



THE IMPACT OF THE HEADMASTERS' TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP STYLE ON TEACHERS' ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT AT TAMIL NATIONAL PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN KEDAH, MALAYSIA

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ABSTRACT

In this technological era, educational institutions are facing many challenges to improve their performance of the institutions through successful leadership behavior. Effective leaders play an essential and important role in accomplishing the target goals for the betterment of organizations through making subordinates committed. The aim of this study is to investigate the impact of headmasters' transformational leadership style on teachers' organizational commitment in Primary Tamil Schools in the state of Kedah, Malaysia. The measuring instruments used in the study were Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ Form 5X) and the Three-Component Model (TCM) survey for organizational commitment. The stratified random sampling technique was used to collect data from 346 teachers from primary Tamil schools through a survey method. Data were analyzed descriptively by using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) and utilized the Structural Equation Modeling technique on higher-order constructs to test the hypotheses of the study by using Smart PLS statistical software. The study's findings revealed that headmasters' transformational leadership style has a significant impact on teachers' organizational commitment. This study also contributes empirical evidence for leaders (Headmasters) to enhance their leadership attitudes to be a more efficient and suitable relationship with teachers' organizational commitment.

KEYWORDS: Transformational leadership, organizational commitment, structural equation modeling, attitudes, stratified random sampling technique.

INTRODUCTION

Leadership is an art that motivates a group of people to act towards achieving a common goal. School leaders, namely headmasters, can improve teaching and learning performance indirectly through their influence on staff motivation, commitment, and working conditions. Teacher commitment is empirically supported as one of the influential factors in school effectiveness, teacher satisfaction, and teacher retention (Fresko, Kfir, & Nasser, 2017; Nir, 2012; Singh & Billingsley, 2018); job performance (Tsui & Cheng, 2019); staff absenteeism and turnover (Ware & Kitsantas, 2011), their ability to innovate and integrate new ideas into leadership practice (Park, 2015). The quality of transformative leadership is important in increasing the level of commitment of members of the organization (Teharaja, A., & A. Hamid, A. (2021).

Leadership plays an important role in creating a comfortable environment for subordinates to work in. Headteachers must provide themselves with organizational leadership knowledge. This emphasizes that the leadership style of head teachers is very important to curb teacher problems. (Teharaja, A., & A. Hamid, A. (2021).

The basic aim of this study is to determine the impact of principals' transformational leadership style on teachers' organizational commitment in Tamil National Primary Schools of Kedah. Many previous studies have been conducted on leadership style and its effect on organizational performance, but in this research, the effects of organizational leadership performance have been studied (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Cardona, 2000; Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Limsila & Ogunlana, 2008; Peterson et al., 2012). Therefore, the impact of subordinate leadership is still poorly studied with employee organizational commitment (Whiteley & Jonson, 2012). From the perspective of the importance of leadership style on teacher's organizational commitment and to fill gaps in existing literature reviews in the context of primary and organizational education, this study focuses on the impact of transformational leadership style on teacher's organizational commitment. This theoretical paradigm has not been studied in the context of Tamil schools in Malaysia. This study is expected to fill the research gap in existing research. This study also fills in the research gap, according to Bass (1999: 23-24), that "although the concepts of transformational and transactional leadership are universally



available, there is still much to be learned about how they are influenced by the context in which they occur".

According to a study conducted by Sharif (2002), the leadership style of the principals and the commitment of rural primary school teachers in Malaysia show that average levels of teacher commitment in the organization are an unhealthy phenomenon if the country aims to develop holistically. Teachers' commitment to their profession needs immediate and serious attention. Leadership plays an important role in creating a comfortable environment for subordinates to work. Indeed in the success of the education system in any country is highly dependent on the commitment of teachers and the leadership style of head teachers in schools. (Teharaja, A., & A. Hamid, A. (2021).

