

Relationship between Principals' Transformational Leadership Style and Secondary School Teachers' Commitment

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Abstract

The main purpose of this study is to identify the relationship between principals' transformational leadership style and secondary school teachers' commitment in the southern zone of Sungai Petani district in Kedah. A questionnaire was distributed to the respondents which composed of 235 teachers randomly selected from 10 schools in the southern zone of Sungai Petani district, Kedah. The results showed that there was no difference in the level of education and the level of transformational leadership style practiced by the principals. The study also showed a significant relationship between principals' transformational leadership and teachers' commitment where principals' inspiring motivation dimension is the domain of transformational leadership style.

Keywords: principals, transformational leadership, commitment, secondary schools

1. Introduction

Leadership is an influential process between leaders and subordinates (Gribben, 1972). Leadership is a process whereby other people are influenced to understand and agree with what is to be implemented and how it should be effectively and collaboratively implemented to achieve a goal (Yukl, 2002). An effective leadership is the core to continuously improving a school (Abdul Ghani & Anandan, 2009). The difference in efficacy between one school to another depends on the leadership of the principal or headmaster (Hussein Mahmood, 1993) and the ups and downs of an organization such as schools are related to work satisfaction, work performance, and teachers' commitment (Hulpia & Devos, 2010). Besides principals' leadership style, teachers' commitment also plays an important role towards achieving school efficiency.

Teachers are the key player in the effort to uphold school culture and school excellence. Teachers' commitment is an important component towards schools' success and it has to be given emphasis for an effective leadership will result in high level of teachers' commitment.

Unfortunately, not all teachers earnestly educate the students. There are still who show low level of commitment in their work and refuse to accept changes, advises or ideas (Richardson, 2011). This impedes the school principals' effort to develop their schools. Lack of commitment among teachers such as disobeying rules and regulations, late to class, showing boredom and uncreative in teaching, refusing to teach in rural areas, lazy to check students' work, focusing more on giving tuition for extra income and doing side business, are occasionally being reported in the mass media.

According to Hallinger & Heck (2010), failure to attain teachers' commitment will result in huge problems to school administrations and leaders. This lack of commitment manifestation has brought about negative behaviors among teachers such as losing temper and imposing abuse on students, physically and mentally; for example, slapping, kicking, scolding using harsh words, and embarrassing the students in front of other students. This issue should not be ignored and it is the principals' responsibility to direct the teachers to the right path and motivate them so that they become quality teachers who will contribute towards the betterment of the school. Therefore, is there any specific principals' leadership style that can change the teachers' low level of commitment? Previous studies showed that principals' leadership style has significant correlation with teachers' commitment (Singh dan Billingsley, 1998; Geijsel et al., 2002; Ross & Gray, 2004).

Since studies on principals' transformational leadership and teachers' commitment are scarce, this study aims to identify principals' transformational leadership and its relationship with teachers' commitment in secondary schools in the district of Sungai Petani, Kedah so as to get a deeper and complete picture.

1.1 Research Objectives

The research objectives are as follows:

1. To identify the level of principal leadership practice based on transformational leadership theory.
2. To identify the differences in terms of principals' level of education and level of principals' transformational leadership practice.
3. To identify the relationship between principals' transformational leadership and teachers' commitment in secondary schools in the district of Sungai Petani, Kedah.
4. To identify principals' transformational leadership dimension that has the most dominant relationship towards teachers' commitment.

2. Literature Review

Transformational leadership refers to the process whereby leaders influence their subordinates to increase their motivation and loyalty towards the organization. Burns (1978) also stated that transformational leaders are those who involve themselves with others in a certain way in that both leaders and subordinates can increase motivation and working spirit to a much higher level. Bass (1985), on the other hand, described transformational leadership as having outstanding performance and leadership affordances. He identified three transformational leadership dimensions namely charismatic, individual sensitivity and stimulating intellectual.

Jazmi (2009) in his study suggested that principals practice transformational leadership style. This is because principals have to deal with teachers, administration staff and students who are the elements that need high human relationship. A study by Kinjerski and Skrypnek (2006) stated that leaders who practice transformational leadership are able to share meanings with their subordinates.

