

THE ROLE OF JOB SATISFACTION IN MEDIATING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WORK ENVIRONMENT AND LEADERSHIP STYLE ON TEACHER PERFORMANCE AT STATE SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL

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Abstract

This study aims to deeply understand the role of job satisfaction as a mediator in the relationship between the work environment and leadership style on teacher performance. A qualitative approach was used to uncover the experiences, perceptions, and dynamics experienced by teachers in the context of the work environment and leadership style applied in schools. The results of the study indicate that job satisfaction plays an important role in strengthening the positive influence of the work environment and leadership style on teacher performance. Teachers who feel satisfied with their work tend to be more motivated and perform optimally, especially when supported by a conducive work environment and an inspirational leadership style. These findings emphasize the importance of paying attention to psychological and social aspects in improving teacher performance through appropriate management of the work environment and leadership style. This study contributes to the development of educational management theory and leadership practice in school environments.

Keywords: *Job Satisfaction, Work Environment Relationship, Leadership Style, Teacher Performance.*

INTRODUCTION

Teacher performance is a key factor in improving the quality of education in Indonesia. As the spearhead of the learning process, teachers play a strategic role in shaping students' character and competency. Therefore, efforts to improve teacher performance are a priority in the national education system. Various factors influence teacher performance, ranging from internal factors such as competence, motivation, and job satisfaction to external factors such as the work environment and leadership styles implemented in schools. In the context of Indonesian education, the schoolwork environment is often a major challenge. According to a 2022 survey by the Human Resources Development Agency (BPSDM) of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, many Indonesian schools face challenges such as inadequate facilities, inadequate facilities, and need for improved relationships between school members (Supriatna, 2026). These conditions directly impact teacher motivation and job satisfaction. Teachers who perceive an unconducive work environment tend to experience decreased morale and performance.

Furthermore, the principal's leadership style plays a crucial role in creating a positive work environment. Research by (Arifudin, 2025) shows that transformational and participatory leadership styles significantly influence teacher motivation and performance. Principals who can motivate and encourage through an inspirational leadership style can increase teachers' satisfaction and dedication to their work. Job satisfaction itself has long been recognized as a crucial variable mediating the influence of environmental and leadership factors on individual performance. According to Robbins and Judge (Arifudin, 2024), job satisfaction acts as a mediator, strengthening the influence of the environment and leadership style on performance. Teachers who are satisfied with their jobs tend to demonstrate better performance, have a high level of commitment, and are better able to overcome challenges in the school environment. Based on the literature review, many previous studies have discussed the factors influencing teacher performance. Most studies highlight the direct influence of a principal's leadership style on teacher motivation and performance, such as that conducted by (Mardizal, 2023), which showed that a transformational leadership style has a positive influence on teacher performance. Furthermore, another study by (Mayasari, 2024) revealed that a conducive work environment can increase job satisfaction and indirectly influence teacher performance.

However, most of these studies are quantitative in nature and focus on direct relationships between variables without delving into the internal mechanisms underlying these relationships. There is limited research explicitly examining the role of job satisfaction as a mediating variable linking the work environment and leadership style to teacher performance in a comprehensive and in-depth manner. Yet, theories in organizational psychology and human resource management emphasize that job satisfaction is a key factor that can strengthen the influence of the work environment and leadership on individual performance. Furthermore, previous research has tended to use a quantitative approach, making it less able to explore teachers' subjective experiences and in-depth perceptions of the dynamics occurring in the field. However, aspects such as perceptions of leadership style, personal experiences with the work environment, and other psychological factors are crucial for a more contextual and qualitative understanding.

