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ORIGINAL RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Influence of Democratic Leadership Style and Organizational Culture on High School Teachers' Work Motivation

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the influence of democratic leadership style and organizational culture on high school teachers' work motivation in Sumberejo District, both partially and simultaneously. The research is motivated by the decline in teachers' work motivation due to high workload, the demands of the Merdeka Curriculum implementation, and the suboptimal application of leadership and organizational culture in schools. This study employed a quantitative approach with an associative research design. The population consisted of all high school teachers in Sumberejo District, with a sample of 57 teachers selected using cluster sampling technique. Data were collected through a Likert-scale questionnaire (1–5) that had been tested for validity and reliability. Data analysis techniques included descriptive statistics, multiple linear regression, t-test, F-test, and coefficient of determination (R^2) using SPSS. The results showed that: (1) democratic leadership style has a positive but not significant effect on teachers' work motivation (t -count = 1.730, sig. = 0.089 > 0.05); (2) organizational culture has a positive and significant effect on teachers' work motivation (t -count = 8.192, sig. = 0.000 < 0.05); (3) simultaneously, democratic leadership style and organizational culture have a significant effect on teachers' work motivation (F -count = 65.744, sig. = 0.000) with a contribution of 70.9% (R^2 = 0.709). This study concludes that organizational culture is the dominant factor in improving teachers' work motivation, while democratic leadership style alone is not sufficient. Therefore, strengthening organizational culture should be a priority in efforts to enhance teacher motivation and educational quality.

Keywords: Democratic Leadership, Organizational Culture, Work Motivation, High School Teachers



ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis pengaruh gaya kepemimpinan demokratis dan budaya organisasi terhadap motivasi kerja guru SMA di Kecamatan Sumberejo, baik secara parsial maupun simultan. Penelitian ini dilatarbelakangi oleh menurunnya motivasi kerja guru akibat beban kerja yang tinggi, tuntutan implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka, serta penerapan kepemimpinan dan budaya organisasi yang belum optimal di sekolah. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif dengan desain penelitian asosiatif. Populasi penelitian adalah seluruh guru SMA di Kecamatan Sumberejo dengan sampel sebanyak 57 guru yang dipilih menggunakan teknik cluster sampling. Data dikumpulkan melalui kuesioner skala Likert (1–5) yang telah diuji validitas dan reliabilitasnya. Teknik analisis data meliputi statistik deskriptif, regresi linier berganda, uji t, uji F, dan koefisien determinasi (R^2) menggunakan SPSS. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa: (1) gaya kepemimpinan demokratis berpengaruh positif tetapi tidak signifikan terhadap motivasi kerja guru (t -hitung = 1,730, sig. = 0,089 > 0,05); (2) budaya organisasi berpengaruh positif dan signifikan terhadap motivasi kerja guru (t -hitung = 8,192, sig. = 0,000 < 0,05); (3) secara simultan, gaya kepemimpinan demokratis dan budaya organisasi berpengaruh signifikan terhadap motivasi kerja guru (F -hitung = 65,744, sig. = 0,000) dengan kontribusi sebesar 70,9% (R^2 = 0,709). Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa budaya organisasi merupakan faktor dominan dalam meningkatkan motivasi kerja guru, sementara gaya kepemimpinan demokratis saja tidak cukup. Oleh karena itu, penguatan budaya organisasi harus menjadi prioritas dalam upaya peningkatan motivasi guru dan kualitas pendidikan.

Kata Kunci: Kepemimpinan Demokratis, Budaya Organisasi, Motivasi Kerja, Guru SMA

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1. INTRODUCTION

Education is a fundamental aspect of developing high-quality and competitive human resources. In the national education system, Senior High Schools (SMA) contribute significantly not only to academic achievement but also to shaping the spiritual, social, and moral character of students. The quality of education largely determines the quality of a nation and has a substantial impact on driving social change toward a smarter and more dignified society (Adelia & Salito, 2025). However, teacher quality cannot stand alone; it is influenced by leadership—namely the principal—who can create a conducive work environment, provide professional support, and direct the educational vision of the school.

