

Transformational Leadership and Teacher Commitment in Secondary Schools of Sarawak

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between teacher commitment and transformational leadership in secondary schools. A survey instrument was developed, based on conceptual framework on transformational leadership ([Bass and Riggio, 2006](#)), and teacher commitment ([Dannetta, 2002](#)). Quantitative survey method was applied and two broadly hypothesized relationships were tested with a sample of 1014 trained teachers serving in twenty-seven secondary schools in Miri, Sarawak. The results indicated a moderate level of teacher commitment and a low level of transformational leadership qualities among the respondents. The results from multiple regression analysis provided little to moderate support for the analysis. They offer insights on how leadership practices affect teachers' commitment. It also necessitates for leadership development of school leaders to acquire transformational leadership qualities that are crucial in changing teachers' attitude and improving their commitment level.

Keywords: Transformational leadership; teacher commitment; intellectual stimulation.

1. Introduction

A principal is the most powerful and influential individual in school. The role of a school principal is considered as the first and foremost important person in ensuring the effectiveness of the school and efficiency in running the school ([Ahmad, 2004](#)). Thus, educators and policymakers alike seek a frame for effective leadership that can produce sustainable school improvement and continuous teacher commitment ([Lambertz, 2002](#)). [Swanepoel et al. \(2000\)](#) argued that leadership style that encourages employees' commitment is essential for an organization to successfully achieving their goal.

It is definitely the utmost role of the most effective and dynamic school leadership that a school leader should take heed and adopt as it affects the level of teacher commitment in the education arena in Malaysia. School leadership has become a priority in education policy agendas internationally. It plays a key role in improving school outcomes by influencing the motivations and capacities of teachers, as well as the school climate and environment. Effective school leadership is essential for improving the efficiency and equity of schooling ([Education and Training Policy Division, 2008](#)).

Educational research also indicates that leadership and teacher commitment are influential factors in school organizational and school effectiveness. School leadership is considered to be highly significant in influencing teachers' levels of commitment to and engagement with new initiatives and reforms ([Day, 2000](#); [Fullan, 2002](#); [Louis, 1998](#)). Thus, school leaders are of crucial importance in establishing and maintaining connections between the new educational ideas and teachers' existing passions and ideological

framework. This is because school leaders are considered to be the interpreters and the connectors between the schools and the system's goals and priorities and specific teacher practice (Elliott and Crosswell, 2001). Principals play a vital role in setting the direction for successful schools, but existing knowledge on the best ways to prepare and develop highly qualified candidates is sparse (Davis et al., 2005). Furthermore, as the impact of leadership on student achievement became evident, policymakers placed greater pressures on principals. Rewards and sanctions affecting principals are increasingly common.

Tesker and Schneider (1999) pointed out that a number of studies emphasized the importance of transformative leadership for school principals (Conley, 1997; Fullan, 1996; Leithwood et al., 1996; Hord, 1992; Sergiovanni, 1992). It is significantly important for principals to embrace transformational leadership as it affects the level of teacher commitment.

1.1. Research problem

The role of the principal is critical in sustaining teacher commitment by being attentive to personal and school context factors. The principal's role is equally critical in addressing the system context factors that diminish teacher commitment (Day et al., 2005). Transformational leadership can influence or impact teacher commitment. However, how does one ensure the influence or impact of transformational leadership on teacher commitment?

Sharif et al. (2002) in a research discovered an only average level of teacher's organizational commitment in Malaysia. Noordin et al., (2008) also discovered that teachers had low to moderate levels of professionalization in Malaysia. This unhealthy phenomenon alerts immediate and serious attention. Moreover, teachers' commitment is reported to decrease progressively over the course of their teaching career (Fraser et al., 1998; Huberman, 1993).

The level of commitment is directly influenced by the principal's leadership. Singh and Billingsley (1996) indicated the importance of principal leadership in enhancing teacher commitment and the effect principals can have on teachers' collegial relationship in a study. Commitment to the workplace is becoming understood as a hallmark of organizational success (Rosenholtz & Simpson, 1990).

Minimal research attention has been directed towards the relationship between transformational leadership practices and teacher commitment in secondary schools in Malaysia essentially in Sarawak. By examining this relationship in education institutions, we can increase our understanding on the importance of transformational leadership and its impact on the teachers' commitment.

1.2. Research objectives

It was to investigate (a) the level of teacher commitment, (b) teachers' perception of their principal's transformational leadership qualities, (c) the relationship between transformational leadership and teacher commitment, (d) and the differences in mean scores among the transformational leadership and teacher commitment components in relation to teachers' demography.

