

## Transformational leadership and teacher well-being: A systematic review

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### ABSTRACT

Teachers play a significant role and face diverse challenges everyday, therefore escalating the research of teacher well-being and its factors, with leadership being one of them. This review aims to summarize the findings focusing on the differences and teacher's perspectives on teacher well-being and transformational leadership in schools. The review consists of peer reviewed articles from 2012 to 2021, with kindergarten to high school teachers as participants. Several databases were used, which are Scopus, Science Direct, PsycInfo, World of Science (WoS) Journal, PubMed, SAGE journals, Education Resources Information Centre (ERIC), and Garuda. Articles were selected using preferred reporting items for systematic reviews and meta-analyses (PRISMA) guidelines and 10 were included in the qualitative synthesis. Studies showed that transformational leadership positively correlated with teacher well-being. Research regarding the efficiency of transformational leadership's each aspect in increasing teacher well-being can be interesting to study in the future.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The teaching profession is not commonly perceived as attractive [1]. Teachers play a significant role in students' lives and are considered one of the most stressful professions [2], [3]. In Indonesia, the teaching profession faces many challenges such as a continuous change in technology that demands teachers to be adaptive and innovative in teaching [4], lack of professional development and training provided by the institution [5], limited resources in rural areas [6], and poor welfare, especially for non-governmental teachers [7] among other problems. These conditions can also be found in other countries, with teachers facing similar challenges [1], [8]. Specifically in Indonesia, being a teacher comes with many responsibilities, where they are expected to master basic competencies in the areas of pedagogical, personality, social, and professional. Teachers are also expected to fulfill academic qualifications on the subject level and join professional development programs such as training, organized by the government, institution, or themselves [7].

Considering the many challenges and responsibilities teachers face, it is no wonder that teacher well-being and the factors impacting it are a rising research topic in the field of education [9], [10]. The definition of teacher well-being is still unresolved and can be looked at from different perspectives, with the more recent conceptualizations identifying two categories, subjective and objective well-being [11]. Subjective well-being consists of three dimensions, satisfaction with life, the absence of negative affect, and the presence of positive affect. It involves factors such as happiness, emotion, engagement, purpose, and

competence [11], [12]. On the other hand, objective well-being refers to external resources of the individual, such as economic resources, political circumstances, health, and literacy [11], [13].

Well-being can also be referred to as psychological well-being, which focuses on the fulfillment of an individual's potential and functioning at an optimal level. Several studies on well-being also focus on the negative aspects of well-being, therefore analyzing constructs such as burnout, stress, and emotional exhaustion as well-being indicators [12], [14]. Teacher well-being can also be understood as diverse and fluid regarding to an individual, family, and community beliefs, values, experiences, culture, opportunities, and contexts across time and change [11]. There are several factors that can contribute to teacher well-being, such as resilience and self-efficacy, emotional intelligence, burnout, student misbehavior, and leadership [11], [15], [16].

Leaders play an important role in the workplace, including schools. Nowadays, principals play a more complex role, where they are expected to be leaders of students and teachers as well as being involved in many areas, such as academic performance, community, finance, or even public relations [17], [18]. Considering the important role of principals, research on leadership styles in educational institutions has proven to be a popular topic [19]–[21].

When talking about leadership styles, the most common styles that come to mind are transactional and transformational leadership [22]. Transactional leadership refers to leaders who motivate their employees by appealing to their self-interests with benefits. On the other hand, transformational leadership refers to a leadership style that appeals to the moral values of the employees in order to mobilize their energy and resources to reform institutions [23], [24]. Transformational leaders stimulate and inspire followers to achieve extraordinary outcomes and, in the process, develop their own leadership capacity. Transformational leaders help followers grow and develop into leaders by responding to individual followers' needs and empowering them as well as aligning the objectives and goals of the individual followers, the leader, the group, and the larger organization [25]. Transformational leadership comprises four components, idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. Idealized influence means that followers identify with their leaders and wish to follow in their footsteps, whereas leaders believe that their followers have extraordinary capabilities and determination. Inspirational motivation means that leaders motivate and inspire their followers by providing meaningful work and challenges, and intellectual stimulation is shown through leaders' behaviors that stimulate innovation and creativity in their followers by questioning assumptions, reframing problems, and approaching old problems with new alternatives. Lastly, individual consideration means that leaders pay attention to each follower's needs and act as a mentor by providing learning opportunities in a supportive climate [25], [26].

