



TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND ITS IMPACT ON TEACHERS' PERFORMANCE AT SELECTED RURAL ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS OF SULU

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ABSTRACT

This study addresses the gap in localized research on transformational leadership within rural island schools by examining its impact on teacher performance in selected elementary schools in Sulu, Philippines. Employing a descriptive-correlational design, data were collected from 96 school heads and teachers using adapted and validated questionnaires measuring four dimensions of transformational leadership—Idealized Influence, Inspirational Motivation, Intellectual Stimulation, and Individualized Consideration—and teacher performance across instructional and professional domains. Data analysis, using SPSS, involved descriptive statistics and simple regression, revealing very high levels of transformational leadership, particularly in intellectual stimulation and idealized influence, alongside very satisfactory teacher performance despite contextual challenges such as limited resources and geographic isolation. Regression results indicated a significant positive impact of transformational leadership on teacher performance ($R^2 = 0.424$, $p = 0.002$), with Idealized Influence as the strongest predictor ($p = 0.011$). Additionally, perceptions of leadership and performance varied significantly across schools, gender, position, and length of service, but not age. These findings underscore the critical role of context-responsive transformational leadership in sustaining educational quality in underserved rural settings and highlight intrinsic teacher motivation as a key factor in maintaining high performance. The study contributes to educational leadership theory by emphasizing the importance of culturally aligned, adaptive leadership models in marginalized contexts. It provides empirical evidence to inform policies that support leadership development and teacher recognition tailored to the unique challenges of rural education in Sulu.

Keywords: *Transformational Leadership, Teacher Performance, Rural Education, Context-Responsive Leadership, Educational Leadership in Sulu*

INTRODUCTION

Effective leadership is globally acknowledged as a pivotal determinant of educational quality and student achievement. Transformational Leadership Theory, as articulated by Bass and Avolio, provides a robust framework for understanding how leaders can inspire and elevate organizational performance through the Four I is: Idealized Influence, where leaders serve as role models fostering trust and respect; Inspirational Motivation, which involves articulating a compelling vision that energizes followers; Intellectual Stimulation, encouraging innovation and critical thinking; and Individualized Consideration, attending to the unique needs and development of each member (Chkheidze, 2025). The enduring significance of leadership is underscored, identifying it as the second most impactful element in enhancing schools during the post-pandemic recovery phase, thereby reaffirming its crucial role in educational reform and resilience (Karimi, 2023).

Within the Philippine educational context, recent studies from 2021 to 2025 highlight the transformative impact of leadership on teacher collaboration and school effectiveness. The findings demonstrate a positive correlation between transformational leadership practices and enhanced teacher collaboration in public schools, both of which are essential for fostering a supportive professional community (Ramos, 2025). In addition, contends that visionary leadership is essential for managing the complexities of the 'new normal,' which is characterized by administrative challenges and evolving pedagogical requirements within the Department of Education (Liyustari & Yunera, 2025). These insights position transformational leadership as a key factor in maintaining educational advancement amid ongoing systemic transitions.

Focusing on the Sulu archipelago, the educational landscape is shaped by unique geographical, infrastructural, and cultural factors. The region's isolation, limited access to resources, and the rich cultural heritage of the Tausūg people present distinctive challenges for school leadership. It highlights the imperative of 'context-responsive' leadership within rural environments, where school leaders are required to serve not only as administrators but also as emotional supports and mediators of limited resources (Wortman, 2022).

Hence, teacher performance in rural Sulu transcends conventional pedagogical concerns, encompassing resilience and sustained motivation amid adversity. Transformational leadership components, particularly Individualized Consideration and Inspirational Motivation, empower teachers to maintain commitment and effectiveness despite resource scarcity and contextual hardships (Lamcja, 2024). Recent literature from 2024 to 2025 highlights that transformational leaders catalyze 'motivational performance' by fostering environments of trust, shared purpose, and professional growth, which are

critical for sustaining teacher morale and educational quality in remote settings (Lamcja, 2024).

Despite the extensive theoretical and empirical work on transformational leadership, there remains a notable gap in localized research focusing on rural island schools in Sulu. Empirical data specific to this context is scarce, limiting the development of tailored leadership frameworks that address the region's unique challenges. This study aims to fill this gap by investigating the impact of transformational leadership on teachers' performance in selected rural elementary schools of Sulu, to establish a leadership model that supports teacher excellence and sustainable educational development in one of the Philippines' most distinctive and underserved educational frontiers.

Research Questions

This research examined the impact of transformational leadership on teacher performance in selected rural elementary schools of Sulu. It began from a simple premise: teacher effectiveness in rural schools depended not only on resources or training but also on the quality of leadership that framed teachers' work.

Specifically, the study asked:

1. What is the level of transformational leadership styles exhibited by school heads of selected elementary schools in Sulu?
2. What is the level of teachers' performance in these schools?
3. Is there a significant impact of transformational leadership styles on the teachers' performance?
4. Is there a significant difference in the perceived transformational leadership styles and teachers' performance when the data are grouped according to the profile of respondents?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive-correlational design, a method widely used in social science and education research to determine whether and how two variables are related. In this case, the study sought to describe the current level of transformational leadership among school heads and the corresponding level of teacher performance in their schools, then determine whether a significant relationship exists between the two.