1.3. Research questions

The questions are: What is the extent of the principal's practice of transformational leadership and teacher commitment? What are the extents of relationship between transformational leadership and teacher commitment? and What are the differences in mean scores among transformational leadership and teacher commitment components in relation to teachers' demography in this study?

2. Literature review and conceptual framework

2.1. Transformational Leadership Theory (Bass & Rigglo, 2006)

First, 'idealized influence' leaders are role models for their followers. They are admired, respected, and trusted. Second, 'inspirational motivation' leaders motivate and inspire those around them by providing meaning and challenge to their followers' work. Third, 'intellectual stimulation' leaders stimulate their followers' efforts to be innovative and creative by questioning assumptions, reframing problems, and approaching old situations in new ways. Fourth, 'individualized consideration' leaders pay special attention to each individual follower's needs for achievement and growth by acting as a coach or mentor.

2.2. Teacher commitment (Dannetta, 2002)

First, 'organizational commitment' includes the belief in and acceptance of organizational goals and values; willingness to exert effort on the organization's behalf; and a desire to remain in the organization (Mowday et al., 1982). Second, 'commitment towards teaching profession' is generally the degree to which one has a positive, affective attachment to one's work (Coladarci, 1992; Firestone & Rosenblum, 1998). Third, 'commitment towards student learning' focuses on the degree to which teachers are dedicated to student learning regardless of the other issues that may be involved.

2.3. Transformational leadership and teacher commitment in education

Since the mid 1990s, the influence of transformational leadership in the educational sector has been the focal point of many research studies. This leadership paradigm has quickly become the most prevalent and widely accepted model of school leadership because of its emphasis on the fostering and development of organizational members (Marzano et al., 2005). Ross and Gray (2004) argued the "essence of transformational leadership is dedication to fostering the growth of organizational members and enhancing their commitment by elevating their goals".

Mounting evidence links transformational leadership practices to individuals' organizational commitment. Koh et al. (1995) in their study discovered the influence of transformational leader behaviour by school principals relates to organizational citizenship behaviour, organizational commitment, teacher satisfaction with the leader and student academic performance. The findings revealed that transformational leadership did have a significant effect on organizational commitment and teacher satisfaction with their leader. Commitment to the organization, related organizational citizenship behaviour, and job satisfaction were significantly greater when the principals were described by the teacher as more transformational.

Ross and Gray (2004) found that transformational leadership had direct effects on teacher commitment. Amoroso (2002) found positive effects of transformational leadership behaviours on commitment. He discovered that principals' behaviours of actively leading staff, supporting staff, and challenging staff were significantly correlated to commitment.

3. Method

Quantitative survey method was employed and two hypothesized relationships were tested using a sample of 1014 trained teachers in 27 government secondary schools in Miri, Sarawak. Miri contained sufficient samples in terms of trained teachers whose qualification, certification, job confirmation, service category, and promotion were similar in the Ministry of Education in Malaysia.

The questions on school profile, principals and teacher's profile were in nominal scale, and the other sections dictated the responses on a five-point Likert-Scale. The survey items were Likert-type items that contained different values which were explained in its respective sections: 1=Never, 2=Seldom, 3=Moderate, 4=Often and 5=Always; and 1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Moderately Agree, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly Agree.

A convenient sampling was employed since the researcher believed this would yield the most accurate assessment of their principals' leadership behaviours. Gathering data from teachers working with a principal on a daily basis was determined to be the best source of this specific research design (Amoroso, 2002).

To adhere to all ethical considerations and guidelines for conducting research with human subjects, the researcher submitted an official written application along with all necessary documentation regarding the nature and purposes of this study to the 'Bahagian Perancangan dan Penyelidikan Dasar Pendidikan, Kementerian Pelajaran Malaysia' (National Planning and Education Research Department) prior to the 'Sektor Khidmat Pengurusan dan Pembangunan Negeri Sarawak' (State Service and Development Sector) seeking their approval to conduct this research.

The researcher travelled to each school to administer the survey to the secondary school principals and the trained non-graduate and graduate teachers. The survey questionnaires contained a cover letter describing the nature of the study and its intended purpose, an approved letter from National Planning and Education Research Department, and State Service and Development Sector. It also stated that principals and teachers' participation was completely voluntary, and their anonymity was protected.

