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The relationship between transformational leadership and teacher organizational commitment: Empirical evidence from China

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the influence of transformational leadership on organizational commitment among teachers in private vocational schools in Chongqing, China, providing empirical evidence of the relationship. A quantitative approach was used employing a structured questionnaire to collect data from 120 teachers. Out of 150 distributed questionnaires, 111 were returned and analyzed. Statistical techniques, including regression and correlation analyses were conducted using SPSS to assess the relationships. The results show a significant and positive relationship between transformational leadership and organizational commitment (Beta = 0.56, p < 0.01), indicating that transformational leadership enhances teachers' commitment to their institutions. This research provides insights into the role of transformational leadership in private vocational schools emphasizing its importance in fostering faculty engagement and retention. The findings offer practical recommendations for school administrators to improve organizational commitment and suggest further exploring contextual factors influencing leadership effectiveness.

Contribution/Originality: This study enriches the literature by demonstrating the applicability of transformational leadership theory in a Chinese higher education setting. It highlights how leadership practices can motivate teachers and strengthen their organizational commitment.

1. INTRODUCTION

Effective leadership is widely recognized as pivotal in cultivating a committed and productive workforce, particularly in academic institutions where challenges are often intensified by evolving educational demands and expectations in organizational behavior and leadership (Zadok & Benoliel, 2023). Transformational leadership, introduced by Burns (1978) and further developed by Bass (1985) emphasizes a leader's role in inspiring and motivating employees through a shared vision, intellectual stimulation and individualized support, fostering higher levels of commitment and performance (Iqbal, Shahzad, & Donia, 2023). This leadership style contrasts with transactional leadership which focuses on exchanges and reward-based performance (Zhang, Huang, & Xu, 2022). Transformational leadership has been widely recognized for its potential to enhance organizational outcomes by aligning employees' personal goals with organizational objectives, fostering a deeper sense of commitment and engagement (Zadok & Benoliel, 2023). The application of transformational leadership in educational settings,

particularly among teachers of private vocational schools has garnered increasing attention due to the unique challenges faced by academic institutions that must motivate and dedicate teachers despite shifting administrative and instructional demands (Cave et al., 2022).

Many studies have demonstrated that transformative leadership improves organizational commitment, performance and work satisfaction. Avolio and Bass (1995) found that transformative leadership boosts employee motivation and engagement by increasing purpose and involvement (Eliyana & Ma'arif, 2019). Similarly, transformational leadership approaches increase teacher commitment and performance in educational institutions (Lubis, Lumbanraja, Absah, & Silalahi, 2022). According to the research, transformational leadership is highly effective in creating a devoted and engaged staff. These findings are essential for private vocational schools because professors affect institutional performance and educational experience (Allozi, Alshurideh, AlHamad, & Al Kurdi, 2022).

There are gaps in the empirical literature especially in higher education while there is a lot of research showing the benefits of transformational leadership. (Berkovich & Bogler, 2021; Bernarto et al., 2020; Sutanto, Utami, & Diantoro, 2022). Most research on transformative leadership and organizational commitment has focused on elementary and secondary education not university lecturers (Hussain & Khayat, 2021; Rahmatullah, Ramdansyah, Kambara, & Haryadi, 2022). There has been substantial research on transformational leadership and organizational effects but few studies have examined academic institutions (Purwanto, Purba, Bernarto, & Sijabat, 2021) and suggested more specialized research on higher education to better understand how leadership styles affect faculty participation in this particular environment. Past research has ignored contextual factors including cultural and institutional variations which may restrict its applicability (Dewiana et al., 2020). These issues must be addressed and transformative leadership in private vocational schools understood to increase faculty participation. This study seeks to address these gaps by exploring transformational leadership's influence on organizational commitment in private vocational schools in Chongqing offering insights that can inform leadership practices and policies.

1. How does transformational leadership affect organizational commitment among faculty in private vocational schools in Chongqing?