The descriptive part of the design allowed the researcher to capture and summarize the characteristics of both leadership and teacher performance as they naturally occur in the schools. It did not manipulate or control any variable but instead painted a clear picture of what was happening on the ground. Meanwhile, the correlational

aspect of the design examined the degree of association between the variables. In simpler terms, it asked: “Do teachers tend to perform better when their school heads exhibit stronger transformational leadership qualities?”

This design was selected because it fits the practical realities of educational settings in Sulu. Manipulating variables in a controlled experiment would not be feasible or ethical in actual schools. A descriptive-correlational approach, on the other hand, allows for observation of real-life conditions, giving the results both validity and relevance.

Research Locale

The study was conducted in selected rural public elementary schools in the province of Sulu, one of the island provinces in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM). Sulu is composed of several municipalities scattered across islands, and travel between these areas often involves boats and rough terrain. The unique geography of Sulu makes it a particularly valuable setting for examining the leadership-teacher relationship.

Schools in rural Sulu often face challenges distinct from those in urban areas—limited facilities, a scarcity of instructional materials, delayed resource delivery, and difficulties in attracting and retaining qualified teachers. However, these schools are also strong centers of community life and culture. School heads often act not only as administrators but also as community leaders who bridge educational goals with local realities.

By focusing on rural elementary schools in Sulu, this study captured a realistic picture of leadership and teaching in conditions of resource constraints, where the commitment to education remains strong. Understanding how transformational leadership operates under such conditions provides practical insights for improving education in similarly situated communities across the country.

Population and Sampling Procedure

The population for this study consisted of school heads and elementary teachers working in selected rural schools in Sulu. To ensure the quality and relevance of the responses, the study used purposive sampling—a non-probability sampling technique in which participants are selected based on specific characteristics relevant to the research objectives.

The inclusion criteria for participants were clear: school heads who were actively managing their schools at the time of the study and teachers with at least 1 year of teaching experience at their current school. The one-year threshold ensured that participants had sufficient exposure to their school heads' leadership styles and could provide reliable feedback.

From a total estimated population of 250 teachers across the selected schools, a target sample size of 154 teachers was determined using Slovin's formula with a 5% margin of error ($e = 0.05$). This formula yielded a sufficient number of participants to ensure the reliability of the findings while considering accessibility and consent.

School heads from the same schools were likewise included to provide complementary perspectives on leadership practices. Their insights added depth to the analysis by aligning teacher perceptions with leaders' self-assessments. The combination of teacher and school head responses allowed the study to triangulate findings and draw more grounded conclusions.

Table 3.1 shows the percent distribution of the respondents. The majority of the respondents are from Akuk Sangkula Elementary School, followed by Datu Bahjin Central School, Bilaan Central School, Camp Andres Central School, Pasil Elementary School, and the lowest is from Latih Elementary School. In terms of age, the majority of respondents are 41 years old and above, followed by those aged 31 to 40, with the fewest below 30. In terms of gender, the majority are female, followed by male. In terms of position, the majority are Teacher I to III, followed by Master Teacher I and II, and Master Teacher III. In terms of Length of Service, the majority of the respondents have served the school for 11 years and above, followed by 5 to 10 years and 6 to 10 years.

The respondents of this study are primarily from Akuk Sangkula Elementary School, aged 41 years and above, female, holding the positions of Teacher I to III, and serving the school for 11 years or more. This result indicates that the majority of the teachers are old enough, but their positions are still in the teacher I-III category, and they have been serving the schools for 11 years or more. The data imply that the respondents in this study are experienced teachers but receive very low promotion.

Table 3.1
Profile of Respondents

		Frequency	Percent
School	1. Bilaan Central School	18	18.8
	2. Latih Elem School	7	7.3
	3. Pasil Elem School	11	11.5
	4. Akuk Sangkula Elem School	25	26.0
	5. Camp Andres Central School	12	12.5
	6. Datu Bahjin Central School	23	24.0
Age	1. Below- 30 yo	9	9.4
	2. 31-40 yo	20	20.8
	3. 41 yo – above	67	69.8
Gender	1. Male	19	19.8
	2. Female	77	80.2
Position	1. Teacher I-III	89	92.7
	2. Master Teacher I – II	6	6.3
	3. Master Teacher III	1	1.0
Length of Service	1. Below – 5 years	23	24.0
	2. 6 – 10 years	16	16.7
	3. 11 years – Above	57	59.4
	N	96	100.0

Research Instruments

Two primary instruments were used for data collection: [1] Transformational Leadership Questionnaire (TLQ). The TLQ was adapted from the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) developed by Bass and Avolio (1995), which is one of the most established tools for assessing leadership behavior. It measures the four main components of transformational leadership—idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration.