The response rate stood 53.26 percent from a total of 1904 samples. To ensure the reliability of the instrument, a pilot study was conducted in Bintulu, Sarawak. Cronbach's Alpha values which stood above 0.70 were taken as many researchers reported that anything above 0.6 was acceptable (refer Appendix A). Factor analysis was run to examine its validity. KMO values measures of sampling adequacy were well above the acceptable level of 0.6 and thus factorability was assumed (Coakes et al., 2006).

The data were analyzed using SPSS Version 15.0 program for windows (Statistical Package for the Social Science) for descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive analysis (mean scores), and inferential statistics (correlation analysis) was used to examine the strength and linear relation direction between two variables (Pallant, 2007). Multiple Linear Regression analysis was used to test the hypothesis that a significant relationship existed between transformational leadership and teacher commitment. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and MANOVA were used to determine the significant differences in mean scores among transformational leadership and teacher commitment components in relation to demography. Correlation analysis was used to examine the strength and linear relation direction between two variables (Pallant, 2007). Simple bivariate correlation referred to the correlation between two continuous variables and was the most common measure of linear relationship. The coefficient had a range of possible values from -1 to +1. The value indicated the strength of the relationship while the sign (+ or -) indicated the direction (Coakes et al., 2006). Bivariate Correlation was used to answer research questions 3. It was used to identify the correlation between transformational leadership and teacher commitment.

Bivariate correlation values were from -1 to 1. Chua (2008) suggested that bivariate values ranging from 0.71 to 0.90 showed a strong correlation. Bivariate values ranging from 0.31 to 0.50 demonstrated a weak correlation. Bivariate values ranging from 0.01 to 0.30 showed a very weak correlation whereas 0.00 values demonstrated no correlation between the variables.

Data were gathered via self-developed survey instrument based on transformational leadership (Bass & Rigglo, 2006), and teacher commitment (Dannetta, 2002) as shown in Figure 1.1. The variables were transformational leadership (idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration), and teacher commitment (commitment towards organization, commitment towards teaching profession, and commitment towards student learning).

The size of the state and its accessibility rate limit this study to the secondary schools in Miri, Sarawak. It consists of ten divisions and twenty-one districts which are sparsely distributed and thus it makes random sampling to cover the ten divisions difficult.

It limits to the trained non-graduate and graduate teachers, and twenty-seven secondary school principals in Miri, Sarawak. The researcher stratifies the sample which resembles all the trained non-graduate and graduate teachers, and school principals in Sarawak as a trained teacher's recruitment, qualification or certification, service confirmation, years of service, and salary scale are similar in Malaysia.

It faces difficulty in gauging the perceptions of the secondary school teachers that do respond as they could possibly have different interpretations of the term teacher commitment as well as their principals' transformational leadership qualities. Next, it also limits to only one dependent variable, teacher commitment. There are a number of variables within the range of school organizational climate that are impacted by a principal's specific behaviours such as teacher innovativeness and teacher professional development and teacher job satisfaction. There are other external factors like teacher efficacy, identification with school, reflective dialogue, job satisfaction and teaching experience which are the possible variables to teacher commitment. However, this study only explores the relationship between transformational leadership and teacher commitment.

It limits to the validity and reliability of the instruments used. It also limits to the accuracy of the participants who have completed the instruments.

Moreover, participants were told that the questionnaires were collected mainly for research purposes, which is likely to result in less self-enhancement than when data are collected for administrative purposes (Farh & Werbel, 1986). Some teachers are reluctant to respond to the instrument as they fear that their principal might check and read their answers especially Section B on transformational leadership and Section C on their level of commitment. Next, different cultural and regional contexts may limit the generalizability of results. It is unclear whether the findings may have the same implications for teachers in different cultural

environment as the values of the participants in this current study might not accurately represent the values of other countries. Comparative studies across cultures, schools in other divisions or areas are needed in order to truly understand many of the constructs included in the study.

4. Findings

4.1. *The extent of principal's transformational leadership practice and the level of teacher commitment*

Teachers perceived an overall low level of their principals' transformational leadership practice as the mean scores recorded only 30.09: 'idealized influence' (41.88), 'intellectual stimulation' (21.83), 'inspirational motivation' (27.77), and 'individualized consideration' (28.86) in Table 2 (refer Appendix B). However, teachers demonstrated an average level of commitment as the mean scores recorded 55.84: 'Commitment towards organization' stood 93.96, 'Commitment towards teaching profession' recorded 56.13, and 'commitment towards student learning' stood 17.43 in Table 3 (refer Appendix C).