This research shows how transformational leadership may boost organizational commitment in Chongqing's private vocational schools. The influence of transformative leadership in a unique educational and cultural environment will be highlighted in organizational behavior and leadership literature. This study will help administrators and policymakers engage and devote academics to increase institutional performance. It also lays the groundwork for future research on transformative leadership in multiple educational and cultural settings advancing leadership effectiveness research.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Leadership's impact on organizational success and personal happiness has been extensively studied in education (Allozi et al., 2022). Leadership theories have evolved to include different perspectives and strategies to improve educational leaders. Transformational and transactional leadership theories are popular due to their different approaches and outcomes (Bernarto et al., 2020). Transformational leadership inspires and empowers followers to go beyond their self-interests to build the organization unlike transactional leadership. Competent school leadership has been shown to boost teacher satisfaction, organizational climate, and student success (Cahyono et al., 2020). Effective educational leaders handle administrative responsibilities and create the school's vision, culture, and direction which affects teachers' careers and students' learning (Dewiana et al., 2020). Leadership affects teacher retention, work happiness and organizational devotion among other aspects. According to research, leadership styles affect teachers' work atmosphere, motivation, and organizational loyalty. Empathetic, supportive, and goal-oriented leaders are more likely to create a motivated and valued environment for teachers (Purwanto et al., 2021). This promotes more devoted and loyal personnel which is crucial for strong educational standards and

advancement. Effective leadership also promotes teachers' professional growth and collaboration through professional learning communities (Rahmatullah et al., 2022). Such environments encourage teachers to engage in reflective practices and adopt innovative teaching methods, thereby enhancing their professional growth and the quality of education provided to students. Consequently, understanding the dynamics of leadership in educational settings is essential for developing strategies that enhance teacher commitment and overall school performance (Sutanto et al., 2022).

2.1. Transformational Leadership and Teacher Organizational Commitment

Education research has focused on the substantial impact that transformational leadership has on teachers' organizational commitment. According to Zadok and Benoliel (2023) this leadership style emphasizes visionary guidance, intellectual thought, individual consideration, and inspiration. These factors encourage and empower teachers, boosting their institutional loyalty. According to Hermanto, Srimulyani, and Pitoyo (2024) transformational leaders inspire their followers to put the group ahead of themselves, thereby aligning organizational and personal aspirations. In educational settings, leaders must not only present a compelling vision but also actively engage teachers academically and emotionally in educational success. According to Taha, Zanin, and Osaili (2024) transformational leaders in schools boost teacher commitment by encouraging collaboration and a single aim. They inspire teachers to work harder for the school's aims. They believe their role is crucial to educational goals. Transformational leadership also inspires teachers to innovate and take charge of their careers. It also provides opportunities for growth and recognition (Hoai, Hung, & Nguyen, 2022). The business culture and climate produced by transformational leadership affect teachers' devotion. Transformational leaders foster teacher growth and recognition. Teachers feel their contributions are important and aligned with the school's aims; therefore, they participate actively. According to Gregory and Penela (2023) transformational leadership boosts teacher morale and work satisfaction which are key to long-term organizational commitment. It also affects teachers emotionally and mentally. Transformational leaders inspire a strong belief in goal-setting and dedication by developing trust and confidence in their followers. Teachers empowered by transformational leaders are more willing to collaborate on school improvement. Their proactive involvement and contribution strengthen this passion (Zadok & Benoliel, 2023). Teachers' emotional connection to the school's vision and values drives them to strive for educational excellence.

H₁: Transformational leadership has a significant impact on teacher organizational commitment.

Thus, we develop the conceptual framework based on the above literature and discussion as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Conceptual framework.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Design

A quantitative research design was used to investigate the impact of transformational leadership on teacher organizational commitment to organize and analyze quantitative data to test hypotheses and examine variable correlations (Creswell, 2018).

The study collected accurate and usable data on transformational leadership and organizational commitment among teachers using a systematic approach.

3.2. Population

Teachers of private vocational schools in Chongqing were the target population for this study. This group was chosen because of their unique position in education where leadership styles strongly affect institutional commitment. The concentration on teachers of private vocational schools allowed a detailed analysis of transformative leadership and organizational commitment in higher education. The schools selected for the sample included prominent private vocational institutions in Chongqing such as Chongqing City Management College, Chongqing Technology and Business Institute, and Chongqing Vocational Institute of Engineering.

