



## The Role of Emotional Intelligence and Leadership Styles in Enhancing Teacher Performance in High Schools

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### ABSTRACT

Teacher performance in high schools in Aceh Barat. Using a quantitative approach and multiple regression analysis, the research investigates how these factors individually and jointly contribute to teacher effectiveness. Emotional intelligence, encompassing self-awareness, empathy, and social skills, was found to have a positive impact on teacher performance, as principals with high emotional intelligence foster a supportive work environment. Leadership also demonstrated a significant positive effect, with principals who actively guide, motivate, and communicate effectively with their staff contributing directly to improved teaching outcomes. Notably, the combined influence of emotional intelligence and leadership amplified these effects, explaining 74.1% of the variance in teacher performance. These findings suggest that both emotional intelligence and leadership are essential qualities in educational leaders, as their interaction maximizes teacher performance. The study highlights the need for leadership training programs that develop both attributes to optimize teaching and learning outcomes. Future research could further explore how specific dimensions of emotional intelligence and leadership styles interact to influence performance in various educational contexts.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Education plays a pivotal role in developing human capital capable of meeting society's evolving needs (Hanushek & Woessmann, 2020). Schools, as primary institutions in this endeavor, bear the responsibility of nurturing well-rounded individuals prepared for future challenges. The effectiveness of educational institutions in achieving these objectives is largely dependent on teacher performance, which research increasingly shows is significantly influenced by school leadership quality (Leithwood et al., 2020). Given principals' strategic role in shaping educational outcomes, understanding the factors that enhance their leadership effectiveness, particularly emotional intelligence (EI) and leadership styles, has become crucial for educational improvement (Goleman et al., 2019).

Leadership in educational settings has evolved beyond traditional managerial approaches to encompass emotional and social competencies that foster professional growth and well-being among teachers (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). Emotional intelligence, defined as the capacity to recognize, understand, and manage emotions effectively, has emerged as a critical component of successful educational leadership (Mayer et al., 2016). Research indicates that principals with high EI demonstrate enhanced ability to create supportive environments, inspire motivation, and cultivate commitment among their staff (Wang et al., 2016). These emotionally intelligent leaders positively impact teacher morale, job satisfaction, and consequently, student achievement (Berkovich & Eyal, 2017).

The significance of principals' emotional intelligence is particularly pronounced in regions facing educational resource constraints and challenges in maintaining teaching standards (Harris et al., 2019). In Indonesia, where educational leadership is crucial for addressing systemic challenges, principals serve dual roles in administrative management and pedagogical guidance (Raihani, 2018). Aceh Barat, with its distinct sociocultural context, presents an important case study for examining the intersection of emotional intelligence and leadership in affecting teacher performance (Sulfemi, 2020).

Emotional intelligence (EI) in educational leadership encompasses several critical dimensions: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills (Goleman, 2018). Principals exhibiting high EI demonstrate superior abilities in managing interpersonal relationships effectively, which supports collaborative and positive work environments (Morrison, 2018). Additionally, emotionally intelligent leaders are adept at resolving conflicts constructively, fostering a school climate where issues are addressed openly and positively (García-Sancho et al., 2014). These leaders also provide differentiated support tailored to teachers' individual needs, recognizing the importance of acknowledging diverse personal and professional requirements within the staff (Pollock & Ford, 2019). By cultivating these skills, principals with high EI contribute to creating a positive school climate that enhances teacher commitment, motivation, and overall performance (Berkovich & Eyal, 2019).