In Malaysia, transformational leadership has successfully influenced teachers' commitment and working satisfaction through principals' leadership practice which evoked the teachers' morale (Ishak, 2001). Principals who practice transformational leadership will give emphasis on the importance of effective team work and the increase of school effectiveness comprehensively.

According to Griffith (2003), commitment is a process whereby workers identify the aims and values of the organization and maintain their membership. Commitment also refers to a behavior by an individual, who has strong beliefs on values and aims of the organization, are motivated and voluntarily work to attain organization's performance and determine to be in the organization (Mowday & Steers dan Porter, 1979).

Teachers committed to the school do not only complete their tasks diligently but they are also willing to sacrifice their time and personal agenda whenever they are needed (Lokman & Khadijah dan Rozita, 2011). A committed individual usually will have a sense of responsibility, involvement, loyalty and ownership towards something.

In a study done by Joo, Yoon and Jeung (2012) regarding the impact of supervisors' transformational leadership on the workers' commitment, it was found that there is positive significant relationship between supervisors' transformational leadership and workers' commitment.

Consequently, in a study done by Jorah (2009) where a comparison was made between transformational leadership and principals' instructional leadership towards teachers' commitment, it was found that principals' instructional leadership has a higher significant influence than principals' instructional leadership towards teachers' commitment. His study involved 419 secondary school teachers in Kedah.

Othman & Ishak (2008), using 432 teachers as sample, also examined principals' instructional leadership towards teachers' commitment and he found that principals' instructional leadership has significant relationship ($p < .05$) with teachers' commitment. In the analysis of four principals' instructional leadership dimensions towards teachers' commitment, he found that only charismatic dimension showed positive significant relationship. Therefore, it is suggested that principals who practice transformational leadership should put emphasis more on charismatic in the effort to increase teachers' commitment towards school.

Abdul Ghani Kanesan (2005), also conducted a study, 'Principals' Transformational Leadership and Leadership Replacement as Determinant for Commitment towards Organization and Attitude of Members of the Organization', on 250 teachers in the district of Kulim, Kedah. The study showed that school transformational leadership has positive significant impact on teachers' commitment ($p < .05$). The result obtained showed variants for teaching commitment ($R^2 = .05$, $p < .05$) and teachers' teaching innovation commitment ($R^2 = .132$, $p < .05$). The result also showed that transformational leadership practice has positive significant impact on teachers' commitment and teachers' teaching innovation commitment.

In the study done by Lok and Crawford (2004) on 251 nurses in Sydney Hospital, Australia, the result also showed that sympathetic leadership style improves workers' commitment. Ishak (2001) also proved that transformational leadership successfully influenced teachers' commitment and working satisfaction through leadership that increases teachers' motivation. He also emphasized that the principals in the study are proactive and focus on developing the motivation, moral and ethics of the members of the organization.

2.1 Research Hypotheses

H₀₁: There is no difference between the principals' level of education and principals' transformational leadership practice.

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between principals' transformational leadership and teachers' commitment.

H₀₃: There is no significant relationship between charismatic dimension in principals' transformational leadership and teachers' commitment.

H₀₄: There is no significant relationship between inspiring motivation dimension in principals' transformational leadership and teachers' commitment.

H₀₅: There is no significant relationship between individually sympathetic dimension in principals' transformational leadership and teachers' commitment.

H₀₆: There is no significant relationship between stimulating intellectual dimension in principals' transformational leadership and teachers' commitment.

3. Research Methodology

The population of this study comprised of all the secondary school teachers in the southern zone of Sungai Petani district, Kedah. This district has 3627 secondary school teachers and there are 607 teachers in the southern zone. The sample was determined by using Size Determinant Table for educational research activities built by Krejcie and Morgan (1970). The research sample was 235 teachers who were randomly selected from several secondary schools in the southern zone of Sungai Petani district.

3.1 Research Instrument

A questionnaire using 5 point Likert Scale, adapted from Toe (2012) was used for this study. The instrument was divided into three sections; section A (teachers' demography) to examine teachers' profile and the principals' level of education which consisted of 4 items. Section B has 33 items to measure principals' transformational leadership and section C measuring teachers' commitment with 20 items.

