



Synergy of Decentralization and Transformational Leadership: Improving Educational Quality at Blimbing 2 Public Elementary School

¹Ummi Hani', ²Misbahul Arifin

Master's Program in Islamic Educational Management,
Nurul Jadid University, Indonesia

¹haniummi17@gmail.com

²arifinmisbahul324@gmail.com (correspondence email)

ABSTRACT

This study examines how decentralization and transformational leadership contribute to the improvement of educational quality at Blimbing 2 Public Elementary School. The research emphasizes locally based infrastructure management and highlights the strategic role of the school principal in encouraging innovation and collaborative practices. A qualitative case study approach was employed, utilizing the interactive analysis model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observations, and document analysis involving the principal, vice principal, teachers, and members of the surrounding community. The findings indicate that decentralization provides schools with greater flexibility to manage infrastructure in a more efficient and cost-effective manner. At the same time, transformational leadership strengthens the utilization of local potential and fosters synergy among stakeholders. The interaction between these two elements creates a more supportive learning environment and enhances students' motivation to learn. This study extends the application of transformational leadership theory within the context of decentralized local education and offers practical insights for educational policy and institutional management.

Keywords: Decentralization, Transformational Leadership, Educational Quality

INTRODUCTION

In an increasingly complex global dynamic, education plays a central role in shaping the quality of human resources (U. Suherman & Victorynie, 2025). One of the main challenges in ensuring that decision-making processes and leadership within educational institutions are able to respond to the needs of modern society (Zayrin et al., 2024). In Indonesia, educational decentralization has been implemented through regional autonomy policies; however, its effectiveness remains a matter of debate. Recent analyses of Indonesia's education system indicate that a substantial proportion of schools in remote areas continue to face limitations in basic educational facilities, including libraries and laboratories (Sarwoedi et al., 2025). This condition highlights structural challenges in translating decentralization policies into effective school-level resource management.

Transformational leadership theory, as proposed by Bass and Avolio (1994) emphasizes that visionary leaders who are capable of inspiring and empowering individuals can drive significant organizational change. In educational settings, this leadership model has



been widely associated with improved teacher motivation, a positive school climate, and enhanced institutional performance (Subni et al., 2024). Within decentralized education systems, however, leadership is not merely a complementary factor but a determining mechanism that shapes how policy autonomy is translated into school-level decision-making and resource management practices (Imamah et al., 2024). Based on this perspective, the present study examines the relationship between decentralization and transformational leadership in enhancing educational quality at Blimbing 2 Public Elementary School, a public primary school facing challenges in the implementation of managerial decentralization.

Previous studies indicate that challenges in the implementation of educational decentralization are often associated with limited leadership capacity at the school level (Yusuf & Hanif, 2025; Sarwoedi et al., 2025). Other studies emphasize that transformational leadership plays a significant role in improving teacher motivation, school climate, and institutional performance (Subni et al., 2024; Buchori et al., 2024). However, these strands of research tend to examine decentralization and leadership as separate analytical domains, rather than exploring their interaction within a unified governance framework.

The novelty of this study lies in its analytical positioning, which conceptualizes transformational leadership as an enabling and optimizing mechanism within decentralized educational management, rather than treating decentralization and leadership as independent variables (A. Suherman et al., 2024). This research not only integrates decentralization and transformational leadership theory but also examines their synergy in a concrete institutional context, namely Blimbing 2 Public Elementary School. By focusing on how leadership practices operationalize decentralized authority in daily school management, this study offers an original contribution to the literature on educational governance and leadership (Yohana et al., 2023).

Based on the identified gap and proposed novelty, the primary objective of this research is to analyze how transformational leadership enables and optimizes decentralization practices in improving educational quality at Blimbing 2 Public Elementary School. Specifically, this study aims to provide a theoretically grounded and empirically informed understanding of the interaction between decentralization and leadership, as well as practical recommendations for policymakers and educational leaders in designing effective and sustainable strategies.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research adopts a qualitative approach employing a case study design (Ilhami et al., 2024). The qualitative method was selected to obtain a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of how decentralization and transformational leadership contribute to improving educational quality (Buchori et al., 2024). A case study approach enables intensive exploration of the phenomenon within its real-life context, allowing researchers to capture social interactions, institutional dynamics, and leadership practices as they naturally occur at Blimbing 2 Public Elementary School (Assyakurrohim et al., 2023). One of the main strengths of this approach lies in its capacity to reveal complexity and contextual uniqueness that cannot be adequately explained through quantitative methods. However, its primary limitation is that the findings are context-specific and cannot be directly generalized to other educational institutions.