The Indonesian education system is currently undergoing a significant transformation with the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum (KURMER), which aims for student-centered learning, including differentiated learning and character development. This character development demands that teachers become more creative, adaptive, and innovative in designing and implementing meaningful learning (Nathasya, 2024). However, field phenomena indicate that many teachers experience a high administrative workload, such as filling digital data, preparing complex teaching tools, and multiple layers of reporting that consume time (Interview with teachers, June 2025). This condition causes fatigue and decreases work motivation, thereby impacting the quality of the learning process.

In such situations, the democratic leadership style becomes a very important factor for increasing teacher motivation in schools. The principal is strategically responsible for supporting teachers' professional growth and creating a good educational environment. The principal not only functions as an administrator responsible for managing school resources but must also act as an intelligent leader who can transform education, motivate teachers, build a team work culture, and direct the school's vision and mission to support the achievement of national education goals (Pitriyani, 2023). The democratic leadership style emphasizes the active participation of organizational members in decision-making, open communication, and appreciation of subordinates' ideas and opinions. In practice, democratic leadership can create a conducive and collaborative work atmosphere (Ihsan & Soleha, 2024).

Recent studies also show that democratic leadership can increase job satisfaction, learning quality, and create an innovative and participatory work environment (Ayana & Jasiah, 2025). Participative leadership encourages teacher involvement, increases sense of belonging to the organization, and strengthens work commitment. Thus, the democratic leadership style has an important role in increasing teacher work motivation in schools. However, achieving and maintaining high levels of teacher motivation is not an easy task. Various challenges arise, especially in Islamic-based educational institutions such as madrasahs and general high schools, which face dual challenges in increasing teacher engagement (Robani & Mustofa, 2024).

In addition to leadership factors, school organizational culture is also an important factor affecting teacher work motivation. Organizational culture is a system of values, norms, and habits that develop within the organization and influence the behavior of its members. A strong and positive organizational culture will create a comfortable work environment, improve cooperation, and encourage high work spirit. Conversely, a weak organizational culture can lead to low teacher motivation and performance (Rachmadhani & Manafe, 2023). A good organizational culture in the school environment is reflected through effective communication, harmonious working relationships, and the presence of professionalism and collaboration values. Research shows that an inclusive and participatory organizational culture can increase member engagement and motivation (Rifka Alkhilyatul Ma'rifat et al., 2024).

Furthermore, democratic leadership also contributes to forming a positive organizational culture by encouraging participation and appreciating diversity of opinions within the organization (Rahmawati et al., 2023). In the context of modern education, teachers face various challenges such as technological developments, dynamic curriculum demands, and increasingly complex student needs. This condition requires support from effective leadership as well as an adaptive and conducive organizational culture. Without such support, teacher work motivation potentially decreases, ultimately impacting the overall quality of education (Rohana et al., 2024).

However, the reality on the ground shows that there are still various problems related to teacher work motivation, especially at the high school level in Sumberejo District, Tanggamus Regency, Lampung Province. Preliminary observations and interviews indicated that teachers faced high administrative burdens, lack of involvement in decision-making, less effective communication between leaders and teachers, and an organizational culture that had not fully supported teacher professional development. These problems indicate a gap between ideal conditions and actual conditions in the field. Previous research has generally focused on the influence of leadership and

organizational culture on teacher performance, but research specifically examining the influence of democratic leadership style and organizational culture on high school teacher work motivation is still relatively limited.

Moreover, the results of initial surveys at several high schools in Sumberejo District showed that many teachers experienced decreased enthusiasm due to the complexity of implementing the Merdeka Curriculum, the burden of digital reporting, and the lack of appreciation from the school. Several teachers also expressed that the principal's leadership style tended to be less participatory, and the organizational culture had not yet fully supported innovation and collaboration (Interview with teachers, 2025). This phenomenon indicates that the democratic leadership style applied has not optimally impacted teacher work motivation, and organizational culture has not functioned as a driving force for teacher enthusiasm. Therefore, this research is important to conduct to provide empirical contributions to the development of educational management, especially in improving teacher work motivation through the application of appropriate leadership styles and strengthening school organizational culture.

