

**A STUDY OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TEACHERS' PERCEPTION TOWARDS ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE AND THEIR FOLLOWERSHIP DIMENSIONS AT THE NO.2 MIDDLE SCHOOL, GANSU, CHINA**

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**Abstract:** The main purpose of this research study was to determine the relationship between teachers' perceptions towards organizational culture and their followership dimensions at the No.2 Middle School, China. The study was conducted to survey all the teachers from the selected schools managed in China from 2019-2020. In this study, the research instrument for Part II investigated the teachers' perception of organizational culture adopted from Gruenert and Valentine's (1998) School Culture Survey (SCS). Part III measured the teachers' perception of followership dimensions adopted from Kelley (1992) Followership Questionnaire for the questionnaire. The collected data from the survey were analyzed by descriptive statistics, *Frequency* and *Percentage*, *Mean* and *Standard Deviation*, and *Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient*. A high level of teachers' perception was found based on organizational culture and Followership Dimensions. The *r*-value was .493 with a significance value of .000, according to the Pearson correlation coefficient. The study results showed that the level of teachers' perceptions towards organizational culture and their followership dimensions were high in the schools. The correlation analysis result showed a significant relationship between teachers' perceptions towards organizational culture and their followership dimensions. To develop high-efficiency and high-quality teaching, teachers need to improve their independent thinking ability, actively share and accept ideas and have independent thinking ability. Teachers need to help and support each other, encourage each other, and improve their perception of school organizational culture and followership.

**Keywords:** Teachers' Perception; Organizational Culture and Followership; No.2 Middle School, China

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### **Introduction**

In this century, we have witnessed the pace of the knowledge-based economy becoming faster. In an environment where knowledge is updated so quickly, the concept of organizational management will also make some adjustments that are completely different from the past. As a cultural management mode, organizational culture can coordinate interpersonal relationships, enhance organizational cohesion, cultivate team spirit, and guide members to common goals, which is of great significance in management.

Abroad, the theory of school organizational culture develops from the theory of organization. The purpose of the research is to explore the relationship between organizational culture and management performance and pay attention to the management effect of organizational culture. In China, the research of school organizational culture mainly emphasizing the educational function of culture.

For a long time, culture has been an important concept to understand and improve human society and organization. Organizational culture is a long-term characteristic of an organization. It can let members experience it and deeply affect the process and behavior of an organization. As a special social organization, no matter its structure, the culture of school organizations is everywhere.

Organizational culture is the deep expression of organizational structure. It is an invisible force and embodies the basic spirit of a school organization. The improvement of school efficiency should focus on the improvement of organizational structure and strengthen the improvement of school organizational culture (Chen, 2013).

The popularity of organizational culture in educational management is related to the research on the characteristics of successful corporate culture in the 1980s, forming a trend of thought in the study of school organizational culture. In 1981, Lin Qingjiang, a Taiwanese scholar, discussed school culture in the new theory of Sociology of education. He called the value and behavior system composed of various elements in the school as school culture. He thought that school culture is the expression of the values and spirit of school organizations.

In 1982, Purkey and Smith (1982) comprehensively reviewed various “effective schools” research results.” They regarded school organizational culture as an important variable of “effective schools” and “school improvement” and regarded the construction of school organizational culture

as the secret of school success. The organizational culture of high-quality schools is a kind of value that guides the staff and students toward successful teaching and learning.

### **Research Objectives**

This research was designed to study the following questions:

1. What is the level of teachers' perception towards organizational culture at the No.2 Middle School, Gansu, China?
2. What are the teachers' followership dimensions at the No.2 Middle School, Gansu, China?
3. Is there any relationship between teachers' perception towards organizational culture and their followership dimensions at the No.2 Middle School, Gansu, China?

### **Literature Review**

*Kelley's Theory of Followership (1992)*

Followership described a relationship the follower has with the leader in the form of a common bond surrounding the organizational values, the vision set for the organization, or the organization's mission (Kelley, 1992).

Kelley (1992) developed a two-dimensional model to explain and evaluate the differences between ineffective and effective followers within an organization. The first of these dimensions was independent critical thinking versus dependent uncritical thinking. The second of these dimensions look to identify the extent to which a follower is either passive or active.

