

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE PRINCIPAL'S TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND THEIR JOB SATISFACTION IN WULANCHABU HENGSHUI ZHUOYUAN MIDDLE SCHOOL, CHINA

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Received: 18th March 2021

Revised: 21st April 2022

Accepted: 1st July 2022

Abstract: This study aimed to determine the relationship between teachers' perceptions of the principal's transformational leadership and their job satisfaction at Wulan Chabu Hengshui Zhuoyuan Middle School, China. The study surveyed 61 full-time teachers in the academic year of 2020. The findings showed that the teachers' perceptions of the principal's transformational leadership style was high. In contrast, the teachers' job satisfaction level at Wulan Chabu Hengshui Zhuoyuan Middle School was moderate. The correlation analysis result showed a strong positive relationship between teachers' perceptions of the principal's transformational leadership style and their job satisfaction at Wulan Chabu Hengshui Zhuoyuan Middle School, China, as the $r = 0.945$, $p < 0.001$.

Keywords: Teachers' Perception; Reward System; Organization Commitment;

Introduction

As an educational leader, the principal was seen as the key person to lead and guide the organization in achieving the goals of the school program (Edmonds, 1979). Since the 20th century, principals' leadership style has changed greatly to adapt to the increasing pressure and demands of the job. The change in standards from school administrator to school leader forces a new generation of school principals to establish and maintain a slight balance between effective management, guiding leadership, and the development of all school stakeholders as partners and leaders in the learning process (Burns, 2012). In the 21st century, school principals are more in need of change than

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ever before, and for decades it has been essential for principals to play a vital role in supporting school teachers.

Leadership is a research field that has undergone extensive research (Barling, Weber, & Kelloway, 1996). There is no doubt that leadership is essential not only in schools but in any organization. Transformational leadership means that leaders train employees, build trust and commitment, and cultivate interest in the organization and its goals; transactional leadership is more based on a reward and punishment system compatible with employee performance (Burns, 2012). Bass (2000) believed that the transformational leadership style takes the organization as a whole, uses employees' talents, and stimulates their potential to achieve organizational goals. The transformational leadership style focuses on finding problems, solving problems, and working with all stakeholders to improve the overall organization. A transformational leader in education can work well with others to guide them to achieve school goals (Gurr, Drysdale, and Mulford, 2006). Therefore, transformational leadership is one of the most popular leadership styles that many school principals or leaders learn and practice in their management.

On the other hand, teaching is a job full of challenges and uncertainties in a school organization, and teachers all hope to work happily and get high job satisfaction from the working places (Dampier & Banks, 2019). When one's efforts are valued, rewarded, and praised, a sense of satisfaction and job commitment are also increased. As Chen, Chang, & Yeh (2004) said, satisfaction is the foundation of motivation at work that influences teachers' behavior and their perceptions of the organization. Therefore, if schools provide good working conditions in which teachers are treated fairly and respected, teachers' job satisfaction will also be increased. Meanwhile, teachers may work harder in return for actions beyond their work (Bang-Chong & Ployhart, 2004).

The Wulan Chabu Hengshui Zhuoyuan Middle School is a private school in the Inner Mongolia area of China. The area of the selected school is located in the north of China. Restricted by the natural environment and geographical location, the economic development of Wulan Chabu City in northern China has a big gap with the eastern region. In China, private schools must recruit students and teachers independently, without any government financial or political support. To attract more students, private school leaders need to recruit excellent teachers and create and maintain a stable teacher team working closely with the principal. Sometimes, the private school recruits some good teachers, but if the teachers' job satisfaction is not much focused, or if the teachers are not happy with the principal's leadership style, they will leave the school and change the job often. Therefore, both principals'

leadership styles and teacher job satisfaction are very important for private schools' competitiveness and strategic development.

