



ISSN 2964-3902 (Online)

SUJANA: Journal of Education and Learning Review

<https://journal.jfpublisher.com/index.php/sujana>

Vol. 5, Issue. 4, (2026)

doi.org/10.56943/sujana.v5i4.1046

Teacher Performance in a Frontier Region: Principal Leadership, School Climate, and Organizational Culture in Paniai, Papua

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the effects of principal leadership, school climate, and organizational culture on teacher performance at state senior high schools in Paniai Regency, Papua Province. A quantitative approach with an ex post facto design was employed. The population consisted of 160 students at four state senior high schools, who provided their perceptions of principal leadership, school climate, organizational culture, and teacher performance. A sample of 62 respondents was determined using proportional stratified random sampling based on the Slovin formula. Data were collected through a Likert-scale questionnaire that had satisfied tests of validity and reliability, and were analyzed using simple and multiple linear regression. The results showed that principal leadership had a positive and significant effect on teacher performance, contributing 7.4 percent; school climate exerted the strongest effect, contributing 26.0 percent; and organizational culture had a positive and significant effect, contributing 8.4 percent. Collectively, the three variables exerted a positive and significant influence on teacher performance, accounting for 40.3 percent of the variance. These findings indicate that strengthening principal leadership, fostering a conducive school climate, and reinforcing organizational culture constitute important strategies for improving teacher performance, particularly in schools situated in geographically and socioculturally distinct regions such as Paniai Regency.

Keywords: Organizational Culture, Principal Leadership, School Climate, Teacher Performance

INTRODUCTION

A high-performing education system constitutes one of the principal drivers of human resource development and national progress (Han et al., 2026; Huang et al., 2023). This position is affirmed by Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, which frames education as a strategic instrument for cultivating learners' competence, moral integrity, and social responsibility. Within this system, teachers occupy a central role as the frontline actors responsible for translating educational policy into classroom practice, which makes the improvement of teacher performance a fundamental condition for achieving educational quality (Mbabazi et al., 2025; Qingyan et al., 2023).

Teacher performance can be defined as the level of achievement demonstrated by an educator in carrying out professional duties within a specified period (Vebriani et al., 2022). This achievement is shaped by the interaction of several managerial and organizational factors. According to the foundational theory advanced by Pianda (2018), visionary and communicative principal leadership functions as a primary catalyst for mobilizing school resources toward institutional goals. This proposition is reinforced by evidence on the roles of a supportive school climate and a firmly internalized organizational culture, both of which guide collective behavior toward institutional objectives. Selfiati et al. (2021) found that principal leadership and organizational culture significantly influenced teacher performance, positioning both as essential components of a productive work environment. Leaders characterized by empathy, attentiveness, and a service-oriented disposition have similarly been found to strengthen work support, psychological safety, and teacher commitment (Harahap et al., 2023; Mataputun & Tijow, 2025).

With respect to leadership specifically, several studies have established that principals play a strategic role in improving teacher performance through managerial oversight, instructional supervision, and the cultivation of work motivation (Alhabsyi et al., 2022; Setiyadi & Rosalina, 2021). Parveen et al. (2022) demonstrated that effective principal leadership styles were positively associated with teacher job performance, with leadership approaches that combined clear direction and support for professional growth producing measurable gains in instructional effectiveness. Principal leadership has likewise been shown to exert a direct effect on teacher performance across educational levels, including primary and secondary schools (Yunus et al., 2021). Collectively, these findings indicate that the quality of leadership remains a key determinant of optimal teacher performance.

Organizational culture plays an equally significant role in shaping individual behavior and performance within schools. A strong organizational culture establishes values, norms, and work habits that promote collaboration and professional responsibility (Hasibuan & Hadijaya, 2024). Effective implementation

of organizational culture has been found to improve teacher performance by fostering a more harmonious and productive working environment, and the interaction between principal leadership and organizational culture has been shown to produce a stronger combined effect on teacher performance than either factor operating in isolation (Afrida & Fitri, 2022).

