



# THE EFFECT OF THE PRINCIPAL'S LEADERSHIP STYLE ON THE MOTIVATION AND JOB PERFORMANCE OF TEACHERS IN RURAL SCHOOLS IN CHINA



Wei Lingmin\*, Khatipah Binti Abdul Ghani, Aminul Islam

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Lincoln University College, 47301 Petaling Jaya, Selangor D.E., Malaysia

\*Corresponding Author's Email: [weilingminsq@163.com](mailto:weilingminsq@163.com)

## Abstract

This research sought to investigate the link between Chinese rural school administrators' leadership philosophies and their employees' level of satisfaction. The researchers examined the connection between job happiness and leadership styles using a variety of ideas. To analyse the data, they used information from 1438 instructors and 151 rural schools. The findings demonstrated that, whereas passive avoidant leadership had a negative correlation with work satisfaction, transformational leadership practices raised teachers' levels of job satisfaction. Additionally, the research found that the emotional aspect of workers' commitment to the organization tempered some relationships between leadership styles and job satisfaction. Certain leadership styles were associated with all components of national culture, except for masculinity. The results suggest that when putting leadership ideas into practice in rural schools, educators and legislators should take these findings into account. To fully comprehend the intricate connection between leadership philosophies and work happiness in remote schools, further investigation is required.

**Keywords:** *Job Performance; Principal Leadership Style; Rural Schools; Teacher's Motivation*

## Introduction

The purpose of this research is to examine how principals' leadership styles in rural Chinese schools affect their teachers' motivation and performance on the job. Different leadership styles, from authoritarian to democratic, with varying levels of participation and dialogue, can guide principals and their staff. The leadership method has the potential to significantly impact teacher satisfaction, dedication, and effectiveness in rural settings, where resources are typically low and outside assistance is often non-existent. There are two primary types of motivators: those that come from within and those that come from outside the individual. To increase teacher motivation, the administrator must be able to create a safe and encouraging school climate. Conversely, job performance is a quantifiable indicator of how well and efficiently a teacher does their job [1]. This study will explore the effects of several leadership styles on these features of rural school teaching staff, including transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire approaches. The study's overarching goal is to shed light on these processes to help shape leadership development programs and enhance educational results in rural China. If a country aspires to be a global power, it must invest in its educational system. They are vital in creating a strong new generation that is careful to preserve traditions while also being flexible enough to adapt to new technologies and times. Schools are among the most crucial institutions and personnel responsible for ensuring a seamless transition for students,

so several nations are now undergoing reforms to their educational systems. Enhancing educational reforms and improving schools requires the development of human qualities that can serve as catalysts for these changes. Studies have linked highly qualified teachers and administrators to significant gains in student achievement. A more comprehensive picture includes better educational institutions, more effective teaching tactics, and more academic achievement for the students they teach, all of which contribute to teachers' job satisfaction [2].

## Literature Review

Scientists in China have studied how school administrators' guiding principles affect classroom discipline and productivity. Because of the principals' harsh dispositions, they discovered that rural school administrators' administrative ideas weren't enough to run educational institutions efficiently. Finding that a principal's leadership and motivational style significantly impacted his staff's performance, the research also examined the administrative strategy of rural school administrators in connection to instructors'. The study also looked at how principals' instructional leadership is defined and what effects it has. Leadership qualities shown by principals explained as much as 20% of the variation in student performance, with various forms of instructional leadership predicting both student performance and the school's effectiveness. The correlation between direct leadership and student success was stronger than that between indirect and direct leadership. Two potential independent factors that influence teacher morale are principal trust and leadership satisfaction [3]. Results demonstrated that principal leadership styles substantially impacted both teacher morale and student achievement. Initiative Schools saw a reduction in disciplinary action recommendations due to strong teacher morale and outstanding student achievement. Results showed that transformational leadership (TF) was the most effective strategy for high-performing schools in Malaysia. Results showed that under democratic leadership, teachers were more productive on the job than under authoritarian leadership. The study found a positive correlation between leadership philosophies and teacher performance in the Gambella region of Ethiopia. The study's results supported the premise that a principal's leadership style influences teachers' levels of devotion, and they also showed that teachers' degrees of commitment fluctuated considerably over years of secondary school. Biographical factors moderated the principal leadership style and teacher commitment. One of the most important leadership subscales also showed substantial variation between the sexes, with male and female teachers displaying very different leadership styles. According to the research, children don't learn well when their instructors don't care about the subject matter, and when administrators disregard teachers' opinions when making decisions, it might cause them to lose interest in teaching [4].