Transformational leadership is a leadership style encouraged and applied by principals of schools in China's low economic developed areas (Lian, 2014). The selected school principal also tried to apply more transformational leadership concepts to his daily management, as the principal mentioned with this researcher in an informal interview. He was trying to enhance the motivation, morale, and job performance of teachers through a variety of mechanisms. These include connecting their sense of identity and self to a project and the collective identity of the school. He is trying to be a role model for teachers to inspire them; challenge teachers to take greater ownership of their work, and understand their strengths and weaknesses, allowing the leader to align teachers with tasks that enhance their performance. To better operate the school and direct the teacher team under a shared goal, the current school principal mentioned that he has tried to apply more transformational leadership to motivate the teachers to work and to create a shared vision for the school's strategic planning and development.

However, no previous research has been done on teachers' perception of their principal's transformational leadership and their level of job satisfaction in Wulan Chabu Hengshui Zhuoyuan Middle School. Thus, the researchers decided to survey the teachers' perceptions of the principal's transformational leadership and job satisfaction in this selected Chinese middle school and test the relationship between their perceptions of the principal's transformational leadership and job satisfaction at Wulan Chabu Hengshui Zhuoyuan Middle School.

Research Objectives

There were three objectives in this research:

1. To determine the level of teachers' perceptions of the principal's transformational leadership at Wulan Chabu Hengshui Zhuoyuan Middle School.
2. To determine teachers' job satisfaction level at Wulan Chabu Hengshui Zhuoyuan Middle School.
3. To determine the relationship between teachers' perception of the principal transformational leadership and job satisfaction at Wulan Chabu Hengshui Zhuoyuan Middle School.

Literature Review

Transformational Leadership Theory

Transformational Leadership Theory is used in this research to provide the context for transformational leadership and the variables by which the principal's leadership will be measured.

Transformational leadership theory concentrates the behaviors and cognition on how to support leaders and followers to achieve an organization's higher-level development, which was first introduced by Burns in 1978. In terms of Burns, transformational leadership is a process rather than a consequence.

According to Bass, the transformational leadership style focuses on building a relationship between leaders and employees that inspires and achieves a shared vision to improve internal motivation. In this incentive process, leaders tend to help employees achieve greater benefits and provide employees with the initiative to improve employee performance and efficiency to some extent to improve the organization's effectiveness (Bass, 1990). Avolio & Bass (1995) divided the transformational leadership style into five elements:

- 1) *Idealized Influence*: Leaders build relationships of trust and respect with followers by building positive values.
- 2) *Idealized Behaviors*: Leaders create a positive team spirit and achieve goals to motivate their followers to achieve their vision and organizational goals.
- 3) *Inspirational Motivation*: Leaders increase followers' organizational identity and commitment by building a shared vision and working with followers.
- 4) *Intellectual Stimulation*: Leaders empower followers, inspire them to create new ideas, and improve organizational effectiveness.
- 5) *Individualized Consideration*: Leaders meet the real needs of followers, provide promotion opportunities, and care about their personal development.

Job Satisfaction Theory

Job Satisfaction Theory is used in this research to provide the context for job satisfaction and to provide the variables by which the teachers' job satisfaction will be measured. Job satisfaction refers to the degree of satisfaction of workers with their work. Through research, understanding the status of teacher job satisfaction and clarifying the factors that affect teacher job satisfaction is of great significance for school leaders to improve the management level and mobilize teachers' enthusiasm (Dinham & Scott, 1998).

This study will use the job satisfaction theory as the major theory based on Herzberg's Two-Factor (motivator-hygiene) Theory (1959). Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory has been linked to teachers' high-order needs. The motivator factors have been aligned to satisfying a teacher's higher-order need; these factors could be intrinsic areas of their work, such as praise and opportunities for progression. In contrast, hygiene factors such as working conditions could align with dissatisfaction.

