


## Building Happy Ecosystems: Transformational Leadership Strategies in Managing Psychological Wellbeing of School People

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### ABSTRACT

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menyelidiki pengembangan ekosistem yang bahagia di lingkungan sekolah melalui penerapan strategi kepemimpinan transformasional dalam pengelolaan kesejahteraan psikologis guru dan staf. Metodologi yang digunakan adalah pendekatan studi kasus kualitatif, di mana data diperoleh melalui observasi serta wawancara mendalam dengan para pemimpin sekolah, termasuk kepala dan wakil kepala sekolah, serta guru dan staf pendidikan. Analisis tematik mengungkapkan bahwa elemen kunci dari kepemimpinan transformasional seperti teladan, motivasi spiritual, transparansi dalam kritik dan inovasi, serta perhatian pribadi memainkan peran penting dalam meningkatkan kesejahteraan psikologis dan menciptakan lingkungan yang bahagia. Kepala sekolah juga berfokus pada penyediaan dukungan emosional, fasilitas yang adekuat, dan pengembangan karier, yang semuanya berkontribusi pada peningkatan kesejahteraan psikologis. Ini mencakup aspek-aspek seperti hubungan interpersonal yang positif dan tujuan hidup yang jelas. Temuan riset ini menunjukkan bahwa pengintegrasian nilai spiritual dalam kepemimpinan transformasional tidak hanya menciptakan ekosistem yang mendukung kebahagiaan tetapi juga meningkatkan komitmen jangka panjang para pendidik. Penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi signifikan dalam studi literatur dengan menampilkan bagaimana praktik kepemimpinan berdampak langsung pada dinamika psikologis dalam konteks sekolah, di mana penelitian sebelumnya sering kali hanya berfokus pada stres dan kelelahan.

*This study aims to investigate the development of a happy ecosystem in the school environment through the application of transformational leadership strategies in the management of teachers' and staff's psychological well-being. The methodology used was a qualitative case study approach, where data were obtained through observation as well as in-depth interviews with school leaders, including principals and vice principals, and teachers and educational staff. Thematic analysis revealed that key elements of transformational leadership such as role modeling, spiritual motivation, transparency in criticism and innovation, and personal attention played an important role in improving psychological well-being and creating a happy environment. Principals also focus on providing emotional support, adequate facilities and career development, all of which contribute to improving psychological well-being. This includes aspects such as positive interpersonal relationships and clear life goals. The findings suggest that integrating spiritual values in transformational leadership not only creates an ecosystem that supports happiness but also increases educators' long-term commitment. This research makes a significant contribution to the literature by showcasing how leadership practices have a direct impact on psychological dynamics in a school context, where previous research has often focused solely on stress and burnout.*



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## INTRODUCTION

Schools function as educational institutions that provide and manage an environment that is safe and comfortable, happy and supportive of the psychological well-being of all school members. A healthy and conducive work environment is considered crucial in increasing motivation, providing a sense of being valued, and building positive relationships among school members (Nurkholis & Santosa, 2022). Leadership in the context of education can be interpreted as the ability of individuals to facilitate the achievement of collective goals through the influence exerted on others. The role of the principal has great significance in building psychological well-being. This includes the development of aspects such as self-confidence, independence, personal growth, life purpose, environmental mastery, and positive relationships with fellow school members (Eva et al., 2020). However, in the practice of principal leadership, various obstacles and challenges often arise in the effort to manage the psychological well-being of school members. The main factors that contribute to these challenges, and which often exacerbate principals' difficulties in managing a conducive happy ecosystem, include a lack of understanding of the importance of psychological aspects in leadership, limited effective strategies and efforts to manage psychological well-being, as well as delays in communication between principals and school members (Rahayu & Iskandar, 2022). Therefore, strengthening leadership competencies that can integrate psychological aspects is indeed an important need in managing the psychological well-being of school members in a sustainable manner (Virtanen et al., 2019).