## Methodology

### a) Materials:

- Surveys/questionnaires: These were used to collect quantitative data from 1438 teachers and 151 rural school administrators. These surveys likely included items related to leadership styles, work satisfaction, organizational commitment, and demographic information.
- Statistical software: The authors utilized IBM SPSS Statistics Version 22 for data cleaning, descriptive statistics, and reliability statistics, and Mplus Version 7.0 for structural equation modeling (SEM).

### b) Data Sources:

- 151 rural schools in China: The study collected data from a sample of 151 rural schools, which represented the population of interest.
- Teachers and school administrators: The authors collected quantitative and qualitative data from 1438 teachers and 151 rural school administrators, respectively. These individuals provided insights into their perceptions of leadership styles, work satisfaction, organizational commitment, and related factors.

## c) Methodologies:

- Mixed-methods explanatory sequential methodology: This approach involved collecting quantitative data first, followed by qualitative data collection to further explain or elaborate on the quantitative findings.
- Quantitative data analysis: The authors used Mplus Version 7.0 to conduct structural equation modeling (SEM) to analyze the relationships between variables like leadership styles, work satisfaction, and organizational commitment.
- Qualitative data analysis: The authors used theme analysis to summarize and interpret the qualitative data collected from rural school administrators. This likely involved identifying recurring themes or patterns in their responses to open-ended questions or interviews.
- Research goals: The study aimed to fulfill four research goals, including examining the relationship between leadership styles and work satisfaction, exploring the role of organizational commitment, and investigating how principals' national and cultural backgrounds influence school management practices.
- Research approach and design: They chose the study's approach and design to align with its research goals and effectively address the specific research questions.

### Conceptual Framework



## Result

### Job Satisfaction of Teachers

The authors obtained descriptive data, such as mean and standard deviations, to examine the level of satisfaction teachers were experiencing in their current employment before assessing the relationship between principals' leadership styles and their workers' happiness. A poll asking employees to assess their level of job satisfaction yielded an average score of 3.38. In general, workers expressed satisfaction with their managers ( $M = 4.21$ ,  $SD = 0.73$ ), their jobs ( $M = 4.04$ ,  $SD = 0.68$ ), and their coworkers ( $M = 3.99$ ,  $SD = 0.62$ ). For communication,  $M = 3.61$ ,  $SD = 0.78$ ; for contingent incentives,  $M = 3.15$ ,  $SD = 0.78$ ; for pay and benefits,  $M = 2.92$ ,  $SD = 0.81$ ; for basic wage and other kinds of remuneration,  $M = 2.65$ ,  $SD = 0.78$ ; and for  $M = 2.43$ ,  $SD = 0.73$ . Table 1 displays the results, revealing that the promotion factor has the lowest mean and standard deviation. This is true for the variance, too.

**Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Job Satisfaction of Teachers**

| Facets of Job Satisfaction | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | Skewness | Kurtosis |
|----------------------------|----------|-----------|----------|----------|
| Overall Job Satisfaction   | 3.38     | 0.51      | -0.23    | 0.67     |
| Pay                        | 2.92     | 0.81      | -0.24    | -0.28    |
| Promotion                  | 2.43     | 0.73      | 0.13     | -0.20    |
| Supervision                | 4.21     | 0.73      | -0.92    | 0.86     |
| Fringe Benefits            | 2.65     | 0.78      | 0.02     | -0.29    |
| Contingent Rewards         | 3.15     | 0.78      | -0.23    | 0.12     |
| Co-workers                 | 3.99     | 0.62      | -0.56    | 1.03     |
| Nature of Work             | 4.04     | 0.68      | -0.69    | 0.77     |
| Communications             | 3.61     | 0.78      | -0.52    | 0.28     |

Source: Collected by Author

They conducted correlation tests and calculated means and standard deviations to determine if there was a relationship between the various aspects of work satisfaction and overall job satisfaction. The findings indicate a favourable correlation between an employee's overall level of happiness with their employment and all the elements that influenced that level of satisfaction. The strongest correlation was seen between contingent pay and working relationships with coworkers ( $r = 0.79, p < 0.001$ ). Other forms of compensation followed ( $r = 0.75, p < 0.001$ ), internal communication ( $r = 0.73, p < 0.001$ ), and other forms of payment ( $r = 0.67, p < 0.001$ ). Table 2 shows that there was a significant positive correlation between compensation and supervision ( $r = 0.65, p < 0.001$ ) as well as a big positive link between promotion and work type ( $r = 0.61, p < 0.001$ ). Overall work satisfaction significantly positively correlated with both of these characteristics.