The job satisfaction theory is a classic theory. As previously mentioned, nine dimensions can affect one's motivation at work, which are called motivators or intrinsic factors, and hygiene factors or extrinsic factors, including the following:

- 1) *Supervision* – refers to the quality of the leader or leadership team.
- 2) *Colleagues* – refers to the relationships with others within the workplace.
- 3) *Working conditions* – refer specifically to the environment where the teachers work. This would include the facilities and working hours.
- 4) *Pay* – refers to the salary teachers receive.
- 5) *Responsibilities* – refers to the level an individual or individuals are liable to groups of people in the organization.
- 6) *Work itself* – refers to teaching and working with co-workers.
- 7) *Advancement* – refers to advancement, positive changes to status, or promotion of an individual within the organization.
- 8) *Job security* – refers to the level of job security and guarantees of employment.
- 9) *Recognition* – refers to the acknowledgment of achievement given to an individual. This can be in public or private.

Previous Studies on the Relationship between Transformational Leadership and Job Satisfaction

A vast amount of literature describes transformational leadership as having a charismatic and inspiring personality, stimulating followers, and providing individualized consideration. Considerable empirical support exists for transformation leadership in terms of its positive effect on followers concerning criteria like their work performance, effectiveness, job satisfaction, and organizational learning.

Fang, Chang, and Chen (2009) indicated that transformational leadership significantly, positively, and directly influences job satisfaction and work performance. Job satisfaction resides in employees' ability to have a clear understanding of the objectives and the goals of the organization. At the same time, transformational leaders focus on the direction with the shared goal, they

may guide the employees in a better way (Gill, Flaschner, Shah and Bhutani, 2010). In Western cultures, job satisfaction comes from the ability of employees to have control over their jobs or feelings of empowerment in their lives at work. Transformational leadership has been of great interest to many researchers in the current era, and adopting transformational leadership behavior helps the organization's success (Riaz and Haider, 2010).

Pihie, Sadeghi, and Ellias (2011) researched Malaysian research universities concerning leadership styles and job satisfaction of academic staff. However, there is limited research on administrative/clerical staff working in different colleges, departments, or schools in Malaysian universities. The job satisfaction of administrative/clerical staff is important for improving Malaysian universities as they are supposed to attract international students, attain excellence in administrative procedures, and achieve high international rankings. The study found that the job satisfaction level of the university administrative/clerical staff was related to the transformational leadership style of the department/school head.

The positive relationship between followers' perception of their leader's transformational leadership and job satisfaction, as Tipparat, Fredendall, and Stephen (2010) mentioned, a possible explanation of this situation could be that employees could not meet their leaders due to the leader's busy schedule leading to lack of individual consideration. Thus, the lesser the individual consideration, the higher the job satisfaction. Another study conducted by Emery and Barker (2007) in the food and banking sector found that mediating variables between transformational leadership and job satisfaction existed; it confirmed the significant positive relationship between transformational leadership and job satisfaction.

Context and Background of the Research

The theory of transformational leadership has been developed for more than twenty years. Foreign research on transformational leadership is getting deeper and deeper, and some in-depth theoretical and empirical studies have been conducted in China, in addition to the localization process.

In China, Hui (2015) from East China Normal University verified that the Transformational Leadership Questionnaire has good conceptual validity and reliability through an empirical study of business managers. Meng Hui's study shares the findings of foreign studies that transformational leadership has a second-order single-factor structure, including the leadership charisma, inspirational, intellectual stimulation, and personalized care. Each factor is an independent subfactor and belongs to a second-order factor. Li, Tian, & Shi,

(2006) in China. of the Renmin University of China found that the validity of the concept of transformational leadership was not ideal. However, it was supported to some extent by the validation factor analysis. Thus, based on the characteristics of Chinese collectivist culture, a transformational leadership questionnaire with Chinese characteristics was developed based on Bass' questionnaire in the context of the Chinese corporate environment, divided into four dimensions: virtuous exemplary, visionary motivation, leadership charisma, and personalized care. Compared to Bass' findings, Li and his partners identified a factor with Chinese characteristics - "moral exemplarity"; personalized care has a broader connotation than Bass' "personalized care." Personalized care is broader than Bass' "personalized care." In other words, managers not only care about employees' work and growth but also about their lives and families. The questionnaire has good reliability and validity and is suitable for use in the Chinese cultural context and related research.