3.3. Sample Size

The sample size of this study was 120 respondents. 150 questionnaires were distributed among teachers in Chongqing, China by using a convenience sampling technique to achieve this sample size. Out of 150, 111 filled questionnaires were received with a response rate of 74% which were used for further analysis.

3.4. Data Collection

Data collection was conducted using a structured questionnaire designed to measure both transformational leadership and organizational commitment. The questionnaire included standardized items adapted from existing validated scales to ensure reliability and validity. The structured format facilitated consistent responses and simplified the data analysis process. The questionnaire was distributed in both paper-based and electronic formats to increase accessibility and response rates among the teachers of private vocational schools.

3.5. Instrument

Transformational leadership was measured using a 20-item scale adapted from Bass (1985). Items were measured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Organizational commitment was measured by using an 18-item scale adapted from Taha et al. (2024).

3.6. Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). SPSS was chosen for its advanced statistical analysis and massive dataset handling. Descriptive statistics summarized respondent demographics and key variables. Regression and correlation analysis were used to test the study's assumptions and investigate the relationship between transformational leadership and organizational commitment. It shows how transformative leadership affects academics' institutional loyalty.

4. RESULTS

Table 1 describes transformational leadership and organizational commitment research factors. It summarizes each variable's primary trend and distribution based on 111 participants' data. The average transformational leadership score was 3.78 with a 0.54 standard deviation. Respondents assessed transformational leadership techniques at their institutions as quite common though there was a lot of variation. This suggests that academics agree transformational leadership works in their private vocational schools. In contrast, organizational commitment had a mean score of 3.65 and a standard deviation of 0.62. This slightly lower average compared to transformational leadership implies that while organizational commitment is also positively perceived, there is greater variability in how committed respondents feel towards their institutions. The standard deviations for both variables reflect moderate levels of dispersion around the mean scores suggesting that there are some differences in individual experiences and perceptions of transformational leadership and organizational commitment among the teachers of private vocational schools surveyed.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of the study variables.

Variables	N	Mean	Std. deviation
Transformational leadership	111	3.78	0.54
Organizational commitment	111	3.65	0.62

Table 2 displays the normality assessment results for the study variables including skewness and kurtosis values. The skewness value was 0.15 indicating a slight positive skewness which suggests that the distribution of scores was fairly symmetric with a minimal tendency for respondents to rate higher levels of transformational leadership. The kurtosis value of -0.45 indicates a platykurtic distribution meaning that the data were slightly flatter than a normal distribution with fewer extreme values. On the other hand, organizational commitment exhibited a skewness value of -0.30 reflecting a slight negative skewness which suggests that respondents' ratings tended to be somewhat lower on average but the distribution remained relatively balanced. The kurtosis value for organizational commitment was 0.60 suggesting a leptokurtic distribution with a peak that is slightly higher and sharper than the normal distribution indicating some degree of concentration of scores around the mean. Overall, these statistics suggest that both variables were approximately normally distributed with minor deviations that were considered acceptable for subsequent statistical analyses.

Table 2. Normality assessment of the study variables.

Variables	Skewness	Kurtosis
Transformational leadership	0.15	-0.45
Organizational commitment	-0.30	0.60

Table 3 presents the correlation analysis results between transformational leadership and organizational commitment. The correlation coefficient between these two variables is 0.56 which is statistically significant at the ** level indicating a moderate to strong positive relationship. This positive correlation suggests that perceptions of transformational leadership increase among teachers of private vocational schools. There is a corresponding increase in their levels of organizational commitment. The value of 0.56 reflects a substantial association highlighting that teachers who experience higher levels of transformational leadership are more likely to exhibit greater commitment to their institutions. According to this study, a deeper emotional and professional link between academics and their institutions requires transformative leadership. The strong relationship suggests that transformative leadership improves organizational commitment underlining the importance of leadership in academic staff engagement and devotion.

Table 3. Correlation analysis between the variables of the study.

Variables	TL	OC
Transformational leadership	1.00	0.56**
Organizational commitment	0.56**	1.00

Note: ** $p < 0.05$.