1. **Independent Thinking** includes independent critical thinking versus dependent uncritical thinking. Independent followers, critical thinkers consider the impact of their actions on the organization; they are willing to be inventive and offer constructive criticism despite the consequences. On the other hand, dependent, uncritical thinkers go by the leader's thinking and do what the leader tells them to do.
2. **Active Engagement** includes active versus passive behavior. Active followers usually take the initiative in making decisions and completing tasks without the continuous guidance or feedback of leaders and actively participate in the performance of duties and other activities in the organization. They do more than they need to do, putting in extra effort to achieve their goals, thereby improving job satisfaction and commitment. Passive followers, on the other hand, wait for someone to tell them what to do.

### *Organizational Culture*

Organizational culture is essential for academic research and education, organizational theory, and, indeed, management practice. A fundamental component of organizational culture is the cultural dimension, which has implications on emotions, thoughts, values, and the consequent behavior of individual employees within a school setting. These respective implications are guided by ideas, beliefs and are rooted in cultural meanings, which are culturally shared. An essential issue to consider is whether management understands the importance of organizational culture and whether they consider it to be important or not. Although some studies may show that certain organizational managers do not consider culture to be an important part of their work environment, the culture of the organization has received a lot of attention in most contemporary organizations. It is – even today - considered to be crucial for the organization’s survival. In fact, Grey (2005) states that a critical concern is that “cultural management is eager to intervene and regulate existence, so there is no distance between the purpose of the individual and the purpose of the organization in which they work” (p. 68). For instance, Schein (1985) is the representative of an organization that specializes in qualitative research. His definition of the research theory has the broadest influence in the theoretical world. In *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, Schein directly points out that many people consider organizational culture the organization’s value orientation and the collective presentation of the employees’ common beliefs. Deal and Kennedy’s (1982) definition of organizational culture is mainly from its constituent elements. The two respective authors proposed that organizational culture is the comprehensive representation of the values and behaviors of employees at different levels in the cultural form of the environment inside and outside the organization.

On the other hand, Denison (1990) states that organizational culture is a set of implicitly formed principles, beliefs, and values generally supported by members. It is the cornerstone of the management behaviors of managers at all levels. At the same time, these management behaviors are continuously made in different stages of organizational development. The ideological value system is more stable, which promotes management practices to achieve or exceed expected results.

In summary, scholars generally believe that organizational culture is a set of norms including values, beliefs, principles, codes of conduct, traditional customs, and ways of doing things that all members of an organization share. Make the behavior of internal members change in favor of the organization in a higher and better direction.

*Denison's Theory of Organizational Culture*

Denison (1990) proposed and supported the four cultural characteristics of organizational culture and theories of effectiveness related to organizational performance, which include: (1) involvement, (2) consistency, (3) adaptability, and (4) mission. Involvement refers to the function of building employees' ability, engagement, and sense of responsibility. It reflects the contribution of organization members in decision-making related to the organization's goals and objectives; Consistency refers to how an organization coordinates well and has a strong and organized internal culture understood by its members; Adaptability reflects how quickly an organization can adapt to changes in its external environment, including customers and markets. Mission refers to a common definition of the functions and purposes of the organization and its members. Mission characteristics help to identify areas of inadequate preparation and to develop strategies and action plans systematically.

*Background of the School*

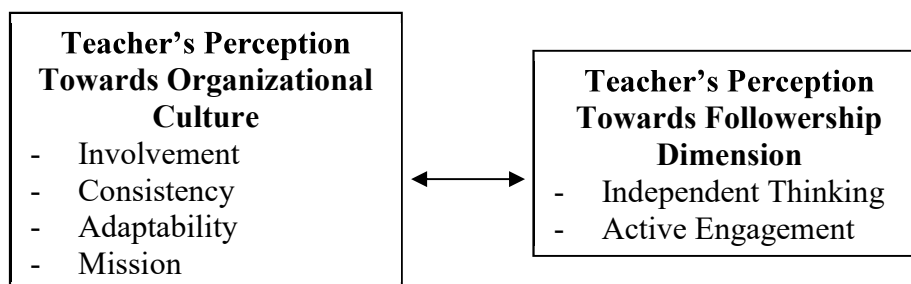
A No.2 middle school in China, which is a model school in Gansu province. And a model school refers to a school with high teaching quality, strict management, and unique characteristics. To make the school develop in the direction of high quality, high level of teachers, high quality of teaching, high quality of students, and high efficiency of management, the school strives to improve the school conditions. There are two teaching buildings with a building area of 14668 square meters, including physical, chemical, student laboratories, multi-functional lecture halls, and multimedia classrooms, suitable for modern teaching. The library has more than 90,000 books and a student reading room with 320 seats.