Wulan Chabu Hengshui Zhuoyuan Middle School is located in Wulan Chabu, the central region of Inner Mongolia, China. The area of the selected school is located in the north of China. Restricted by the natural environment and geographical location, the economic development of Wulan Chabu City in northern China has a big gap with the eastern region. This also impacted the people in Wulan Chabu on the education development. The education situation in Wulan Chabu has not been advanced in China. Mr. You Ruhao, the chairman and principal of Hengshui Zhuoyuan Middle School in Wulan Qab, has 17 years of principal experience, including four years as a principal in Hengshui and 13 years as a principal in Jining. He has rich management experience and likes to transformational leadership style. In 2007, he won the "Famous Principal" award of Wulan Chabu City. Based on the informal interview with Mr. You, the researcher heard that the teachers of Wulan Chabu Hengshui Zhuoyuan Middle School are working closely with the principal in this school currently. Still, no studies on teachers' perceptions of the principal's transformational leadership style were conducted before.

The main reason why the researchers wanted to conduct this study in this school was to know the level of teachers' job satisfaction and their perceptions of the principal's transformational leadership and test the relationship between teachers' perceptions of the principal transformational leadership style and teacher's job satisfaction in this school.

Conceptual Framework

This study was designed to identify the relationship between teachers' perception of the principal's leadership and their job satisfaction at the selected School in Wulan Chabu, China. Figure 1 below shows the conceptual

framework of this research. The left-sided box in the framework was the principal's transformational leadership style, based on transformational leadership style theory (Bass & Avolio, 1995). The right-sided box was the teacher's job satisfaction and its nine dimensions, which are based on Herzberg's teacher job satisfaction theories (1987).

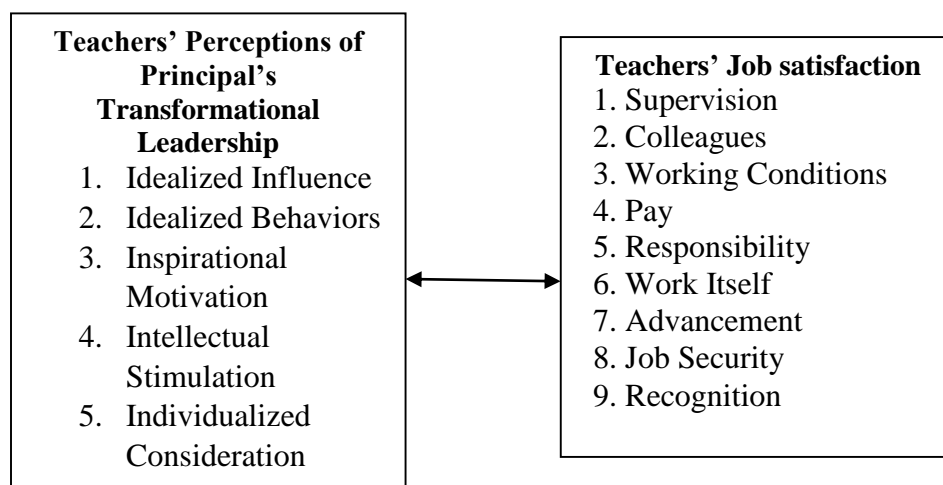


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of This Study

Research Method

Population

This research was conducted at Wulan Chabu Hengshui Zhuoyuan Middle School in Wulan Chabu City, Inner Mongolia Province, China, in the first semester of the school academic year of 2020. The researchers used all 61 full-time teachers of Wulan Chabu Hengshui Zhuoyuan Middle School as the participants for this study.

Research Instrument

The instrument for this study included three parts. Besides Part 1, which this researcher developed to collect some basic information from the teachers, Part 2 was adopted from Bass & Avolio (1995) to measure the teachers' perception of the principal's transformational leadership; Part 3 was adopted from Weiss (1967) to measure the Teacher's Job Satisfaction.

