



# IMPACT OF PRINCIPAL'S LEADERSHIP STYLE ON TEACHER'S MOTIVATION AND JOB PERFORMANCE IN CHINA RURAL SCHOOLS



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## Abstract

The aim of this research was to investigate the link between the level of employee satisfaction and the philosophy of leadership of Chinese rural school administrators. The researchers examined the connection between job happiness and leadership ideologies using a variety of ideas. They used data from 151 rural schools and 1438 teachers to examine it. The findings demonstrated that, whereas avoidant passive leadership had a negative relationship with work satisfaction, transformational leadership practices enhanced teachers' job satisfaction. The study also found that the emotional component of employees' loyalty to the company moderated several correlations between leadership styles and job satisfaction. Every aspect of national culture, apart from masculinity, was associated with certain leadership philosophies. The findings suggest that educators and policymakers should consider these findings when implementing leadership principles in rural schools. More research is necessary to completely understand the complex relationship between job satisfaction and leadership ideologies in distant schools.

**Keywords:** *Leadership Style; Job Satisfaction; Principal Leadership Style; Teachers Job Performance; Teacher's Motivation*

## Introduction

In today's dynamic environment, individuals encounter numerous problems that require creative responses. Globally, educational changes are preparing the youth for the challenges of the twenty-first century. Discussions on quality and advancement must take into account the members of these institutions. Paying close attention to the people who really do the job for the company is the surest way to influence change and unleash human potential. It is necessary to cultivate human qualities that serve as catalysts for educational reforms in order to improve schools overall. Simply put, the authors cannot accomplish this in an empty space. This has a direct impact on the level of classroom teaching and pupils' intellectual growth. Studies have shown a direct correlation between students' academic success and the presence of qualified education leaders in the classroom. The current educational reforms aim, among other things, to enhance students' performance. Academic achievement for children, improved schools, and pleased instructors are all parts of the same puzzle, according to research. As a general rule, both students and businesses that employ teachers benefit from instructors who are content with their work. Teachers who are very effective in their jobs also tend to be optimistic, efficient, and efficacious themselves. Boosted morale at work boosts output since it reduces absenteeism and increases

retention, which boosts output on an individual level and the company's bottom line. Boosting productivity and a decrease in absenteeism and turnover may help a company save money on operational costs. That extra cash can then be put towards other important initiatives [1].

Researchers in China found a strong correlation between teachers' productivity and their ability to meet Maslow's requirements for work success. When teachers do a competent job, it shows in their pupils' growth and in the learning environment they create. Evidence suggests a positive association between organizational commitment and teacher performance, as well as a negative relationship with absenteeism and turnover. Researchers have discovered that job attitude—which is defined as a sense of happiness and dedication to one's work—influences attendance, productivity, and other actions linked to one's job. Learning what makes a difference in the workplace is essential in light of recent reforms to the educational system. The workplace may employ various measures to enhance employee happiness. There are other extrinsic variables than pay and job security that might affect intrinsic motivation, according to the research. A number of studies have shown that when school administrators provide teachers with the support and incentives they need, both student success and teachers' job satisfaction increase.

A study looked at how teachers' dedication and productivity may improve with the help of a principal. The researchers discovered a strong correlation between administrative support and teachers' assessments of students' work performance and school loyalty. Numerous studies have shown that the leadership styles of school administrators affect teachers' organizational commitment and work performance. There is a widespread belief that leadership is culturally located, but researchers have shown that this is not always the case. Findings indicate that a leader's cultural upbringing has an effect on their leadership style. The leaders' home cultures influence the dynamics of leadership relationships due to the inherent differences in viewpoints, cultural sensibilities, and experiences between them and those they lead. In order to successfully ease the transfer of information across nations, it is crucial to study the relationships between their leadership styles and cultural norms. An important step in measuring cultural impact, according to researchers, is developing outstanding leaders. Lastly, becoming outstanding leaders requires a cultural link between culture and leadership [2].