Transformational leadership and well-being are popular research topics in the field of education, with past research stating the positive impact transformational leadership has on teachers' well-being [26]–[29]. Despite being a popular topic, research on these areas in Indonesia is still limited, and reviews regarding this matter are still limited. Therefore, this review aims to summarize and explain the findings focusing on the difference of teacher well-being in schools where principals apply transformational leadership, teachers' perceptions of principals' transformational leadership, and the impact it has on enhancing teachers' well-being.

## 2. RESEARCH METHOD

This literature review aims to summarize the findings related to transformational leadership and teacher well-being in formal institutions. The search started in July 2022 until September 2022 to find as many relevant articles as possible. The electronic database used in this review included: Scopus, Science Direct, PsycInfo, World of Science (WoS) Journal, PubMed, SAGE Journals, and Education Resources Information Centre (ERIC). Garuda (Indonesian platform for scholarly publications managed by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology) was also used as an electronic database to gain insight into the trends of transformational leadership and teacher well-being in Indonesia. Search strings consisted of a combination of these terms: “teacher\* well-being” or “teacher\* subjective well-being” or “teacher\* psychological well-being” or “teacher\* emotional well-being” or “teacher\* occupational well-being” or “teacher\* life satisfaction” and “Transformational leadership\*” or “school leadership”. The terms were searched in title, keywords, and abstracts producing a first total of 100 articles.

Among those 100 articles, duplicates were removed and 98 articles remained were screened by reading the titles and abstracts. At this point, articles were assessed on whether they were on topic, empirical, or using languages other than English and Indonesian language. Following these criteria, 82 articles were excluded and 16 articles remained. For the next part of the process, 10 articles were assessed for eligibility with six being excluded for not including kindergarten to secondary teachers and not defining subjective and/or psychological well-being.

Chosen articles were those available in English and Indonesian language and were screened using the inclusion and exclusion criteria. Articles included in this review were research published between 2012 and 2022 to ensure the relevance of the studies. Research also included kindergarten to secondary teachers working in formal institutions and used primary data. We also selected peer-reviewed articles to ensure the scientific quality of the research. Articles also used quantitative, qualitative, and/or mixed methods research strategies. This review focuses on articles that defined well-being in terms of subjective and/or psychological well-being and not those focused on the negative aspects of well-being such as burnout. The summary of exclusion criteria and examples is presented in the Table 1. Furthermore, the review process followed the preferred reporting items for systematic reviews and meta-analyses (PRISMA) guidelines [30]. The PRISMA flow diagram for this systematic review can be seen in Figure 1.

Table 1. Summary of exclusion criteria and examples

No	Criterion	Description	Example
1	Not on topic	The article addresses another topic	[31]
2	Not empirical	The article is not reporting an empirical study	[32]
3	Does not measure teacher wellbeing in kindergarten to secondary teachers	Participants are faculty members or other educational staff	[33]
4	Papers are literature review, meta-analysis, report, and/or policy	Papers are secondary research	[32]
5	Paper does not define subjective and/or psychological well-being	Paper defines objective well-being	[34]
6	Paper measures negative aspects of well-being	Paper measures the negative aspects of well-being such as burnout and emotional exhaustion	
7	Papers are proceeding articles	Papers are not peer-reviewed	
8	Research uses experimental design	Research measures the cause and effect between variables	