Ausat's study emphasizes the importance of transformational leadership as one of the key factors in creating a work environment that supports the enhancement of employees' psychological well-being, with implications that are particularly relevant in the educational context (Ausat et al., 2024). Furthermore, Thaci explains that effective communication in organizations facilitates better decisions, and this is in line with the idea that good leaders create happy and healthy ecosystems (Thaci et al., 2024). This is reinforced by previous research conducted by Hartanto confirmed that effective leadership contributes to improving team performance and achieving overall organizational goals (Hartanto, 2024). Similarly, research in Sulawesi showed that principal leadership contributed 15.4% to the variation in teacher performance (Kesek et al., 2024).

This study seeks to construct an understanding of the contribution of school principals' leadership in managing psychological well-being to build a happy ecosystem for school members. The novelty of this study lies in the integration of the dimensions of school transformational leadership with spiritual values provided as a form of offering a socio-culturally relevant perspective and building happiness based on spiritual aspects as a strategic effort in managing the psychological well-being of school members. Thus, this study aims to analyze how to build a happy ecosystem of transformational leadership strategies in managing the psychological well-being of school members, which is simultaneously expected to optimize happiness and well-being. Leadership in the school environment plays a crucial role in managing the psychological well-being of members of the school community, and a lack of sensitivity on the part of leaders can have very serious repercussions. Numerous studies have shown that leadership that lacks empathy can place a heavy burden on teachers, which in turn leads to increased stress, unhappiness, emotional exhaustion and dissatisfaction among educators (Berger et al., 2019). An unsupportive work environment is further disrupted by leaders' disregard for staff mental health, which can lead to a long-term decline in motivation, happiness and teaching quality (Berger et al., 2019; Li et al., 2020).

Furthermore, indifference to the psychological well-being of staff can also negatively impact the principal's ability to manage the school community's mood and harmony. Leaders who are ineffective in applying a supportive approach may cause tensions to arise among staff members, which in turn impacts their psychological well-being and increases the risk of emotional burnout (Ji & Yue, 2020). In these circumstances, it is imperative to formulate and implement strategies to support the mental health of school personnel. Responsive and caring leadership approaches have been shown to play a significant role in improving the well-being and productivity of educators (Berger et al., 2019).

Attention to the psychological well-being of school members is a fundamental aspect that supports educational success. When principals and management make efforts to address the psychological well-being of teachers and staff, the school atmosphere tends to improve, making it happier and more comfortable for all involved (Sebila & Cemaloglu, 2025). Nurturing psychological well-being can increase the happiness, motivation and productivity of school members, which in turn has a positive

impact on academic outcomes as well as the overall learning process (Permana & Yuslimah, 2025). Maintaining psychological well-being can increase the motivation and productivity of school members, which in turn contributes positively to academic outcomes and the overall learning process (Riyanto, 2022). Research shows that a school environment that supports mental health not only reduces the risk of stress and depression, but also plays an important role in creating an atmosphere that encourages individual self-development.

Therefore, the management of psychological aspects should be a top priority (Sasaki et al., 2024). In order to achieve overall educational success, schools are expected to implement policies that support the psychological needs of all school members. Transformation towards a happy ecosystem is essential as a basis for creating a healthy and productive work environment. Therefore, this study aims to analyze how to build a happy ecosystem of transformational leadership strategies in managing the psychological well-being of school members. With this approach, the study titled "Building a Happy Ecosystem: Transformational Leadership Strategies in Managing the Psychological Wellbeing of School Citizens" is expected to provide a framework for creating a more supportive and humane school environment.

## METHOD

This research adopted a qualitative approach with a case study design to analyze in depth the diverse aspects of the phenomenon under study, aiming for a holistic and comprehensive understanding of the context. The qualitative approach makes it possible to explore and understand the nuances that exist in such social phenomena, as stated in the study which shows the need for in-depth understanding to answer complex clinical questions (Wiraguna et al., 2024). Qualitative research is designed to explore social phenomena through the collection of relevant and in-depth information, allowing researchers to explore reality in a richer context (Verma et al., 2022). This approach allows researchers to explore real phenomena in a richer and deeper context. Informants were selected in this study using purposive sampling, which is a sample selection technique based on certain objectives in order to represent characteristics relevant to the research. In this study, data collection was conducted through semi-structured interviews and observations. Furthermore, all the data were combined with the triangulation method which aims to strengthen the analysis, verify the findings, and provide more solid support for the constructs and hypotheses that have been built (Schifferdecker et al., 2023).