A campus local area network that can directly access the Internet provides students with a new and broad space for interactive learning, individual autonomous learning, and online learning in the computer environment. The office and teaching and research room are equipped with computers and an electronic preparation room for teachers to prepare lessons and consult materials. There are more than 1800 students' apartments, sports facilities, and Youth Activity Center. The improvement of school running conditions has laid a solid material foundation for the informatization and modernization of education in our school. The No.2 middle school, based on the existing teachers' team, adopts the strategy of paying equal attention to management and service, use and training, and backbone and all staff to promote the construction of a high-quality teachers' team. The school has established a provincial demonstration high school and adheres to learning, team, organization, system, and implementation. The school carries out quality

education in an all-around way, actively promotes educational innovation, and rapidly improves teaching quality. The results of the general examination and the college entrance examination rose in an all-around way.

### Conceptual Framework

As the theoretical framework was set up, this researcher used Denison Theory of Organizational Culture, including involvement consistency, adaptability, mission to investigate; and Kelley's Theory of Followership including an intense focus on independent thinking and Active Engagement to investigate the relationship between organizational culture and their followership dimensions at the No.2 Middle School, Gansu, China. Figure 1 presents the details of conceptual framework for this study as follows:



**Figure 1. Conceptual Framework**

### Research Method

#### *Population*

The target study group for this research comprised all full-time faculty teachers from a No.2 middle school in the academic year of 2019. As there were 79 teachers currently teaching in the school, all 79 teachers working full time from a No.2 middle school were used as the target group for this study.

#### *Instrumentation*

This research was designed as a quantitative and relationship study, which used the *School Culture Survey Questionnaires* developed by Gruenert & Valentine (1988) to investigate the teachers' perception of organizational culture as the major research instrument for data collection. And the followership dimensions were by using the *Followership Questionnaire* developed by Kelley. The questionnaires were divided into three parts:

Part (I) general inquiry on teachers' demographic profile including their gender, age, educational background.

Part (II) Teachers' perception of organizational culture; and

Part (III) Teachers' perception on followership dimensions in the No.2 middle schools, China. The researcher used descriptive statistics and correlation methods in this study.

## Findings

### *Research Objective One*

Table 1 indicates the summary of the total mean scores of teachers' perceptions towards organizational culture (3.87), in the range of 3.51- 4.50, which was interpreted as high according to the data interpretation criteria. The overall result indicated that teachers' 43 perceptions were high towards organizational culture.

It is noted that the component of adaptability gained the highest mean score (3.97), whereas the component of consistency achieved the lowest mean score (3.82). The item that received the highest mean responses indicated that teachers believed adaptability is important for the organizational culture.

In contrast, the lowest mean score indicates that teachers do not perceive consistency as an important factor in organizational culture.

Table 1. *The Summary of the Total Mean and Standard Deviations score of Teachers' Perceptions towards Organizational Culture (n=90)*

| Variable     | Mean | SD   | Interpretation |
|--------------|------|------|----------------|
| Mission      | 3.89 | 1.05 | High           |
| Adaptability | 3.97 | 0.94 | High           |
| Involvement  | 3.79 | 1.05 | High           |
| Consistency  | 3.83 | 0.98 | High           |
| Total        | 3.87 | 1.00 | High           |

### *Research Objective Two*

Table 2. *The Summary of the Total Mean and Standard Deviations score of Teacher's Perceptions towards Followership Dimensions (n=79)*

| Variable             | Mean | SD   | Interpretation |
|----------------------|------|------|----------------|
| Active Engagement    | 4.30 | 1.07 | High           |
| Independent Thinking | 3.88 | 1.06 | High           |
| Total                | 4.09 | 1.08 | High           |

*Research Objective Three*Table 3. *Pearson Correlation between the level of Teachers' Perceptions towards Organizational Culture and Followership Dimensions (n=79)*

| Variable               |                     | Followership Dimensions |
|------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------|
|                        | Pearson Correlation | .493                    |
| Organizational Culture | Sig. (2 tailed)     | 0.000                   |
|                        | N                   | 79                      |

Note: \*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The results of Table 3 show the relationship between teachers' perception towards organizational culture and their followership dimensions at the Second School, Gansu, China. Since the significance value was 0.00, which is less than .05, thus, it was concluded that there was a significant relationship between teachers' perception towards organizational 47 culture and their followership dimensions at the No.2 Middle School, Gansu, China.