Validity and Reliability of the Instrument

The MLQ has proven a reliable and effective track record in assessing transformational leadership in terms of its validity. In terms of reliability, the MLQ has shown frequent Cronbach's Alpha results with reliability scores for each

of the scales ranging from 0.74 to 0.91; based on the recent study by Ali & Banks (2019), its Cronbach's Alpha reached .967.

Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ) from Weiss (1967) was proved by a previous study by Bruce (2016) that MSQ's reliability coefficients, in general, reached .713. Table 5 shows the detailed information of the Reliability Report for the Questionnaire from previous studies and the current study.

Table 1. *Reliability Report for the Questionnaire*

Questionnaire	Cronbach's Alpha of Previous Studies	Cronbach's Alpha of Current study
MLQ	.967 (Ali & Banks, 2019)	.897
MSQ	.713 (Bruce, 2016)	.861

Findings

Research Objective One

Table 2 shows the summary of the total mean scores, and the standard deviation of the level of teachers' perceptions toward the principal's transformational leadership style was 3.53, the range of 3.51 – 4.50. It was interpreted at a high level according to data interpretation standards. Therefore, the level of teachers' perception of the principal transformational leadership style was included. The function of Intellectual Stimulation and Individualized Consideration obtained the highest mean score, the highest mean score of both of them is 3.57, and the function of Idealized Influence got the lowest mean score of 3.46.

Table 2. *Means and SD Report for Participants' Perceptions toward Principal's Transformational Leadership Style*

Item	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Idealized Influence	3.46	1.321	Moderate
Individualized Behaviors	3.56	1.177	High
Inspiration Motivation	3.51	1.286	High
Intellectual Simulation	3.57	1.274	High
Individualized Consideration	3.57	1.208	High
Total	3.53	1.211	High

Research Objective Two

Table 3 indicates the summary of the total scores of mean and standard deviations of the level of teachers' perceptions toward teachers' job satisfaction was 3.47, the range of 2.51- 3.50. According to data interpretation standards, this was interpreted as a Moderate level. Therefore, it was shown that the level

of teachers' perceptions of their job satisfaction was moderate. The highest value of teachers' scores were "Advancement" and "Working Conditions"; their mean score was 3.59. And the lowest mean score is 3.32 for "Job Security."

Table 27. Means and SD Report for Participants' Perception of Job Satisfaction

Job Satisfaction	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Supervision	3.50	1.329	Moderate
Colleagues	3.45	0.474	Moderate
Pay	3.51	1.237	High
Responsibilities	3.56	1.311	Low
Work itself	3.33	0.648	Moderate
Advancement	3.59	1.222	High
Job Security	3.32	0.487	Moderate
Recognition	3.44	1.360	Moderate
Working Conditions	3.59	1.290	High
Total	3.47	0.637	Moderate

Research Objective Three

Table 3 shows the Pearson correlation statistical analysis was conducted to test the relationship between the teachers' perceptions of the principal's transformational leadership style and job satisfaction. As the results presented in Table 28 showed a strong positive relationship between teachers' perceptions of principals' leadership and teachers' job satisfaction in the selected school, as the $r = 0.945$, $p < 0.001$, this correlation is significant even at the 0.01 level.

Table 3. Results of Pearson Correlation Analysis

Job Satisfaction		Interpretation
Teachers' Perception of Principal's Transformational Leadership	Pearson Correlation	0.945**
	Sig.(2-tailed)	0.000
		There is a strong positive relationship

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Discussion

Based on the findings and conclusions, the research did the following discussion to better understand the study's findings with the reviews of the previous studies and apply them to real school practices.