Respondents rated statements on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from *Strongly Disagree* (1) to *Agree* (5) Strongly. The items were reworded and contextualized to reflect the realities of rural school settings in Sulu, including the roles of school heads in mentoring, resource mobilization, and community relations. [2] Teacher Performance Assessment Questionnaire (TPAQ). This instrument evaluated teacher performance across several domains: instructional delivery, classroom management, professional commitment, and collaboration. Some items were based on existing teacher appraisal systems used by the Department of Education, but modified to reflect the study's objectives.

The TPAQ also included self-report components where teachers reflected on their own effectiveness and motivation. This provided both quantitative data and personal insight into their professional experiences. Before data collection, both instruments underwent pilot testing at a comparable rural school outside the study sample. Feedback from the pilot helped refine ambiguous or unclear items. Cronbach's alpha coefficients were then computed to assess internal consistency, with values above 0.70 considered acceptable for this type of study. The reliability test ensured that the instruments measured the intended variables consistently.

Validity and Reliability

The questionnaire was validated using the split-half method. The results are shown in Table 3.1. Cronbach's Alpha greater than .5 indicates that the questions are reliable and valid. In this study, Cronbach's Alpha for part 1 is .980 and for part 2 is .961, with a correlation between the forms of .978, indicating that the questions are highly valid and reliable.

Table 3.2
Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Part 1	Value	.980
		N of Items	16 ^a
	Part 2	Value	.961
		N of Items	16 ^b
	Total N of Items		32
Correlation Between Forms			.978
Spearman-Brown Coefficient	Equal Length		.989
	Unequal Length		.989
Guttman Split-Half Coefficient			.981

Data Gathering Procedures

Data collection followed a systematic process that respected both administrative protocols and ethical standards. Before the study began, formal permission was obtained from the Department of Education (DepEd) regional and division offices, as well as from the principals of the participating schools.

After receiving approval, the researcher personally visited each participating school to conduct orientations. During these visits, teachers and school heads were informed about the objectives of the study, their role as participants, and their rights—including the right to refuse or withdraw at any time without penalty.

Questionnaires were distributed during school hours in coordination with school administrators to minimize disruption to classes. Respondents were given clear instructions and sufficient time to answer all items thoughtfully. The completed questionnaires were collected immediately after completion to ensure confidentiality and prevent loss or alteration of data.

Throughout the data collection process, the researcher maintained an open line of communication with respondents to clarify questions and ensure accuracy. This personal approach also helped build trust—a crucial factor when conducting research in close-knit rural communities.

Data Analysis

Once the data were gathered, they were organized and encoded using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), a widely used software for quantitative data analysis. The first step involved generating descriptive statistics such as means, standard deviations, and frequency distributions. These provided a general overview of the participants' responses and summarized the levels of transformational leadership and teacher performance.

To test the impact of the two main variables, a simple regression was computed at the 0.05 significance level. This statistical test determines whether a meaningful relationship exists between two continuous variables and measures its magnitude.

In addition to the main correlation analysis, demographic variables such as school, age, gender, years of service, and position were examined to identify potential moderating effects or trends. These supplementary analyses helped interpret the findings within the real-life context of Sulu's rural education environment.

RESULTS

Transformational Leadership Exhibited by School Heads

The data in Table 4.1 are summaries of the computations of the indicators of translational leadership styles for the school heads of the selected elementary school in Sulu. Two-way analysis was used in the discussion, including description and

interpretation. The description was used as the respondent's direct answer to each indicator of transformational leadership, where further interpretation is needed, since the subject concerns the level of transformational leadership that requires additional interpretation to understand the results better.

The results show that idealized influence is practiced in the selected schools in Sulu, as the respondent strongly agreed, indicating a very high level of transformation. This means that the school head fosters a sense of pride in being part of the school. The teachers see challenges as opportunities and school head expresses optimism about the school's future, inspires teamwork and cooperation, uses encouraging words to uplift teachers, motivates teachers to achieve school goals, uses encouraging words to uplift teachers, and communicates a clear and inspiring vision. The data indicate that the idealized influence type of transformational leadership can have a very high impact on teachers by following the school heads' inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration.

The high level of idealized influence observed in Sulu schools aligns with broader research in the Philippine educational context. Studies of public elementary school heads in La Union and Region III similarly found that transformational leadership is highly practiced and consistently rated across all dimensions by both leaders and teachers (Dacpano, 2022; "Transformational Leadership Styles of Public Elementary School Principals in Relation to School Social Organizational Factors in Region III, Philippines," 2017). Specifically, the "Idealized Influence" and "Inspirational Motivation" dimensions are often perceived as being used "always," which directly correlates with positive school social organizational factors such as shared goals, teacher commitment, and overall school effectiveness ("Transformational Leadership Styles of Public Elementary School Principals in Relation to School Social Organizational Factors in Region III, Philippines," 2017).

Furthermore, research indicates that when school heads exhibit idealized influence, they act as role models who earn the trust and respect of their staff (Shah, 2018, p. 249). This creates a "structure of care" and a supportive organizational culture characterized by respect and cooperation (Wang, 2019, p. 331). By prioritizing common goals over personal interests, such leaders inspire a sense of pride and emotional attachment within their teams, which has been shown to lead to extraordinary performance levels and enhanced job satisfaction among academic staff (Garzón-Lasso et al., 2024, p. 3; Yakob et al., 2025).