In the context of education at Tamil schools in Malaysia, not much research has been found that uses the theoretical paradigm of transformational leadership to study the impact of the transformational leadership style of headmasters on the organizational commitment of teachers at Tamil schools. According to Northouse (2010), only a few studies have been conducted on the impact of different leadership styles in non-Western cultures and contexts. This research focuses on the impact of leadership style on the paradigm of transformational leadership theory on the organizational commitment of teachers in Tamil Schools of Kedah State. In the Malaysian context, there have been many studies of transformational leadership styles on teacher organization commitment. Yet no studies have been conducted in Tamil schools across Malaysia on the leadership style of teacher organization commitment.

This has prompted the researcher to carry out this study in the Tamil Schools of Kedah to look at the impact of transformational leadership on teachers' organizational commitment among Tamil school teachers. Transformational leadership has been identified as one of the best leadership styles for implementing change in school organizations (Musa, Yusof, Yunus, & Hamid 2014).

In recent times there have been several issues that have affected the organizational commitment among school teachers. Among them, there have been complaints from teachers that their workload has increased. It was also pointed out by Rahman (2000) that increased workload, the disempowerment of employees, and stress. Recent studies have led researchers to study the relationship between transformational leadership style and organizational commitment among Tamil school teachers. Various styles of leadership are practiced but transformational leadership is used in most excellent organizations (Musa et al., 2014). According to Northouse (2010), several types of research have been found to detect different leadership styles in western cultures and contexts. Through conducting this research, researchers can identify leadership styles based on the theoretical paradigm of transformational leadership on teacher organization commitment in Tamil schools.

In the Malaysian context, there is a need to study the impact of transformational leadership on organizational

commitment in education. After review, all national and international related literature researcher finds a gap. Therefore, this study is the first effort to investigate two theoretical paradigms including transformational leadership and organizational commitment in Tamil schools in Kedah.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of transformational leadership presented by Burns (1978) was further developed by Bass (1985) with an argument regarding the full acceptance of the concept of transactional leadership. The term change leadership was later replaced by Bass with transformational leadership, and he claimed that different leaders could easily transform their followers to become more active by using different types of motivations for different achievements. A transformational leader is determined to achieve his goals through his followers, he, therefore, supported them by honoring them and giving them loyalty and trust to improve their performance (Bass, 1985; Bass & Avolio, 1994). For leadership style differences, Bass provides a model for measuring leadership behavior, and Bass and Avolio subsequently improve and develop the MLQ (Bass and Avolio, 1998; Bass and Avolio, 1994; Bass and Avolio, 2004). In 2004, leadership development models were introduced for different training sessions to facilitate transformational leadership.

Leadership is considered an important organizational factor. Positive and transformational leadership behaviors increase commitment among workers and they feel satisfied and committed to their institution (Mowday, 1982). Many researchers have found that transformational leaders significantly impact employee organizational commitment and satisfaction and build a strong relationship between workers and organizations (Walumbwa & Lawler, 2003). Positive leadership performance enhances positive organizational commitment to a productive and effective environment (Bass, 1985; Bass & Avolio, 1994; Allen & Meyer, 1996; Cardona, 2000). In a meta-analysis by Keskes (2014), it was found that workers working under the supervision of transformational leadership have some unique attitudes towards their organizations, such as how committed they are to achieving their career goals. Supervisors should provide organizational support to their employees (Leider et al., 2016); Effective leadership significantly impacts the role of organizational leaders and is crucial to improving or improving job satisfaction among their employees (Asencio & Mujkic, 2016).

Kim and Kim (2014) argue that transformational leadership enhances existing psychological conditions related to employee organizational commitment, ie. employees have an emotional connection with the organization and feel proud to be members of the organization as well as work in organizational activities. Employees of the Korean Spilled off company were surveyed for research purposes. Structured equation modeling was used to test the study hypotheses. The findings of the study indicate that there is a significant relationship between transformational leadership style and affective organizational



commitment. Rowold et al. al. (2014) explored the study that transformational leaders who inspire employees offer a clear vision and increase cohesion, i.e. involve employees to create teamwork to achieve goals or objectives for the sake of organizational progress. Transformational leadership seeks commitment from their subordinates to conform to their beliefs and values. Employees feel committed when they perform tasks under the supervision of transformational leaders because their leaders involve them in the decision-making process.