Based on the above description, this study aims to: (1) analyze the partial influence of democratic leadership style on high school teachers' work motivation in Sumberejo District; (2) analyze the partial influence of organizational culture on high school teachers' work motivation in Sumberejo District; (3) analyze the simultaneous influence of democratic leadership style and organizational culture on high school teachers' work motivation in Sumberejo District. The results of this study are expected to provide theoretical contributions to the development of Islamic educational management and practical recommendations for school principals in improving teacher work motivation through the application of democratic leadership and strengthening organizational culture.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a quantitative approach with an associative causal design, which aims to determine the cause-and-effect relationship between the independent variables (democratic leadership style and organizational culture) and the dependent variable (teacher work motivation). The quantitative approach was chosen because it allows statistical hypothesis testing and generalization of results (Sugiyono, 2019; Indrawan & Yaniawati, 2016). The type of research used was a survey, in which data were collected through a closed-ended questionnaire with a Likert scale of 1–5 (Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree). The associative research design was used to test the influence between variables, both partially and simultaneously (Sugiyono, 2022).

The research was conducted in Sumberejo District, Tanggamus Regency, Lampung Province, at two high schools: SMA Islam Kebumen and SMA Negeri 1 Sumberejo. The research location was chosen because these schools have diverse characteristics in terms of school management, organizational culture, and principal leadership styles. The research was conducted during the even semester of the 2025/2026 academic year, from January to April 2026. The timeline included instrument preparation, validity and reliability testing, data collection, analysis, and report writing.

The population of this study was all high school teachers in Sumberejo District, totaling 102 teachers (data from the education office). The sample was determined using cluster sampling technique, where the researcher took one cluster (two schools) with a total of 57 teachers who were willing to fill out the questionnaire completely. The sample consisted of teachers from SMA Islam Kebumen (43 teachers) and SMA Negeri 1 Sumberejo (58 teachers), but only 57 responded completely. The inclusion criteria were: permanent teachers who had been teaching for at least one year and were willing to fill out the questionnaire. The sampling technique used was purposive cluster sampling, which is appropriate when the population is heterogeneous and the researcher wants to take samples from specific clusters (Asrulla et al., 2023).

The research instrument was a questionnaire developed based on the indicators of each variable. The democratic leadership style variable (X_1) was measured using 12 items adapted from Robbins & Judge (2019) and Yukl (2013), with indicators: behavior, communication, ability, personal quality, and self-development. The organizational culture variable (X_2) was measured using 12 items adapted from Schein (2010) and Robbins (2016), with indicators: organizational values, behavior patterns, organizational communication, and organizational commitment. The teacher work motivation variable (Y) was measured using 12 items adapted from Sardiman (2018), Uno (2016), and Mulyasa (2020), with indicators: intrinsic motivation (responsibility, perseverance, achievement desire) and extrinsic motivation (competence, work quality). Validity testing used Pearson Product Moment correlation with r -table for $n=30$ of 0.361. The validity test results showed that all 36 items were valid (r -values ranging from 0.63 to 0.92). Reliability testing using Cronbach's Alpha yielded values of 0.89 for X_1 , 0.87 for X_2 , and 0.91 for Y , all >0.70 , so the instrument was declared very reliable (Ghozali, 2016).

Table 1. Characteristics of Research Respondents (N=57)

Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	12	21.1%
	Female	45	78.9%
School Type	Public (SMA Negeri 1)	30	52.6%
	Private (SMA Islam Kebumen)	27	47.4%
Teaching Experience	1-5 years	18	31.6%
	6-10 years	22	38.6%
	>10 years	17	29.8%

Data analysis techniques used descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, min, max) to describe the level of each variable, and inferential statistics in the form of multiple linear regression to test the hypotheses. Before regression, classical assumption tests were performed: normality test (Kolmogorov-Smirnov), linearity test (ANOVA), multicollinearity test (VIF and Tolerance), autocorrelation test (Durbin-Watson), and heteroscedasticity test (Glejser). All calculations used SPSS version 20. The regression equation used was $Y = a + b_1X_1 + b_2X_2 + e$. Hypothesis testing was conducted using the F-test for simultaneous effects and the t-test for partial effects, at a significance level of $\alpha=0.05$ (Sugiyono, 2019; Dharma, 2021).

3. RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Description of Research Location and Respondent Characteristics

Sumberejo District is located in Tanggamus Regency, Lampung Province, geographically situated at approximately 5°22' South Latitude and 104°41' East Longitude. The area is dominated by highlands and hills as part of the Bukit Barisan mountain range, around the foot of Mount Tanggamus. This condition makes the soil relatively fertile and very supportive of agricultural and plantation activities. The research was conducted at two high schools: SMA Islam Kebumen (43 teachers) and SMA Negeri 1 Sumberejo (58 teachers), with a total of 57 respondents who fully completed the questionnaire. The majority of respondents were female (78.9%), with teaching experience dominated by 6-10 years (38.6%). This demographic reflects the general trend in the teaching profession in Indonesia, where women dominate the education sector, especially at the secondary school level.

Table 2. Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (N = 57)

Characteristic	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	45	78.9
	Male	12	21.1
Teaching Experience	6–10 years	22	38.6
	Other experience categories	35	61.4
Total		57	100.0

Descriptive Statistics of Each Variable

The results of descriptive statistical analysis showed that the democratic leadership style variable (X_1) had a mean score of 48.2 from a maximum score of 60, with a standard deviation of 5.67. Based on three-level categorization (low, medium, high), this value falls into the medium category, meaning that the implementation of democratic leadership by school principals in Sumberejo District is quite good but not yet optimal. The indicator of participatory decision-making obtained the highest score, while the indicator of open communication obtained the lowest score.

The organizational culture variable (X_2) had a mean of 52.8 from a maximum score of 60, with a standard deviation of 4.89, falling into the high category. This indicates that the organizational culture in the research schools has been well established. The highest score was on the indicator of shared values and beliefs, while the lowest score was on the innovation and adaptation indicator. The teacher work motivation variable (Y) had a mean of 53.4 from a maximum score of 60, with a standard deviation of 5.12, also falling into the high category. The highest score was on the dedication indicator, while the lowest score was on the absorption indicator.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of Research Variables

Variables	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Category
Democratic Leadership (X ₁)	57	39	60	48.2	5.67	Medium
Organizational Culture (X ₂)	57	42	60	52.8	4.89	High
Work Motivation (Y)	57	39	60	53.4	5.12	High

Classical Assumption Test Results

Before hypothesis testing, classical assumption tests were performed. The normality test using Kolmogorov-Smirnov showed a significance value of 0.625 (>0.05), so the residual data were normally distributed. The linearity test for X₁-Y showed a significance of 0.455 (>0.05) and for X₂-Y showed a significance of 0.033 (>0.05), so both relationships were linear. The multicollinearity test showed Tolerance values of 0.659 (>0.10) and VIF values of 1.517 (<10), so no multicollinearity was present. The Durbin-Watson value was 2.155 (close to 2), so no autocorrelation was present. The heteroscedasticity test using Glejser showed significance for X₁ (0.276) and X₂ (0.090), both >0.05 , so no heteroscedasticity was present. Thus, all classical assumptions were met.

Multiple Linear Regression Equation

The multiple linear regression analysis produced the following equation: $Y = 4.657 + 0.163X_1 + 0.759X_2$. Interpretation: The constant value of 4.657 indicates that without the influence of democratic leadership style and organizational culture, teacher work motivation would be 4.657. The regression coefficient for democratic leadership (X₁) is 0.163, meaning that for every one-unit increase in democratic leadership, work motivation increases by 0.163 units, assuming other variables are constant. The regression coefficient for organizational culture (X₂) is 0.759, meaning that for every one-unit increase in organizational culture, work motivation increases by 0.759 units, assuming other variables are constant. This shows that organizational culture has a much larger influence (4.7 times) compared to democratic leadership style.