## Literature Review

There are a number of ways that researchers have looked at the connection between satisfied employees and loyal employers. It is often believed that dedication to one's organization comes after a strong performance on the job. The focus is on the big picture, with organizational commitment, and the little picture, with job performance. Organisational commitment develops over time, while job performance reveals an individual's emotional response to their work and its characteristics instantly. A better grasp of the job at hand, familiarity with the organization's principles and objectives, and continued participation all contribute to this development, according to the research. To support the hypothesis that work happiness is a prerequisite for organizational commitment, researchers have shown that individuals develop a focus on their jobs before they develop a focus on their organizations. Given the robust positive correlation between organisational commitment and work performance, researchers concluded that there was a direct correlation between these two variables, which significantly correlated with job performance.

Findings from a study involving 425 employees from two separate service organizations indicate a positive correlation between employee loyalty and occupational performance. When teachers reported high levels of job satisfaction across a range of dimensions, including supervision and working conditions, their levels of organisational commitment rose. Although the exact relationship between research and improved productivity is up for debate, researchers maintain that the former is more important [3]. The second model suggests that prioritising job performance over organisational commitment enhances an individual's loyalty to their organisation. A third model suggests that job satisfaction and organisational loyalty are interdependent, despite the lack of universal agreement on this link. Research indicates a correlation between workplace dedication and employee performance [4]. Research indicates a stronger correlation between emotional commitment, or attitude-based devotion, and overall job performance, happiness with supervisors

and colleagues, and the task at hand. There is a robust association between calculative commitment (also called continuity commitment or normative commitment) and extrinsic variables like income and promotion that influence job performance [5]. The results demonstrate a strong, statistically significant correlation between the three components of organizational commitment and the five features that comprise overall success on the job. These links do exist, but the strength of them depends on other factors. Emotional commitment had a much stronger and greater correlation with overall success on the job than normative and continuing commitments, respectively. The correlations between the organizational commitment dimensions and overall job performance were also much stronger than those between the dimensions and specific measures of performance [9].

## Materials and Methods

### a) Materials:

- Questionnaires and surveys: Used to get quantitative information from 151 rural school administrators and 1438 teachers. These surveys most likely asked questions about demographic data, organizational commitment, job happiness, and leadership styles.
- Statistical software: Data cleaning, descriptive statistics, and reliability statistics were performed using IBM SPSS Statistics Version 22, while structural equation modelling (SEM) was carried out using Mplus Version 7.0.

### b) Data Sources:

- China has 151 rural schools: A sample of 151 rural schools, representing the study's target demographic, provided the data.
- Teachers and school administrators: 1438 teachers and 151 rural school administrators provided quantitative and qualitative information, respectively. These people shared their perspectives on organizational commitment, job satisfaction, leadership styles, and other relevant topics.

### c) Methodologies:

- Mixed-methods explanatory sequential methodology: In this strategy, quantitative data were gathered first, and then qualitative data were gathered to supplement or expand upon the quantitative results.
- Quantitative data analysis: Using Mplus Version 7.0, structural equation modelling (SEM) was used to examine the correlations between factors such as organisational commitment, job satisfaction, and leadership styles.
- Qualitative data analysis: We used theme analysis to compile and analyze the qualitative information we received from administrators of rural schools. This probably included looking for reoccurring themes or patterns in their interview or open-ended inquiry replies.
- Research approach and design: The study's approach and design were selected to effectively address the specific research questions and align with its research goals. These goals included examining the relationship between work satisfaction and leadership styles, exploring the role of organisational commitment, and determining how principals' national and cultural backgrounds influence school management practices.

## Conceptual Framework



## Results

### Principals' and Teachers' Views on Leadership Styles

Three different leadership models were used to help with an examination of the views that educators had about the management of their schools: the transformational, transactional, and passive avoidant models. The quantified components of the previously mentioned management approaches included individual attention, stimulation of thought, inspirational motivation, management by exception (active), management by exception (passive), idealized influence (behaviour), contingent reward, and laissez-faire.