The research site, Blimbing 2 Public Elementary School in Situbondo, was selected because this school represents a relevant case for the phenomenon under study. Unlike other educational institutions that may still operate in a centralized manner, Blimbing 2 Public Elementary School has implemented managerial decentralization practices and demonstrates leadership that actively encourages change (Sidiq et al., 2025). This makes the school an ideal social laboratory for examining the synergy between decentralization and transformational leadership.

The research informants consisted of key stakeholders who are directly involved in and affected by the implementation of decentralization and transformational leadership at the school level. A total of nine informants were involved, comprising one school principal, five teachers, and three students. The principal was selected as the main informant due to his/her strategic role in decision-making and leadership practices. Teachers were chosen to represent instructional and managerial perspectives, while students were included to capture the perceived impact of leadership and decentralization on learning experiences.

The selection of informants employed a purposive sampling technique. This technique was used to ensure that participants had sufficient knowledge, experience, and involvement related to the research focus (Rusli et al., 2025). The criteria for informant selection included (1) active involvement in school management or instructional processes, (2) direct interaction with the principal's leadership practices, (3) a minimum of two years of experience at Blimbing 2 Public Elementary School. This approach allowed the researcher to obtain rich and relevant data aligned with the objectives of the study.

Data were collected through the triangulation of three main techniques to ensure the validity and credibility of the findings. In-depth Interviews were conducted with the principal, teachers, and students to explore perspectives, experiences, and personal narratives from various stakeholders. These interviews helped to understand how transformational leadership values and visions are internalized and how decentralization is experienced in daily practice. Participant Observation involved observing learning processes, managerial activities, and social interactions to gain direct contextual insights into how decentralization and transformational leadership are implemented in real actions. Document Analysis included the examination of documents such as curricula, program reports, and internal school policies to reinforce data obtained from interviews and observations. These documents provided concrete evidence of structures and policies supporting decentralization.

Data analysis was conducted using the interactive qualitative analysis model developed by Miles, et al. (2014). This model was selected because it enables systematic, cyclical, and continuous analysis throughout the research process, allowing researchers to move iteratively between data collection and interpretation (Aziz et al., 2025). The analytical process consists of three interrelated stages: data reduction, in which raw data from interviews, observations, and documentation are selected, simplified, and categorized according to the main research themes of decentralization and transformational leadership; data display, which involves organizing reduced data into thematic narratives and analytical matrices to illustrate relationships between empirical findings and relevant theoretical frameworks; and conclusion drawing and verification, which entails interpreting emerging patterns and validating findings through source and technique triangulation to ensure analytical rigor and credibility (Husnullail et al., 2024). Through this process, the analysis was

able to link school-level empowerment practices with transformational leadership theory and to explain how decentralization contributes to improvements in educational quality.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Based on the research conducted at Blimbing 2 Public Elementary School, the researcher identified several pieces of evidence indicating the significant contribution of decentralization and transformational leadership to improving the quality of education at the school. The findings are presented thematically as follows:

Accountability and Transparency in Budget Management

Accountability in budget management can be defined as an institution's obligation to responsibly justify the use of funds honestly and in accordance with predetermined objectives (Windasari, 2024). This includes the obligation to provide clear and accountable reports to relevant stakeholders, such as the government and the community. Meanwhile, transparency refers to the openness of information regarding budget planning, implementation, and evaluation. Through transparency, all parties are able to access budget-related information and assess the financial decisions that have been made (Listiani, 2025). Both accountability and transparency are essential for building public trust, preventing the misuse of funds, and ensuring efficiency and effectiveness in budget utilization.

Referring to interviews conducted with the principal of Blimbing 2 Public Elementary School, decentralization was reported to provide flexibility in managing the school budget, while supervision remained a key priority (Nazarilmi et al., 2025). Budget management is carried out based on strong transparency principles, one of which is providing open access to financial reports for all relevant stakeholders. Every budgetary decision is discussed in meetings involving the school principal, teachers, and representatives of parents. In this way, although authority is more distributed, budget management can still be collectively supervised to ensure accountability.

The interview results indicate that decentralization enables greater autonomy in budget utilization without eliminating control mechanisms. Transparency is maintained through routine reporting and collective decision-making forums, which function as internal monitoring instruments. This practice reflects how decentralization, when supported by transformational leadership, does not weaken accountability but instead strengthens participatory governance at the school level.



Figure 1 Accountability and Transparency Process

Based on the Figure 1, accountable and transparent budget management involves several interconnected stages, including budget planning, financial supervision, auditing, public reporting, and stakeholder involvement. These stages form a continuous cycle that ensures budget utilization remains aligned with institutional goals and community expectations (Meliana et al., 2024).