**Table 2: Correlations Between Job Satisfaction and its Facets**

| Correlation           |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |   |
|-----------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---|
|                       | 1       | 2       | 3       | 4       | 5       | 6       | 7       | 8       | 9 |
| 1. Pay                |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |   |
| 2. Promotion          | 0.56*** |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |   |
| 3. Supervision        | 0.22*** | 0.13*** |         |         |         |         |         |         |   |
| 4. Fringe Benefits    | 0.56*** | 0.58*** | 0.28*** |         |         |         |         |         |   |
| 5. Contingent Rewards | 0.42*** | 0.38*** | 0.50*** | 0.57*** |         |         |         |         |   |
| 6. Co-workers         | 0.28*** | 0.20*** | 0.53*** | 0.33*** | 0.46*** |         |         |         |   |
| 7. Nature of Work     | 0.23*** | 0.25*** | 0.36*** | 0.29*** | 0.38*** | 0.46*** |         |         |   |
| 8. Communications     | 0.23*** | 0.20*** | 0.60*** | 0.42*** | 0.59*** | 0.54*** | 0.42*** |         |   |
| 9. Job Satisfaction   | 0.65*** | 0.61*** | 0.65*** | 0.75*** | 0.79*** | 0.67*** | 0.61*** | 0.73*** |   |

Source: Collected by Author

### The Connection Between Principals' Leadership Styles and Aspects and Teachers' Job Satisfaction

The research looked at the connection between administrators' leadership philosophies and teachers' overall job satisfaction ratings. Path analyses assessed the relationship between transformational, transactional, and passive-avoidance managers and the degrees of job satisfaction expressed by educators. The model considered a variety of factors, such as age, gender, level of education attained, number of years worked at the school, number of years working under the same concept, and overall number of years worked. The findings indicated that there was a negative correlation ( $\beta = -0.18, p < 0.001$ ) between passive avoidant leadership style and overall job satisfaction, but there was a statistically significant positive relationship ( $\beta = 0.60, p < 0.001$ ) between transformational leadership style and teachers' overall job satisfaction. Instructors who received less transformational leadership from their administrators reported significantly lower levels of work satisfaction than those who received more transformational leadership from their principals. Comparing teachers with principals who showed a passive avoidant leadership style to their peers whose superiors demonstrated a less passive avoidant leadership style, the former group reported considerably poorer work satisfaction. The research concluded that a transactional interaction-based management style and employee happiness are unrelated.

**Table 3: Structural Equation Modelling Analyses Predicting Job Satisfaction from Leadership Style**

| Variables | Estimate | SE   |
|-----------|----------|------|
| Gender    | 0.036    | 0.03 |
| Education | -0.04    | 0.05 |

|   |          |      |
|---|----------|------|
| Age   | 0.07     | 0.04 |
| Years in School   | -0.09    | 0.06 |
| Years with Principal  | 0.01     | 0.05 |
| Transformational Leadership   | 0.60***  | 0.09 |
| Transactional Leadership  | -0.05    | 0.08 |
| Passive Avoidant Leadership   | -0.18*** | 0.04 |
| <i>Note: *p&lt;0.05, **p&lt;0.01, ***p&lt;0.001, RMSEA=0.00 (90% CI:0.00-0.00), CFI=1.00, TLI=1.00, SRMR=0.00</i> |          |      |