This research was conducted at Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 1 Bantul with a focus on the selection of participants consisting of the principal, vice principal in charge of curriculum, teachers, and education personnel. The selection of the subject group was based on the fact that they are the individuals most directly involved in the interactions and dynamics in the school work environment, so they can feel the real impact of the principal's leadership style. In the context of qualitative research, the number of samples taken is generally limited, because the main purpose of this approach is to explore information that can provide an in-depth description of the difficulty, complexity, variation, or context of a particular phenomenon, not to produce data that has statistical representativeness as in the quantitative approach (Wafiah & Wustari L Mangundjaya, 2023).

Data obtained through semi-structured interviews and observations were analyzed using systematic thematic analysis techniques outlined by Braun dan Clarke. This process consisted of six main phases: (1) identifying and making repeated readings of the data while noting initial ideas; (2) systematically compiling initial codes from all the data; (3) grouping related codes to find themes; (4) reviewing themes to ensure consistency and compatibility of themes with the overall data; (5) defining and naming themes to clarify the meaning contained; and (6) compiling a coherent and easy-to-understand analysis report. This process aims to uncover the hidden meanings in the data in a more comprehensive way (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### ***Result***

The results show that the transformational leadership model described by Bass and Avolio includes four main dimensions, namely idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration, which can be categorized as important pillars in creating a productive and innovative environment in various organizations.

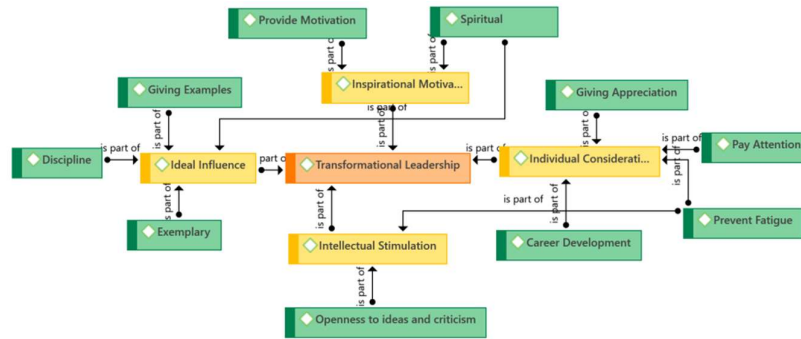


Figure 1. Transformational Leadership

### ***Ideal Influence***

This research shows that school leaders provide role models. This is as stated by informant P2: “Yes, of course he is always patient, disciplined, because he is also patient to set an example... it can be an example for us” (P2).

Principals who set an example through concrete actions, such as participating in school activities that reflect positive values, have been shown to improve the well-being of the school community. In line with P2, P5 also expressed a similar view. “Starting from the discipline of the principal...self-development, extraordinary responsibility and so on, it becomes a role model” (P5).

### ***Motivation Inspiration***

In this study, participants reported that principals play an active role in motivating the entire school community through a spiritual approach. This approach is described as an attempt to instill the values of sincerity and patience, where the principal consistently guides the community in interpreting the task of education as a form of worship to God. P1 revealed, “What is clear is that as the leader, when I motivate the teachers and staff, of course it will be easier with a spiritual approach” (P5).

### ***Intellectual Stimulation***

The principal provides opportunities and encourages critical thinking. P3 revealed, “Yes, the principal encourages critical thinking, even when teachers convey ideas during meetings, he accepts the ideas and suggestions that we propose” (P3).

In line with P3, the principal is very open to, criticism, ideas and suggestions will foster a culture of reflection, innovation and adaptability. This was also revealed by P1, "So I give space to them so that they are free to provide input, suggestions, evaluations, ideas, well that's one, giving full openness to me. Their openness to provide input, ideas, evaluations, suggestions is very important and very much needed by us" (P1).

### ***Individual Consideration***

This study shows that the principal shows his care by giving attention and appreciation to staff and teachers. As revealed by P4 “the principal always gives appreciation and thanks when I do the assigned tasks” (P4). P2 also revealed the same thing, “Of course, the principal definitely gives appreciation, even if it is a small thing like praise... like that I already feel very comfortable” (P2).