Numerous empirical studies have further substantiated the relevance of these variables. Mailizar et al. (2024) in a study of private vocational school teachers in Depok, found that strengthening transformational leadership together with organizational culture, empowerment, and pedagogical competence functioned as effective strategies for improving teacher performance. In a related study, Hidayat et al. (2024) reported that organizational climate, transformational leadership, work motivation, and growth mindset jointly contributed to improved teacher job performance among private junior high school teachers in Depok City, underscoring the consistency of these organizational determinants across school settings. Complementing these findings, Bellibaş et al. (2021) demonstrated, using cross-national TALIS data, that principal instructional leadership exerted a significant direct effect on instructional quality, while its influence on other dimensions of teacher practice operated indirectly through teacher collaboration and job satisfaction. Ansyary (2021) similarly identified leadership and organizational culture as significant determinant factors within educational institutions, while Gasmadia et al. (2022) confirmed that leadership, work motivation, organizational culture, and school climate collectively exerted a significant influence on teacher performance in elementary schools.

However, preliminary observations conducted at several state senior high schools in Paniai Regency revealed a discrepancy between these theoretical expectations and actual conditions in the field. Teacher performance in this setting continues to face considerable professional challenges, a condition presumed to stem from principal leadership styles that have not yet fully embraced participatory management, a work climate that does not consistently support productivity, and limited cohesion within the schools' organizational culture. This gap between the findings of prior research and the anomalous conditions observed in Paniai underscores the need for a more context-specific investigation.

Building on this background, the present study seeks to examine the effects of principal leadership, school climate, and organizational culture on teacher performance at state senior high schools in Paniai Regency, Papua Province. The findings are expected to contribute theoretically to the field of educational management and practically to the formulation of policy directed at improving educational quality in regions characterized by distinct geographical and sociocultural conditions.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed a quantitative approach using the ex post facto method to examine the effects of principal leadership (X1), school climate (X2), and organizational culture (X3) on teacher performance (Y) (Creswell & Creswell, 2022). The research was conducted at four state senior high schools in Paniai Regency (SMAN 1, SMAN 2, SMAN 3, and SMAN 4). The study population consisted of 160 students enrolled at these schools, who served as respondents providing their perceptions of principal leadership, school climate, organizational culture, and the performance of their teachers. The sample was determined through proportional stratified random sampling based on the Slovin formula, applying a margin of error of 10 percent, which yielded 62 respondents (Sugiyono, 2022).

Data were collected using a closed-ended questionnaire based on a five-point Likert scale (1 to 5). The research instrument was tested for validity using the Product Moment correlation and for reliability using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, applying a criterion of $\alpha > 0.60$ (Arikunto, 2010). Several items were identified as invalid during instrument testing and were subsequently removed from the questionnaire. The results of this testing are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1 Results of Instrument Validity and Reliability Testing

Variable	Number of Items	Invalid	Valid	Cronbach's Alpha	Remarks
Principal Leadership (X1)	49	4	45	0.972	Reliable
School Climate (X2)	45	1	44	0.955	Reliable
Organizational Culture (X3)	48	4	44	0.987	Reliable
Teacher Performance (Y)	67	0	67	0.974	Reliable

Source: Processed by the researchers (2026)

As shown in Table 1, all four variables achieved Cronbach's Alpha coefficients well above 0.60, indicating a high level of internal consistency for the retained items. It should be noted, however, that alpha values approaching or exceeding 0.95, as observed for Organizational Culture ($\alpha = 0.987$) and Teacher Performance ($\alpha = 0.974$) in this study, can also signal item redundancy rather than a purely favorable measurement property, since coefficient alpha increases mechanically with both the number of items and the degree of inter-item correlation (Zakariya, 2022). Future refinements of this instrument would therefore benefit from an inter-item correlation or exploratory factor analysis to identify and reduce overlapping items, rather than relying on Cronbach's Alpha as the sole indicator of instrument quality.

A related consideration concerns the overall length of the instrument. Even after the removal of invalid items, the four constructs retained a combined total of 200 items (45 for Principal Leadership, 44 for School Climate, 44 for Organizational Culture, and 67 for Teacher Performance), administered to a sample of 62 respondents, an item-to-respondent ratio of approximately 3:1. Instruments of this length carry a documented risk of respondent fatigue, which can compromise data quality through inattentive or patterned responding, particularly toward the later sections of a questionnaire (Jeong et al., 2023). This limitation is acknowledged here and is revisited in the Limitations section; future applications of this instrument are encouraged to consider item reduction through factor analysis or split-form administration to mitigate this risk.