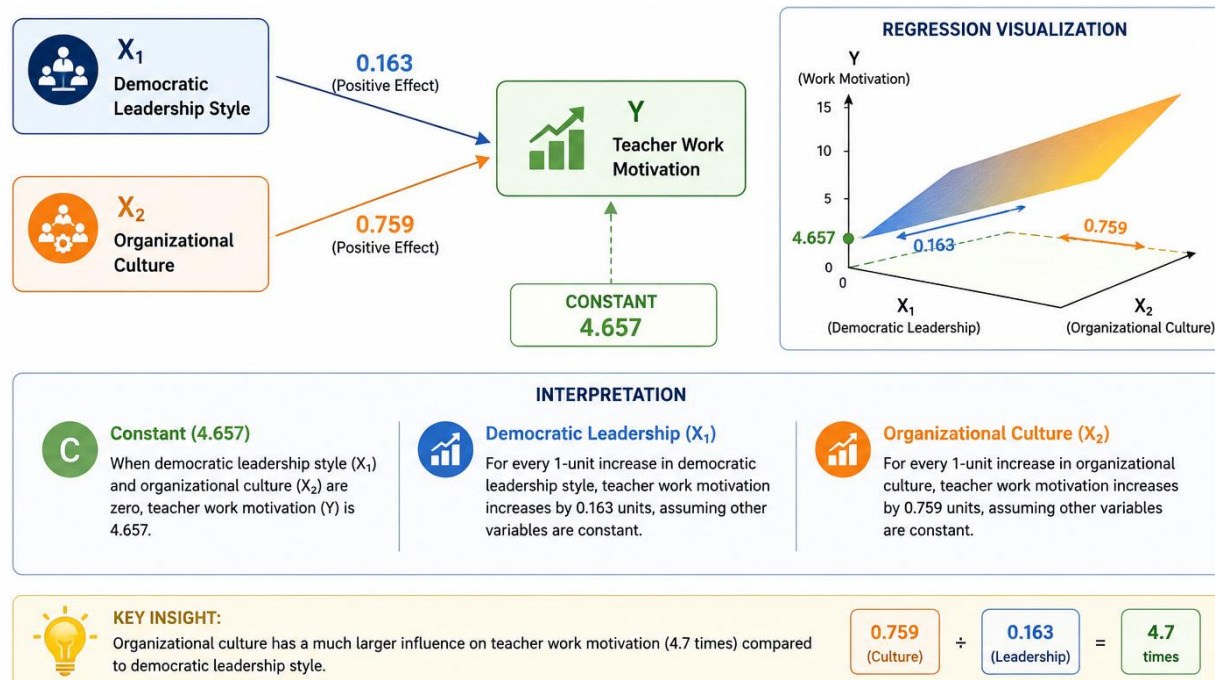


Figure 1. Multiple Linear Regression Equation

Partial Hypothesis Test (t-test)

Effect of Democratic Leadership on Work Motivation (H_1): The t-test result for X_1 showed t-count = 1.730 with significance 0.089 (>0.05). Therefore, H_0 is accepted and H_1 is rejected. This means that democratic leadership style has a positive but not significant effect on teacher work motivation. Although the coefficient is positive, the effect is not statistically significant at $\alpha=0.05$. Effect of Organizational Culture on Work Motivation (H_2): The t-test result for X_2 showed t-count = 8.192 with significance 0.000 (<0.05). Therefore, H_0 is rejected and H_1 is accepted. This means that organizational culture has a positive and significant effect on teacher work motivation. The large t-count value indicates that organizational culture is a strong predictor of work motivation.

Simultaneous Hypothesis Test (F-test) and Coefficient of Determination

The F-test result showed F-count = 65.744 with significance 0.000 (<0.05). Therefore, H_0 is rejected and H_1 is accepted, meaning that democratic leadership style and organizational culture simultaneously have a significant effect on teacher work motivation. The R Square value of 0.709 (70.9%) indicates that both independent variables together explain 70.9% of the variation in teacher work motivation, while the remaining 29.1% is explained by other variables outside the study (such as compensation, physical work environment, job satisfaction, or individual factors).