Further, Yunus and Ibrahim (2015) argue that transformational leaders can make a positive impact among followers through their charismatic behavior to be committed to the organization. Through a survey of 122 employees, the findings show the characteristics of leaders that allow followers to identify leaders who can be followed, including those who inspire teachers and other staff about working to achieve institutional goals and achieve target objectives by conveying expectations. Having a visionary sense of purpose, makes subordinates feel free to share ideas and allows employees to feel a more emotional bond with their work and organization.

Allen, Attoh, and Gong (2017) conducted a study in the United States to investigate the impact of transformational leadership on the affective commitment of 218 employees in two private universities. A multi-mediated serial model was used to analyze the data. The transformational leadership paradigm was used to test transformational leadership behaviors through the use of the Multi-Factor Leadership Questionnaire (Avolio & Bass, 2004). An affective commitment was measured through a scale developed by Allen and Meyer (1990) and used to assess participants' affective organizational commitment through eight items. The findings of this study indicate that leaders with transformational leadership behaviors can make their subordinates emotionally related to their work.

Shurbagi (2014) stressed that transformational leadership behaviors increase organizational commitment among workers in Libya. SPSS software was used to test the hypothesis through the application of Spearman Correlation and Multiple Regression statistical techniques. The results of the study indicate a positive and significant relationship between transformational leadership style with job satisfaction and organizational commitment. The study also found that leaders of national oil companies direct their followers through transformational leadership behaviors and this attitude results in increased commitment among the employees of those organizations.

In a recent study, Eyal (2017) examined the impact of transformational leadership on teachers' organizational commitment to education. The findings of the study revealed that leaders with transformational leadership qualities can develop emotional relationships with their staff so that their staff can understand the vision of the institution and develop their skills as they should and become committed to their leadership and organization.

Berkovich and Eyal (2017) argue that individual judgment represents a leader's ability to pay individual attention to their followers and focus on the high-level needs of their followers. Through this behavior, leaders offer their followers an encouraging atmosphere and listen to the expressions of concern of their followers. The respondents of this study were 639 primary school teachers surveyed from a sample of schools in Israel. Multi-level analysis software was used to analyze the data for this study.

Para-González, Jimenez-Jimenez, and Martínez-Lorente (2016) through their research were able to examine employees working under the supervision of transformational leadership. They find employees do honest work for the organization because their leaders pay individual attention to them. Human resource management, learning, and innovation are the motivating variables in this study. Partial Least Squares was used to study the relationship between data from 200 Spanish industrial companies. The findings of the study indicate that transformational leadership behaviors improve organizational performance, and there is a significant and positive correlation with organizational performance.

Asif, Ayyub, and Bashir (2014) researched and found that transformational leaders have some unique qualities that make them more effective and able to keep employees committed to achieving targeted goals. A total of 250 workers from the textile sector in Punjab province were surveyed using MLQ-5X, OCQ, and Psychological Empowerment Questionnaire (PEQ) as research instruments. The results of the study show that there is a strong relationship between transformational leadership and organizational commitment.

Abdullah et al. (2017) argue that transformational leadership styles in the Malaysian educational environment increase employee commitment to their organizations by offering an attractive vision for future situations, encouraging enthusiasm and optimism as well as enriching teachers' goals. The participants of this study were 835 teachers from 167 national secondary schools in Malaysia.

Stinglhamber, Marique, Gaëtane, Dorothée, and De Zanet (2015) argue that transformational leaders make their employees establish an emotional connection with the organization. A total of 287 employees of water-producing companies in Belgium were surveyed. Data were analyzed using Lisrel 8.8 software. Confirmatory Analysis Factor (CFA) and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) or path modeling were used to test the study hypotheses. Findings of the study indicate that transformational leadership behaviors increase employee affective commitment.

Ibrahim, Ghavifker, Ling, Siraj, and Azeez (2014) investigated the impact of different dimensions of transformational leadership on teachers' organizational commitment. This quantitative study surveyed a total of 1014 secondary school teachers in Malaysia. The findings of the study indicate that employees working under the supervision of transformational leadership are committed to their work and their workplace. This study suggests that educational leaders

should improve the quality of effective leadership to improve teachers' commitment to their institutions.