Subsequently, data analysis was conducted using SPSS 25.0 through several stages of classical assumption testing, including normality testing, multicollinearity testing (tolerance value greater than 0.10 and VIF value less than 10), and heteroscedasticity testing (Ghozali, 2021). This was followed by simple linear regression analysis to examine the partial effect of each independent variable and multiple linear regression analysis to examine the simultaneous effect of all three independent variables together. Hypothesis testing was conducted using the t-test for partial effects and the F-test for simultaneous effects, both at a significance level of 5 percent ($\alpha = 0.05$) (Sugiyono, 2022). The coefficient of determination (R^2) was used to measure the proportion of variance in teacher performance explained by the independent variables. It should be clarified that the individual R^2 contribution reported for each predictor in Table 2 derives from its respective simple linear regression, rather than from a partial decomposition of the combined multiple regression model; this is why these values are not expected to sum to the total R^2 of 0.403 reported in Table 3, and a corresponding table note will be added when we revise the Results section.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the statistical findings of the study, beginning with the partial and simultaneous hypothesis testing, followed by a discussion of each variable's contribution to teacher performance. The analysis proceeds in two stages consistent with the methodology described earlier: partial testing through simple linear regression to assess the individual effect of each independent variable, and simultaneous testing through multiple linear regression to assess the combined effect of principal leadership, school climate, and organizational culture. Both stages were evaluated at a significance level of 5 percent ($\alpha = 0.05$), with hypotheses accepted when the calculated t-value or F-value exceeded its respective critical table value and the significance level fell below 0.05.

Partial Effects of Principal Leadership, School Climate, and Organizational Culture

To examine the partial effect of each independent variable on teacher performance, hypothesis testing was conducted using the t-test, comparing the calculated t-value for each predictor against the critical t-table value of 2.0017 at 60 degrees of freedom. This procedure allows each of the three independent variables, principal leadership, school climate, and organizational culture, to be evaluated individually for its statistical association with teacher performance, independent of the other two predictors. The results of this partial testing are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2 Results of Partial Hypothesis Testing (t-test)

Independent Variable	t-Count	t-Table	Sig.	R Square (Contribution)	Beta Coefficient	Result
Principal Leadership (X1)	2.195	2.0017	0.032	0.074	0.273	Significant
School Climate (X2)	4.596	2.0017	0.000	0.260	0.510	Significant
Organizational Culture (X3)	2.349	2.0017	0.000	0.084	0.290	Significant

Note: The R Square (Contribution) values represent the coefficient of determination obtained from separate simple linear regressions for each predictor and therefore do not sum to the total R^2 reported in Table 3; they should not be interpreted as partial contributions within the combined multiple regression model.

Source: Processed by the researchers (2026)

As shown in Table 2, all three independent variables produced t-count values greater than the t-table value of 2.0017, with significance values below 0.05, indicating that each variable exerted a positive and statistically significant partial effect on teacher performance. School climate recorded the highest t-value and beta coefficient among the three predictors, followed by organizational culture and then principal leadership, suggesting that the strength of association with teacher performance varies considerably across these organizational factors even though all three reached statistical significance. These partial results establish the foundation for the subsequent simultaneous analysis, which examines whether the three variables continue to exert a significant effect when considered jointly rather than in isolation.

Simultaneous Effects of the Three Independent Variables

Beyond the partial effects reported above, it is also important to determine whether principal leadership, school climate, and organizational culture jointly account for a significant proportion of the variance in teacher performance when

analyzed together. This simultaneous relationship was tested using multiple linear regression analysis with the F-test, comparing the calculated F-value against the critical F-table value at a significance level of 0.05. This step addresses a question distinct from the partial testing above, namely whether the combined explanatory power of the three predictors exceeds what would be expected by chance. The results of this simultaneous testing are presented in Table 3.