For sections B and C, the Likert scale denoted 1- totally disagree, 2- disagree, 3- somewhat agree, 4- agree and 5- totally agree.

Table 1. Items List for section B- Principals' Transformational Leadership.

Dimensions in Principals' Transformational Leadership	Items List	Number
Charismatic	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7	7
Individually Sympathetic	8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17	10
Stimulating Intellectual	18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24	7
Inspiring motivation	25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33	9
Total		33

Table 2. Items List for section C- Teachers' commitment.

Dimension in Teachers' Commitment	Items List	Number
Affective	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10	10
Continuous	11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16	6
Normative	17, 18, 19, 20	4
Total		20

A pilot study was conducted on 20 teachers randomly selected from a secondary school in the southern zone of Sungai Petani district. This school was not included in the real study. According to Hair et.al (2013), the alpha Cronbach value which exceeds 0.8 is good, value between 0.6 and 0.7 is acceptable; and value less than 0.6 is weak.

4. Research Finding

235 questionnaires were distributed and 205 were returned with a high return rate of 87%. From 205 respondents, 60 teachers were male (29.3%) and 145 were female teachers (70.7%).

Table 3. Distribution of respondents based on gender

Gender	Number	Percentage
Male	60	29.3
Female	145	70.7
Total	205	100.0

For measuring respondents' principals' level of education, 160 respondents have principals of Bachelor's level (78%) and 45 respondents have principals of Master's level (22%).

Table 4. Distribution of respondents' principals based on level of education

Principals' Level of Education	Number of respondents	Percentage
Bachelor	160	78.0
Master	45	22.0
Total	205	100.0

4.1 Hypothesis Testing

H₀₁: There is no difference between the principals' level of education and principals' transformational leadership practice.

Table 5. Independent sample t-test result on the principals' level of education and principals' transformational leadership practice

Level of Education	N	mean	SD	DF	t	p
Degree	160	3.64	0.87	203	-0.683	.495
Master	45	3.74	0.95			

$p > .05$

Table 5 shows Independent sample t-test was not significant ($t(203) = -0.683, p > .05$). The result failed to reject **H₀₁**. This shows that there is no difference between the principals' level of education and principals' transformational leadership practice.

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between principals' transformational leadership and teachers' commitment.

Table 6. Spearman correlation between principals' transformational leadership and teachers' commitment variables

	Teachers Commitment
Principals' transformational Leadership	.58**

**Significant at 0.01

Table 6 shows that there is positive significant relationship between principals' transformational leadership and teachers' commitment ($r = .58, p < .05$). Therefore, **H₀₂** is rejected and there exist positive averagely significant relationship. This shows that high principals' transformational leadership will result in high teachers' commitment.

H₀₃: There is no significant relationship between charismatic dimension in principals' transformational leadership and teachers' commitment.

The result found (Table 7) showed that there is positive relationship between charismatic dimension in principals' transformational leadership and teachers' commitment. Sig (2-tailed) is less than 0.05, ($r = .55, p < .05$). Therefore, **H₀₃** is rejected and there exist positive averagely significant relationship between charismatic dimension in principals' transformational leadership and teachers' commitment. This shows that high charismatic transformational leadership style will increase teachers' commitment and vice versa.

Table 7. Spearman correlation between charismatic dimension and teachers' commitment

	Teachers' Commitment
Charismatic Dimension	.55**

** Significant at 0.01

H₀₄ There is no significant relationship between inspiring motivation dimension in principals' transformational leadership and teachers' commitment.

Table 8. Spearman correlation result between inspiring motivation dimension and teachers' commitment

	Teachers' Commitment
Inspiring Motivation Dimension	.59**

** Significant at 0.01

Table 8 shows the inspiring motivation dimension in principals' transformational leadership has positive significant relationship ($r = .59, p < .05$) with teachers' commitment. Therefore, **H₀₄** is rejected and there exist positive averagely significant relationship between inspiring motivation dimension in principals' transformational leadership and teachers' commitment. This shows that high inspiring motivation dimension in principals' transformational leadership will result in high teachers' commitment.