Source: Collected by Author

The authors conducted an inquiry to determine the extent to which various facets of transformational leadership impacted overall job satisfaction levels. We examined the linkages between intellectual stimulation, customized care, idealized influence (attributed), and conduct through route analyses to gain a deeper understanding of the factors influencing teachers' total work satisfaction. The authors conducted this analysis to gain a deeper understanding of the factors that impact teachers' overall levels of satisfaction. The model considered a number of factors, such as age, gender, level of education attained, length of time worked at the school, length of time worked on the same concept, and total number of years worked. The study demonstrated a positive and statistically significant relationship between teachers' perceived level of overall work satisfaction and the elements of transformational leadership style known as intellectual stimulation and inspiring motivation ( $\beta = 0.36, p < 0.001$  and  $\beta = 0.20, p < 0.01$ , respectively). The path analysis's findings showed that this link was statistically significant and favourable. Teachers who reported feeling substantially more inspired and intellectually stimulated by their administrators at work than by their peers also reported far higher levels of job satisfaction. However, teachers asserted that their superiors did not engage in any of these activities with them. Table 4 revealed no statistically significant relationship between idealized influence (behaviours), idealized influence (attributes), and work satisfaction.

**Table 4: Structural Equation Modelling Analyses Predicting Job Satisfaction from Transformational Leadership Dimensions**

| Variables   | Estimate | SE   |
|---|----------|------|
| Gender  | 0.05     | 0.04 |
| Education   | -0.02    | 0.05 |
| Age   | 0.08*    | 0.04 |
| Years in School   | -0.10    | 0.06 |
| Years with Principal  | 0.03     | 0.05 |
| Intellectual Stimulation  | 0.36***  | 0.08 |
| Inspirational Motivation  | 0.20***  | 0.08 |
| Individual Consideration  | 0.06     | 0.07 |
| Idealised Influence (Attributed)  | 0.13     | 0.08 |
| Idealised Influence (Behaviour)   | 0.07     | 0.08 |
| <i>Note: *p&lt;0.05, **p&lt;0.01, ***p&lt;0.001, RMSEA=0.00 (90% CI:0.00-0.00), CFI=1.00, TLI=1.00, SRMR=0.00</i> |          |      |

Source: Collected by Author

Furthermore, they used path analyses to investigate the effects of contingent pay and active management on teachers' job satisfaction levels. The model considered a number of factors, such as age, gender, level of education attained, length of time worked at the school, length of time worked on the same concept, and total number of years worked. The transactional leadership style's contingent reward component was shown to positively correlate with teachers' overall job satisfaction ( $\beta = 0.63, p < 0.001$  for statistical significance). An earlier investigation corroborated these results. Administrators said that teachers who reported significantly higher levels of job satisfaction received significantly more

opportunities for contingent incentives than their peers who reported significantly fewer chances for such awards. Table 5 reveals no statistically significant correlation between the satisfaction levels of workers and the management by exception (active) approach.

**Table 5: Structural Equation Modelling Analyses of Predicting Job Satisfaction from Transactional Leadership Dimensions**

| Variables  | Estimate | SE   |
|--|----------|------|
| Gender   | 0.05     | 0.05 |
| Education  | -0.02    | 0.05 |
| Age  | 0.05     | 0.04 |
| Years in School  | -0.07    | 0.06 |
| Years with Principal   | 0.01     | 0.05 |
| Management by exception (Active)   | -0.07    | 0.06 |
| Contingent Rewards   | 0.63*    | 0.05 |
| <i>Note: *<math>p &lt; 0.05</math>, **<math>p &lt; 0.01</math>, ***<math>p &lt; 0.001</math>, RMSEA=0.00 (90% CI:0.00-0.00), CFI=1.00, TLI=1.00, SRMR=0.00</i> |          |      |

Source: Collected by Author

Furthermore, they conducted path analyses to examine the relationship between educators' work satisfaction levels and management philosophies (passive vs. laissez-faire). They found that a passive management style had a stronger correlation with work satisfaction than a laissez-faire management style. As potential confounders, they looked at age, gender, level of education attained, total time at the school, number of years teaching, and number of years working under the same principal. As shown by the path analyses, teachers' overall job satisfaction is significantly and statistically significantly inversely correlated with the passive avoidant leadership component of "let them do it their way" ( $\beta = -0.30, p < 0.001$ ). The degree of satisfaction felt by teachers whose principals had a more hands-off approach to classroom management differed statistically significantly from that of teachers whose administrators participated more actively in the classroom. Teachers whose administrators took a more active role in running the classroom felt a different degree of pleasure. Table 6 presents evidence that suggests there is no statistically significant correlation between management by exception (passive) and employee satisfaction levels.