Table 3 Results of Simultaneous Hypothesis Testing (F-test)

Model	F-Count	F-Table	Sig.	R Square (Total)	Result
Combined (X1, X2, X3)	13.041	2.763	0.000	0.403	Significant

Source: Processed by the researchers (2026)

The F-test indicated that principal leadership, school climate, and organizational culture collectively exerted a significant effect on teacher performance, with an F-count of 13.041 well above the F-table value of 2.763 and a significance value below 0.05. The coefficient of determination of 0.403 indicates that 40.3 percent of the variance in teacher performance can be explained jointly by the three independent variables included in this research model, while the remaining 59.7 percent is attributable to factors outside the scope of the model. This result confirms that the three organizational factors, although differing in their individual strength as shown in Table 2, function as a coherent and statistically robust predictive model when considered together, providing the empirical basis for the variable-by-variable discussion that follows.

Principal Leadership and Teacher Performance

Principal leadership had a positive and significant effect on teacher performance, contributing 7.4 percent, with a t-value of 2.195 (greater than the t-table value of 2.0017) and a significance level of 0.032 ($p < 0.05$). The beta coefficient of 0.273 indicated that more effective principal leadership was associated with higher teacher performance in executing professional duties. This finding confirms that principals function not merely as administrators but as instructional leaders capable of directing, motivating, mentoring, and evaluating teacher performance. Through effective leadership, principals can establish a shared vision, enhance work motivation, strengthen professional commitment, and encourage teachers to develop their competencies in response to the demands of educational change (He et al., 2024). This finding is consistent with Noorsanti et al. (2023), who described leadership as the capacity to mobilize organizational resources toward shared goals through influence, empowerment, and effective decision-making. It also aligns with recent evidence that principal instructional leadership shapes the psychological safety of the school environment, which in turn

functions as a critical mechanism supporting teachers' collaborative and innovative practice (Li & Zhang, 2026).

This finding also reinforces prior research demonstrating that principal leadership is among the primary determinants of school success. Agustin et al. (2023) found that principal leadership style had a positive and significant effect on teacher performance, both directly and through its support for school organizational culture. Leithwood et al. (2020) similarly affirmed that school leadership makes a significant contribution to improving the quality of learning through the development of teacher capacity, the cultivation of a collaborative culture, and the strengthening of organizational commitment. Within contemporary educational leadership scholarship, principal effectiveness is no longer measured solely by administrative competence but by the ability to build a learning environment centered on teacher quality, innovation, and student success.

Within the context of Paniai Regency, principal leadership exhibits characteristics distinct from those observed in urban schools. Difficult geographical terrain, limited educational infrastructure, uneven access to transportation, and the sociocultural diversity of the community require principals to possess adaptive, contextual, and participatory leadership capabilities. Principals function not only as organizational leaders but also as social mediators who build harmonious relationships with teachers, parents, traditional leaders, religious figures, and the surrounding community. A leadership approach grounded in deliberation, respect for local Papuan values, and inclusive communication constitutes an important foundation for building trust and strengthening community support for education. The effectiveness of principal leadership in Paniai is therefore determined not only by managerial competence but also by the ability to understand the local cultural context and to empower stakeholders as strategic partners in improving educational quality.

Although the contribution of principal leadership to teacher performance in this study was 7.4 percent, this figure indicates that leadership remains an important factor operating in synergy with school climate and organizational culture. This suggests that improving teacher performance requires leadership that fosters collaboration, strengthens work culture, and creates a conducive school climate simultaneously. The OECD (2024) affirmed that schools led by principals who empower teachers, support continuous professional development, and cultivate a collaborative culture tend to achieve higher learning quality than schools oriented primarily toward administrative leadership. Capacity development for principals in Paniai Regency should therefore be directed toward strengthening transformational leadership competencies, instructional leadership, change management skills, and sensitivity to the local sociocultural context.