While the results in Sulu show a very high level of transformation, some contemporary studies offer a more nuanced or critical perspective on the impact of this leadership style. For instance, a study in public elementary schools in Bacolod City found that despite high perceptions of transformational leadership, there was no significant relationship between the leadership of school heads and the actual work performance of teachers (Esogon et al., 2024). This suggests that while transformational behaviors may increase motivation, other factors—such as specific teaching styles or classroom strategies—might be more influential on objective educational outcomes (Esogon et al., 2024).

Critiques also exist regarding the theoretical framework itself. Some scholars argue that transformational leadership relies on a "heroic leader" narrative that potentially downplays the importance of shared or distributed leadership and follower agency (Dabie & Asare, 2025, p. 676). In highly centralized or bureaucratic educational systems, the application of transformational styles can be problematic because the primary task of school leaders often shifts from improvement to simple maintenance of existing structures (Toprak et al., 2023, p. 526). Additionally, the effectiveness of these leadership behaviors can be hindered by external constraints such as heavy workloads, resource limitations, and a lack of multicultural awareness in diverse school environments (Ghifary & anto, 2022, p. 7; Ko, 2024; Menon, 2021, p. 8)

Table 4.1
Level of Transformational Leadership

Leadership	Mean	SD	Description	Interpretation
Idealized Influence	4.67	.581	Strongly Agree	Very High Transformation
Inspirational Motivation	4.66	.593	Strongly Agree	Very High Transformation
Intellectual Simulation	4.70	.497	Strongly Agree	Very High Transformation
Individual Consideration	4.23	.682	Agree	High Transformation

Legend: 1.0-1.49(1)-Strongly Disagree/Very Low Transformation; 1.5-2.49(2)-Disagree/Low Transformation; 2.5-3.49(3)-Moderately agree/Moderate Transformation; 3.5-4.49(4)-Agree/High Transformation; 4.5-5.0(5)-Strongly Agree/Very High Transformation

Level of Teachers' Performance

The selected elementary schools in this study are located in a rural setting. Bilaan Central School is located at Bilaan, Municipality of Talipao, Sulu. Latih

Elementary School and Datuh Bahjin Central School are located in the Municipality of Patikul, Sulu. Pasil Elementary School is located in the Municipality of Indanan, Sulu. Akuk Sangkula Elementary School is located in the Municipality of Parang, Sulu. Camp Andres Central School is located in the Sulu II district of the Municipality of Luuk. The teachers' performance in this study is a result of the assessment conducted by the MBHTE Division of Sulu. The data were taken from the Summary of Individual Performance Commitment and Review Form (IPCRF) of the MBHTE Division of Sulu, signed by the School Heads, School District Supervisor and Sulu Division Superintendent.

Table 4.2 presents a summary of teacher performance, sorted by school. The mean values of the assessed performance fall within the range of 3.5-4.49 on the scale, given the verbal description "very satisfactory". The data indicate that the individual performance of teachers in the selected elementary schools of Sulu is very satisfactory.

Very Satisfactory performance indicates that the quality and effectiveness of teaching meet the expected standards and requirements of the school, educational institution, or governing body. It encompasses various aspects according to the National Policy on Teacher Performance Evaluation (NPTPE), including: [1] Teaching Skills –

Lesson planning, delivery and assessment. [2] Subject matter expertise – knowledge and understanding of the subject being taught. [3] Classroom management – maintaining a conducive learning environment. [4] Student engagement – encouraging participation and interest. [5] Assessment and feedback – evaluating student progress and providing constructive feedback. [6] Professionalism – adherence to school policies, attendance, and continuous professional development (Meta AI, 2026; DepEd Order No. 42, s. 2017).

Furthermore, in the Philippines, the Department of Education (DepEd) has established standards for teacher performance in the DepEd Manual on Teacher Performance Evaluation (2017) and the Philippine Professional Standard for Teachers (PPST) by DepEd, which include: [1] Professional Growth and Development. [2] Learning Environment. [3] Curriculum and Instruction. [4] Assessment and Reporting. [5] Community Involvement and Services (Meta AI, 2026; PPST).

Generally, teachers are typically evaluated based on these standards, and satisfactory performance is often measured through regular evaluation, observations, and feedback from students, peers, and administration, reflected in the Teacher Performance Evaluation Framework by the National Education Association (NEA) Philippines.

The teachers of the selected Elementary Schools in Sulu have met the standard evaluation criteria with very satisfactory performance.

Recent research confirms that "Very Satisfactory" is the most prevalent rating for teachers across various Philippine districts, reflecting a high degree of dedication and adherence to the Key Result Areas outlined in the IPCRF (Cadag, 2024; Daing & Mustapha, 2023). In a study of teachers in the BARMM region (specifically Maguindanao del Sur), quantitative findings similarly indicated a "Very Satisfactory" level of performance, demonstrating that teachers consistently meet the expectations of the Results-based Performance Management System despite regional challenges (Parcon et al., 2025). This high rating is often linked to strong competencies in lesson structuring, assessment, and the ability to provide constructive feedback to learners (Cabahug et al., 2024; CAMAHALAN & Naparan, 2022).