Based on the results of the study by Munian, S., & Hasan, S. (2020), it was found that the transformational leadership style of headmasters has a significant relationship with the work commitment of Tamil National Type School teachers in Kulim Bandar Baharu district. Maintaining a

leadership style that emphasizes the interests of teachers can increase teachers' work commitment in schools.

METHODOLOGY

Figure 1 below depicts the conceptual framework of this study based on the discussion of variables in the literature review section.

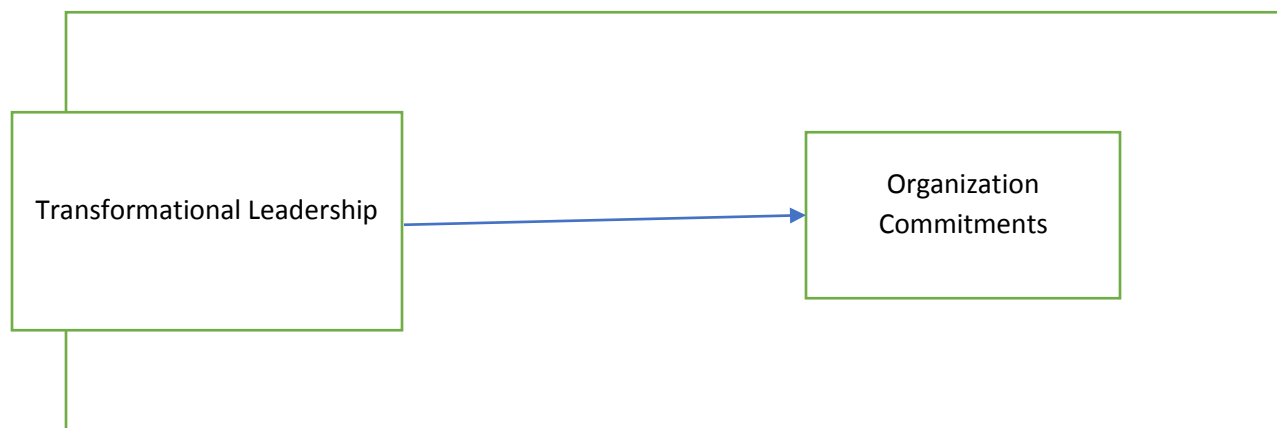


Fig. 1: Research Framework of the effect of transformational leadership on organizational commitments

This study used a quantitative research design. The study's respondents were Tamil primary school teachers from Kedah state. Responses from the teachers were gathered through a survey method. A total of 356 surveys from Tamil primary school teachers were gathered. From 356, about ten responses were discarded due to missing cases. The questionnaire's measurement item was modified from the prior research. A seven-point Likert scale was used with a score of "1" representing "strongly disagree" and a score of "7" representing "strongly agree". A total of 346 were carried out for further

analysis. Smart-PLS version 3.2.9 was used to analyze the measurement and structural model for this study.

FINDINGS

All the findings of the study are discussed in this section with the justification of the latest relevant literature review. For this purpose, all four main research objectives and related research questions and hypotheses are shown in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1 Research Objectives, Research Questions, and Hypotheses

Research Questions	Research Objectives	Hypothesis
To what extent does the transformational leadership style of headmasters have an impact on the organizational commitment of SJKT teachers in Kedah?	To investigate the impact of the transformational leadership style of headmasters on the organizational commitment of SJKT teachers in Kedah	H1: The transformational leadership style of headmasters has a significant impact on the organizational commitment of SJKT teachers in the state of Kedah.

Transformational Leadership and Organizational Commitment

Research Objective 1: To investigate the impact of the transformational leadership style of headmasters on the organizational commitment of SJKT teachers in the state of Kedah.

The objective of this research is to "Investigate the impact of the transformational leadership style of headmasters

on the organizational commitment of SJKT teachers in the state of Kedah". Hypothesis H1 was tested in parallel with research objective 1. The findings support the significant impact of transformational leadership on organizational commitment ($\beta = 0.401$, $t = 8.06$, $p < 0.05$). This means that the transformational leadership style of headmasters has a significant impact on the organizational commitment of SJKT teachers in the state of Kedah.