#### A. Analysing Quantitative Data

Descriptive statistics was used like means and standard deviations to investigate the teachers' perceptions of the administrators' leadership philosophies at their different schools. Leadership that is transformational ( $M = 4.05$ ,  $SD = 0.68$ ) had the highest mean score, followed by leadership that is transactional ( $M = 3.84$ ,  $SD = 0.66$ ). The least effective kind of leadership was passive avoidance ( $M = 2.39$ ,  $SD = 0.70$ ). The highest mean scores were for idealised influence (Behaviour) ( $M = 4.10$ ,  $SD = 0.70$ ), idealised influence (Attributed) ( $M = 4.09$ ,  $SD = 0.75$ ), and inspirational motivation ( $M = 4.35$ ,  $SD = 0.75$ ). The areas of intellectual stimulation and individual concern had the lowest mean scores ( $M = 3.91$ ,  $SD = 0.85$ ). These two groupings also had the lowest standard deviations. In contrast to the management by exception (active) dimension, which had a mean score of 3.6 and a standard deviation of 0.82, the contingent compensation component of transactional management had a mean score of 4.08 and a standard deviation of 0.79. In comparison, these results are shown. Table 1 shows that laissez-faire received a lower mean score ( $M = 2.15$ ,  $SD = 0.82$ ) than leadership by exception when it came to passive avoidant leadership. It was found that there was a 0.79 standard deviation difference between the two.

*Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Teachers' Perceptions of Leadership Styles*

Leadership Styles and Dimensions	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Skewness	Kurtosis
<b>Transformational Leadership</b>	4.05	0.68	-1.03	1.33
Intellectual Stimulation	3.91	0.85	-0.78	0.45
Inspirational Motivation	4.35	0.75	-1.48	2.72
Individual Consideration	3.78	0.78	-0.40	-0.11
Idealised Influence (Attributed)	4.09	0.75	-0.75	0.50
Idealised Influence (Behaviour)	4.10	0.70	-0.87	1.03
<b>Transactional Leadership</b>	3.84	0.66	-0.33	-0.04
Contingent Reward	4.08	0.79	-0.10	-0.29
Management by Exception (Active)	3.60	0.82	-1.01	1.01
<b>Passive Avoidant Leadership</b>	2.39	0.70	0.44	0.18
Management by Exception (Active)	2.63	0.79	0.18	-0.22
Laissez Faire	2.15	0.82	0.59	0.16

*Source: Collected by Author*

The research looked at school administrators' opinions on their own leadership philosophies. Descriptive statistics were generated, such as averages and standard deviations, to facilitate comparison with the teacher evaluations of their individual principals' leadership styles. This comparison sought to identify which principals ran their respective schools more effectively. The following leadership types with the highest mean scores were defined as passive avoidant leadership ( $M = 1.93$ ,  $SD = 0.51$ ), transactional leadership ( $M = 3.58$ ,  $SD = 0.50$ ), and transformational management ( $M = 4.20$ ,  $SD = 0.35$ ). The attribute of idealized influence had the highest mean score ( $M = 4.54$ ,  $SD = 0.44$ ), followed by individual consideration ( $M = 4.10$ , standard deviation = 0.49), and the category of idealized influence ( $M = 4.23$ ,  $SD = 0.63$ ). Intellectual stimulation and idealized impact (behavior) had the lowest mean scores ( $M = 4.07$ ,  $SD = 0.51$ ). While the management by exception (active) dimension had a mean score of 2.94, the contingent compensation part of transactional leadership earned a mean score of 4.22 (standard deviation = 0.51). The leadership by exception (active)

dimension has a 0.84 standard deviation. The laissez-faire passive avoidant leadership style had a lower mean score ( $M = 1.78$ ,  $SD = 0.52$ ) than the management-by-exception passive avoidant management style (see Table 2 for details). The difference between the mean scores for management by exception and laissez-faire, 1.78 and 2.07, respectively, demonstrated this.

**Table 2: Descriptive Statistics for Principals' Perceptions of Leadership Styles**

Leadership Styles and Dimensions	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Skewness	Kurtosis
<b>Transformational Leadership</b>	4.20	0.35	0.20	-0.57
Intellectual Stimulation	4.06	0.45	0.50	-0.33
Inspirational Motivation	4.54	0.44	-0.68	-0.21
Individual Consideration	4.10	0.49	-0.09	-0.48
Idealised Influence (Attributed)	4.23	0.63	-2.17	9.58
Idealised Influence (Behaviour)	4.07	0.51	-0.12	-0.42
<b>Transactional Leadership</b>	3.58	0.50	-0.22	-0.01
Contingent Reward	4.22	0.51	-0.43	-0.44
Management by Exception (Active)	2.94	0.84	0.08	-0.47
<b>Passive Avoidant Leadership</b>	1.93	0.51	0.17	-0.62
Management by Exception (Active)	2.07	0.69	0.50	0.05
Laissez Faire	1.78	0.52	0.07	-1.13