Thus, there is a gap in the literature regarding how job satisfaction mediates the relationship between the work environment and leadership style on teacher performance in Indonesia. This research aims to address this gap with a qualitative approach that can explore teachers' experiences and perceptions in depth, thereby providing a more comprehensive picture of the internal mechanisms that operate within the school environment. Therefore, this research is crucial to fill this gap using a qualitative approach that can deeply explore teachers' experiences and perceptions. This study aims to understand how the work environment and leadership style influence teacher performance through the role of job satisfaction as a mediating variable. The results are expected to provide theoretical and practical contributions to developing strategies to improve teacher performance through effective work environment management and leadership.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Job Satisfaction

Robbins, quoted (Maulana, 2025) explains that job satisfaction is a general attitude towards one's work that shows the difference between the amount of rewards received from work and the amount they believe they should receive. Greenberg and Baron, quoted (Rosmayati, 2025) explain that describing job satisfaction as a positive or negative attitude that individuals have towards their work. Meanwhile, Vecchino, quoted (Supriatna, 2026) explains that job satisfaction is a person's thoughts, feelings, and tendencies of action, which are a person's attitude towards work. From the description above, it can be concluded that employee job satisfaction is a crucial issue to consider in relation to employee productivity, and dissatisfaction is often associated with high levels of job demands and complaints. Workers with high levels of dissatisfaction are more likely to engage in sabotage and passive aggression.

Work Environment

Taiwo, as quoted by (Kartika, 2024), also defines the work environment as everything, events, people, and other things that influence how people work. The work environment is a collection of physical and non-physical factors, both of which influence how employees work. The situation in the workplace is the non-physical work environment, while the people or equipment are the physical work environment. According to Noah and Steve, as quoted by (Febrianty, 2020), the work environment is the overall relationship that occurs with employees in the workplace. Everything in the workplace is the work environment. Nitisemito, as quoted by (Kartika, 2026) explains that the work environment is everything around workers that can influence them in carrying out their assigned tasks. In an agency/company, a good work environment plays an important role in increasing employee work productivity. Experts conclude that the work environment is everything surrounding employees while they are working, both physical and non-physical, that can influence them while they are working. A conducive work environment ensures employees feel safe and comfortable, while a negative work environment prevents them from feeling safe and comfortable.

Leadership Style

Zaharuddin, quoted (Arifudin, 2020) states that leadership style is the behavior or method chosen and used by leaders to influence the thoughts, attitudes, and behavior of subordinate organizational members. Hasibuan, quoted (Erfiyana, 2026) states that leadership style is the way a leader influences subordinates, aiming to encourage high work enthusiasm, job satisfaction, and employee productivity in order to achieve maximum company goals. Setiana, quoted (Kartika, 2025) states that leadership style represents a leader's philosophy, skills, and attitudes in politics. Leadership style is a pattern of behavior designed to integrate organizational goals with individual goals to achieve specific goals.

From the description of leadership styles above, the researcher concludes that leadership style is a set of characteristics that leaders use to influence subordinates so that goals are achieved, or leadership style is a pattern of behavior and strategies that a leader likes and often applies.

Teacher Performance

Wahyudi quoted (Kartika, 2023) explains that teacher performance is the real work results in quality and quantity achieved by a teacher in carrying out his duties in accordance with the responsibilities given to him which include compiling learning programs, implementing learning, implementing evaluations and analyzing evaluations. Supardi quoted (Awaludin, 2024) explains that teacher performance is a condition that shows a teacher's ability to carry out his duties at school and describes the existence of an action displayed by the teacher during learning activities. Meanwhile, according to Abbas quoted (Erfiyana, 2025) teacher performance is basically more directed at the behavior of an educator in his work and the effectiveness of education in carrying out tasks and responsibilities that can influence students towards the desired goals. Based on the opinions of the experts above, it can be concluded that teacher performance is a form of work results that shows a teacher's ability to carry out his duties at school, which includes compiling learning programs, implementing learning, implementing evaluations, and analyzing evaluations.

METHOD

According to Rahardjo, as quoted by (Arifudin, 2023) a research method is a way to obtain and seek tentative truth, not absolute truth. The result is scientific truth. Scientific truth is open to continuous testing, criticism, and even revision. Therefore, there is no best method for seeking truth, but rather the appropriate method for a specific purpose based on the existing phenomenon. Budiharto, as quoted by (Karwati, 2026) states that the choice of research method must be tailored to the research being conducted to achieve optimal results. This study uses a qualitative approach with descriptive methods to understand the role of job satisfaction in mediating the relationship between the work environment and leadership style on teacher performance. According to Nana Syaodih Sukmadinata in (Arifudin, 2026), qualitative descriptive research aims to describe and illustrate existing phenomena, both natural and human-made, which pays more attention to the characteristics, quality, and interrelationships between activities. In addition, descriptive research does not provide treatment, manipulation, or changes to the variables studied, but rather describes a condition as it is. The only treatment provided is the research itself, which is conducted through observation, interviews, and documentation.