Table 4. Multiple Linear Regression Analysis Results

Variable	Coefficient B	Std. Error	t-count	Sig.	Description
Constant	4.657	4.467	1.043	0.302	-
Democratic Leadership (X ₁)	0.163	0.094	1.730	0.089	Not Significant
Organizational Culture (X ₂)	0.759	0.093	8.192	0.000	Significant
R = 0.842	R Square = 0.709	Adjusted R Square = 0.698	F-count = 65.744	Sig. F = 0.000	

DISCUSSION

1. Level of Democratic Leadership Style Implementation in Sumberejo District High Schools

The research results showed that the implementation of democratic leadership style in the two high schools in Sumberejo District was in the medium category (mean 48.2 out of 60). This indicates that school principals have applied democratic principles such as participation, open communication, and participatory decision-making, but the implementation is not yet optimal. The highest indicator was participatory decision-making, showing that principals have attempted to involve teachers in school policy discussions. However, the lowest indicator was open communication, indicating that communication between principals and teachers is still not fully effective (Asparani et al., 2025). This finding aligns with the theory of Robbins & Judge (2019) that democratic leadership is characterized by member involvement, two-way communication, and participative decision-making. However, in practice, formal involvement often does not translate into substantive participation (Rahmawati & Aliyyah, 2024). In the context of high schools in Sumberejo District, which is a semi-rural area with dominant agricultural activities, the hierarchical culture still influences principal-teacher relationships, so even though principals apply democratic styles, the impact is not yet maximal.

2. Level of Organizational Culture in Sumberejo District High Schools

Organizational culture in the research schools was in the high category (mean 52.8 out of 60), indicating that shared values, work norms, and interaction patterns have been well established. The highest score was on shared values and beliefs, showing that Islamic values such as honesty, trustworthiness, and responsibility have been well internalized among teachers. This aligns with Schein's (2010) view that organizational culture includes dominant values that guide member behavior. The lowest score was on innovation and adaptation, indicating that the schools are still weak in encouraging creativity and trying new things. This finding is consistent with research by Tripiawan & Aurachman (2019) which states that low innovation culture may be due to lack of appreciation for creative ideas, limited supporting facilities, or a work climate that does not support experimentation. In the era of educational disruption and digitalization, the ability to innovate is key to adapting to changes in curriculum and learning technology (Kraus, 2024). Therefore, strengthening the innovation culture should be a priority for schools in Sumberejo District.

3. Level of Teacher Work Motivation in Sumberejo District High Schools

Teacher work motivation was in the high category (mean 53.4 out of 60), reflecting that generally teachers have sufficient emotional and psychological attachment to their work. The highest score was on dedication, indicating that teachers feel proud, enthusiastic, and consider teaching work very meaningful. This aligns with Sardiman's (2018) definition that dedication refers to feelings of meaningfulness, inspiration, and challenge at work. However, the lowest score was on absorption, indicating that teachers have not fully immersed and focused on their work. Low absorption may be caused by excessive administrative burdens from Merdeka Curriculum implementation, distractions from non-teaching tasks, and lack of work environment support (Nathasya, 2024). This finding also confirms the 2024 Integrity Assessment Survey data reporting high rates of tardiness and absenteeism among teachers in Lampung Province. Therefore, schools need to create an environment that allows teachers to concentrate fully on the learning process by reducing unnecessary administrative burdens.

4. Effect of Democratic Leadership on Teacher Work Motivation (Not Significant)

The hypothesis test proved that democratic leadership style has a positive but not significant effect on teacher work motivation ($t=1.730$; $\text{sig.}=0.089$). This finding indicates that the application of democratic leadership by school principals has not been able to directly increase teacher work motivation significantly. Theoretically, according to Robbins & Judge (2019), democratic leadership is characterized by member involvement, two-way communication, and participative decision-making. These characteristics have direct implications for teachers' psychological aspects. When teachers are involved in decision-making, they feel valued and have a role in the organization, which should increase work motivation (Herlina et al., 2024). However, the empirical results of this study show that this influence is not yet significant. Several factors explain this non-significant result.

First, the implementation of democratic leadership in the research schools is still not optimal. Teacher involvement in decision-making is often merely formalistic, not substantive, so it does not create a strong sense of belonging. Second, the diverse characteristics of teachers cause different responses to leadership styles, where some teachers need clear direction rather than participative freedom. Third, the school organizational culture tends to be hierarchical, which can hinder the effectiveness of democratic leadership. Fourth, external factors are more dominant, such as high workload, suboptimal reward systems, and complex educational policy demands. Fifth, less effective communication between principals and teachers also causes the values of democratic leadership not to be conveyed optimally. This finding is consistent with research by Ajisasmito & Saryatmo (2024) which found that leadership style does not directly affect innovation ability, but is mediated by other variables. This confirms that democratic leadership alone is not sufficient to increase teacher work motivation.