Source: Collected by Author

After presenting the descriptive results, we conducted a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) to determine if the teacher and principal assessments of their respective leadership qualities differed in a statistically significant manner. The presentation of the descriptive data completed this process. The results of the variance analysis indicate statistically significant disparities in the evaluations of administrators' and teachers' personal leadership effectiveness. Both of these groups have reported these variances. In terms of the transactional leadership style ( $M = 3.84$ ,  $SD = 0.66$ ;  $M = 3.58$ ,  $SD = 0.50$ ;  $F(1,487) = 7.29$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) and the passive avoidant leadership style ( $F(1,487) = 20.80$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) ( $M = 2.39$ ,  $SD = 0.70$ ;  $M = 1.93$ ,  $SD = 0.51$ ), teachers and principals had statistically different ideas about how to lead. Principals' and teachers' leadership styles were rated differently on three different dimensions: the individual consideration dimension ( $M = 3.78$ ,  $SD = 0.78$ ;  $M = 4.10$ ,  $SD = 0.49$ , respectively;  $F(1,487) = 28.82$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ); the management by exception (active) dimension ( $F(1,487) = 23.20$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ;  $M = 2.63$ ,  $SD = 0.79$ ;  $M = 2.07$ ,  $SD = 0.69$ , respectively). Regarding their leadership capacity, administrators' and teachers' perceptions did not differ in any other statistically significant ways (refer to Table 3).

**Table 3: Results of One Way ANOVA for Teachers' Perceptions and Principals' Perceptions of Leadership Styles**

Leadership Styles and Dimensions	Teachers' Perceptions of Leadership Styles		Principals' Perceptions of Leadership Styles	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
<b>Transformational Leadership</b>	4.05	0.68	4.20	0.35
Intellectual Stimulation	3.91	0.85	4.06	0.45
Inspirational Motivation	4.35	0.75	4.54	0.44
Individual Consideration	3.78	0.78	-4.10*	0.49
Idealised Influence (Attributed)	4.09	0.75	4.23	0.63
Idealised Influence (Behaviour)	4.10	0.70	4.07	0.51
<b>Transactional Leadership</b>	3.84*	0.66	3.58	0.50
Contingent Reward	4.08	0.79	4.22	0.51
Management by Exception (Active)	3.60*	0.82	2.94	0.84
<b>Passive Avoidant Leadership</b>	2.39*	0.70	1.93	0.51
Management by Exception (Active)	2.63*	0.79	2.07	0.69
Laissez Faire	2.15*	0.82	1.78	0.52

Source: Collected by Author

## B. Analysing Qualitative Data

The questions posed to the principals during the interviews were intended to generate responses that would demonstrate each leadership style, and the element associated with it. The findings showed that the data from administrator interviews and teacher focus groups had similar results and were therefore compatible with each other. The instructors were also given the opportunity to verify their answers by responding to the same questions.

- **Transformational Leadership**

The report indicates that both administrators and teachers primarily employ transformational leadership. Both invite speakers and plan social events, as well as employ incentives and prizes to motivate students. Despite difficulties, administrators' positive reinforcement is essential for keeping teachers engaged. When administrators demonstrate revolutionary leadership in providing individualized attention, teachers often give them the lowest marks. Principals assess the needs of their teachers, provide chances for professional growth, and promote teamwork via staff meetings, peer evaluations, and shadowing more seasoned teachers. Although teachers' evaluations of their administrators' leadership styles were not statistically significantly different from their own, they were still lower. One of the most important facets of transformative leadership is fostering artistic expression. Teachers' and administrators' assessments of their leadership did not significantly change, but two fundamental concepts emerged: acting professionally and earning the respect of educators.

- **Transactional Leadership**

After transformational leadership, transactional leadership is the second most prevalent style in educational settings. Regarding the predominance of transactional leadership, administrators and instructors have somewhat different opinions. Three main themes result from the less prevalent presence of the management's exception (active) component compared to the dependent incentive dimension. Rural school principals in China say that the current organizational structure facilitates teachers' understanding of who is responsible for what. Verbal gratitude, certificates of recognition, rituals of gratitude, or professional development opportunities are examples of more abstract incentives. Teachers believe they have received fair compensation for their efforts when colleagues and the government commend them. Three common themes emerged from conversations between school officials and teachers. The educator's subject-matter expertise and the task's difficulty determined the number of follow-up administrators needed.