4.2. *Extents of relationship between transformational leadership and teacher commitment*

There were partially significant linear correlations between transformational leadership and teacher commitment ($r=0.443$). 'Individualized consideration' recorded the strongest linear correlation ($r=0.516$), and 'inspirational motivation' had the weakest linear correlation ($r=0.463$) with 'commitment towards organization'. 'Inspirational motivation' had the strongest linear correlation ($r=0.398$), and 'intellectual stimulation' ($r=0.335$) had the weakest linear correlation with 'commitment towards teaching profession'. 'Intellectual stimulation' had the lowest correlation ($r=-0.018$) with 'commitment towards student learning', and it was not significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed) in Table 4.

Significantly, 'individualized consideration' ($B=0.370$, $p<0.05$) contributed 26.6 percent of the variance ($R\text{ Square}=0.266$) in 'commitment towards organization' as indicated by the F-value of $[F(1,1012)=367.202]$. It indicated that 'individualized consideration' ($B=0.516$, $p<0.05$) was the main factor which caused the respondents to 'commit towards organization'. Thus, 'idealized influence' and 'individualized consideration' were predictors of 'commitment towards organization'.

Significantly, 'inspirational motivation' ($B=0.264$, $p<0.05$), 'individualized consideration' ($B=0.295$, $p<0.05$), and 'intellectual stimulation' ($B=0.122$, $p<0.05$) contributed 18.1 percent of the variance ($R\text{ Square}=0.181$) in 'commitment towards teaching profession', as shown by the F-value of $[F(3,1010)=74.328]$. It indicated that 'inspirational motivation' ($B=0.398$, $p<0.05$) was the main factor which caused the respondents to 'commit towards teaching profession'. Thus, 'inspirational motivation', 'individualized consideration', and 'intellectual stimulation' were predictors of 'commitment towards teaching profession'.

However, 'idealized influence', 'inspirational motivation', 'intellectual stimulation', and 'individualized consideration' were not predictors of 'commitment towards student learning'.

4.3 *Differences in mean scores among transformational leadership and teacher commitment components in relation to demography*

4.3.1 *Differences among transformational leadership qualities in relation to demography*

There were significant differences in mean scores among transformational leadership qualities in relation to years of teaching experience $[F(7,1006)=2.456$, $p=0.017]$. However, there were no significant differences in mean scores among transformational leadership components in relation to status $[F(2,1011)=2.435$, $p=0.088]$, and service category $[F(5,1008)=2.117$, $p=0.061]$. Therefore, the null hypotheses were confirmed at the 0.05 level. It demonstrated that there were partial significant differences in mean scores among transformational leadership qualities in relation to demography.

4.3.2 *Differences in mean scores among teacher commitment components in relation to demography*

There was a significant difference in mean scores among teacher commitment components in relation to years of teaching experience $[F(7,1006)=3.286$, $p=0.002]$. Therefore the null hypothesis was rejected at the 0.05 level. There were also non-significant differences in mean scores among teacher commitment components in relation to status $[F(2,1011)=0.812$, $p=0.444]$ and service category $[F(5,1008)=0.1707$, $p=0.130]$. Therefore, the null hypotheses were confirmed at the 0.05 level. It indicated that there were

partial significant differences in mean scores among teacher commitment components in relation to demography.

4.3.3. Multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA)

There were no significant differences in mean scores among transformational leadership practices and teacher commitment components in relation to demography. Thus, the null hypotheses were confirmed at the 0.05 level.

4.4. Discussion of findings

4.4.1. The extent of transformational leadership practices

It showed a low level of transformational leadership practices, and did not support the previous studies which highlighted the dynamism of transformational leadership that could bring changes to the level of teacher commitment.

a) Idealized influence

The practice of 'idealized influence' recorded the highest mean values (mean=41.88). It indicated that teachers perceived a fairly high level of 'idealized influence' from the principals, and they recognized the impact of 'idealized influence' in enhancing teacher commitment. It supported the previous research that 'idealized influence' as a behaviour which enables a leader to instil pride in and respect for the leader as well as make him, or her, a trustworthy and an energetic role model for the followers (Rowold & Heinitz, 2007). It also matched with previous studies that 'idealized influence' from a leader functions to transform followers by creating changes in their goals, values, needs, beliefs, and aspirations (Rowold & Heinitz, 2007; Yukl, 2002).

It also supported the previous research that 'idealized influence' builds trust and respect in followers and provides the basis for accepting radical and fundamental changes in the ways individuals and organizations do their work (Bass & Avolio, 1994).