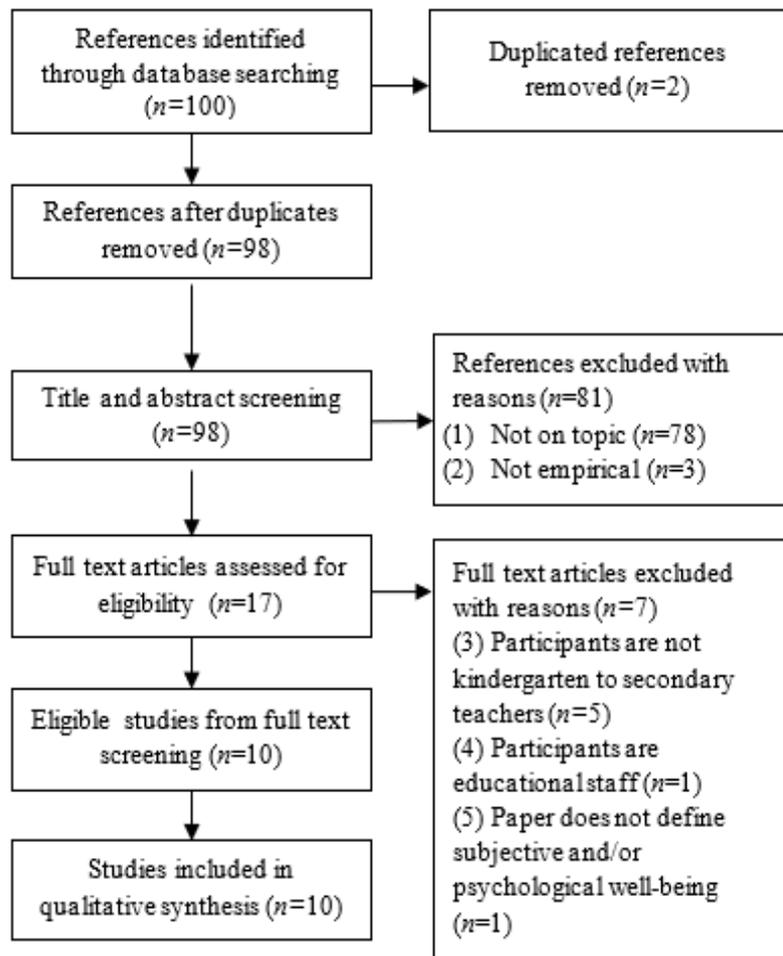


Figure 1. PRISMA flow diagram

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

There are 10 studies included in the qualitative synthesis. All studies were published in peer-reviewed journals between 2012 and 2021. The summary of studies being reviewed is presented in the Table 2. Studies were conducted in eight different countries, which were Indonesia ( $n=3$ ), Malaysia ( $n=2$ ), Israel ( $n=1$ ), Tanzania ( $n=1$ ), Greece ( $n=1$ ), Italy ( $n=1$ ), and the United States of America ( $n=1$ ). Studies were done in several school levels, kindergarten ( $n=1$ ), elementary ( $n=2$ ), junior high school ( $n=3$ ), and high school ( $n=4$ ). Studies were quantitative research studies with one being mixed methods [35]. Three studies measured both objective and subjective well-being, with aspects such as insurance, contingent rewards, and financial aid as part of the objective well-being [36]–[38]. Aspects such as the nature of work, communication, and relationships with colleagues and principals were defined as part of subjective well-being [36]–[38]. These definitions are in line with previous research regarding subjective and objective well-being [11]–[13]. One out of those studies used job satisfaction to measure well-being, from both objective and subjective perspectives [36]. When measuring subjective well-being, almost all studies used job satisfaction as its indicator. This showed that job satisfaction was still a popular indicator to measure subjective well-being. In sum, job satisfaction used in these studies referred to, a positive feeling that an individual feels and expressed for his or her job when he or she evaluates its characteristics and results based on the needs, incentives, values, or goals that he or she considers as important ([35] is example). However, there were no studies that defined well-being from a psychological well-being perspective, therefore analysis regarding the differences between these point of view are not present in this review.

Table 2. Summary of studies

Author (year)	Citation	Country	Sample size	Teacher well-being theory	School level
Mashudi (2017)	[37]	Indonesia	114	Objective and subjective Well-being	High school
Mulyo (2015)	[38]	Indonesia	88	Objective and subjective well-being	Junior high school
Wahab <i>et al.</i> (2014)	[39]	Malaysia	170	Subjective well-being (Job satisfaction)	Primary school
Halim <i>et al.</i> (2021)	[36]	Malaysia	400	Objective and subjective well-being (Job satisfaction)	Junior high school
Haj & Jubran (2016)	[28]	Israel	182	Subjective well-being (Job satisfaction)	Kindergarten and primary school
Nyenyembe <i>et al.</i> (2016)	[40]	Tanzania	180	Subjective well-being (Job satisfaction)	Junior high school
Kouni <i>et al.</i> (2018)	[35]	Greece	171	Subjective well-being (Job satisfaction)	Junior and high school
Kieres & Gutmore (2014)	[41]	United States of America	156	Subjective well-being (Job satisfaction)	High school
Sumaryanto (2012)	[42]	Indonesia	40	Subjective well-being	Junior high school
Barbieri <i>et al.</i> (2019)	[27]	Italy	6.491	Subjective well-being (Job satisfaction)	High school

Most studies used the term developed by Bass and Riggio [25], Maheshwari [26] when defining transformational leadership. Three studies used the definition developed by Bass and Riggio [25], which in general characterised transformational leaders as leaders who inspire, motivate, and build a personal relationship with employees to enhance change in the organization [36], [41]. Some studies [34], [35], [38], [39] used different definitions to explain transformational leadership, but still similar to the definitions and aspects as Bass and Riggio defined. One study by Sumaryanto [42] defined transformational leadership as a process to inspire change and empower followers to achieve greater heights, improve themselves, and improve organization processes. Studies in Indonesia used more ambiguous explanations to define transformational leadership. A study by Mashudi [37] used a more general term regarding leadership, which was an employee's evaluation regarding their leaders' leadership style in affecting employees' to promote change in the organization. Other studies conducted in Indonesia did not properly define transformational leadership, with leadership only being mentioned as one of the external factors that impacted teacher well-being. This showed that research regarding transformational leadership was quite consistent in defining the concept.