Furthermore, the rural context of the Sulu schools may actually contribute to these positive ratings. Literature suggests that teachers in rural areas often exhibit slightly higher job performance than their urban counterparts (Kotherja & Hamzallari, 2022). This is attributed to smaller class sizes, which enable more manageable classroom environments and more individualized attention to students' needs—factors that directly align with the "Very Satisfactory" indicators for classroom management and student engagement (Kotherja & Hamzallari, 2022).

While administrative ratings are high, several studies raise concerns about the "Very Satisfactory" paradox in the Philippines. A significant contrasting finding in recent literature is the lack of correlation between teacher IPCRF ratings and actual student academic achievement (Estrada & Gumban, 2024). This suggests that while teachers may meet all administrative and procedural requirements of the IPCRF, these "Very Satisfactory" scores do not always translate into improved learner performance (Estrada & Gumban, 2024, 2024).

Additionally, scholars have pointed to the risk of rating inflation, in which the pressure to demonstrate effectiveness leads to subjective or skewed evaluations that may not reflect a teacher's true pedagogical impact (Cadag, 2024; Sutton et al., 2023). In the specific context of BARM, the "Very Satisfactory" ratings may be challenged by the prevalence of "out-of-field" teaching, where educators are assigned subjects outside their areas of specialization due to teacher shortages (Guiaselon et al., 2022). Research indicates that this mismatch can lead to less effective instruction, even if the teacher's administrative compliance remains high (Guiaselon et al., 2022). Finally, teachers themselves have reported that the IPCRF process can be burdensome and "chaotic," with time- and resource-related challenges often hindering their ability to provide the high-quality instruction implied by the "Very Satisfactory" rating (Cahilog et al., 2023; Parcon et al., 2025).

Table 4.2
Performance of Teachers in Selected Elementary Schools of Sulu

School	N	Mean	SD	Description
1. Bilaan Central School	18	3.8765	.11301	Very Satisfactory
2. Latih Elem School	7	4.1827	.06969	Very Satisfactory
3. Pasil Elem School	11	3.7555	.30411	Very Satisfactory
4. Akuk Sangkula Elem School	25	3.5445	.02416	Very Satisfactory
5. Camp Andres Central School	12	3.8688	.21761	Very Satisfactory
6. Datu Uddin Bahjin Central School	23	3.7198	.12751	Very Satisfactory
Total	96	3.7600	.22709	Very Satisfactory

Legend: 1.0-1.49(1)-Fair; 1.5-2.49(2)-Satisfactory; 2.5-3.49(3)-3.5-4.49(4)- Very Satisfactory; 4.5-5.0(5)-Excellent

Impact of Transformational Leadership on Teachers' Motivational Performance

Table 4.3 presents a summary of the computations for the Likert-scale questionnaire, which was assessed as valid and reliable using the split-half reliability test. Simple Regression was used to test the hypothesis that states "There is no significant impact of the Transformational Leadership Styles on the Teachers' Performance. The R value indicates a high relationship. The R² values indicate that the model accounts for 42.4 percent of the variance in the data. The F values indicate the positive impact of the Transformational Leadership Styles exhibited by the school heads. The sig. values are less than the .05 significance level, indicating that the impact is significant. Therefore, based on these data, the hypothesis is rejected; hence, there is a significant impact of the Transformational Leadership Styles exhibited by the school heads in the selected elementary school of Sulu. The Idealized Influence style predominantly drives the impact, while the other styles, such as inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration, have minimal impact.

The impact of exhibited transformational leadership styles on the performance of teachers indicates that there is an influence of the transformational leadership styles of a leader who inspires, motivates, and empowers teachers to achieve exceptional results and improve their overall performance.

The significant impact of transformational leadership on teacher performance found in your study is corroborated by several recent empirical works. Research on school heads' leadership suggests that these styles are fundamental drivers of educational excellence and quality (Yakob et al., 2025). Specifically, in the Philippine context, studies in Region III have shown that transformational leadership is not only highly practiced but is also strongly related to positive school organizational factors ("Transformational Leadership Styles of Public Elementary School Principals in Relation to School Social Organizational Factors in Region III, Philippines," 2017). The value of 42.4% in your study is comparable to other findings in the field; for instance, research on full-range leadership has shown that transformational behaviors can account for approximately 49.2% of the variance in employees' extra effort and satisfaction (Garzón-Lasso et al., 2024).

This finding that idealized influence is the predominant driver is also supported by literature indicating that this specific dimension—where leaders act as role models and foster trust—is often the most frequently perceived and influential style in public elementary schools ("Transformational Leadership Styles of Public Elementary School Principals in Relation to School Social Organizational Factors in Region III, Philippines," 2017). By exhibiting "idealized influence," school heads create a "structure of care" and a supportive climate that encourages teachers to transcend their self-interest for the sake of the school's vision, ultimately leading to higher levels of commitment and modernity within the staff (Shah, 2018; Wang, 2019).