The significant impact of transformational leadership on organizational commitment is also supported by past studies that show a significant positive impact of transformational leadership on organizational commitment. According to Avolio & Yammarino (2013), all transformational leadership behaviors such as involving subordinates in important decisions can provide individual support and improve their loyalty by expressing an inspiring vision to increase commitment among subordinates to the organization. The findings of this study support Mesu et. al. (2015) on transformational leadership behaviors that can increase organizational commitment among their followers and increase the level of organizational commitment.

These results are supported by the leadership literature showing that the instinct of caring and listening to the expressions of subordinate employees for transformational leadership can encourage and inspire subordinate employees to do work beyond expectations with trust and loyalty to the organization [(Bass (1985)), Sarros & Santora (2001), Dionne et. Al. (2004), Kirkbride (2006) and Limsila & Ogunlana (2008)]. Many researchers agree that employees working under transformational leaders often feel committed to the organization in all aspects (Farahani et. Al. (2011), Shurbagi (2014), Eyal (2017) and Meyer et al. (2002)].

However, these findings contradict the findings of metanalytic studies that employees feel committed when they work under transformational leaders because the behavior of transformational leaders gives positive feelings among employees to be committed to their institution (Jackson et. Al., 2013). A review of the literature concluded employees have an affective commitment to their organization and their transformational leaders as they create convincing visions, motivate employees through emotional attraction and employees feel satisfied with them. The findings of the study reveal transformational leadership related to organizational commitment that supports the findings of this study.

The findings of this study are also supported by research conducted in Sarawak, Malaysia, when Ibrahim, Ghavifker, Ling, Siraj, and Azeez (2014) argued that transformational style is based on emotional relationships created with followers by initiating a common vision among teachers of the institution. Transformational leadership behaviors serve as strengths that create an organization's innovative settings and improve organizational commitment among them. In a recent study, Eyal (2017) examined the impact of transformational leadership on teachers' organizational commitment to education. The findings of the study revealed that leaders with transformational leadership qualities can develop emotional relationships with their staff so that their staff can understand the vision of the institution and develop their skills as they should and become committed to their leadership and organization.

Shurbagi (2014) investigated the extent to which staff feels committed and satisfied working under transformational leadership in Libya. MLQ, OCQ, and JSS forms were used to

assess transformational leadership, organizational commitment, and job satisfaction. The findings of the study found that transformational leaders are responsible for developing the skills of their followers that can improve organizational performance. Transformational leadership is highly effective and successfully provides encouragement to employees to try new ways of solving problems and makes them more committed to the organization and satisfied with their jobs.

Based on the results of the study by Munian, S., & Hasan, S. (2020), it was found that the transformational leadership style of headmasters has a significant relationship with the work commitment of Tamil National Type School teachers in Kulim Bandar Baharu district. Maintaining a leadership style that emphasizes the interests of teachers can increase teachers' work commitment in schools.

Studies on the impact of leadership styles on teachers' organizational commitment in Tamil-medium schools are very limited in Malaysia. Therefore, this study is a significant contribution to the study of the impact of transformational leadership styles on teachers' organizational commitment in SJKT in the state of Kedah. In the context of Malaysia at the lower level of education, there have been few studies that have investigated the variability of organizational commitment. The theoretical model of this study is the first attempt to study the impact of transformational leadership on organizational commitment.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The findings of this study proved that the transformational leadership style of the headmasters in Tamil schools has an impact on teacher organization. This finding maybe could be the reason for the achievement of UPSR results in the year 2019 in Kedah. The findings of (Sarros & Santora, 2001) proved that transformational leadership and student academic achievement in Florida primary schools show that there is a significant relationship between transformational leadership and student academic achievement. The overall achievement of Tamil schools in Kedah is 70.33% and it shows an increase of 4.67% compared to the achievement of 2018 which is 65%. According to sources in the Kedah State Department of Education performance of Tamil, schools are second best after Chinese schools. (Sarros & Santora, 2001) concludes that this study shows that transformational leadership affects student achievement and increases teacher commitment in primary school.