Table 4 shows transformational leadership and organizational commitment reliability analysis outcomes. Cronbach's alpha and composite dependability assessed construct reliability. Transformative leadership has a 0.89 Cronbach's alpha and 0.91 composite reliability. Both coefficients are above the 0.70 threshold. The high scores indicate that transformative leadership assessments are internally consistent and reliable. The organizational commitment metric has a composite reliability of 0.90 and a Cronbach's alpha of 0.87, both above the minimum of 0.70. The results indicate that organizational commitment items were reliable and consistent. Transformational leadership and organizational commitment evaluations are valid and reliable for correlation analysis due to the study's strong instruments and extraordinarily high-reliability ratings in both variables.

Table 4. Reliability analysis of the study variables.

Constructs	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability
Transformational leadership	0.89	0.91
Organizational commitment	0.87	0.90

Table 5 shows the external impacts on transformational leadership and organizational commitment. Organizational commitment metrics have significant external loadings of 0.787 to 0.875. Commodities OC1_1 through OC1_6 are strongly loaded with loadings from 0.787 to 0.862. OC2_1 through OC2_6 and OC3_1 through OC3_6 have moderate loadings of 0.823 to 0.872. The substantial relationships between organizational commitment indicators and the underlying construct demonstrate that the indicators reflect the core of commitment and assure the assessment model's reliability and validity. The external loadings for transformational leadership range from 0.686 to 0.913 indicating the strength of the component-construct link. TL1_7, TL1_1, TL3_1, and TL3_4 have high loadings of 0.852 to 0.91. This shows they are skilled at transformational leadership. TL1_5 meets the measurement quality criteria despite having low loadings (0.686). Most items' high outside loadings correctly depict the transformational leadership evaluation proving its reliability. These findings demonstrate the validity and efficacy of transformational leadership and organizational commitment assessments.

Table 5. Outer loadings of the variables of the study.

Variables	Items	Indicators
Organizational commitment	OC1_1	0.787
	OC1_2	0.850
	OC1_3	0.875
	OC1_4	0.869
	OC1_5	0.827
	OC1_6	0.862
	OC2_1	0.826
	OC2_2	0.859
	OC2_3	0.858
	OC2_4	0.823
	OC2_5	0.872
	OC2_6	0.845
	OC3_1	0.837
	OC3_2	0.868
	OC3_3	0.861
	OC3_4	0.841
	OC3_5	0.825
	OC3_6	0.865
Transformational leadership	TL1_1	0.881
	TL1_2	0.757
	TL1_3	0.760
	TL1_4	0.776
	TL1_5	0.686
	TL1_6	0.861
	TL1_7	0.913
	TL1_8	0.846
	TL2_1	0.833
	TL2_2	0.877
	TL2_3	0.874
	TL2_4	0.865
	TL3_1	0.880
	TL3_2	0.867
	TL3_3	0.852
	TL3_4	0.878
	TL4_1	0.867
	TL4_2	0.829
	TL4_3	0.845
	TL4_4	0.878

Table 6 shows an R-squared of 0.32 for organizational commitment. This suggests that model predictors explain 32% of organizational commitment variation. The R-squared score in this study suggests weak explanatory power. This shows that the model explains a lot of organizational commitment variability. However, the research factors cannot explain much variability. As shown by the 32% variance, the model somewhat explains the organizational commitment of teachers of private vocational schools in Chongqing. A significant relationship exists between predictors and organizational commitment. This conclusion stresses the necessity to consider contextual elements that may improve organizational commitment in educational settings.

Table 6. R-squared of the dependent variable.

Variable	R-squared
Organizational commitment	0.32

Table 7 and Figure 2 show the regression analysis results on transformational leadership and organizational commitment. Organizational commitment and transformational leadership are moderately to strongly positively correlated (Beta = 0.56). The positive beta value implies that private vocational schools' teachers with stronger transformational leadership are more involved in their organizations. The t-value of 5.67 indicates a strong effect and statistical significance of the connection. The p-value is less than 0.01 suggesting that the observed impact is unlikely to have occurred by chance emphasizing the relevance of this study. Our findings demonstrate that transformational leadership significantly improves organizational commitment demonstrating the importance of effective leadership in increasing teachers' loyalty and dedication to their institutions.

Table 7. Regression analysis between IV and DV.