H₀₅ There is no significant relationship between individually sympathetic dimension in principals' transformational leadership and teachers' commitment.

Table 9. Spearman correlation between individually sympathetic dimension and teachers' commitment

	Teachers' Commitment
Individually Sympathetic Dimension	.52**

** Significant at 0.01

The result finding showed (Table 9) that the relationship between individually sympathetic dimension in principals' transformational leadership and teachers' commitment is significant ($r = .52, p < .05$). Therefore, **H₀₅** is rejected and there exist positive averagely significant relationship between individually sympathetic dimension in principals' transformational leadership and teachers' commitment. This positive significant relationship showed that a high individually sympathetic dimension in principals' transformational leadership will result in high teachers' commitment and vice versa.

H₀₆ There is no significant relationship between stimulating intellectual dimension in principals' transformational leadership and teachers' commitment.

Table 10. Spearman correlation result between stimulating intellectual dimension and teachers' commitment

	Teachers' Commitment
Stimulating Intellectual Dimension	.56**

** Significant at 0.01

Table 10 shows that there is positive significant relationship between stimulating intellectual dimension in principals' transformational leadership and teachers' commitment. Sig (2-tailed) showed $r = .56, p < .05$. Therefore, **H₀₆** is rejected and there exist positive averagely significant relationship between stimulating intellectual dimension in principals' transformational leadership and teachers' commitment. This also showed that a high stimulating intellectual dimension in principals' transformational leadership will result in high teachers' commitment and vice versa.

5. Discussion and Implication

The result of the study showed that there is no difference in the principals' level of education with principals' transformational leadership styles. This finding is correlates with the finding in the study conducted by Robinson (1997), and Othman (2004) where a principal's level of education does not influence his/her leadership practice.

The finding of this study is also similar to the study finding by Mohd Rizal et al. (2012) where the mean level of principals' transformational leadership is high. Therefore, it can be said that principals are aware that

transformational leadership practice can bring about good change in the administration and management of the school. This change can also increase teachers' motivation and commitment; and thus increase school effectiveness. This is parallel with the finding by Norlidah (2000) where the study showed that leaders who practice transformational leadership have great influence in developing quality and excellent schools through the leadership orientation practice. Therefore, transformational leadership style is suitable to be practiced by principals to achieve school goals.

The statistical analysis showed that there is positive significant relationship between principals' transformational leadership and teachers' commitment in secondary schools in the southern zone of Sungai Petani district. This means that high principals' transformational leadership practice will result in high teachers' commitment. This finding is similar to the finding by Zainal (1997) and Khalid (1997) where high principals' transformational leadership practice will result in high teachers' commitment.

In addition, this result finding correlates with the result finding by Azman et al. (2011) which found that there is significant relationship between leaders' transformational leadership and their subordinates. A principal's leadership skill will influence school effectiveness, teachers' commitment and productivity in school. In fact, it is the responsibility of the leaders to develop their subordinates in the organization.

There are four dimensions in transformational leadership namely charismatic, inspiring motivation, individually sympathetic and stimulating intellectual (Burn, 1978). Bass and Avolio (2004) suggested that principals should practice transformational leadership and the four dimensions to produce a more effective and committed teachers.

According to Leithwood, Tomlinson and Genge (1997), in terms of education, principals' transformational leadership has positive impact on work satisfaction, commitment towards the organization and teachers' performance. A principal who practice transformational leadership is able to inspire and stimulate the teachers' intellect while at the same time care about the teachers.

The result analysis for every dimension in principals' transformational leadership showed averagely strong relationship with teachers' commitment in the secondary schools studied. The dimension that showed a higher correlation value compared to the other dimensions is the inspiring motivation dimension. Nevertheless, the difference in value is not wide. Thus, it can be claimed that each dimension has its own significance in transformational leadership.

As a conclusion, this study has achieved its objectives and the result findings can be used as guidelines for future research. School administration is an important element in developing quality students and schools that can compete globally. Thus, it is hoped that this study will be used as guidelines for the school principals to practice leadership in their organizations so that they can be effective leaders and increase the commitment of their staff towards the organization.

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