School Climate and Teacher Performance

School climate was the variable with the most dominant effect on teacher performance, contributing 26.0 percent, with a t-value of 4.596 ($p < 0.001$) and a beta coefficient of 0.510. This finding indicates that the more positively teachers perceive the school climate, the higher the performance they demonstrate in carrying out their professional duties. A conducive school climate reflects the quality of interpersonal communication within the school organization, a sense of safety, open communication, support from school leadership, and a shared atmosphere that provides opportunities for the entire school community to engage in the teaching and learning process (Mataputun, 2026). This perspective is consistent with School Climate theory, which posits that a positive work environment enhances intrinsic motivation, organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and teacher effectiveness. Mustanida et al. (2024) explained that a healthy school climate builds mutual trust, open communication, and collective commitment among school members, thereby motivating teachers to work professionally and to focus on improving learning quality. This finding is further supported by Wang and Degol (2016), who identified school climate as one of the most consistent predictors of teacher effectiveness, functioning as a psychological environment that supports work engagement, wellbeing, and teaching quality.

Within the context of Paniai Regency, the strong influence of school climate on teacher performance suggests that harmonious social relationships play a strategic role in sustaining the educational process amid various limitations. Although schools continue to face challenges related to limited facilities, restricted access to technology, and difficult geographical conditions, teachers continue to demonstrate strong work motivation through a culture of mutual assistance, the sharing of teaching experiences, and solidarity among colleagues. This sense of togetherness constitutes a form of social capital that strengthens the resilience of the school organization. According to Leithwood et al. (2020), schools with higher levels of trust, collaboration, and professional support tend to produce teachers with greater commitment, creativity, and effectiveness than schools relying solely on structural or administrative mechanisms. Accordingly, the social capital cultivated through a positive school climate can serve as a vital organizational resource, particularly for schools located in underdeveloped, frontier, and outermost (3T) regions such as Paniai Regency.

This finding further reinforces the view that improving educational quality cannot be achieved through the provision of physical facilities alone but must be accompanied by the cultivation of a healthy, inclusive, and collaborative organizational climate. A positive school climate allows teachers to feel valued, to receive emotional and professional support, and to have space for innovation in teaching, thereby enhancing work engagement, job satisfaction, and commitment to school goals. Principals should therefore prioritize strategies that strengthen a collaborative culture, promote participatory communication, recognize teacher

performance, and establish professional learning communities as part of broader efforts to build a sustainable school climate. This recommendation is consistent with the OECD (2024) study, which affirmed that schools with a positive organizational climate and strong interpersonal relationships are better positioned to improve teacher quality while producing effective and sustainable learning outcomes.

Organizational Culture and Teacher Performance

Organizational culture had a positive and significant effect on teacher performance, contributing 8.4 percent, with a t-value of 2.349 ($p < 0.001$) and a beta coefficient of 0.290. Although the magnitude of this effect was smaller than that of principal leadership and school climate, the finding confirms that organizational culture remains a strategic factor shaping teachers' work behavior. Organizational culture is understood as a system of shared values, beliefs, norms, and habits that guides all members of the school community in carrying out their duties and achieving educational goals. When organizational values are consistently internalized, teachers tend to develop a more professional work orientation, higher commitment, and stronger responsibility toward the quality of learning. This finding is consistent with Farwitawati et al. (2022), who concluded that organizational culture, together with principal leadership, exerts a significant influence on improving teacher performance. The strengthening of organizational culture through effective leadership can foster productive work behavior, enhance teacher loyalty, and reinforce the achievement of school goals.

Within the context of schools in Paniai Regency, organizational culture develops through a blend of professional educational values and the local wisdom of the Papuan community, which upholds togetherness, mutual cooperation, respect, and social responsibility. These values are reflected in familial working relationships, mutual assistance in completing school tasks, and collaboration among teachers in supporting the learning process. This perspective aligns with Schein and Schein (2016) theory of organizational culture, which explains that organizational culture is formed through basic assumptions, shared values, and practices that are continuously transmitted, thereby becoming a guide for members' behavior. Within a school environment, a strong culture can foster a sense of belonging, enhance trust among teachers, and strengthen commitment to a shared vision. Despite facing resource limitations and geographical challenges, schools with an organizational culture rooted in local values possess a form of social capital capable of maintaining organizational stability while supporting improved teacher performance.