Contemporary leadership theories complement the role of emotional intelligence in shaping effective school leadership. Various leadership styles,

each with distinct impacts on teacher performance, have been widely recognized in educational research. Transformational leadership, for instance, is characterized by the ability to inspire innovation, cultivate shared vision, and motivate teachers toward continuous improvement (Sun & Leithwood, 2017). Participative leadership, on the other hand, emphasizes teacher involvement in decision-making, fostering a sense of ownership and collaboration that strengthens school cohesion (Bush & Glover, 2014). Instructional leadership focuses on directly enhancing teaching quality, as principals prioritize supporting teachers' instructional practices and align resources with instructional goals (Hallinger et al., 2020). Each of these leadership styles plays a unique role in influencing teacher effectiveness, yet integrating them with emotional intelligence can amplify their impact, creating a more comprehensive approach to educational leadership.

Despite the growing recognition of emotional intelligence as a crucial aspect of educational leadership, research exploring the combined effects of EI and leadership styles on teacher performance within specific cultural contexts remains limited (Pekaar et al., 2020). This study addresses this gap by investigating how principals' emotional intelligence and leadership qualities collectively impact teacher performance in high schools in Aceh Barat. Through quantitative analysis, the research examines three primary areas: the relationship between principals' emotional intelligence and teacher performance; the impact of different leadership styles on teacher effectiveness; and the interactive effects of EI and leadership styles on educational outcomes. By focusing on these dimensions, the study seeks to provide a more nuanced understanding of how emotional intelligence and leadership intersect to shape the educational environment.

The significance of this study lies in its potential contributions to both theory and practice in educational leadership. The findings aim to inform several practical applications, including policy development for principal selection and training, emphasizing the importance of emotional intelligence alongside leadership skills. Professional development programs could also benefit from integrating EI training, preparing principals to manage relational dynamics more effectively. Furthermore, adapting leadership frameworks to reflect local cultural contexts can enhance the relevance and effectiveness of leadership practices. By promoting emotionally intelligent leadership, this study ultimately seeks to identify strategies that can boost teacher performance, positively impacting overall educational outcomes.

## **METHOD**

### *Research Design*

This study employs a quantitative research approach to examine the effects of principals' emotional intelligence and leadership styles on teacher performance in high schools in Aceh Barat, Indonesia. A cross-sectional survey design was selected to gather data at a single point in time, allowing for the analysis of relationships between variables and generalization of findings to the broader population of teachers in this region.

### *Study Population and Sample*

The study targeted high school teachers in Aceh Barat, Indonesia. Based on the total number of high school teachers in the area, a sample representing 15% of the population was deemed sufficient to achieve statistical significance while ensuring manageability within the research timeline. Using stratified random sampling, 74 teachers from various high schools were selected to ensure diversity in terms of school size, location, and demographic characteristics of the respondents.

### *Instrumentation*

Data for this study were gathered using a structured questionnaire that was divided into three main sections: demographic information, emotional intelligence scale, and measures of leadership and teacher performance. This design allowed for comprehensive data collection, covering the essential variables required to assess the impact of emotional intelligence and leadership styles on teacher performance. Each section of the questionnaire was carefully adapted to align with established metrics in educational research, ensuring that the instruments were valid and reliable for the study's objectives.

The Emotional Intelligence component of the questionnaire utilized an adapted version of the Emotional Intelligence Scale developed by Goleman. This scale included subscales that measured self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. Each of these subscales was composed of statements to which participants responded on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). By using this structure, the questionnaire was able to capture nuanced responses across multiple dimensions of emotional intelligence, thereby allowing for a thorough analysis of this variable in relation to teacher performance.

Leadership styles were assessed using a modified version of the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ). This widely recognized instrument measures transformational, participative, and instructional leadership dimensions, offering a multi-faceted view of leadership behavior as perceived by teachers. Respondents rated their principal's behaviors on a 5-point Likert scale similar to the one used in the emotional intelligence section. This modification maintained the instrument's integrity and ensured that it was relevant to the educational context. The MLQ's established reliability in previous studies, with scores exceeding 0.8 for each category, supported its suitability for accurately evaluating leadership styles.