This researcher accepted the research hypothesis and rejected the null hypothesis in this study. Additionally, the r-value .493\*\* indicates a positive relationship between teachers' perception of organizational culture and their followership dimensions at the No.2 Middle School, Gansu, China.

**Discussion**

The teachers' perception towards organizational culture and followership dimension was 0.00 - which was smaller than .05. Thus, it is concluded that there was a significant relationship between teachers' perception towards organizational culture and followership dimensions at the No.2 Middle School in China. In fact, the Pearson Correlation r-value was .493. This could be interpreted as a strong positive relationship between teachers' perception of organizational culture and followership dimensions at China's No.2 middle school. Kujur (2016) studied organizational culture and leadership capacity in the Marianists schools, India.

This study showed that the Adaptability and Mission variables scored slightly higher than the Involvement and Consistency variables. Based on these results, the employees 57 of the reviewed organization have a clear understanding of the organization's goals. Still, they have a slightly lower understanding of how to be actively involved in the work and adjust themselves to work in coordination with the organization's culture. This could reasonably be explained by the numerous low-scoring job functions illustrated in Chapter Four Teachers' Perceptions towards Followership Dimensions in the area of Independent Thinking of Table 15. While the explanation may be



straightforward, this researcher proposes that the sub-topics of Independent Thinking are a key factor that underlies the negative impact of the organizational culture on understanding, coordination, and goal attainment, as respectively mentioned.

Moe (2016) studied the relationship between teachers' perception of organizational culture and occupational stress. The results here show that the level of teachers' perception of organizational culture is moderate, which needs to be improved. In contrast, the level of teachers' perception of occupational stress is low, which illustrates that teachers have a sense of control over the school environment and situation.

It was found that the organization needs to assess, regularly, the design of its structure and strategy to achieve significant changes in the future livelihood of its organization. Suppose the organization realizes that it has a dysfunctional culture. In that case, it should make appropriate changes immediately, particularly in the case of the Second School, because there is still room for improvement and to grow from a level of high perception to very high. It is well known that schools must always be willing to adapt and meet the needs of the times by continually providing for professional development; for this purpose, improvement is possible. This will ensure the future of employees will lead to active hard work, but greater understanding, coordination, and engagement are needed (Kujur, 2016).

This study found that the degree of perception by teachers towards followership was also high (4.09). This suggested that teachers had a sense of security and cultural safety 58 within their workplace. This finding was similar to a recent study by Chris (2013), who came to the same conclusion. While this is a critical finding, it is also important to point out the key factors that were identified, based on previous studies, on how the mean score could be utilized to improve organizational followership. To this end, it was found that San (2018) noted a high score reflects effective management within the institution. San (2018) stated that there was a significant relationship between leaders' leadership ability and a flow-on effect on team performance, which is positive.

Similarly, this researcher also found that a high score in followership could reflect strong leadership even though it was found that teaching quality (particularly with regards to independent thinking) was not significantly high within the school context. This could indicate that greater supervision is required to improve teaching techniques or teachers' utilization and choice of theoretical or practical learning content (Chaleff, 2003). To support this

statement, it was found that Organizational Culture in the area of Mission was 3.98; although high, it did not meet the average standard found in Kujur's (2016) former studies.

Related to this respective finding, it was also established that teaching performance reflects the school's mission was the lowest-performing job-function (3.47) of teachers across the entire Organizational Culture Survey. This respective mean-score might echo an underlying issue that hinders job-performance alignment to the school mission. As a result, it was seen from the findings that teachers also contributed to the decline in the level of education (Kayawe, 2012). With these teachers in the classroom, the country's vision for education is far from being realized because they have little to offer their students. Overall, the researcher accepted the research hypothesis and rejected the null hypothesis for this study. Since the r-value was .493, this research concluded a positive relationship between teachers' perception of organizational culture and followership in the selected schools in China.