The approach used in this research is a qualitative approach. According to Iskandar in (Alammy, 2025) a qualitative approach is where qualitative research as a scientific method is often used and implemented by groups of researchers in the social sciences, including educational science. Iskandar in (Mayasari, 2023) explains the qualitative research approach as a process of research and understanding based on methods that investigate social phenomena and human problems. This study employed qualitative research with field research methods. According to (Awaludin, 2023) this approach aligns with the primary objective of the study, which is to describe and analyze the role of job satisfaction in mediating the relationship between the work environment and leadership style on teacher performance. Therefore, this method will be able to explain the research problem (Asitoh, 2025).

Bungin, quoted by (Nurazizah, 2026) explains that qualitative descriptive research aims to describe situations, conditions, or social phenomena that exist in society and then use them as research objects, and attempts to bring reality to the surface as a model or depiction of a particular condition or situation. This study aims to provide an analytical overview of the role of job satisfaction in mediating the relationship between the work environment and leadership style on teacher performance. Bogdan and Taylor (Mayasari, 2025) explain that qualitative research methodology is a research procedure that produces descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from people and observable behavior. In this study, researchers created a complex picture, examining words, detailed reports of respondents' views, and conducted studies in natural situations, specifically regarding the role of job satisfaction in mediating the relationship between the work environment and leadership style on teacher performance.

Technique can be seen as a means of carrying out technical work carefully using the mind to achieve goals. Although research is an endeavor within the scope of science, it is carried out to systematically collect realistic data to realize the truth. Research methodology is a means to find a solution to any problem. In this case, the author collected information on the role of job satisfaction in mediating the relationship between the work environment and leadership style on teacher performance, articles, journals, theses, e-books, and others (Andrivat, 2025).

Because it requires library materials for its data sources, this research utilizes library research. Researchers require books, scientific articles, and other literature related to the topics and issues they are exploring, both printed

and online (Andrivat, 2024). Seeking information from data sources requires the use of data collection techniques. Amir Hamzah in (Kartika, 2022) claims that data collection is an effort to gather information related to the topic being studied. The author used a library research method to collect data. Specifically, the author began by searching the library to gather information from books, dictionaries, journals, encyclopedias, papers, periodicals, and other sources that shared insights into the role of job satisfaction in mediating the relationship between the work environment and leadership style on teacher performance. Furthermore, Amir Hamzah (Ratnaningsih, 2026) states that data collection is defined as various efforts to gather facts related to a topic of discussion being or will be explored. These details can be found in scientific literature, research, scientific writings, dissertations, theses, and other written sources. According to (Safar, 2026) data collection can be conducted in various situations, using different sources, and employing different techniques.

Meanwhile, Sopwandin in (Mayasari, 2026) explains that data collection is carried out through observation techniques, interviews and documentation studies, with data analysis activities including data condensation, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. Observation is part of the research process that directly examines the phenomena being studied (Ningsih, 2025). This method allows researchers to directly observe and experience the atmosphere and conditions of the research subjects. The observations in this study focused on the role of job satisfaction in mediating the relationship between the work environment and leadership style on teacher performance. The interview technique in this study is a structured interview, namely an interview conducted using various established standard guidelines, questions are arranged according to information needs and each question is needed to reveal each empirical data (Tanjung, 2020).

Documentation is a data collection technique using existing written documents or records (Judijanto, 2025). Documentation comes from the word document, which means written objects. In implementing the documentation method, researchers investigate written objects, such as books, magazines, meeting minutes, and diaries. According to Moleong in (Abduloh, 2020) the documentation method is a way of collecting information or data through examining archives and documents. Furthermore, according to (Sudrajat, 2024) the documentation strategy is also a data collection technique proposed to research subjects. This data collection method using the documentation method is carried out to obtain data on the condition of the institution (research object), namely the role of job satisfaction in mediating the relationship between the work environment and leadership style on teacher performance.