As expressed by P4 and P2, principals who continuously provide recognition through praise and concrete actions are able to increase their sense of comfort and strengthen their perception that they are valued. In addition, principals also provide opportunities for teachers and staff to develop their abilities and careers in the professional sphere. P3 stated this. “the principal also always provides good facilities for us starting from the teachers' room or seminars and encourages us to take part in training that is in accordance with the field” (P3).

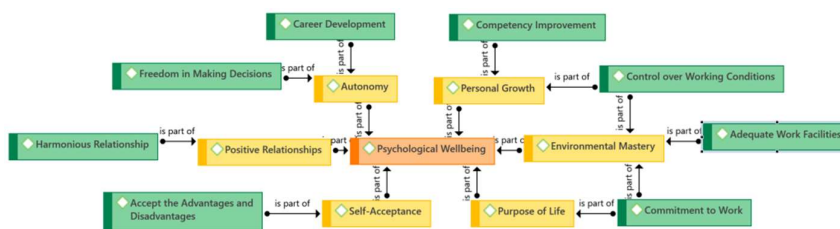


Figure 2. Psychological well-being

Figure 2 displays the psychological well-being model designed by Carol Ryff, which includes six main dimensions of self-acceptance, positive relationships with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, life purpose, and personal growth.

### **Self-acceptance**

The principal has a high awareness of the diversity of competencies possessed by the teachers. Understanding that each teacher has strengths and weaknesses, principals try to ensure that the weaknesses of teachers and staff do not become a barrier to their performance. Instead, they create a positive atmosphere by providing concrete support, as expressed by P1 and P5: “Then in relation to further studies, there are also terms, study permits and so on, we support for self-development, especially young teachers” (P1).

"Of course, we must have shortcomings and have advantages, with that I talk to the principal when we have shortcomings, we are always helped by teammates ... when there is one job, it is completed, and we help each other. So when we are overwhelmed, the principal and other curriculum deputies will help. The principal as the leader helps motivate and also helps our work, and also directs" (P5).

### **Positive Relationship**

This research shows that principals build positive relationships with members to create a sense of comfort, happiness, build trust, and provide emotional support. P1 revealed, "The real form that I do for them to avoid stress and breakout, so I often do activities for refreshing. Sometimes during the semester break, we hold capacity building by holding intimacy activities such as gymnastics together, touring, outbound, family recitation" (P1).

In accordance with P1's statement, P5 also agreed with this by giving a statement, "This principal is because he is close and has often worked with us, so I feel comfortable. What is our problem, we can confide in him, we can pour it out, he also guides ... every year there are 4 recitations, well this is a family recitation and later we are interspersed if there is halal bihalal ... it is one of the places to strengthen silaturahmi and also harmony" (P5).

### **Autonomy**

The participants in this study indicated that the granting of autonomy in decision-making, positive recognition, and the principal's view of education staff made the teaching profession an attractive option for career development and innovation. This was revealed in P3, “the madrasah head also said that because it is for future development, it suggests that if you want to develop new things, you are welcome... Yes, of course mba, with the advancement of technology, I continue to develop and keep up with the times, starting from searching the internet and others for learning” (P3).

### **Environmental Mastery**

This study revealed that the school principal provides adequate facilities and infrastructure for the school community, so as to support the management of psychological well-being among the school community. P revealed, “Yes, of course, to create a safe and conducive environment, it must be equipped with facilities and infrastructure that provide a comfortable space... With a pleasant and comfortable environment, it will provide greater comfort for them” (P1).

### **Life Purpose**

This study found that principals consistently emphasize that the duties of education staff and teachers are mandates that require breadth of heart and are meaningful as life goals. P3 said: "My job as a teacher is just to teach and I am happy with that. The task of being a teacher comes from my

conscience...the principal always reminds me that educating is a noble task and part of worship. It makes me realize that my job is not only to educate but to create character in students and become a noble task" (P3). In accordance with P3's statement, P2 also stated "he always reminds us that we not only teach but also educate children well and become an act of worship for us" (P2).

