work motivation. Similarly, Little (2003) asserts that organizational cultures characterized by inclusion, fairness, and recognition encourage teachers to align with school values, enhancing both affective commitment and motivation to excel in teaching.

Indonesian studies have reinforced these findings in local contexts. (Istanti et al., 2020) A study revealed that organizational commitment significantly influences teacher motivation in public schools in East Java, emphasizing that teachers who feel valued by their institutions show higher dedication and perseverance. (Damanik et al., 2018) Also that organizational trust and fair treatment were major factors contributing to teachers' emotional commitment and intrinsic motivation.

Furthermore, Amalia & Santi Budiani (2022) and Junaidi et al. (2025) found that teachers with strong organizational commitment are more likely to engage in continuous professional development, contribute to school innovation, and demonstrate resilience under pressure. These behaviors are essential in the post-pandemic recovery era, where teacher adaptability and motivation are critical to restoring educational quality.

From a motivational theory perspective, these findings align with Self-Determination Theory (Taylor et al., 2014), which highlights the importance of relatedness—a feeling of connection to others and the organization—as a core determinant of intrinsic motivation. When teachers feel that their efforts are appreciated and their voices heard, they are more likely to internalize institutional goals as their own.

Thus, organizational commitment not only promotes retention and reduces turnover but also enhances work enthusiasm, instructional effectiveness, and psychological resilience among educators. School leaders in Indonesia and elsewhere must therefore prioritize building a culture of recognition, participatory leadership, and professional respect to sustain teacher motivation.

Combined Influence of Principal Leadership and Organizational Commitment

In line with Hypothesis 3, which suggests that the principal's role and organizational commitment simultaneously have a significant effect on teachers' work motivation, the findings of this study reveal that the combined influence of both variables explains 32.8% of the variance in teacher work motivation. The correlation coefficient (r = 0.573) indicates a moderately strong and statistically significant positive relationship. This suggests that when both factors are present in a strategic and supportive manner, teacher motivation improves significantly.

This result aligns with the Integrated Leadership–School Climate Framework proposed by Scheer (2021), which emphasizes that school leadership and the broader school climate—including relational trust, teacher autonomy, and organizational commitment—operate together to shape motivation and performance. Principals who exhibit strategic leadership behaviors—such as empowering staff, promoting collaboration, and maintaining transparent communication—help build a school climate where teachers feel supported, respected, and valued. These factors collectively stimulate greater intrinsic motivation and professional engagement among educators.

From a theoretical perspective, this study is well-supported by the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model (Tummers & Bakker, 2021), which posits that leadership and organizational commitment are essential job resources. These resources mitigate job demands such as stress, burnout, or workload pressure, thereby enabling teachers to remain enthusiastic and motivated. Principals who provide meaningful feedback, ensure professional development opportunities, and foster commitment to school goals serve as crucial buffers against demotivation and disengagement, especially in high-demand educational contexts.

Further evidence is provided by (Raman et al., 2015), who found that committed school leadership positively influences school climate, which in turn supports teacher well-being, professional efficacy, and motivation. Their study highlights the importance of an emotionally supportive leadership approach that not only focuses on administrative tasks but also on building psychological safety and trust. In this context, teacher motivation becomes a shared product of leadership effectiveness and the internalization of school values through strong organizational

commitment.

Similar patterns have been observed in recent studies. (Rumahorbo, 2025; Li et al., 2024) Reported that principal leadership combined with organizational commitment had a significant joint effect on teacher motivation in elementary schools. They emphasized that a leader's vision, appreciation of teacher effort, and ability to create participative structures were vital in enhancing both commitment and motivation. (Dwiyono et al., 2022; Sanchez et al., 2022) Further added that schools with strong collegial climates and consistent leadership practices showed higher levels of teacher performance and intrinsic drive.

Found that when school principals actively involve teachers in decision-making and recognize their achievements, teachers exhibit stronger feelings of belonging and are more motivated to contribute to institutional development. In such contexts, leadership is not perceived merely as a hierarchical function, but rather as a shared endeavor that influences teacher morale, instructional commitment, and job satisfaction (Ganon-Shilon & Schechter, 2019). These insights confirm that effective principal leadership and organizational commitment are mutually reinforcing, shaping the affective and cognitive aspects of teacher motivation. In addition, Kesumawati et al. (2018) examined how transformational leadership and organizational climate influence teachers' extrinsic motivation, finding organizational resources like recognition and participation partially mediated that effect. This emphasizes how supportive leadership and strong commitment structures synergize to motivate teachers and enhance educational outcomes.

Therefore, the findings of this study suggest a need for integrated school improvement strategies that recognize the dual importance of competent leadership and a committed organizational culture. Policies that support leadership development programs—with a focus on emotional intelligence, teacher empowerment, and climate building—can significantly enhance teacher motivation. At the same time, fostering a sense of shared purpose, organizational trust, and recognition for teacher contributions should be central to institutional planning in both urban and rural educational settings across Indonesia and beyond.

CONCLUSION

This study underscores the integral role of both principal leadership and organizational commitment as foundational elements in fostering teacher motivation within elementary schools. The interaction between effective leadership and a strong organizational culture creates a

professional ecosystem where teachers are empowered, supported, and intrinsically driven to fulfill their roles. These findings reinforce the necessity for a holistic approach in educational management that prioritizes relational leadership and cultivates institutional loyalty as strategic levers for improving school performance. As schools face growing demands for accountability and innovation, stakeholders must shift focus from isolated administrative improvements to systemic efforts that build cohesive, supportive, and motivating environments for teachers. Investing in leadership development and strengthening organizational commitment are not merely operational goals—they are essential pillars for achieving sustainable quality in education.

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