Despite the strong statistical relationship found in the study, other research presents a more complex or even contradictory view. Most notably, a study of public elementary schools in Bacolod City found no significant relationship between school heads' transformational leadership practices and teachers' actual work performance (Esogon et al., 2024). This suggests that the impact of leadership may be moderated by other factors, such as the specific socio-demographic profile of the teachers or the existing school culture, which can sometimes overshadow the influence of a leader's style (Kotherja & Hamzallari, 2022).

Furthermore, some scholars argue that in highly centralized education systems, a leader's "transformational" impact may be structurally limited. In such environments, school heads may be forced to focus more on administrative maintenance and compliance rather than genuine instructional or motivational transformation (Toprak et al., 2023). Other barriers that can minimize the impact of transformational leadership include excessive teacher workloads, high levels of stress, and a lack of resources, all of which can hinder a teacher's ability to respond to motivational stimulation, regardless of how "idealized" the leader's influence may be (Ko, 2024; Menon, 2021). Finally, while your study emphasizes idealized influence, some researchers suggest that a "Full Range" approach—including transactional elements—is often necessary to address the practical, day-to-day requirements of school management (Garzón-Lasso et al., 2024).

Table 4.3
Impact of Transformational Leadership Styles on the Teachers' Motivational Performance

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	4.748	.413		11.508	.000
1 1. Idealized Influence	.163	.062	.499	2.614	.011
2. Inspirational Motivation	.547	.304	1.142	1.802	.076
3. Intellectual Simulation	.110	.084	.463	1.306	.196
4. Individual Consideration	.111	.065	-.289	1.701	.093
R = .651 R ² = .424	F = 2.559		Sig. = .002		

a. Dependent Variable: Performance Rating

b. Predictors: (Constant), Idealized Influence, Inspirational Motivation, Intellectual Simulation, Individual Consideration

Difference of Perceptions on Transformational Leaders' Style and Performance

Table 4.4 presents the summary results of the statistical computation of the difference in perceptions of exhibited transformational leadership and teachers' performance in selected elementary schools in the province of Sulu. The hypothesis states that "There is no significant difference in perceptions on the Transformational Leadership Styles and teachers' performance when grouped according to the profile of teachers, was tested using a t-test for gender and an F-test for schools, age, positions and length of service in both leadership styles and teachers' performance.

The F-test values for transformational leadership styles, categorized by school, age, position and length of service and for teachers' performance, categorized by school, with significant values less than .05, indicate that the hypothesis is rejected. In contrast, transformational leadership, categorized by age and teachers' performance, age, gender, position and length of service, has significant values greater than the .05 confidence level, indicating acceptance of the hypothesis.

The data indicate that perceptions of transformational leadership styles differed significantly across school, gender, position, and length of service, and that teachers' performance differed significantly across schools. At the same time, there is no significant difference in perceptions of transformational leadership styles when grouped by age, nor in teachers' performance when grouped by age, gender, position and length of service.

The significant difference in perceptions when grouped according to school, gender, position and length of service can be related to the positive impact of leadership on performance in several ways: [1] contextual factors – leadership impact may vary across schools, with some schools responding better to certain leadership styles. [2] Diverse perspectives – different groups (e.g., males vs. males, teachers vs. administrators) may perceive leadership impact differently, highlighting areas for improvement. [3] Experience and expectations – length of service and position can influence how individuals perceive leadership and its impact on performance. [4] Targeted

interventions – identifying significant differences in perceptions can inform leadership strategies tailored to specific groups, enhancing overall performance (Bass et. al., 2006).

The finding that perceptions of leadership vary significantly by school and gender is supported by research indicating that leadership styles are often context-bound and perceived differently across demographic lines. Studies on secondary school heads have shown that gender interacts significantly with leadership styles, as male and female educators often prioritize different dimensions of transformation, such as "Idealized Influence" versus "Individualized Consideration" (Shah, 2018). Furthermore, the school context itself acts as a critical moderator; research in the Philippines emphasizes that school-specific social organizational factors—such as local climate and shared goals—dictate how transformational leadership is received and executed (Dacpano, 2022; "Transformational Leadership Styles of Public Elementary School Principals in Relation to School Social Organizational Factors in Region III, Philippines," 2017).

The finding that teacher performance does not vary significantly by age, gender, or length of service is corroborated by recent studies of teacher job performance. Research indicates that socio-demographic variables such as age often show no significant differences in professional output, as all teachers are bound by the same standardized evaluation frameworks (such as the IPCRF in the Philippines) (Cadag, 2024; Kotherja & Hamzallari, 2022). In many cases, professionalism and adherence to national standards such as the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers result in performance generally rated "Very Satisfactory" across various demographic profiles (Cabahug et al., 2024; Estrada & Gumban, 2024).

While you found significant differences in perceptions by gender and position, some empirical studies suggest that perceptions of transformational leadership are often uniform across demographic groups. For example, research using the "Full Range Leadership" model has shown that employee satisfaction and perceptions of leader effectiveness do not always differ significantly by gender or position, especially when the leader maintains a high level of consistent transformational behavior (Garzón-Lasso et al., 2024). This suggests that in some educational environments, the leadership style itself is powerful enough to transcend demographic differences among the staff (Garzón-Lasso et al., 2024).