### **Personal Growth**

The study found that staff and teachers regularly conduct self-reflection to continuously improve their potential. The principal consistently provides support for competency development. P2 revealed, "If there is a smart seminar, I participate in it and even asked to participate by the principal to participate in the seminar...we must continue to upgrade like the seminar or participate in training training, especially about learning media media... and yes as far as I know it must be permitted and allowed to continue to the next level" (P2).

### **Discussion**

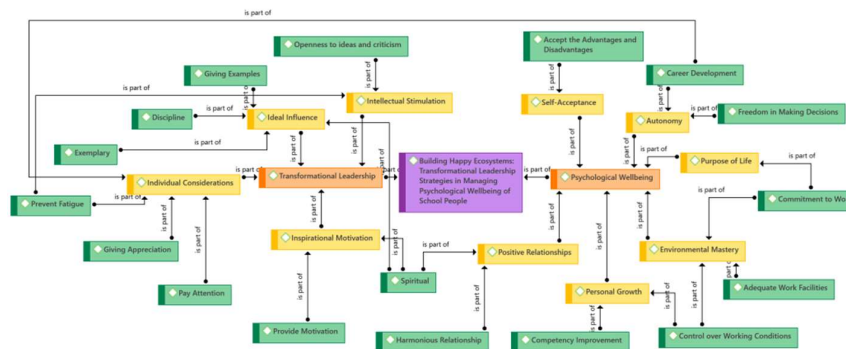


Figure 3. Building Happy Ecosystems: Transformational Leadership Strategies in Managing Psychological Wellbeing of School People.

Principal leadership plays a crucial role in building a working atmosphere that facilitates the psychological well-being of every individual involved in the school community. Effective leadership implementation can build a happy and positive ecosystem among members, while providing a supportive environment. This has implications for psychological well-being, which in turn can increase the motivation and productivity of school members as a whole. Principals who are responsive to the needs and emotional states of school members can create a harmonious working atmosphere, which also reflects the importance of inclusive and sensitive leadership in dealing with psychological challenges. In the realm of education, the principal's leadership plays a very significant role in creating a happy ecosystem, which in turn supports the psychological well-being of all school members. Effective leadership not only serves to build positive relationships within the school community, but also creates a conducive environment for the school community to thrive (Robinson et al., 2008). This will contribute to psychological well-being, and have a direct impact on the motivation and productivity of the members. A leadership that is sensitive and responsive to the needs and psychological conditions of individuals in the school is a key factor in creating a harmonious working environment, which is expected to support the psychological well-being of all staff and teachers (Hidayat & Patras, 2023). In the context of education, principal leadership plays a vital role in creating a work environment that supports the psychological well-being of all school members. Effective leadership can facilitate the establishment of positive, happy relationships and a conducive environment, which affects the psychological well-being, motivation and productivity of school members. Principals who demonstrate responsive leadership and are sensitive to the psychological needs and conditions of their members are able to create a harmonious working atmosphere, which contributes to their overall psychological well-being (Hartawan, 2020).

Research shows that good leadership aspects are essential for creating positive conditions in the interaction between school members, as well as in the effective management of learning activities (Wicaksono et al., 2023). Thus, the principal functions not only as a manager, but also as a leader who must be able to inspire and motivate teachers and educators, so that they feel comfortable and have high confidence in carrying out their duties and responsibilities. Furthermore, the creation of a harmonious working environment in schools allows for stronger solidarity and connectedness between all members

of the school community, which in turn improves psychological well-being and learning outcomes in educational institutions (Mohune et al., 2023). This suggests that the adaptive and responsive leadership of the principal has a significant influence on the working atmosphere and overall educational goals.

This is in line with research showing that principals who support well-being have a significant positive effect on performance, including actions such as building positive relationships, providing direct attention, happiness, comfort, and valuing and motivating individuals within the school environment. These four elements have been shown to reinforce a sense of comfort and confidence, and promote harmonization within the school environment. Creating harmony and enhancing emotional support in schools acts as a protective factor against challenges faced by all members of the community. When principals prioritize responsive leadership, trusting relationships and strong bonds are formed between members of the school community, which in turn contribute to improving their psychological well-being (Bosworth et al., 2011).