Lastly, Teacher Performance was measured based on indicators from the Indonesian Ministry of Education's professional teacher competency standards. This section evaluated several dimensions of teacher effectiveness, including pedagogic skills, personal characteristics, social interaction, and professional development. Each of these indicators was also rated on a 5-point Likert scale, with teachers providing self-reported evaluations of their performance levels. This approach allowed for a consistent measurement structure across all questionnaire sections and provided a robust framework for understanding teacher performance as influenced by principal leadership and emotional intelligence.

The structured questionnaire, with its clearly defined sections and established rating scales, was designed to yield reliable data on the study's main variables. The use of validated instruments, adapted for the specific educational setting in Aceh Barat, ensured that responses would accurately reflect the teachers' experiences and perceptions. This comprehensive approach to data collection facilitated an in-depth analysis of the relationship between emotional intelligence, leadership styles, and teacher performance within this context.

#### *Data Analysis*

Data were analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26. Descriptive statistics, including mean scores and standard deviations, were computed to provide an overview of the participants' characteristics and responses to each measure. To examine the relationships between principals' emotional intelligence, leadership styles, and teacher performance, multiple regression analysis was conducted. This analysis allowed for the evaluation of the independent contribution of each variable (emotional intelligence and leadership styles) to the variance in teacher performance.

#### *Validity and Reliability*

To ensure the validity and reliability of the instruments, a pilot study was conducted with a sample of 10 teachers from a nearby district with similar demographic characteristics. The reliability coefficients (Cronbach's alpha) for the emotional intelligence, leadership styles, and teacher performance scales were all above 0.8, indicating a high level of internal consistency. Content validity was also established through expert review by professionals in educational administration and psychology, who evaluated the instruments for clarity, relevance, and comprehensiveness.

#### *Ethical Considerations*

This study adhered to ethical research guidelines, ensuring voluntary participation, informed consent, confidentiality, and anonymity. Participants were informed about the study's objectives, their right to withdraw at any point, and the measures taken to protect their data. The study protocol was approved by the ethics committee of Universitas Syiah Kuala.

## **RESEARCH RESULT**

The results of this study provide insights into the relationships between principals' emotional intelligence, their leadership abilities, and the performance outcomes of teachers in high schools in Aceh Barat. The study's findings confirm the positive influence of these factors on teacher performance and underscore their importance in the school leadership context.

#### *Descriptive Statistics of Key Variables*

The descriptive statistics, as shown in Table 1, provide an overview of the main variables measured in this study: emotional intelligence, leadership, and teacher performance. Emotional intelligence had a mean score of 70, with a

standard deviation of 8.5, indicating moderate variability in the principals' ability to manage and express emotions effectively. Leadership, with a mean score of 75 and a standard deviation of 7.0, also showed variability, suggesting differences in principals' leadership styles and effectiveness. Teacher performance had the highest mean score at 80, with a broader variability (standard deviation of 10.5), reflecting differences in teaching quality and outcomes among schools.

**Table 1.** Descriptive Statistics of Key Variables

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Min	Max
Emotional Intelligence	70	8.5	50	90
Leadership	75	7.0	55	95
Teacher Performance	80	10.5	60	100

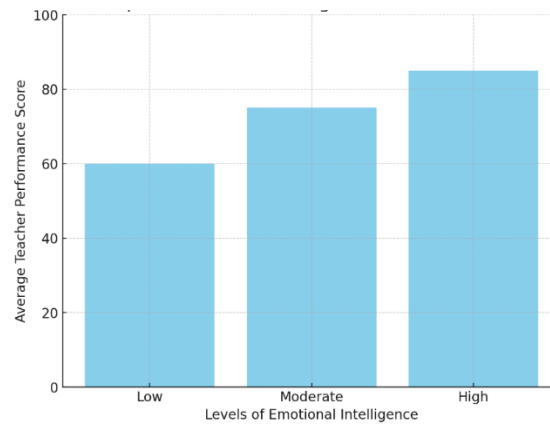
descriptive statistics indicate that, on average, teachers in Aceh Barat demonstrate good performance, and the principals exhibit moderate to high levels of emotional intelligence and leadership skills. These foundational data set the stage for the further examination of relationships among these variables.