It also supported the previous research that 'idealized influence' from a leader would involve setting high performance, expectations and standards. Leaders with this attribute and behaviour know that challenging but attainable goals lead to high productivity. They also publicly express confidence in the ability of followers to meet high performance expectations. This is essential because employees are more likely to be motivated to pursue difficult tasks when they believe that they can accomplish what is being asked of them. Furthermore, such leaders are role models (Kinicki & Kreitner, 2006).

It also supported the previous research that 'idealized influence' is about building confidence and trust and providing a role model that followers seek to emulate (Bono & Judge, 2004). Leaders are admired, respected and trusted (Bass et al., 2003).

In short, teachers rated a fairly high level of 'idealized influence' from the principals in enhancing teacher commitment.

b) Inspirational motivation

It showed that the practice of 'inspirational motivation' recorded the third highest mean value (mean=27.77). Teachers perceived a fairly low level of 'inspirational motivation' from the principals in enhancing teacher commitment.

It partially matched with the previous studies that 'inspirational motivation' is a process through which the transformational leader motivates his or her followers to become committed to and a part of the shared vision in the organization. Through 'inspirational motivation', transformational leadership communicates high expectations to followers which inspires them and creates in them the desire to become committed to and involved in efforts to realize the shared vision in the organization. It has been demonstrated that inspires team spirit and consequently leads to greater motivation and enhanced productivity (Yukl, 2002).

It also partially supported the previous research that 'inspirational motivation' is descriptive of leaders who communicate high expectations to followers, inspiring them through motivation to become committed to and a part of the shared vision in the organization. Leader used symbols and emotional appeals to focus group members' efforts to achieve more than they would in their own self-interest. Team spirit is enhanced by this type of leadership (Northouse, 2004).

It also partially matched with the previous studies that transformational leadership places a strong emphasis on followers' needs, values and morals. Burns (1978) suggested that transformational leadership involves attempts by leaders to move individuals to higher standards or moral responsibility. It includes motivating followers to transcend their own self-interest for the good of team, organization, or community (Howell & Avolio, 1992). Transformational leadership is morally uplifting (Avolio, 1999)

In short, teachers perceived a fairly low level of 'inspirational motivation' from the principals in enhancing teacher commitment.

c) Intellectual stimulation

It showed that the practice of 'intellectual stimulation' recorded the lowest mean value (mean=21.83). Teachers perceived a fairly low level of 'intellectual stimulation' from the principal in enhancing teacher commitment. It also meant that principals scarcely regarded 'intellectual stimulation' as an important asset in gaining teacher commitment.

It partially supported the previous studies that 'intellectual stimulation' involves arousing and changing followers' awareness of problems and their capacity to solve those problems (Bono & Judge, 2004). Transformational leaders question assumptions and beliefs and encourage followers to be innovative and creative, approaching old problems in new ways (Barbuto, 2005). They empower followers by persuading them to propose new and controversial ideas without fear and punishment or ridicule (Stone et al., 2003). They impose their own ideas judiciously and certainly not at any cost (Barbuto, 2005; Simic, 1998).

It also partially supported the previous research that 'intellectual stimulation' includes leadership that stimulates followers to be creative and to challenge their own beliefs and values as well as those of the leader and the organization. This type of leadership supports followers as they try new approaches and develop innovative ways of dealing with organizational issues. It promotes followers' thinking things out on their own and engaging in careful problem solving (Northouse, 2004).

In short, teachers perceived a fairly low level of 'intellectual stimulation' from the principal in enhancing teacher commitment.

d) Individualized consideration

The practice of 'individualized consideration' recorded the second highest mean value (mean=28.86). Teachers perceived a fairly low level of 'individualized consideration' from the principal in enhancing teacher commitment. It also meant that principals scarcely regarded 'individualized consideration' quality as an important asset in gaining teacher commitment.

It partially supported the previous studies that 'individualized consideration' is to determine the needs and strengths of others (Atwater & Bass, 1994). Transformational leaders help followers and colleagues develop to successively higher levels of potential and to take responsibility for their own development (Bass & Avolio, 1994).

It also partially supported the previous research that 'individualized consideration' involves responding to the specific unique needs of followers to ensure they are included in the organizational transformation process (Simic, 1998). People are treated individually and differently on the basis of their talents and knowledge (Shin & Zhou, 2003) and with the intention of allowing them to reach higher levels of achievement than might otherwise have been achieved (Chekwa, 2001)

It also partially supported the previous research that 'individualized consideration' is a degree to which the leader is concerned with the individual need of followers. The leader responds to followers' needs for growth and development, elevating needs and abilities to higher levels when appropriate and delegating projects to stimulate individual learning experience (Amoroso, 2002).