A supportive school environment can be closely linked to improved work outcomes, which includes responsibility for building strong interpersonal bonds, as well as attention to the emotional and psychological needs of each individual in an educational context (Astuti & Purnama Sari, 2023). Therefore, adaptive and responsive principal leadership serves to strengthen collaboration and positive interactions among school members, as well as create a sense of mutual respect and stimulation in every educational activity (Rizqiana & Suriansyah, 2025). With proper attention to these elements, schools can reduce stress factors that potentially affect the psychological well-being of teachers and students, while increasing their motivation and engagement in the teaching and learning process.

Based on these findings, it can be concluded that the principal of Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 1 Bantul plays an important role in shaping responsible professional attitudes among school members. The principal initiates a space for the acceptance of ideas and criticism from various internal school communities and plays a role in facilitating participatory communication, which significantly strengthens the vitality of interpersonal relationships within the school environment. This process not only strengthens social bonds but also creates a happy atmosphere where each individual feels valued and has a voice, which in turn promotes mutual trust and minimizes feelings of alienation among school members. As such, it supports psychological comfort, harmonious emotional bonds and collective commitment among all school members (Mohune et al., 2023).

The principal's role is realized through the application of a transformational leadership style that focuses on psychological well-being. In this context, the principal is not only responsible for administrative decisions but also seeks to build a harmonious, open, happy and supportive work atmosphere. Transformational leadership in the school environment not only emphasizes the delivery of a clear vision and mission, but also managing conditions conducive to the psychological well-being of school members. Leaders who apply the principles of transformational leadership can strengthen interpersonal relationships, which are essential in creating a positive organizational climate. Research shows that a work environment supported by transformational leadership contributes significantly to improved performance and well-being of school members (Afiatin et al., 2019).

Visionary principals with an inclusive managerial approach are reported to increasingly facilitate the active participation of the entire school community in the decision-making process. When team members feel that their opinions are heard and valued, they are more likely to contribute creative ideas and maintain high levels of motivation. The addition of responsibility for shared outcomes can also improve the quality of interactions between members. This engagement shows a positive relationship with school success, characterized by increased psychological resilience and decreased risk of burnout. Moreover, it highlights that attention to the mental well-being of school members has a direct impact on their motivation and productivity (Özdemir et al., 2024).

Good support in the school environment can support and facilitate better mental health management for all members, as well as create a climate that supports academic success. Research shows that adopting an inclusive and participatory approach to leadership not only strengthens engagement but also facilitates better communication and builds trust among school members. As such, efforts to manage mental wellbeing directly correlate with positive outcomes, including higher motivation and productivity in educational settings (Yetkin Tekin, 2024).

In this context, principals demonstrate consistency in providing moral support and recognition, as well as in facilitating healthy communication that can significantly improve the comfort and enthusiasm of staff and teachers. The principal's transformational leadership actions are also reflected in concrete

attitudes, such as openness to criticism, sincere praise, and support for individual career development. This is in line with the view that transformational leadership style can contribute to improving the quality of education through motivation and inspiration for staff (Utami et al., 2024). As an inspirer, motivator and facilitator, the principal contributes directly to creating a healthy work environment that supports the development of individuals within the school community (Özdemir et al., 2024).

## CONCLUSION

The study concluded that transformational leadership applied by school principals has a significant impact in creating a happy ecosystem that supports psychological well-being in educational institutions. Specifically in Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 1 Bantul, it was found that a responsive, caring and empathetic leadership approach can facilitate effective management and the establishment of a positive ecosystem, increase team trust, and strengthen interpersonal relationships among school members. This contributes not only to psychological well-being, but also to increased motivation and productivity, as previous studies have shown that open communication and attention to the psychological needs of team members are key elements in realizing a healthy organizational culture. Thus, transformational leadership not only creates a happy environment for individuals but also acts as a protective and managing factor against stress and burnout among members. Future research should involve longitudinal studies to explore the long-term impact of transformational leadership on the psychological well-being of teachers and staff in schools. In addition, future research could also explore ways to build and sustain a supportive school culture in various educational contexts as well as the innovative role of principals in advancing school culture.

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