Nevertheless, the contribution of organizational culture to teacher performance remains relatively lower than that of school climate and principal leadership. This suggests that the internalization of organizational culture in schools within Paniai Regency still requires more systematic reinforcement through

exemplary leadership, the cultivation of professional work values, recognition of positive behavior, and the development of professional learning communities. The OECD (2024) affirmed that schools that succeed in building a collaborative culture, sustaining continuous learning, and providing supportive leadership are better able to improve teacher quality and organizational effectiveness.

Combined Effects of Principal Leadership, School Climate, and Organizational Culture

Simultaneously, principal leadership, school climate, and organizational culture collectively contributed 40.3 percent to teacher performance ($F = 13.041$; $p < 0.001$). This finding suggests that improved teacher performance results from the interaction of multiple mutually reinforcing organizational factors rather than from any single variable operating independently. Effective leadership functions as a primary driver in building a collaborative school climate and a productive work culture, thereby providing teachers with opportunities to enhance professionalism, share teaching practices, and strengthen commitment to school goals. Yada and Savolainen (2023) affirmed that the effectiveness of principal leadership influences the development of teacher capacity through the cultivation of a positive school climate, which in turn strengthens collective teacher efficacy.

The contribution of 40.3 percent also indicates that nearly half of the variance in teacher performance can be explained by the synergy among leadership, school climate, and work culture, while the remaining 59.7 percent is influenced by factors beyond the scope of this research model, such as intrinsic motivation, teacher welfare or income, professional competence, information technology support, and individual or social-environmental characteristics of the school. This condition is particularly relevant to schools in Paniai Regency, which continue to face limitations in educational infrastructure, technological access, and equitable distribution of human resources. Improving teacher performance therefore requires a systemic approach that focuses not only on strengthening principal leadership but also on enhancing teacher welfare, developing digital competence, and fostering an organizational culture that is adaptive to change. This finding is supported by the meta-analysis of Çoğaltay and Boz (2023), who concluded that school leadership exerts a strong influence on collective teacher efficacy and learning outcomes when supported by a healthy organizational culture, and by the systematic review of Javornik and Mirazchiyski (2023), which identified leadership, school climate, organizational culture, and teacher quality as key determinants of school effectiveness.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that principal leadership, school climate, and organizational culture are organizational factors that exert a positive and significant effect on teacher performance at state senior high schools in Paniai

Regency. Among the three variables, school climate provided the largest contribution (26.0 percent), followed by organizational culture (8.4 percent) and principal leadership (7.4 percent), with the three variables collectively explaining 40.3 percent of the variance in teacher performance. These findings indicate that improving teacher performance depends not only on the quality of principal leadership but also on the establishment of a conducive school climate and an organizational culture that supports collaboration, professionalism, and shared values, particularly within a geographically and socioculturally distinct region such as Paniai.

In practical terms, these findings carry implications for principals, education authorities, and policymakers to prioritize the development of leadership that is adaptive, participatory, and oriented toward teacher empowerment. Efforts to create a safe, inclusive, and collaborative school climate, together with the strengthening of an organizational culture that integrates professional values with local Papuan wisdom, should form part of broader strategies for improving educational quality. An integrated intervention across these three dimensions has the potential to sustainably improve the quality of learning and teacher performance, particularly in schools situated in regions with challenging geographical and social conditions.

This study is subject to several limitations that should inform its interpretation and guide future research. First, the sample was confined to students at state senior high schools in Paniai Regency, and generalization of the findings to other educational levels, respondent groups, or regions should be undertaken with caution. Second, the ex post facto design, while suitable for establishing statistical association, does not permit an in-depth explanation of the underlying mechanisms connecting principal leadership, school climate, and organizational culture to teacher performance; mixed-methods or longitudinal designs would be better suited to that purpose. Third, the length of the research instrument relative to the sample size raises a documented risk of respondent fatigue, as discussed in the Methodology section, and future applications of this instrument would benefit from item reduction through factor analysis. Fourth, 59.7 percent of the variance in teacher performance remains attributable to factors beyond the scope of this research model, such as work motivation, professional competence, welfare, organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and the availability of facilities and infrastructure. Future research is therefore encouraged to develop a more comprehensive model incorporating these variables and to extend data collection across other educational levels and underdeveloped, frontier, and outermost (3T) regions in Papua, in order to test the consistency of these findings and strengthen their external validity.

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