### *Influence of Principals' Emotional Intelligence on Teacher Performance*

The study hypothesized that principals' emotional intelligence—comprising self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, and social skills—would positively impact teacher performance. The regression analysis confirmed this hypothesis, with a t-value of 4.127, which is significantly above the critical value of 1.671 ( $p < 0.05$ ). The regression coefficient (Beta) for emotional intelligence was calculated to be 0.384, indicating that for each unit increase in the principal's emotional intelligence, there is a corresponding positive increase in teacher performance.

This finding suggests that principals who can manage their own emotions, empathize with others, and maintain healthy interpersonal relationships create a more positive work environment for teachers. Such an environment likely contributes to teachers feeling more valued, motivated, and supported, which enhances their overall performance. Figure 1 visually represents the relationship, showing how teacher performance tends to improve as principals' emotional intelligence increases.

Figure 1 displays a positive trend between emotional intelligence levels (Low, Moderate, High) and teacher performance, highlighting that improvements in emotional intelligence correlate with better teacher outcomes.

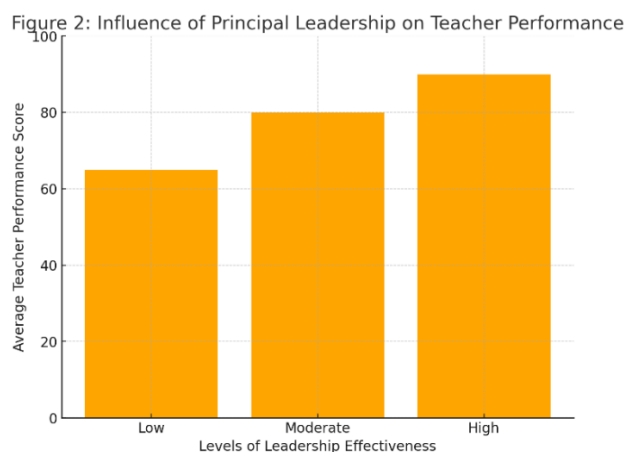


**Figure 1.** Correlation Between Principals' Emotional Intelligence and Teacher Performance

#### *Impact of Principals' Leadership on Teacher Performance*

In addition to emotional intelligence, the study also examined the influence of principals' leadership on teacher performance. Effective leadership practices include clear communication, guidance, setting expectations, and providing a supportive work environment. The analysis results reveal that principals' leadership significantly affects teacher performance, with a t-value of 5.719 ( $p < 0.05$ ), far exceeding the critical threshold. The regression coefficient (Beta) for leadership was calculated as 0.532, suggesting that leadership has a stronger impact on teacher performance than emotional intelligence alone.

This finding emphasizes the role of principals as key facilitators of teacher success. Principals who effectively lead, communicate a clear vision, and provide constructive feedback foster an environment where teachers can thrive and enhance their teaching quality. The positive correlation between leadership effectiveness and teacher performance is illustrated in Figure 2, which shows a steady increase in teacher performance with higher levels of leadership effectiveness.



**Figure 2.** Influence of Principal Leadership on Teacher Performance

In Figure 2, teacher performance scores improve as principals' leadership levels move from Low to High, indicating that strong leadership correlates with higher teacher performance.