Autonomy in Educational Program Management

Autonomy in educational program management refers to the ability of educational institutions to independently design, manage, and develop educational programs based on student needs and local context (Mashudi, 2025). This autonomy encompasses decision-making authority, strategic planning, resource allocation, and program evaluation. Such flexibility enables institutions to create innovative, relevant, and sustainable educational programs, while also enhancing teacher competence and institutional responsiveness.

As explained by the principal of Blimbing 2 Public Elementary School, decentralization allows the school greater freedom to formulate educational programs without full dependence on central government directives. This autonomy is particularly evident in the development of flagship programs, such as the integration of Islamic values with digital literacy and the implementation of project-based learning approaches that are adapted to students' socio-cultural backgrounds.

Table 1 Forms of Autonomy in Educational Program Management

Aspect of Autonomy	Empirical Evidence	Implication
Curriculum adaption	School-designed enrichment programs aligned with local needs	Learning becomes more contextual and relevant
Instructional strategy	Application of project-based learning	Increased student engagement and critical thinking
Value integration	Integration of Islamic values with technology-based learning	Strengthening character education
Program evaluation	Internal evaluation conducted by teachers and school leaders	Continuous improvement of program effectiveness

The findings presented in Table 1 indicate that decentralization provides Blimbing 2 Public Elementary School with substantial autonomy in managing educational programs, which is strategically utilized through transformational leadership. Curriculum adaption that aligns with local needs demonstrates how decentralized authority enables schools to respond contextually to students' socio-cultural backgrounds, thereby enhancing learning relevance. The implementation of project-based learning reflects institutional flexibility in instructional strategies, which supports student engagement and critical thinking development. Furthermore, the integration of Islamic values with technology-based learning illustrates the school's capacity to balance local values with global competencies, a key objective of autonomous educational management. Internal program evaluation conducted by teachers and school leaders shows that decentralization fosters reflective and continuous improvement practices. These findings confirm that autonomy in program management, when guided by transformational leadership, does not merely increase managerial freedom but also contributes directly to the improvement of educational quality through innovation, contextualization, and sustainability (Darmawan & Chotimah, 2023).

Local-Based Infrastructure Development

Local-based infrastructure development refers to the process of developing facilities by utilizing local resources, labor, and contextual knowledge to meet community needs (Susanti & Kurniati, 2025). This approach emphasizes sustainability, cost efficiency, and community empowerment by aligning infrastructure planning with local socio-economic conditions.

Besed on interviews with the Vice Principal for Facilities and Infrastructure at Blimbing 2 Public Elementary School, decentralization grants the school greater autonomy in planning and developing infrastructure. One key strategy implemented is the use of locally sourced materials, such as bricks and wood from the Besuki area, combined with the involvement of local community members as construction workers. This strategy not only reduces costs but also generates economic benefits for the surrounding community.

Transformational leadership plays a critical role in supporting this initiative. The school principal actively encourages the facilities management team to utilize local potential and engage community participation. This leadership approach fosters a sense of shared ownership and strengthens the relationship between the school and the local community. As a result, decentralization and transformational leadership jointly contribute not only to improved educational facilities but also to broader social and economic empowerment.

Discussion

The results of this study demonstrate that the synergy between decentralization and transformational leadership significantly enhances educational quality at Blimbing 2 Public Elementary School, particularly through the implementation of locally based infrastructure management. These findings are consistent with previous studies indicating that decentralization becomes more effective when accompanied by strong school leadership that is capable of aligning institutional goals with local resources and community needs (Sallata et al., 2024; Darmawan & Chotimah, 2023). In the case of Blimbing 2 Public Elementary School, the school principal's visionary leadership not only delegates authority but also actively involves the local community in development initiatives. This strategy fosters a sense of collective ownership and improves cost efficiency, reflecting the successful application of decentralization principles.

These findings are consistent with previous studies emphasizing the role of transformational leadership in fostering teacher motivation, innovation, and a positive school climate (Buchori et al., 2024; Riduansyah et al., 2025). In the context of Blimbing 2 Public Elementary School, transformational leadership is reflected in the principal's ability to encourage collaboration, innovation, and shared responsibility among school stakeholders.

Furthermore, the emphasis on community empowerment in this study aligns with research highlighting the importance of stakeholder participation in decentralized educational governance (Aisyah & Nugraha, 2024; Meliana et al., 2024). The involvement of local communities in school development initiatives strengthens institutional sustainability and reinforces public trust in school management.