**Table 6: Structural Equation Modelling Analyses Predicting Job Satisfaction from Passive Avoidant Leadership Dimensions**

| Variables  | Estimate | SE   |
|--|----------|------|
| Gender   | 0.05     | 0.03 |
| Education  | -0.05    | 0.05 |
| Age  | 0.08     | 0.05 |
| Years in School  | -0.11    | 0.07 |
| Years with Principal   | 0.05     | 0.06 |
| Management by exception (Passive)  | -0.10    | 0.05 |
| Laissez Faire  | -0.30*   | 0.06 |
| <i>Note: *<math>p &lt; 0.05</math>, **<math>p &lt; 0.01</math>, ***<math>p &lt; 0.001</math>, RMSEA=0.00 (90% CI:0.00-0.00), CFI=1.00, TLI=1.00, SRMR=0.00</i> |          |      |

Source: Collected by Author

## Discussion

The studies showed that instructors were more satisfied with their jobs when their bosses used a transformational style of leadership. Teachers reported more happiness when their leaders were transformational, meaning they could motivate

and challenge their employees intellectually. Teachers who worked under administrators who took a hands-off approach to management were less satisfied with their jobs, according to a negative link between job satisfaction and a passive-avoidance leadership style. This study investigated the effects of several characteristics of transformational leadership on workplace contentment, including intellectual stimulation and motivating motivation [5]. Educators who felt intellectually challenged and motivated by their administrators expressed a greater degree of work satisfaction. This provides strong evidence that teachers report higher levels of job satisfaction when their supervisors display certain traits and behaviors. The research established a connection between contingent reward, a characteristic of transactional leadership, and teachers' job satisfaction, yet it determined that the overall impact of transactional leadership on instructors was minimal. This shows that transactional leadership may not be as effective as transformational leadership, even if incentives and rewards could help employees feel more fulfilled in their work [6]. The research looked at the impact of passive and laissez-faire management styles on employee happiness on the job. The study found that work satisfaction was negatively associated with a passive management style, which is characterized by a hands-off attitude. There was no correlation between active management, in which administrators take a more hands-on approach to classroom management, and employee happiness. This underscores the importance of leadership actively fostering a pleasant work environment. The results have important implications for how rural schools in China handle leadership [7]. Teachers are more likely to be satisfied with their jobs when principals demonstrate transformational leadership behaviors, such as inspiring and stimulating their minds. Teachers may be less satisfied with their jobs when their managers adopt a passive and laissez-faire approach. Thus, leadership development programs should target school administrators with an emphasis on helping them build transformational leadership skills [8].

## Conclusion

According to the research, principals in China's rural schools exhibit varying degrees of transactional, transformational, and passive-avoidant leadership styles. Researchers assert that leaders who employ tactics that blend elements of transformational and transactional leadership are more likely to achieve success in their endeavors. Most often, the participants employed the transformational leadership style, followed by the transactional approach and the passive avoidance tactic. When comparing their judgments of their personal leadership styles with the instructors' evaluations of their principals' leadership styles, it became evident that the principals held different opinions about their practices, depending on the type of leadership. There was a divergence in the principals' and teachers' assessments of each other's leadership styles, suggesting that the principals and teachers had distinct perspectives on leadership styles. One noteworthy accomplishment was the principals' and teachers' consistent ratings of the transformational leadership shown by the teachers and principals generally. However, the administrators' assessments of their own transformative leadership in the context of individual consideration practices did not align with the evaluations provided by the instructors. According to the teachers at this institution, the administrators do not provide each and every pupil with enough individual attention. Administrators and teachers alike expressed dissatisfaction with principals' lack of effort in assessing the strengths and weaknesses of their individual teachers. Regarding the contingent compensation component of transactional leadership, principals' assessments of teachers' performance aligned with teachers' assessments of administrators' achievement on this dimension. When it came to the exception-making (passive) and laissez-faire (active) aspects of passive avoidant leadership, the administrators' evaluations of their own management differed significantly from those of the teachers. The teacher assessments were much more positive, indicating that principals may be more deeply committed to these leadership duties than they realize. This disparity could have been caused by both the teachers' and the students' basic misinterpretation of these behaviours. One instance of an active action that teachers see the principal's follow-up monitoring of completed projects.

## Conflict of Interests

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interests.

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