From the perspective of Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory, the non-significant effect can be explained because teachers' basic needs such as welfare, job security, and workload have not been fully met. When basic needs are not satisfied, higher-level needs such as participation in decision-making do not become the main drivers of motivation. This is in line with Vroom's expectancy theory, which states that motivation is influenced by an individual's expectations of outcomes and

rewards obtained (Silalah, 2023). If teachers feel that their participation does not lead to concrete rewards or improvements in working conditions, then the democratic leadership style will not significantly increase their motivation.

5. Effect of Organizational Culture on Teacher Work Motivation

The hypothesis test proved that organizational culture has a positive and significant effect on teacher work motivation ($t=8.192$; $\text{sig.}=0.000$). This finding indicates that the stronger the organizational culture established in schools, the higher the teacher work motivation. The regression coefficient of 0.759 shows that organizational culture has a much larger influence compared to democratic leadership (0.163). Theoretically, this finding can be explained through Albert Bandura's social learning theory perspective, which states that individuals learn not only through direct experience but also through observation of their social environment (Bandura, 1986). In the school context, teachers observe the behavior of colleagues and leaders that reflects organizational culture values such as discipline, cooperation, responsibility, and commitment. Through the stages of attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation, these behaviors are then imitated and internalized by individuals. When positive behaviors are seen to produce results or rewards, the tendency to imitate them becomes stronger, directly impacting the increase in teacher work motivation.

Furthermore, according to Edgar H. Schein (2010), organizational culture is a pattern of values and basic assumptions learned and passed on to members as the correct way to think and act. When these values have taken root, social pressure emerges that encourages individuals to adjust to the environment. This condition is in line with the concept of contagion effect, where positive culture spreads and influences the behavior of other members collectively. In the context of high schools in Sumberejo District, the high score on shared values and beliefs (such as cooperation, responsibility, integrity) shows that these values have been well internalized among teachers. When every teacher feels that they are part of a community that upholds professionalism and mutual respect, then work motivation will increase naturally. This finding is consistent with research by Rohmahs (2024) which states that organizational culture serves as a social glue that strengthens the emotional bond among teachers and with the institution.

6. Simultaneous Effect and Dominance of Organizational Culture

The simultaneous test ($F=65.744$; $\text{sig.}=0.000$) and R Square value of 0.709 prove that democratic leadership style and organizational culture together have a significant effect on teacher work motivation, explaining 70.9% of the variation. This is a relatively high figure for social research. However, the partial test shows that organizational culture ($\beta=0.741$) has a much larger contribution than democratic leadership ($\beta=0.156$). This indicates that organizational culture is the dominant factor in increasing teacher work motivation in the research schools. The regression equation $Y = 4.657 + 0.163X_1 + 0.759X_2$ confirms that when organizational culture increases by one unit, work motivation increases by 0.759 units, while the same increase in democratic leadership only increases motivation by 0.163 units. This finding suggests that although democratic leadership is important, without support from a strong organizational culture, the increase in work motivation will not be optimal.

Conceptually, this simultaneous relationship can be explained using the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) theory by Bakker & Demerouti. Organizational culture functions as a social resource that provides emotional and social support to teachers. A positive culture creates psychological safety, which is a condition where teachers feel safe to express opinions, try new things, and make mistakes without fear of excessive sanctions. Meanwhile, democratic leadership functions as an organizational resource that provides structural support through participatory decision-making. The combination of both creates optimal psychological conditions for teachers to fully engage in their work. However, the dominance of organizational culture shows that in the context of high schools in Sumberejo District, social and cultural factors are more influential than structural leadership factors (Rifka Alkhilyatul Ma'rifat et al., 2024). This is because organizational culture works not merely as a formal rule but as a psychological and social mechanism that "infects" through the process of behavior imitation. When a positive culture has taken root, without instruction, teachers will be encouraged to behave productively. This explains why organizational culture is the most dominant factor in increasing teacher work motivation.