In short, teachers perceived a fairly low level of 'individualized consideration' from the principal in enhancing teacher commitment.

e) Overall findings on transformational leadership

Teachers perceived a low level of transformational leadership among their principals. Teachers rated the practice of transformational leadership qualities fairly unfavourably, and they were doubtful about their principal's leadership skills in gaining teacher commitment.

It partially supported the previous finding which highlighted the dynamism of transformational leadership that could bring changes to the level of teacher commitment. In reality, it was justified that transformational leadership fosters capacity development and brings higher levels of personal commitment amongst 'followers' to organizational objectives. Bass (1990) argued that transformational leadership occurs when leaders broaden and elevate the interests of their employees; when they generate awareness and acceptance of the purposes and mission of the group; and when they stir employees to look beyond their own self-interest for the good of the group. Together, heightened capacity and commitment are held to lead to additional effort and greater productivity (Barbuto, 2005; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000).

4.4.2. The extent of teacher commitment

It showed a moderate level of teacher commitment and matched with the previous studies that teachers in Malaysia only had moderate levels of affective, continuance, and normative commitment (Noordin et al., 2002).

a) Commitment towards organization

Teachers rated their 'commitment towards organization' at the highest mean values (mean=93.96). It supported the previous studies which showed that teachers' 'commitment towards organization' was influenced by (a) beliefs and acceptance of organizational goals (Mowday et al., 1979), (b) level of involvement in decision making (Kushman, 1992), (c) orderly climates conducive to learning (Kushman, 1992); (Rosenholtz, 1989), and (d) student achievement (Kushman, 1992).

This study revealed that teachers were very willing to believe and accept organizational goals and values, and exert effort on the organization behalf and desire to remain in the organization.

b) Commitment towards teaching profession.

Teachers rated their 'commitment towards teaching profession' at the second highest mean values (mean=56.13). It supported the previous findings that teachers revealed a moderate level of commitment to teaching profession by showing a moderately positive, affective attachment towards their career. It also suggested that teachers had a moderate sense of relevance or purpose in one's work. In short, teachers were committed to their teaching profession at a moderate level.

c) Commitment towards student learning

Teachers rated their 'commitment towards student learning' at the lowest mean values (mean=17.43). It did not support the previous finding as administrative support was noticed at a moderate level at the school.

Firestone and Rosenblum (1998) argued that administrative support for teachers could enhance teacher commitment towards teaching. Support from administrators contributed to teachers' performance and willingness to stay in the teaching field (Dworkin, 1987). A primary area of support is student discipline. Teachers expect the principal to control the public space in the school and to be sympathetic when teachers have problems with uncontrollable students (Firestone & Rosenblum, 1998). Teachers also expect administrators to reduce paperwork, support them in parental disputes, and minimize outside interruptions to their classroom (Rosenblum, 1985).

The findings contradicted the theory which conceptualized teacher commitment to student learning that consisted of the committed behaviors directed towards both the social and intellectual development of students (Hoy & Sabo, 1998; Hoy & Tarter, 1997).

Generally, it suggested that teachers were unwilling to interact with students on a more sensitive level such as adolescent development issues or extracurricular activities as suggested by Louis (1998) in this study. They were also unwilling to help students learn regardless of academic difficulties or social background as purported by Danetta (2002). Teachers with lower levels of commitment develop fewer plans to improve the academic quality of their instruction. They are also less sympathetic towards students, have more anxiety, and have less tolerance for frustration in the classroom (Firestone & Pennell, 1993).

4.4.3. Extents of relationship between transformational leadership and teacher commitment

There were partial significant linear correlations between transformational leadership and teacher commitment. 'Individualized consideration' and 'idealized influence' were factors to 'commitment towards organization'. The findings matched with a study that 'individualized consideration' was one of the

most important factors in describing transformational leadership in collectivistic culture when an emphasis on teamwork was also expected (Boehnke et al., 2003).

There were no factors influencing 'commitment towards student learning'. It matched with the previous study that teachers were reluctant to show 'commitment towards student learning' as teachers were most dissatisfied with student motivation and discipline, lack of recognition, and administrative support (Darling-Hammond, 1997). The findings also partially supported the studies that transformational leadership had a significant positive effect on organizational commitment (Geijsel et al., 2003).