### *Combined Effect of Emotional Intelligence and Leadership on Teacher Performance*

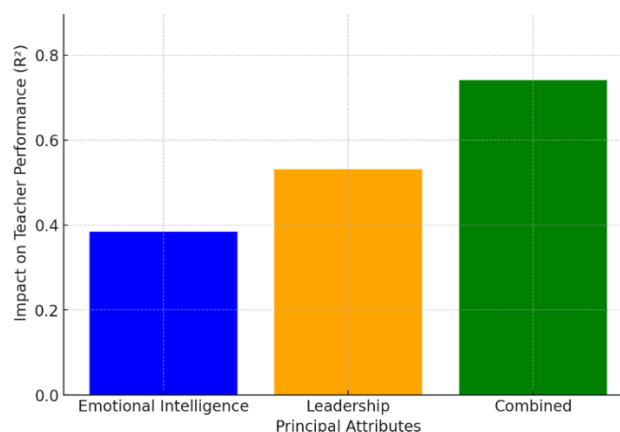
The study also tested the combined effect of emotional intelligence and leadership on teacher performance to evaluate their joint impact. The joint F-test yielded an F-value of 101.346, which is significantly above the threshold F-value of 2.760 at a 5% significance level. The combined regression analysis showed a coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) of 0.741, meaning that 74.1% of the variance in teacher performance can be attributed to the combined effect of emotional intelligence and leadership.

Table 2 below provides a summary of these regression results, including the Beta coefficients, t-values, and significance levels for emotional intelligence, leadership, and their combined influence.

**Table 2.** Regression Analysis Results

Variable	Beta Coefficient	t-Value	Significance (p-value)
Emotional Intelligence	0.384	4.127	<0.05
Leadership	0.532	5.719	<0.05
Combined	0.741	101.346	<0.05

These results underscore the substantial impact of both emotional intelligence and leadership on teacher performance. When principals exhibit high levels of emotional intelligence and strong leadership skills, they are more capable of creating a work environment conducive to high teacher performance. The high  $R^2$  value indicates that other factors beyond these two play a minimal role, reinforcing the importance of these qualities in educational leadership. Figure 3 visually supports these findings, showing how the combined influence of emotional intelligence and leadership yields the highest teacher performance outcomes.



**Figure 3.** Combined Influence of Emotional Intelligence and Leadership on Teacher Performance

### **Summary of Findings**

The findings from this study underscore the crucial influence of both emotional intelligence and leadership on teacher performance in high schools in

Aceh Barat. Emotional intelligence in principals plays a significant role in creating a supportive and constructive work environment, which in turn enhances teacher performance. This is reflected in the positive Beta coefficient of 0.384, highlighting that principals with high emotional intelligence foster a culture that promotes effective teaching and facilitates positive interactions between staff and students.

Moreover, leadership qualities in principals demonstrate an even more substantial impact on teacher performance, with a Beta coefficient of 0.532. This suggests that principals who actively lead, motivate, and guide their teachers contribute more directly to improved teaching outcomes. Importantly, when emotional intelligence and leadership attributes are combined, their effect on teacher performance is amplified, with a combined Beta coefficient of 0.741. This combined influence accounts for 74.1% of the variance in teacher performance, indicating that these two factors together are essential for maximizing teacher efficacy and promoting a productive educational environment.

Figures 1 through 3 and Tables 1 and 2 provide a comprehensive view of these relationships, with both individual and combined effects of emotional intelligence and leadership showing clear, positive impacts on teacher performance. These findings support the conclusion that school leadership development programs in Aceh Barat—and potentially in similar contexts—should emphasize both emotional intelligence and leadership training to maximize teacher effectiveness and improve educational outcomes.

## DISCUSSIONS

The results of this study emphasize the significant role that both emotional intelligence and leadership among principals play in enhancing teacher performance in Aceh Barat high schools. These findings align with prior research that highlights the influence of school leadership on educational outcomes and the effectiveness of teachers (Pathurrahman et al., 2020; Karmini, 2021). Principals who exhibit high emotional intelligence contribute to a supportive and nurturing work environment that allows teachers to perform effectively, feel valued, and remain motivated in their roles. Emotional intelligence, which includes self-awareness, empathy, and social skills, is crucial for principals as it aids in managing stress and fostering positive interactions with teachers. According to Goleman (1995), leaders who manage their emotions well and demonstrate empathy build stronger professional relationships, which is essential in educational settings where collaboration and trust are fundamental.