This study examines the impact of transformational leadership of headmasters on organizational commitment in SJKT in Kedah. The conceptual research model was designed through a review of the literature review and with the support of four research hypotheses. The effects of transformational leadership styles have been investigated in most empirical studies in the Western world [Nguni, S., Slegers, P., & Denessen, E. (2006)]. This study was conducted in a developing



country to investigate the impact of transformational leadership on organizational commitment.

Transformational leadership is an exogenous variable that represents the predictive construct of organizational commitment in research models. To explore the impact of the transformational leadership style of head teachers on the organizational commitment of teachers in SJKT in Kedah, researchers have used three standard instruments (questionnaires), namely MLQ and OCQ. This instrument is an instrument that has obtained permission. Respondents' demographic information was collected through the instrument, including age, gender, marital status, position, educational qualifications, and work experience. The MLQ form (Avolio & Bass, 2004) was used to measure transformational leadership behavior, i.e. a high-level construct. According to Bass & Avolio (2004) and Darvish & Pour (2013), the MLQ 5X has been used to measure leadership style. Transformational leadership style consists of five dimensions, namely ideal influence attribute (leader quality identified by followers by considering their leader as an example based on high ethical and moral behavior), ideal influence behavior (leader behavior close to their followers), inspiring motivation (leaders motivate their subordinates by encouraging enthusiasm in the team to achieve target objectives), intellectual stimulation (leaders who increase the instincts of creativity and innovation among their subordinates by making the leadership inspire and free employees criticize not only their point of view but also opinions of leaders and their institutions), individual considerations (policies give importance to each employee and expand their role by assigning daily tasks and providing feedback on their performance to correct their mistakes). Each MLQ dimension contained four five-point items on a Likert scale valued between 1–5. This variable consists of 20 items. Each dimension has five items.

The second instrument used by researchers is the Organizational Commitment survey introduced by Allen and Meyer (2004). The organizational commitment questionnaire consists of high-level constructs (OCQ) involving affective commitment (ACS), normative commitment (NCS), and continuous commitment (CCS). First, affective commitment involves the psychological state of an organization's commitment when different factors such as work experience, job characteristics, and personality play an important role. Researchers emphasize work experience is seen as an important factor for an employee to show emotional attachment to the organization [Meyer & Allen (1987) as cited in Allen & Meyer (1990)]. Second, normative commitment is a state of an employee's attitude that can be changed by culture. Organizational culture plays an important role in allowing an employee to decide whether to leave the organization or continue working there [Wiener (1982) cited in Allen & Meyer's statement, p.19]. For example, an employee expresses his or her commitment to the organization when influenced by important people and also shows loyalty to the organization in

the long run (Allen & Meyer, 1990). Lastly, ongoing commitment is considered an important component of organizational development by many researchers. Ongoing commitment is an employee's feeling when wanting to continue working in an existing job and related organizations because of benefits such as salary, social ties, employment opportunities, and pensions. This sense of commitment reflects a sense of "security" in the organization [Allen & Meyer (1990), Meyer et. Al. (2002), Brown (2003), Jaros (2007), Meyer et. Al. (2012) and Lambert et. Al. (2013)]. This statement is a seven-point Likert scale that shows the psychological bonding of an employee with an organization. The instrument consists of 18 items with three dimensions. Six items measure each dimension.

The study reveals that the transformational leadership style of headmasters' has a significant impact on organizational commitment. This study also revealed empirical evidence for leaders (headmasters) to improve their leadership attitude to be more efficient and to foster a positive relationship with the organizational commitment of teachers. The study also will help to produce effective leaders who will play an essential role in accomplishing the target goals for the betterment of organizations through making subordinates committed. This research will be of significant value to all educational institutions where principals have a direct influence on teacher organizational commitment.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This study is significant to attract future researchers in international and Malaysian contexts, and to study the impact of leadership styles at other educational levels with other dependent variables such as cultural context, political influence, and so on. This paper was significant to develop the interest of principals who were particularly noted through this study and principals in other schools, in general, to analyze leadership practices and refine their leadership style and behavior to enhance job satisfaction and organizational commitment among teachers.

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