Three studies used multifactor leadership questionnaire (MLQ) to measure transformational leadership [36], [41], which is the leading instrument in assessing leadership [43]. Two studies used the short form consisting of 20 items [36], [41] and one study used the full version consisting of 45 items with seven subscales [40]. Other studies used self-developed questionnaires. There were several scales used to measure

teacher well-being, specifically regarding job satisfaction. Some of the scales used were jobs satisfaction scales which included 35 items [36] and Minnesota satisfaction questionnaire [41]. A study Barbieri *et al.* [27] used the data collected by programme for international student assessment or PISA and used item response theory to measure the variables. Most studies conducted in Indonesia did not properly define teacher well-being and transformational leadership. Some of the scales used were self-developed questionnaires without clear reporting of their validity and reliability [28], [35], [37], [38], [42].

As shown in Table 2, 10 studies regarding teacher well-being and transformational leadership were collected and reviewed. The main finding of the studies showed that there is a positive significant impact of transformational leadership on teacher well-being, with one study stating otherwise [42]. The study showed that although transformational leadership is positively correlated to teacher well-being, the effect it has is not significant. Despite one study stating otherwise, it can be concluded that research findings regarding transformational leadership and teacher well-being are consistent. This is line with previous research stating that transformational leadership has a positive impact on teacher well-being [26], [29]. Other than that, Kouni *et al.* [35] showed no difference of teachers' well-being in primary and secondary schools. One study by Kieres and Gutmore [41] highlighted idealized influence and individualized consideration as two aspects of transformational leadership that have more power in influencing teachers' well-being. Other studies didn't highlight a specific aspect of transformational leadership that increased teacher well-being, but teachers perceived actions that involved investment in personal development, availability of resources [27], implementation of policies [37], recognizing each individual's potential [38], [40] charisma, leaders who are able to stimulate intellectually, give contingent rewards [40], and motivating [35] as some characteristics shown by transformational leaders. Therefore, these characteristics can be applied by principals in their respective schools to increase teacher well-being. It is also important to note that these are the actions that teacher's perceived as transformational leaders. It is worth noting that principals' and teachers' perception of transformational leadership can be different [44]. All studies measured teacher well-being as a dependent variable, except for one study that measured it as a mediator between transformational leadership and organizational commitment [36]. A unique finding was found regarding leadership styles, which stated transactional and transformational leadership as a continuum in which leaders must undergo transactional leadership first before transformational leadership for initiating change [40].

Besides the main findings, it is also important to note several relevant findings from the studies to understand transformational leadership and teacher well-being better. One study stated that teacher well-being had a positive impact on teachers' motivation and teacher performance [37], but this was not consistent with another study that stated teacher well-being had no significant effect on teacher performance. There were also some factors that affect teacher well-being, such as their experience, organizational aspects, and school practices as well as policies [38]. However, one study stated that there was no significant difference in transformational leadership's impact on job satisfaction based on teachers' years of experience [35]. Additional findings like these should not be overlooked and can be interesting to include in further research on teacher well-being and transformational leadership. The studies did not compare teacher well-being in schools where principals practice transformational leadership and those who did not. Therefore, analysis regarding this data is not present.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Although transformational leadership and teacher well-being are popular research topics in the field of education, studies measuring the impact of transformational leadership on teacher well-being are still limited. Most studies agreed that transformational leadership is a significant practice to enhance teacher well-being in schools. Teacher well-being was also seen to have a positive impact on other aspects, such as teacher motivation and performance. An interesting result was found in one of the studies that proposed leadership styles as a continuum, with transactional leadership being practiced before transformational leadership to enable change in the organization. Although some research did not report proper scales to measure the variables, the results were still beneficial to see the trends of transformational leadership and teacher well-being across the world and understand its impact. Other than that, there were some behaviours that teachers perceived as transformational leadership. Principals can learn to apply these behaviours in their respective institutions.

There are a few limitations regarding this review. Although several databases were used in this review, the results showed limited research to be analysed. Results regarding the studies in Indonesia also have limited findings and some used self-developed scales without proper reports of validity and reliability. This made the findings less credible than other articles in this review. This review concludes that transformational leadership practice can increase teacher well-being. However, it is worth mentioning that transformational leadership is comprised of several aspects. Research regarding the efficiency of each aspect can be interesting to study in the future.

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