4.4.4. Differences in mean scores between transformational leadership and teacher commitment components in relation to demography

a) Differences in mean scores among transformational leadership components in relation to demography

There were significant differences in mean scores among years of teaching experience components in relation to 'idealized influence', 'inspirational motivation', and 'intellectual stimulation'. There were also significant differences in mean scores among status at school, and service category components in relation to 'individualized consideration'. It showed partial significant differences in mean scores among transformational leadership practices in relation to demography.

It indicated that there were partially significant differences in mean scores among teacher's demography and transformational leadership components. It demonstrated that an increase in teaching experience, a higher level of transformational leadership qualities from the principal was expected from the teachers. It also showed that an increase in teachers' status at school would partially increase the expectation of teachers on transformational leadership qualities from the principals. It also showed that an increase in service category among the teachers, a higher level of transformational leadership qualities from the principal was looked upon to from the teachers excluding the service category of DG48.

b) Differences in mean scores among teacher commitment components in relation to demography

There were significant differences in mean scores among years of teaching experience in relation to 'commitment towards organization' and 'teaching profession'. However, there were no significant differences in mean scores among status at school in relation to teacher commitment but there were significant differences in mean scores among service category in relation to 'commitment towards teaching profession'.

It indicated that there were partially significant differences among teacher's demography and teacher commitment in this study. It meant that an increase in teaching experience could partially decrease in teacher commitment except for those who had 2 to 5 years, and 6 to 10 years of teaching experience. It also showed that an increase in teachers' status at school did not increase their commitment towards organization, towards teaching profession, and towards student learning essentially for those who were in the 'other category' like Senior Student Affairs teachers, School Counsellors, Senior Co-curricular teachers. It also suggested that an increase in service category could partially increase in transformational leadership qualities except for the service category of DG48. In short, there were partially significant differences in mean scores among teacher commitment components in relation to demography.

c) Differences in mean scores among transformational leadership and teacher commitment components in relation to demography

There were no significant differences in mean scores among transformational leadership and teacher commitment components in relation to demography. It indicated that there were no effects of teachers' demography (years of teaching experience, status at school, and service category) on transformational leadership and teacher commitment.

Conclusion

The findings showed that transformational leadership behaviours were slightly correlated to teachers' sense of commitment. The practice of transformational leadership behaviours by school leaders enhanced teacher commitment. It indicated that transformational leadership qualities are an important dimension of the social context in improving the level of teacher commitment in schools. It provided empirical evidence on the impact of transformational leadership qualities on improving teacher commitment in schools.

It had provided considerable insights on the teachers' perceptions of their principal's transformational leadership qualities. It had inevitably provided some empirical supports to verify the notion that transformational leadership had direct impact on teacher commitment towards organization, towards teaching profession, and towards student learning. Teachers' commitment was at a low level, and the practice of transformational leadership qualities was reported at a moderate level. There were weak significant correlations between transformational leadership (idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration), and commitment towards organization, and commitment towards teaching profession. However, there was no significant correlation between transformational leadership and commitment towards student learning.

The findings also showed that 'individualized consideration' and 'idealized influence' were factors to 'commitment towards organization'. 'Inspirational motivation', 'individualized consideration', and 'intellectual stimulation' were factors to 'commitment towards teaching profession'. However, there were no factors to 'commitment towards student learning'.

There is substantial evidence that transformational leadership is an effective form of leadership (Yukl, 1999). It also agreed with Bass (1985) who argued that transformational leadership motivated followers to do more than the expected by doing the following (a) raising followers' levels of consciousness about the importance and value of specified and idealized goals, (b) getting followers to transcend their own self-interest for the sake of the team or organization, and (c) moving followers to address higher-level needs. Besides, it also showed that transformational leadership is concerned with the performance of followers and also with developing followers to their fullest potential (Bass & Avolio, 1994).

It also revealed that individuals who exhibited transformational leadership often had a strong set of internal values and ideals, and they were effective at motivating followers to act in ways that supported the greater good rather than their own self-interest (Kuhnert, 1994). It also supported Lowe et al. (1996) who discovered that individuals who exhibited transformational leadership were perceived to be more effective leaders with better work outcomes than were individuals who exhibited only transactional leadership. It also confirmed with the previous research by Yu et al. (2002) who argued that transformational leadership behaviors have been found to have a significant effect on teachers' level of commitment.

It had provided specific avenues regarding future research on the four components of transformational leadership to increase the three dimensions of teachers' commitment level in schools. However, the practice of transformational leadership qualities to improve teacher commitment towards student learning might need special attention to the 'how' to boost teachers' spirit in committing themselves to help students really learn and thereafter improve academic performances in public examinations. Further empirical research is needed to confirm whether a principal who adopts and adapts transformational leadership style might change or improve teachers' commitment level in schools.