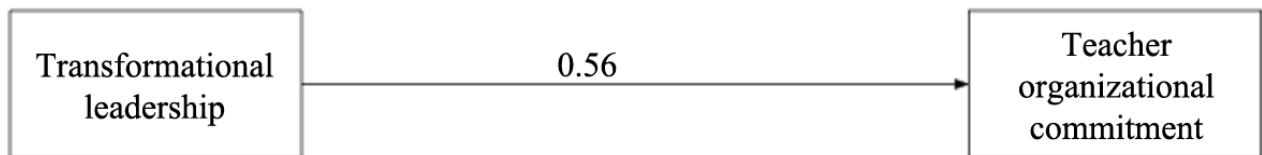| Predictor variable	Dependent variable	Beta	t-value	p-value
Transformational leadership	Organizational commitment	0.56	5.67	<0.01**

Note: ** $p < 0.05$.

Figure 2. Structural model.

5. DISCUSSION

This study found that transformational leadership boosts organizational commitment among teachers of private vocational schools in Chongqing. The regression analysis demonstrated a substantial and statistically significant link between transformational leadership and a beta coefficient of 0.56, a t-value of 5.67 and a p-value of less than 0.01. It appears that transformational leadership increases commitment in firms. According to transformational leadership theory, leaders who excite, engage and inspire their followers may boost their organizational commitment (Akdere & Egan, 2020). Transformational leaders are known for their ability to foster teamwork, articulate a compelling vision and meet individual needs. The team becomes more emotionally and professionally involved (Allozi et al., 2022). These findings support earlier research linking organizational commitment to transformational leadership. Transformational leadership boosts teacher engagement by fostering a supportive work environment and linking teachers' aspirations with the organization's goals (Berkovich & Bogler, 2021; Sutanto et al., 2022). Similarly, Bernarto et al. (2020) discovered that transformational leadership increases normative commitment by instilling a sense of duty in workers. These consistent findings across numerous scenarios show the power of the transformational leadership-organizational commitment link.

Compared to previous studies, these findings differ greatly. Some studies demonstrate that transformational leadership has little or no influence on organizational commitment. Cultural differences, institutional frameworks, and organizational devotion may explain the discrepancy. Rahmatullah et al. (2022) found that transformational leadership did not affect organizational commitment suggesting that it may differ by culture and leadership style. Due to the variety of approaches and criteria used to measure transformational leadership and organizational commitment and the demographic groupings analyzed, results vary. This research differs from others because of Chongqing's culture. Since China values collectivism and hierarchical ties, transformational leadership may be more effective in building organizational commitment than in other cultures (Dewiana et al., 2020). Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory states that leadership practices in collectivist societies may considerably impact organizational commitment. Transformational leadership may impact organizational commitment in China due to this cultural feature. This influence may be reduced in egalitarian and individualistic cultures (Cahyono et al., 2020). The sample's uniqueness may have created disparities. Chongqing private vocational school teachers' organizational commitment may depend on their educational environment, institutional restraints, and career objectives. Teachers may react differently to transformative leadership due to their professional expectations and views of private vocational schools. Leadership styles may impact commitment depending on individual and job factors (Purwanto et al., 2021). The data suggest Chongqing's educational atmosphere affects them. Transformative leadership contextualizes organizational commitment. Transformative leadership is beneficial because cultural and institutional elements are important in leadership research. These data indicate to private vocational school administrators and lawmakers that transformational leadership influences instructors. Future research should study these relationships across cultures and education to understand how transformational leadership might optimize organizational commitment. This approach could help determine if Chongqing's private vocational schools' effects are replicable in other regions and educational systems adding to the literature on leadership and organizational behavior in different cultures and institutions.