Your finding that performance does not differ by position or length of service is contested by some educational research. Some studies indicate that "Master Teachers" or those in higher positions often receive significantly higher performance ratings and demonstrate higher levels of competency compared to junior teachers (Estrada & Gumban, 2024). Additionally, while you found no performance differences by age, some literature suggests that younger teachers may exhibit higher levels of "21st-century skill" implementation and digital literacy, which may lead to differences in performance ratings related to modern instructional delivery (Cabahug et al., 2024). Finally, researchers have noted that teachers with longer service records may experience "performance plateaus" or higher levels of burnout, which can lead to significant differences in performance compared to their mid-career counterparts (Cahilog et al., 2023; Parcon et al., 2025).

Finally, there is no significant difference of the perceptions on transformation leadership styles when grouped according to age also there is no significant difference of the performance of teachers when grouped according to age, gender, position and length of service, however, there is significant difference of the perceptions on transformational leadership styles when grouped according to school, gender, position, length of service and significant difference also exist on the performance when grouped according to school. The profile of teachers (school, gender, position and length of service) moderately and significantly moderates the positive impact of transformational leadership styles on teachers' performance.

Table 4.4
Difference of Perceptions Grouped According to the Profile of Teachers on Leadership Styles and Teachers' Performance

	Transformational Leadership Styles		Teacher's Performance	
	Statistics	Sig. [.05]	Statistics	Sig. [.05]
School	F = 41.825	.000*	F = 24.733	.000*
Age	F = 0.498	.610	F = 1.458	.231
Gender	t = -3.282	.002*	t = -.007	.938
Position	F = 49.316	.000*	F = 2.398	.097
Length of Service	F = 13.112	.000*	F = 1.848	.163

*Reject Ho (Sig. ≤ .05)

DISCUSSION

A clear pattern emerges: transformational leadership is not only present but deeply embedded in the daily realities of rural schools in Sulu, with *Intellectual Stimulation* (M = 4.70) standing out as its most visible expression. The data suggest that school heads serve as enablers of innovation, particularly in contexts characterized by limited facilities, geographical isolation, and even physically challenging terrain. Rather than relying on material sufficiency, leaders appear to mobilize cognitive and adaptive resources—encouraging teachers to rethink instructional delivery, localize content, and improvise with what is available. This finding aligns with the core propositions of Bernard M. Bass and Bruce J. Avolio, who emphasized the role of leaders in stimulating higher-order thinking among followers. However, the Sulu context appears to extend this framework by introducing what may be described as a *resilience-driven dimension* of transformational leadership. In such environments, intellectual stimulation is not merely developmental—it becomes a survival mechanism that sustains instructional quality despite systemic constraints.

The *Very Satisfactory* level of teacher performance (M = 3.76) presents a performance paradox when juxtaposed with the respondents' demographic profile. A substantial majority of teachers remain within the Teacher I–III ranks despite having more than a decade of service. Under conventional organizational assumptions, such

stagnation in career progression would likely dampen motivation and performance. Nevertheless, the data suggest otherwise. It is plausible that intrinsic motivation—anchored in professional identity, cultural expectations, and community responsibility—plays a more decisive role than extrinsic rewards in this context. Teachers in Sulu appear to sustain high levels of performance not because of promotion incentives, but despite their absence. This gap between intrinsic commitment and limited extrinsic recognition raises important policy considerations. Strengthening career progression systems, providing equitable promotion pathways, and recognizing long-serving educators may be necessary to ensure that sustained commitment is matched by institutional support.

The regression results ($R^2 = .424$, $p = .002$) further reinforce the centrality of leadership, indicating that nearly half of the variance in teacher performance can be explained by transformational leadership practices. Among its dimensions, *Idealized Influence* emerges as the most significant predictor ($p = .011$), underscoring the cultural and relational weight of leadership in the Sulu archipelago. The data suggests that teachers respond most strongly not to directives, but to examples. In tightly knit communities where leaders are constantly observed, credibility is built through consistency between words and actions. It is plausible that this “leader as role model” dynamic resonates deeply within the Tausūg cultural framework, where authority is closely tied to personal integrity and communal respect. This reinforces the notion of *context-responsive leadership*, where effectiveness is not defined by universal standards alone but by alignment with local values, expectations, and social structures.

The absence of significant differences in teacher performance across age and gender introduces another layer of interpretation. Rather than indicating a lack of variability, this finding may reflect *professional homogeneity*. The shared challenges of teaching in rural Sulu—ranging from resource scarcity to geographic isolation—appear to foster a collective identity among educators. It is plausible that these common experiences shape a unified standard of practice in which commitment, adaptability, and resilience are normalized across demographic groups. In this sense, professional identity may override individual differences, resulting in a workforce that is cohesive in both outlook and performance.