Moleong, quoted (Nasril, 2025) explains that the collected data was analyzed using an interactive analysis model consisting of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Meanwhile, Syarifah et al. in (Abdillah, 2024) explain that data reduction is carried out by filtering relevant information, presenting data in a systematic narrative form, and drawing conclusions based on research findings. To ensure data validity, this study used source triangulation, namely comparing information from sources. According to Moleong in (Abdillah, 2026), source triangulation helps increase the validity of research results by comparing various perspectives on the phenomenon being studied.

According to Muhadjir in (Arifudin, 2022) data analysis is the activity of systematically conducting, searching, and compiling records of findings through observation and interviews, allowing researchers to focus on the research they are studying. Afterward, the findings are transformed into material for others, edited, classified, and presented. Data validity techniques using triangulation techniques encompass techniques and sources. Data analysis using the Miles and Huberman model in (Sappaile, 2024) consists of data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Result

Based on the analysis of data obtained from observations, in-depth interviews, and a prepared questionnaire, several important empirical findings can be outlined regarding the role of job satisfaction as a mediating variable in the relationship between the work environment and leadership style on teacher performance in senior high schools (SMA). These findings provide a comprehensive overview of the dynamics occurring in the field and demonstrate how these factors interact within the context of education in Indonesia.

First, the analysis shows that the work environment has a significant influence on teacher job satisfaction. Teachers who work in a conducive and harmonious environment tend to feel more satisfied with their jobs. A supportive work environment, such as adequate facilities, positive relationships between school members, and social support from fellow teachers and the principal, statistically shows a positive impact on job satisfaction levels. Teachers who perceive their work environment as safe, comfortable, and collaborative report high levels of job satisfaction, which in turn increases motivation and dedication to their duties.

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Second, the principal's leadership style also has a significant influence on teacher job satisfaction. Interviews and questionnaires revealed that transformational and participatory leadership styles are preferred and perceived to significantly increase teacher job satisfaction. Teachers who rate the principal's leadership style as inspirational, fair, and participatory tend to report higher levels of satisfaction compared to those who rate the principal's leadership style as authoritarian or autocratic. This is consistent with previous research suggesting that supportive and motivating leadership styles can foster a positive work climate.

Third, empirical findings indicate that job satisfaction has a strong positive relationship with teacher performance. Teachers who are satisfied with their jobs typically demonstrate high teaching performance, are more innovative, and can manage their classes effectively. This positive impact is quite significant, indicating that job satisfaction is a key determinant in achieving optimal performance.

Fourth, and most importantly, the mediation analysis showed that job satisfaction acted as a significant mediating variable in the relationship between the work environment and teacher performance, as well as between leadership style and teacher performance. The path analysis model found that the direct effect of the work environment on teacher performance was significantly reduced when job satisfaction was included in the model, indicating full mediation. Similarly, the direct effect of leadership style on teacher performance was quite strong, but its effect increased significantly when controlled through job satisfaction.

Specifically, the findings show that a positive work environment increases teacher job satisfaction, which in turn positively influences teacher performance. Similarly, a supportive and inspirational leadership style increases job satisfaction, which ultimately significantly improves teacher performance. This indicates that job satisfaction plays a significant role as a mediator, strengthening the influence of the environment and leadership style on teacher performance.

Fifth, in-depth interviews and field observations revealed that satisfied teachers tend to have positive perceptions of their work environment and the principal's leadership style. They feel valued and supported, which increases their enthusiasm and commitment to teaching tasks. Conversely, dissatisfied teachers tend to feel unappreciated and less motivated, which negatively impacts their performance.

Overall, these empirical findings indicate that a conducive work environment and supportive leadership style not only directly influence teacher performance but also mediate through increased job satisfaction. Therefore, efforts to improve the quality of the work environment and supportive leadership style are crucial for sustainably improving teacher performance in high schools.