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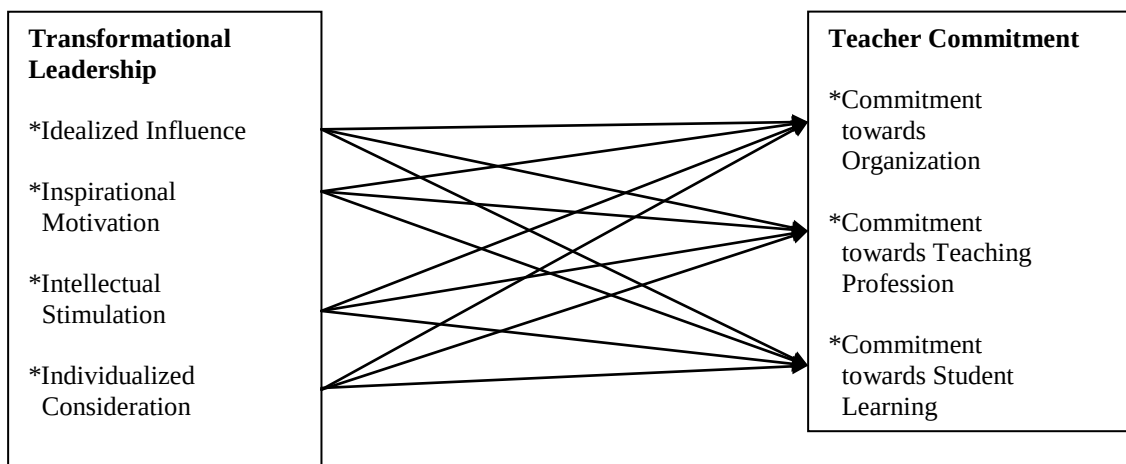
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Figures & tables

Figure 1.1: Possible relationships between transformational leadership, and teacher commitment



Source: Adapted from Bass and Rigglo (2006), and Dannetta (2002)

Table 1: Reliability Test of the Questionnaire

Section	Dimension	Pilot Study One		Pilot Study Two	
		Cronbach's Alpha Value	No. Items	Cronbach's Alpha Value	No. Items
C	Antecedent	.			
	Transformational Leadership	0.977		0.977	
i	Idealized Influence	0.955	11	0.955	11
ii	Inspirational Motivation	0.905	7	0.905	7
iii	Intellectual Stimulation	0.876	6	0.876	6
iv	Individualized Consideration	0.940	8	0.940	8
D	Criterion				
	Teacher Commitment	0.949		0.954	
i	Commitment to the Organization	0.933	32	0.942	25
ii	Commitment to Teaching Profession	0.918	20	0.935	15
iii	Commitment to Student Learning	0.554	15	0.723	6
	(Total)		99		78

Table 2: Transformational Leadership Practice in Secondary Schools in Miri, Sarawak

		Idealized Influence	Inspirational Motivation	Intellectual Stimulation	Individualized Consideration
N	Valid	1014	1014	1014	1014
	Missing	0	0	0	0
Mean		41.88	27.77	21.83	28.86
Median		43.00	28.00	22.00	29.00
Mode		44	35	18	24
Std. Deviation		9.018	5.612	4.777	6.778
Variance		81.317	31.497	22.823	45.947
Range		44	28	24	32
Minimum		1	7	6	8
Maximum		55	35	30	40
(Average Mean Values)					30.09

Table 3: Teacher Commitment Level in Secondary Schools in Miri, Sarawak

		Commitment to Organization	Commitment to Teaching Profession	Commitment to Student Learning
N	Valid	1014	1014	1014
	Missing	0	0	0
Mean		93.96	56.13	17.43
Median		94.00	57.00	17.00
Mode		78	60	18
Std. Deviation		12.225	8.239	4.220
Variance		149.462	67.886	17.807
Range		100	51	22
Minimum		30	24	8
Maximum		130	75	30
(Average Mean Scores)				55.84

Table 4: Correlation coefficient values between transformational leadership and teacher commitment

		Idealized Influence	Inspirational Motivation	Intellectual Stimulation	Individualized Consideration
Commitment to Organization	to	.478(**)	.463(**)	.468(**)	.516(**)
Commitment to Teaching Profession	to	.395(**)	.398(**)	.335(**)	.396(**)
Commitment to Student Learning		-.032	-.059	-.018	-.022

Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). All results are significant except for teacher commitment towards student learning