When situated within the broader global discourse, these findings offer valuable insights that extend beyond the local context. Recent Scopus-indexed studies have emphasized the importance of transformational leadership in improving teacher outcomes, particularly in structured and resource-rich environments (Chkheidze, 2025; Ramos, 2025). However, the Sulu case suggests that the principles of transformational leadership may become even more critical—and perhaps more visible—in underserved settings. The “Sulu Frontier” provides a compelling counterpoint to Global North perspectives, illustrating how leadership grounded in resilience, moral example, and contextual adaptation can sustain performance even in the absence of systemic advantages. It is plausible that educational systems in more developed contexts may draw lessons from this model, particularly in addressing inequities and fostering leadership that is both human-centered and responsive to constraint.

Taken together, the findings suggest that leadership in rural Sulu is not defined by positional authority or access to resources, but by the capacity to inspire, adapt, and embody shared values. Such insights contribute to a more nuanced understanding of transformational leadership, one that recognizes the interplay between theory and context, and highlights the enduring strength of educators working at the margins of the system.

Conclusions

Transformational leadership emerges as a decisive force in shaping teacher performance within the rural educational landscape of Sulu, where leadership is not merely administrative but deeply adaptive and value-driven. The consistently *very high* levels of intellectual stimulation and idealized influence indicate that school heads can foster innovation, commitment, and a shared vision despite persistent challenges such as limited resources, geographical isolation, and infrastructural constraints. This suggests that leadership in such contexts operates beyond formal structures, functioning instead as a mechanism for sustaining instructional quality through creativity, resilience, and strong interpersonal influence.

Teacher performance, while rated as *very satisfactory*, presents a compelling contradiction when viewed alongside the respondents' demographic profile. A significant proportion of teachers remain in entry-level positions despite long years of service, highlighting a disconnect between professional experience and career advancement. Nevertheless, performance remains consistently high. This indicates that teachers' motivation is largely intrinsic—rooted in professional commitment, cultural values, and a sense of responsibility to their communities—rather than driven by external rewards such as promotion. Such findings underscore the need for more responsive policies that recognize and support long-serving educators, ensuring that sustained dedication is met with equitable opportunities for professional growth.

The significant relationship between transformational leadership and teacher performance further reinforces the central role of leadership in educational effectiveness. With 42.4% of teacher performance explained by leadership practices, and *idealized influence* identified as the strongest predictor, the findings highlight the importance of the leader as a role model. In the Sulu context, where social relationships are closely knit and leadership is highly visible, teachers are strongly influenced by leaders who demonstrate integrity, commitment, and consistency. Leadership effectiveness, therefore, is closely tied to personal example and the ability to inspire trust and respect.

The absence of significant differences in teacher performance across age, gender, position, and length of service suggests a unified professional culture among educators in Sulu. Shared experiences of working in resource-constrained and geographically challenging environments appear to shape a collective identity that emphasizes resilience, adaptability, and dedication. At the same time, differences in perceptions of leadership across schools and other profile variables indicate that leadership practices are not uniformly experienced, pointing to the importance of contextual and situational factors in shaping leadership effectiveness.

Moreover, the findings affirm that transformational leadership is not only relevant but essential in rural and underserved educational settings. It provides a framework through which school heads can inspire, support, and empower teachers to maintain high levels of performance despite systemic limitations. More importantly, the study highlights the need for a context-responsive approach to leadership—one that aligns with local realities, values, and challenges—and addresses structural gaps in teacher development and recognition. In doing so, it contributes to a more nuanced understanding of how leadership can sustain educational quality in marginalized contexts and provides a foundation for future policy and practice aimed at strengthening rural education systems.

Recommendations

Based on the study's findings and conclusions, the following recommendations were forwarded.

A. Research Policy

1. The MBHTE may create a monitoring team to ensure the impact of leadership styles on the teachers' performance.
2. The School Administrators may adopt and improve the policy to assess the Individual Performance Commitment and Review Form (IPCRF) of teachers in the province of Sulu.
3. The teachers may collaboratively participate in improved policy assessment to achieve better results of IPCRF.
4. The School Administrator may include in their 5-year School Improvement Plan (SIP) the annual IPCRF of teachers.
5. The Evaluation process of the IPCRF may include the School Administrator, Teachers, Students and Peer Teachers.

B. Research Agenda

1. There should be a study conducted similar to this study in the other school districts.
2. The teachers may prepare and participate collaboratively in the evaluation process during the IPCRF assessment.
3. The teachers may support the school administrators in the conduct of IPCRF annually.
4. The school administrator may include in their School Improvement Plan (SIP) the strategies to develop the evaluation and assessment of IPCRF to enhance excellent results.
5. The teachers may voluntarily participate in the evaluation of the IPCRF assessment.

C. Research Problem

1. Strategies on the Implementation of IPCRF Approach in the Schools' Rural Setting;
2. Factors Affecting the Evaluation and Assessment of Teachers' IPCRF.
3. Developing More Strategies and Improving the Method of IPCRF Evaluation.
4. Enhancement of Transformational Leadership Styles in Rural Elementary Schools.
5. Collaborative Efforts of Teachers and School Heads Focus on the Effective Transformational School Leadership.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this paper. This study was conducted in accordance with ethical standards and principles. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and their confidentiality and anonymity were strictly maintained. No harm was inflicted on the participants, and all data collected were used solely for academic and research purposes.

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