The findings of this study align with and strengthen previous research. Research by Abdillah et al. (2024) found that democratic leadership style and organizational culture simultaneously have a significant effect on employee commitment and work motivation. Research by Asy'ari & Ratnaningsih (n.d.) also showed that principal leadership and school culture simultaneously affect teacher performance and motivation. Research by Endrawati et al. (2025) found that democratic leadership style and work environment have a positive and significant effect on teacher work motivation and performance. However, the finding that democratic leadership style has a non-significant partial effect differs from some previous studies. This difference can be explained by the specific context of this research location, which is a semi-rural area with a strong hierarchical culture. Research by Banuyekti (2024) in urban vocational schools found a significant effect, indicating that context influences the effectiveness of democratic leadership. Thus, this research provides an important nuance that democratic leadership is not a universal solution; its effectiveness depends on the local context and organizational culture.

Theoretically, this research enriches the body of knowledge in educational management by confirming that organizational culture is a stronger predictor of teacher work motivation than democratic leadership style in semi-rural high school contexts. This finding supports the theory that organizational effectiveness is determined not only by leadership factors but also by cultural factors that develop collectively. In an Islamic perspective, these findings align with the principles of *ta'awun* (mutual cooperation) and *amanah* (trustworthiness) that form the foundation of a healthy organizational culture (Sari et al., 2022). Practically, this research provides important recommendations for school principals. First, strengthening organizational culture should be the main priority in efforts to increase teacher work motivation. This can be done by consistently cultivating values such as cooperation, responsibility, integrity, and discipline through work habits and collective activities. Second, although democratic leadership has not shown a significant partial effect, it still needs to be maintained because it contributes simultaneously with organizational culture. Principals need to increase the substance of teacher involvement in decision-making, not just formalities. Third, schools need to develop an innovation culture by providing appreciation for creative ideas, facilitating training, and creating a safe space for experimentation.

This study has several limitations. First, the research location is limited to two high schools in Sumberejo District, Tanggamus Regency, so the results cannot be generalized to all high schools in Lampung Province or Indonesia. Second, the cross-sectional quantitative approach cannot capture the dynamics of changes in work motivation over time. Third, the R Square value of 0.709 means that 29.1% of the variation is explained by other variables not included in this study, such as compensation, physical work environment, job satisfaction, workload, and individual factors like self-efficacy. Fourth, the use of self-report questionnaires may lead to social desirability bias. Fifth, the democratic leadership variable had a non-significant effect, which may be due to the relatively low variance in respondents' perceptions or the need for mediating variables. Future research should consider adding mediating variables such as job satisfaction or work environment, using a mixed-methods approach, and expanding the research location to multiple schools in various regions.

5. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Based on the results of data analysis and discussion, it can be concluded that democratic leadership style has a positive but not significant effect on high school teachers' work motivation in Sumberejo District ($t = 1.730$, $\text{sig.} = 0.089 > 0.05$), with a regression coefficient of 0.163, indicating that a one-unit increase in democratic leadership only increases work motivation by 0.163 units due to suboptimal implementation, formalistic involvement, diverse teacher characteristics, hierarchical culture, and more dominant external factors such as high workload and inadequate reward systems, while from Maslow's perspective, teachers' basic needs for welfare and job security remain unmet, so higher-level needs like participation do not drive motivation. In contrast, organizational culture has a positive and significant effect on work motivation ($t = 8.192$, $\text{sig.} = 0.000 < 0.05$), with a coefficient of 0.759—4.7 times larger than that of democratic leadership—working through social learning mechanisms (observation and imitation) where strong shared values of cooperation, responsibility, and integrity create a positive work environment that naturally enhances motivation without constant leader direction. Simultaneously, democratic leadership and organizational culture together have a significant effect ($F = 65.744$, $\text{sig.} = 0.000$, $R^2 = 0.709$), explaining 70.9% of the variation in teacher work motivation, with organizational culture dominating; thus, strengthening a solid, adaptive, and sustainable organizational culture should be the main strategy for improving teacher motivation, while democratic leadership serves as a supporting factor, reinforcing that enhancing teachers' motivation cannot rely solely on leadership but must be built on a strong cultural foundation for educational quality.

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