The study's findings further indicate that leadership attributes, such as setting clear expectations, providing constructive feedback, and maintaining open communication, significantly impact teacher performance. Effective leadership creates an atmosphere in which teachers feel guided, supported, and inspired to improve their practice (Yenni & Sari, 2020). This effect is demonstrated in the stronger Beta coefficient for leadership (0.532) compared to emotional intelligence alone, suggesting that while emotional intelligence fosters a positive environment, the practical aspects of leadership directly enhance teaching quality and learning outcomes. Research by Rasyid (2018) and Duryat

(2021) supports this view, noting that transformational and instructional leadership approaches are particularly effective in educational contexts, as they focus on both professional development and the instructional processes that teachers implement in the classroom.

When emotional intelligence and leadership are combined, the study reveals an amplified effect on teacher performance, with a combined Beta coefficient of 0.741. This combined influence explains 74.1% of the variance in teacher performance, suggesting that these two attributes together are critical in creating an optimal educational environment. This result is consistent with findings by Barkah and Hidayat (2023), who identified a synergistic effect of emotional intelligence and leadership on teacher motivation and effectiveness. The high explanatory power of the combined model also aligns with research indicating that leaders who possess both emotional intelligence and strong leadership skills are better equipped to handle complex educational challenges, motivate their staff, and foster an environment conducive to high-quality teaching and learning (Rilistina, 2021).

The implications of these findings are significant for educational policy and principal training programs. As principals play a central role in shaping school culture and teacher motivation, school districts and policymakers should consider incorporating emotional intelligence and leadership development into principal training curricula. According to Laia (2022), such training can equip school leaders with the skills necessary to create a positive work environment, manage interpersonal conflicts, and inspire continuous professional growth among teachers. Additionally, the results of this study suggest that emotional intelligence and leadership are not isolated qualities but interact dynamically to enhance teacher performance. Therefore, interventions should focus on developing both skills simultaneously to maximize the impact on teacher outcomes and, ultimately, student success.

The findings of this study contribute to the growing body of literature on educational leadership by demonstrating the importance of emotional intelligence and leadership in influencing teacher performance. Future research could explore how specific components of emotional intelligence—such as empathy or self-regulation—interact with different leadership styles to produce optimal outcomes in various educational contexts. Additionally, longitudinal studies could provide deeper insights into how the development of these skills over time affects school performance and student achievement, further validating the critical role of principal attributes in educational success.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This study highlights the significant role that both emotional intelligence and leadership qualities in principals play in enhancing teacher performance in high schools across Aceh Barat. The analysis demonstrates that principals who exhibit high emotional intelligence—characterized by self-awareness, empathy, and interpersonal skills—foster an environment conducive to effective teaching. Such an environment promotes collaboration, motivation, and a sense of value among teachers, positively impacting their performance.

The findings also underscore the importance of strong leadership. Principals who actively guide, motivate, and provide clear direction to their teachers contribute more directly to teaching effectiveness and improved educational outcomes. This effect is especially notable given the Beta coefficient for leadership, which surpasses that of emotional intelligence, indicating the particularly impactful role of leadership in day-to-day teaching dynamics.

Crucially, the combined effect of emotional intelligence and leadership is amplified, explaining a substantial 74.1% of the variance in teacher performance. This highlights the interactive influence of these qualities in principals, emphasizing that a balance of emotional intelligence and effective leadership yields the most favorable outcomes. Consequently, training programs and policies aimed at principal development should prioritize both emotional intelligence and leadership skills to optimize teacher performance and enhance student success.

In conclusion, this study supports the notion that educational leadership is a multifaceted construct, where emotional intelligence and leadership skills work in tandem to shape positive teaching and learning environments. Future research might explore additional contextual factors that interact with these qualities or examine longitudinal effects to deepen our understanding of how these attributes in school leaders drive sustained improvements in educational settings.

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