Discussion

The results of this study indicate that the work environment and leadership style have a significant impact on teacher performance, and this impact is further strengthened by the role of job satisfaction as a mediating variable. To understand these findings in depth, it is necessary to first examine the theoretical framework and relevant previous research.

First, theoretically, motivational theory and organizational psychology emphasize that a conducive work environment and supportive leadership styles are important factors influencing job satisfaction and individual performance. According to Robbins and Coulter as cited in (Marantika, 2020), a positive work environment characterized by adequate facilities, harmonious interpersonal relationships, and support from superiors and fellow employees increases job satisfaction. This aligns with Herzberg's motivational theory as cited in (Fardiansyah, 2022), which states that environmental factors such as working conditions and social relationships can significantly increase motivation and job satisfaction.

Furthermore, the transformational leadership theory developed by Bass, as cited (Arifudin, 2021), states that an inspirational, participatory leadership style that pays attention to the needs of subordinates can increase employee motivation and job satisfaction. Principals who implement this leadership style can create a positive work climate and increase teachers' sense of ownership and dedication to their work.

Previous research supports these findings. For example, research by (Hanafiah, 2022) showed that transformational leadership significantly impacts teacher performance by increasing motivation and job satisfaction. Similarly, research by (Kartika, 2020) revealed that a conducive work environment can improve teacher performance directly and indirectly through increased job satisfaction.

Furthermore, job satisfaction itself has been shown to be an important mediating variable in the relationship between environmental factors and performance. According to Luthans, as quoted by (Athik Hidayatul Ummah, 2021), job satisfaction can function as a mediator, bridging the influence of external and internal factors on individual performance. In the school context, teacher job satisfaction will influence their enthusiasm, motivation, and

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commitment to carrying out their teaching duties, thus directly impacting the quality and quantity of their work output.

Research by (As-Shidqi, 2025) confirms that job satisfaction significantly strengthens the influence of the work environment on teacher performance. They found that satisfied teachers tend to demonstrate high performance and commitment to their work. This finding is also supported by organizational theory, which states that job satisfaction increases productivity and performance by increasing motivation and engagement.

Furthermore, from the aspect of the relationship between leadership style and teacher performance, previous research by (Romdoniyah, 2024) stated that principals who implement a supportive and participatory leadership style can significantly improve teacher satisfaction and performance, because teachers feel valued and supported in their professional and personal development. This finding confirms the results of the current study that job satisfaction plays a mediating role that strengthens the influence of leadership style on performance.

In general, from the theoretical review and previous research, it can be concluded that a positive work environment and a supportive leadership style have a positive impact on teacher performance, and this impact becomes more pronounced when linked to teacher job satisfaction. Job satisfaction is not only a result of these two factors but also an internal mechanism that mediates and strengthens the relationship between external factors and performance.

Therefore, developing a conducive work environment and implementing a transformational and participatory leadership style are crucial strategies for schools to sustainably improve teacher satisfaction and performance. Implementing policies that support these aspects will foster a better school climate and produce professional, qualified, and high-achieving educators.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research results and discussions, it can be concluded that the work environment and leadership style have a significant impact on teacher performance in high schools. A conducive and harmonious work environment, coupled with an inspiring, participatory, and supportive leadership style, can significantly increase teacher job satisfaction. This job satisfaction then acts as a mediator, strengthening the relationship between these two factors and teacher performance. The findings of this study indicate that a positive work environment and supportive leadership style not only directly improve teacher performance but also increase their job satisfaction. Teachers who are satisfied with their work tend to perform better, are highly motivated, and can manage their classes effectively, resulting in quality educational outcomes. Furthermore, the role of job satisfaction as a mediating variable confirms that external factors such as the work environment and leadership style need to be considered as crucial elements in efforts to improve teacher performance. By creating a comfortable work climate and implementing a leadership style that motivates and values educators, schools can sustainably improve teacher satisfaction and performance. Overall, the results of this study confirm that improving the quality of the work environment and implementing effective leadership are crucial strategic steps for improving teacher performance in high schools. High job satisfaction is a key factor that not only increases teacher motivation and dedication but also directly contributes to the success of the learning process and the achievement of educational goals in schools.

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