Firstly, through the research survey, we learned that the level of the teachers' perceptions toward the principal's transformational leadership in Ulaanbaatar Hengshui Zhuoyuan Middle School is high. The mean scores of each dimension of transformational leadership from high to low are *Intellectual Stimulation and Individualized Consideration tied for the highest, Individualized Behaviors, Inspiration Motivation, and Idealized Influence*. Principal uses the transformational leadership style in school management to make staff aware of the importance of their responsibilities and tasks through leadership charisma, leadership inspiration, intellectual stimulation, and personal care, and to inspire them to pursue higher levels of excellence so that they can maximize their potential to achieve the highest levels of performance (Rutledge, 2010; Baggett, 2015).

The researcher also considered the possible reasons for this finding, which is that in recent years, along with the new educational reform, various theories of school reform have started to receive attention from scholars, especially the learning organization had become a model of reform across the century. On the other hand, with the implementation of the new curriculum reform, the most important task of schools is to construct a vision of the school's future and guide the staff to work toward a common aspiration and ideal. As a result, school administrators have begun to focus on visionary motivation and strive to shape the school into a learning organization.

Based on the conversation with the principal and teachers, the researcher learned that the principal of Wulan Chabu Hengshui Zhuoyuan middle school was dedicated to his work and can lead by example, sacrifice self-interest, and practice what he preaches. In addition to being strict with themselves, the principal communicated with teachers regularly and maintained a close relationship with each other. The principal was able to care for and help teachers in their lives and work at the external level, thus understanding teachers' needs more quickly and creating an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect between principals and teachers. The principal not only provided a platform for teachers to develop themselves but also innovated, continued to learn, and improved school management skills so that teachers feel a sense of belonging to the school.

Secondly, the study found that the teachers' job satisfaction level was moderate at Wulan Chabu Hengshui Zhuoyuan middle school. The dimensions in descending order are: *Advancement and Working Conditions* are the highest, followed by *Pay, Supervision, Recognition, Colleagues, Work itself, Job Security* and the lowest is *Responsibilities*. This reflected that teacher job satisfaction should still be a concern and must be improved, especially to

improve teachers' perception of *Job Security*. This is confirmed by Holdaway's (1978) study on teachers' job satisfaction; his finding also showed that teachers' satisfaction with their jobs is mostly internal factors, such as job security and job challenges; these could also affect teacher satisfaction.

Lastly, when exploring the relationship between the teachers' perceptions of the principal's transformational leadership and their job satisfaction, it was found that there was a strong positive relationship between these two variables. This implied that the more transformational leadership the principal could use in practice, the higher teachers' job satisfaction could achieve.

As Job satisfaction resides from employees' ability to have a clear understanding of the objectives and the goals of the organization, while transformational leaders focus on the direction with the shared goal, they may guide the employees in a better way (Gill, Flaschner, Shah and Bhutani, 2010). In Western cultures, job satisfaction comes from the ability of employees to have control over their jobs or feelings of empowerment in their lives at work. Transformational leadership has been of great interest to many researchers in the current era, and adopting transformational leadership behavior helps the organization's success (Riaz and Haider, 2010).

This finding was consistent with a few previous studies, including the following: Fang, Chang, and Chen (2009) also found that transformational leadership has a significant, positive, and direct influence on job satisfaction and work performance. Pihie, Sadeghi, and Ellias (2011) researched Malaysian research universities concerning transformational leadership and job satisfaction of academic staff. Their study also confirmed that the job satisfaction level of the university administrative/clerical staff was related to the transformational leadership style of the concerned department/ school head.

The positive relationship between followers' perception of their leader's transformational leadership and job satisfaction, as Tipparat, Fredendall, and Stephen (2010) mentioned, a possible explanation of this situation could be that employees could not meet their leaders due to the leader's busy schedule leading to lack of individual consideration. Thus, the lesser the individual consideration, the higher the job satisfaction. Another study by Emery and Barker (2007) in the food and banking sector also had a similar finding to this study; they mentioned that though mediating variables between transformational leadership and job satisfaction existed, a significant positive relationship between transformational leadership and job satisfaction existed.

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