- **Passive Avoidant Leadership**

In their schools, teachers and administrators reported low levels of passive avoidant leadership; nevertheless, instructors also claimed that their principals often took advantage of this approach. Three main themes emerged from the observation that the management-by-exception (passive) component was more prevalent than laissez-faire leadership. Principals would approach various members of the school personnel, such as vice principals, department chairmen, teachers, coordinators, and social workers, to use this dimension effectively. They took this action in order to achieve their objectives. One of the secondary characteristics of passive avoidant leadership was its minimal application frequency. Two major themes emerged from the qualitative data's thematic analysis. First, all principals had the trait of never letting bureaucracy get in the way of making decisions or answering questions. This highlights how crucial strong leadership is in educational institutions.

## Discussion

The study investigated three primary leadership philosophies: transactional, transformational, and passive avoidant. Transformational leadership received the highest mean ratings from teachers and administrators, indicating its widespread use and perceived success in rural educational environments [6]. Both groups preferred transactional leadership, albeit to a lesser extent, while passive-avoidant leadership was the least preferred. Descriptive statistics provide light on how administrators and teachers see different leadership philosophies. Both groups rated transformational leadership highest due to its personalised attention and inspiring motivation [10]. Transactional

leadership also received positive feedback, particularly in relation to contingent remuneration. Passive-avoidant leadership, on the other hand, had a far lower rating, suggesting that teachers do not believe it to be useful in raising teacher satisfaction. There are statistically significant disparities in the ways that administrators and teachers perceive different leadership styles, according to a one-way ANOVA [7]. Teachers and administrators both gave transformational leadership high ratings, while administrators gave transactional leadership a slightly higher rating. Administrators and teachers had somewhat different opinions on passive-avoidant leadership, with the former ranking it lower [8]. Qualitative data, collected through focus groups with teachers and administrative interviews, provided additional insights into leadership styles. The most popular approach emerged as transformational leadership, characterized by the promotion of collaboration, the provision of opportunities for professional development, and the recognition of educators' needs [9]. Additionally, transactional leadership was seen, mostly in the form of explicit organisational frameworks and dependent benefits. However, since there was less participation and decision-making, passive-avoidant leadership was less common and seen unfavourably [10]. Teachers and administrators had similar opinions on leadership styles, despite minor rating discrepancies. Both groups determined transformational leadership to be the most successful leadership style, emphasizing the value of individual attention, inspiring motivation, and creating a supportive work environment [11].

## Conclusion

Principals in China's rural schools exhibit different levels of transactional, transformational, and passive avoidant leadership styles, according to the study. Researchers assert that leaders who employ strategies that incorporate elements of both transactional and transformational leadership are more likely to achieve their objectives. The transformational leadership style, the transactional approach, and the passive avoidance tactic were the most frequently used styles by the participants. When comparing the principals' judgments of their own leadership styles with the instructors' views of their teachers' leadership styles, it became evident that the principals differed in many areas of their practices, depending on the type of leadership. The administrators' and teachers' ratings of each other's leadership styles differed, indicating that the two groups had different ideas about what constitutes a successful leadership style. One notable achievement was the consistent evaluation of transformational leadership by principals and teachers, which focused on the general actions of teachers and principals. However, there was a discrepancy between the teacher evaluations and the administrators' assessments of their own transformational leadership in the area of individual consideration practices. This school's professors say the administration doesn't give students enough individual attention. Both educators and administrators voiced their displeasure with the principals' lack of diligence in evaluating each of their individual instructors' strengths and shortcomings. Teachers' evaluations of administrators' success on this dimension were in line with principals' evaluations of teachers' performance with regard to the contingent pay component of transactional management. The administrators' assessments of their own management were quite different from the instructors' when it came to the exception-making (passive) and laissez-faire (active) aspects of passive avoidant leadership. The teacher evaluations were much more favourable, suggesting that principals could be more fully dedicated to their leadership responsibilities than they believed. This discrepancy could have arisen from the students' and instructors' common misunderstanding of these actions. One example of an active measure that educators see as exemplifying this is the principal's follow-up oversight of finished projects.

## Conflict of Interests

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interests.

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