6. CONCLUSION

Transformational leadership and organizational commitment among Chongqing private vocational school instructors were examined in this study. Transformational leadership may increase teachers' loyalty and engagement in their institutions as shown by beta coefficient of 0.56 and a p-value below 0.01. Transformational leadership aligns individual incentives with institutional goals, fosters emotional support and creates a shared sense of purpose which is known to increase organizational commitment to education. Transformational leadership explains 32% of organizational engagement among Chongqing's private vocational school instructors, a new finding. This proportion shows that other elements influence organizational commitment, demonstrating that transformational leadership while effective works with other aspects in complicated educational environments. This discovery invites further study of cultural norms, institutional regulations and teacher work-life balance which may also affect organizational commitment. This study's cultural and contextual insights on Chongqing schooling are unique. Transformational leadership may work effectively in China's collectivist and hierarchical culture which fits Hofstede's cultural dimensions hypothesis. This cultural influence implies that the reported benefits may be less evident in more individualistic or egalitarian societies emphasizing the relevance of context in leadership studies. This study verifies transformational leadership's broader applicability and underlines the necessity for culturally informed leadership by showing how it may motivate Chinese instructors. This study also shows that transformational leadership may affect retention and commitment in vocational education, a field with fewer leadership studies. Transformational leadership may improve faculty engagement, motivation and retention in private vocational schools enhancing institutional performance and student results. These findings should be expanded by studying additional factors affecting vocational commitment and whether comparable effects apply to other cultural and educational situations. This study emphasizes the importance of transformational leadership in

promoting organizational commitment in Chongqing's private vocational schools and calls for more research on leadership, cultural context and other commitment-related factors in education. These findings can help school administrators establish a dedicated and motivated staff in similar institutional and cultural contexts.

6.1. Implications

The study's findings have major implications for administrators of private vocational schools and politicians seeking to increase faculty organizational commitment. Transformational leadership and organizational dedication strongly support academic leadership development programs. Leadership training in transformational leadership strategies including intellectual stimulation, personalized assistance and inspiring motivation can help private vocational schools recruit more engaged professors. Such methods can create a vibrant and enjoyable workplace, improving worker satisfaction and professor retention. Institutions should prioritize these leadership skills to better serve academic staff and improve organizational performance. This research underlines the necessity for institutions to provide clear career paths as part of their transformational leadership plan. Well-organized professional development opportunities can improve teachers' commitment since transformational leaders inspire and guide their followers. This may include ongoing training, mentorship and academic research and collaboration. Integrating career development with transformational leadership may boost teacher morale and organizational commitment. Transformational leadership may increase employee engagement by creating a friendly and enjoyable workplace, according to research. This theoretical contribution improves our understanding of how leadership practices affect worker attitudes and actions, establishing the framework for future research. The study found that transformational leadership has a significant influence but only explains a small portion of organizational commitment variability. This implies that theoretical concepts and situations may considerably impact commitment. Job satisfaction, work-life balance, and institutional culture should be studied to deepen organizational commitment understanding. Researchers may add variables to theoretical models to account for the complex factors that affect employee commitment in academic and other settings.

6.2. Limitations and Future Direction

This work provides important insights but its many limitations suggest future research subjects. The survey only includes teachers of private vocational schools in Chongqing, China which limits it. The findings are relevant to this situation but may not apply to professors in other geographical locations or educational institutions with different cultural or institutional features. Chongqing's cultural ideas and organizational practices may affect transformational leadership's efficacy and perspectives differently than elsewhere. Future research should repeat this study in different educational and geographical contexts to verify the observed connections and address context-specific factors. The study's cross-sectional design limits data collection to one time. This architecture makes it hard to track changes and identify causal links. A longitudinal method can reveal transformative leadership's long-term effects on organizational commitment. Researchers can better comprehend cause-and-effect linkages and long-term effects by evaluating these traits across time. This will help students understand leadership and devotion. Additionally, the study's reliance on self-reported measures introduces potential biases such as social desirability and common method variance. While efforts were made to mitigate these biases through anonymity and confidentiality assurances, future research could employ multiple data sources and methodologies (e.g., qualitative interviews, observational studies) to triangulate findings and enhance the robustness of conclusions. Future studies should include peer evaluations, supervisor assessments or objective performance measures to improve credibility and provide a complete understanding of how transformational leadership affects organizational commitment. The investigation concluded that organizational commitment is strongly correlated with transformative leadership. It explained a small portion of the variance. This suggests that many other factors can impact commitment. Transformational leadership may affect organizational commitment through job satisfaction, work-life balance, and

institutional support. Further research is needed on these features. Academics can better understand organizational commitment and academic staff engagement by adding these variables to the study model.

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