The study also found that the selected schoolteachers had high perceptions of organizational culture and followership. The possible justification is that organizational culture and followership are two sides of the same coin (Purkey & Smith, 1982) because leaders create culture first when developing teams and organizations. An organization's core values begin with the effective followership of employees (Purkey & Smith, 1982).

The previous researcher Kujur (2016) studied organizational culture and leadership capacity in India's Marianists schools. That respective study found a significant relationship between leadership capacity and organizational culture in the Marianists schools in India. He also mentioned that teachers from the selected school need to improve their leadership capacities, which is a rationale identified by this study. Moe (2016), who authored the relationship between teachers' perception towards organizational culture and occupational stress, found that there were significant relationships between teachers' perception towards organizational culture and occupational stress at the selected schools. However, the teachers' perceptions were moderate in organizational culture.

The researchers suggested that teachers needed to work more closely than before and develop into people with high productivity and good performance to achieve organizational goals. In addition, teachers should be provided with information and motivation to improve working conditions and reduce personal pressure in the workplace. The school or management should also check that the supervision, support, and relationship with teachers are properly

taken care of and strengthened. Chris (2013) studied the relationship between Followership Style and Job Performance in Botswana Private Universities. This study found out that there was a high relationship between passive followership style and job performance, indicating the high performance of lecturers who indicated this style of followership.

Chris (2013) studied the relationship between followership style and organizational safety culture. The results show that a significant relationship did exist between followership and organizational safety culture. The researcher suggested that as a dimension of an organization's safety culture, the impact of followership style may not be as important as previously thought (Mullen, Kelloway, Amp, & Teed, 2011). Therefore, to evaluate or enhance the active participation of employees, other aspects of demonstrating safety culture should be paid more attention. To sum up, followership plays a crucial role in creating and managing the organizational culture alive. Teachers' ability to participate actively and think independently can also be an area of opportunity, including organizational development plans. If organizations can find ways to improve teachers' active participation and independent thinking ability, they will enhance their cultural level. Therefore, the ability of active participation and independent thinking should be included in the training program to improve the organizational culture.

### **Recommendations**

The following recommendations would help the school director, schoolteachers', and future researchers

#### *Recommendation for the Teachers*

Based on the findings of the teachers' organizational culture and followership, the schoolteachers are highly responsible for the improvement of the organizational culture and followership. In order to develop high-efficiency and high-quality teaching, teachers need to improve their ability for independent thinking by actively sharing and accepting ideas. To be a teacher with independent thinking ability, teachers are recommended to help and support each other, encourage each other, and improve their perception of school organizational culture and followership.

#### *Recommendation for the Administrators*

One of the factors that affect teachers' perception is school leaders and administrators. In order to effectively manage the school, the following suggestions are put forward to the school leaders. First of all, school leaders need to understand the importance of teachers' followership for professional development because it can lead to teachers' work quality and school success.

Research shows that most teachers are not satisfied with their inability to participate in decision-making. Therefore, the researchers suggest that school leaders improve the organization's culture to enhance teachers' participation. School leaders also need to listen to teachers' suggestions and opinions, encourage teachers to think independently, and create more opportunities for their own and school development to achieve their own goals. Finally, school leaders need to provide development plans that emphasize how teachers develop and evaluate programs in the classroom to strengthen teaching. In addition, school leaders should cooperate with employees to implement effective leadership while supporting school-related behaviors. In this way, they can organize professional development plans, which require teachers to take the initiative in the teaching environment and improve students' learning.

*Recommendation for the school*

In order to improve the followership and organizational culture of teachers, the school needs to provide more trains for each teacher. School also needs to train teachers to perform their duties outside of their traditional roles and need to develop a plan to share responsibility in implementing decisions and agreements. In order to improve the organizational culture, schools need to make some strategies to let teachers use their professional network to obtain the latest information, allocate classroom teaching resources, and let teachers observe each other's teaching to improve teaching skills.

*Recommendation for the future researchers'*

Future researchers can investigate teachers' perceptions of followership and organizational culture and consider using quantitative and qualitative methods. Qualitative research on followership and organizational culture is likely to collect more facts, while quantitative research may not. These studies should also include in-depth interviews with principals, teachers, and staff. The mixed teaching methods can better understand teachers' perception of followership and organizational culture. Future researchers can consider researching the principals' perceptions towards organizational culture and followership levels.

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