CONCLUSION

This study affirms that decentralization supported by transformational leadership constitutes an effective policy approach for improving educational quality at the school level. The findings indicate that granting schools greater managerial autonomy particularly in budget management, program development, and infrastructure planning enables more efficient, transparent, and contextually responsive decision-making. Transformational leadership plays a strategic role in ensuring that decentralized authority is exercised responsibly, collaboratively, and in alignment with educational quality objectives, while simultaneously strengthening school-community partnerships through the utilization of local resources.

From a policy perspective, these findings suggest that decentralization should be accompanied by systematic leadership development programs for school principals to ensure effective implementation at the institutional level. Policymakers are encouraged to design decentralization frameworks that not only transfer authority but also reinforce accountability mechanisms and leadership capacity. Although this study is limited to a single case, it provides policy-relevant insights that may inform the formulation of sustainable strategies for decentralized educational governance. Further multi-site and mixed-methods research is recommended to support evidence-based policymaking in this area.

REFERENCES

- Aisyah, I. S., & Nugraha, M. S. (2024). Strategi pelibatan masyarakat dalam peningkatan kualitas sekolah di MAN 2 Kota Bandung. *Alacrity: Journal of Education*, 4(2), 312–329. <https://doi.org/10.52121/alacrity.v4i2.347>
- Assyakurrohim, D., Ikhrum, D., Sirodj, R. A., & Afgani, M. W. (2023). Metode studi kasus dalam penelitian kualitatif. *Jurnal Pendidikan Sains dan Komputer*, 3(1), 1–9. <https://doi.org/10.47709/jpsk.v3i01.1951>
- Aziz, M., Napitupulu, D. S., & Umami, N. L. (2025). Implementasi manajemen pendidik dan peserta didik pada lembaga pendidikan taman kanak-kanak. *Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan dan Pembelajaran*, 3(2), 40–46. <https://doi.org/10.58706/jipp.v3n2.p40-46>
- Bass, B. M., & Avolio, B. J. (Eds.). (1994). *Improving organizational effectiveness through transformational leadership*. Sage Publications.
- Buchori, U., Ma'mur, I., & Muhtarom, A. (2024). Peran penting kepemimpinan transformasional dalam proses pengembangan madrasah. *Evaluasi: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam*, 8(1), 124–143. <https://doi.org/10.32478/g75xeq47>
- Darmawan, D., & Chotimah, C. (2023). Manajemen berbasis sekolah (MBS) sebagai implementasi manajemen strategik lembaga pendidikan Islam era digital. *Lentera: Jurnal Ilmiah Kependidikan*, 18(2), 36–53. <https://doi.org/10.33654/jpl.v18i2.2672>
- Husnullail, M., Risnita, Jailani, M. S., & Asbui. (2024). Teknik pemeriksaan keabsahan data dalam riset ilmiah. *Journal Genta Mulia*, 15(2), 70–78. <https://ejournal.uncm.ac.id/index.php/gm/article/view/1148>
- Ilhami, M. W., Nurfajriani, W. V., Mahendra, A., Sirodj, R. A., & Afgani, M. W. (2024). Penerapan metode studi kasus dalam penelitian kualitatif. *Jurnal Ilmiah Wahana Pendidikan*, 10(9), 462–469. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.11180129>
- Imamah, I., Umah, L. R., Septiana, N., & Rofiq, A. (2024). Kepemimpinan adaptif sebagai kunci sukses: Membangun model organizing hybrid yang relevan dan berkelanjutan. *Jurnal Tarbiyatuna*, 5(2), 53–74. <https://doi.org/10.30739/tarbiyatuna.v5i2.3559>
- Listiani, Y. (2025). Transparansi dan efisiensi keuangan di universitas untuk mewujudkan tata kelola yang baik. *The World of Financial Administration Journal*, 7(1), 1–7. <https://doi.org/10.37950/wfaj.v7i1.2331>
- Mashudi. (2025). Etos subsistensi sebagai modal pengembangan potensi agropreneur menuju kemandirian pesantren Nurul Jadid Paiton Probolinggo. *Leaderia: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam*, 6(1), 37–47. <https://doi.org/10.35719/leaderia.v6i1.1104>
- Meliana, S., Ramadhan, F., Oktavia, D., Pratama, R., & Anggraeni, L. (2024). Penerapan manajemen partisipatif dalam optimalisasi pengelolaan lembaga pendidikan. *Jurnal Riset Ilmu Pengabdian dan Pendidikan*, 1(1), 167–178. <https://doi.org/10.71382/sinova.v1i1.115>
- Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, J. (2014). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook*. Sage.
- Nazarilmi, A. M., Afrinda, N., Aswanda, A., & Musyafa, M. N. (2025). Evaluasi praktik otonomi daerah sebagai upaya optimalisasi pembangunan daerah. *Tarunalaw: Journal of Law and Syariah*, 3(1), 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.54298/tarunalaw.v3i01.226>
- Riduansyah, A., Syahrani, Muammar, Aslamiah, & Cinantya, C. (2025). Peran pemberdayaan guru dan kepemimpinan transformasional dalam meningkatkan mutu sekolah di

- Indonesia. *Jurnal Keilmuan dan Keislaman*, 4(2), 256–268. <https://doi.org/10.23917/jkk.v4i2.455>
- Rusli, A., Fadhil, M., Ishaq, M., Hidayatullah, R., & Harmonedi. (2025). Strategi pengumpulan dan pengelolaan data dalam penelitian pendidikan: Kajian teoretis dan praktis. *Ihsan: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 3(3), 573–581. <https://doi.org/10.61104/ihsan.v3i3.1045>
- Sallata, O. M., Djafri, N., & Lamatenggo, N. (2024). Desain manajemen mutu pendidikan sekolah dalam kepemimpinan kepala sekolah dan guru secara sentralisasi dan desentralisasi. *Damhil Education Journal*, 4(2), 159–166. <https://doi.org/10.37905/dej.v4i2.2591>
- Sarwoedi, Adekamisti, R., Handayani, T., & Novianty, E. (2025). Implementasi manajemen sistem pendidikan pada tingkat dasar dan menengah: Tantangan dan solusi. *Dirasah*, 8(1), 211–225. <https://doi.org/10.58401/dirasah.v8i1.1606>
- Sidiq, F., Sarbanun, A., & Handoko, C. (2025). Peran kepala sekolah dalam meningkatkan mutu kegiatan belajar mengajar di SMP PGRI 1 Kalianda Lampung Selatan. *Unisan: Jurnal Manajemen dan Pendidikan*, 4(3), 183–194. <https://journal.an-nur.ac.id/index.php/unisanjournal/article/view/4217>
- Subni, M., Putri, A. P., Restiawati, Y., Pelealu, N. C. O., & Dwiyono, Y. (2024). Implementasi kepemimpinan visioner dalam meningkatkan mutu pendidikan. *Sistema: Jurnal Pendidikan*, 5(1), 64–72. <https://doi.org/10.24903/sjp.v5i1.1808>
- Suherman, A., Firmansyah, Y., & Suherman. (2024). Manajemen sumber daya manusia yang efektif dan efisien dalam pendidikan di era 5.0. *Journal of Education Research*, 5(2), 2066–2073. <https://doi.org/10.37985/jer.v5i2.1079>
- Suherman, U., & Victorynie, I. (2025). Pengembangan sumber daya manusia dalam pendidikan: Strategi dan implikasi untuk pembelajaran berkualitas di era global. *As-Sulthan Journal of Education*, 1(3), 453–464. <https://ojssulthan.com/asje/article/view/46>
- Susanti, & Kurniati, E. (2025). Analisis pengembangan wilayah berbasis potensi lokal sebagai upaya peningkatan ekonomi daerah di Provinsi Lampung. *Jurnal Ilmu Ekonomi*, 4(1), 274–297. <https://doi.org/10.59827/jie.v4i1.224>
- Windasari, I. (2024). Akuntabilitas dan transparansi pengelolaan keuangan dalam perspektif Islam. *Hasina: Jurnal Akuntansi dan Bisnis Syariah*, 1(1), 10–25. <https://doi.org/10.35897/hasina.v1i1.1395>
- Yohana, Ridho, F., & Malik. (2023). Peran kepemimpinan transformasional dalam mempengaruhi kinerja karyawan dengan motivasi kerja sebagai mediasi. *Master: Jurnal Manajemen Strategik Kewirausahaan*, 3(1), 89–100. <https://doi.org/10.37366/master.v3i1.673>
- Yusuf, A., & Hanif, M. (2025). Dampak desentralisasi pendidikan terhadap ketimpangan akses di Indonesia. *Jurnal Inovasi Penelitian Ilmu Pendidikan Indonesia*, 2(3), 153–166. <https://doi.org/10.31004/mnhraz85>
- Zayrin, A. A., Hafizah, N., Hanifah, H., Hidayatullah, R., & Harmonedi. (2024). Kepala sekolah sebagai pemimpin visioner di era Society 5.0. *At-Tarbiyah: Jurnal Penelitian dan Pendidikan Agama Islam*, 2(1), 248–254. <https://journal.staittd.ac.id/index.php/at/article/view/124>