

The Relationship Between Transformational Leadership And Work Motivation In Shaping Teachers' Happiness

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Abstract—This concept paper examines the influence of transformational leadership and work motivation on teachers' happiness among secondary school teachers in the Padawan District, Kuching. It highlights the critical role of transformational leadership in fostering positive work environments and enhancing teacher motivation. The study aims to address the gap in existing research by exploring how these factors collectively impact teacher well-being, which is essential for improving educational outcomes and fostering a supportive school culture. The findings of this study will have broad implications for leadership practices, emphasizing the need for training programs that promote interpersonal relationships, emotional support, and motivational strategies. Additionally, the research offers valuable insights into teacher retention and recruitment, suggesting methods to reduce turnover and enhance job happiness. It further contributes to policy development by advocating for leadership and motivational initiatives as key elements of educational reform. This paper seeks to encourage academic dialogue and collaboration to better understand and support teacher well-being in similar educational contexts, providing a foundation for future research. By exploring the intersection of leadership, motivation, and happiness, this study contributes to the development of strategies that empower teachers, enhance job satisfaction, and ultimately improve the overall quality of education.

Keywords - transformational leadership, work motivation, teachers' happiness

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The teaching profession is among the most prestigious and dignified professions in society. Teachers are entrusted with meeting the needs and expectations of learners, parents, society, and the nation as a whole. They play a crucial role in shaping the personalities and futures of students. In today's era, teachers undertake diverse responsibilities, serving as facilitators, guides, supervisors, mentors, friends, philosophers, and motivators (Sherpa & Bachhar, 2018).

In contemporary educational settings, the role of teachers extends far beyond imparting knowledge. They influence students' lives and contribute significantly to societal development. As educators of the future, their responsibilities in curriculum development, teaching, and learning often transcend the classroom, evolving alongside educational needs. Teachers must adapt and grow to empower students to take risks, embrace innovation, and seize opportunities (Aliyeva, 2024). To achieve this, teachers require extensive preparation and training. Proficiency in pedagogy, subject-specific methodologies, child psychology, and using ICT, among other skills, is essential for fostering meaningful learning experiences.

Graccia-Arroyo (2019) highlighted that teaching is a high-stress profession, with many teachers worldwide facing severe emotional challenges related to job stress and burnout. Teacher burnout is characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a sense of low personal accomplishment (Zhong, Lai, Li, Tang & Zhang, 2023). A nationwide survey in China revealed that, compared to a decade ago, teachers in K12 schools report higher levels of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, anxiety, and fatigue (Wu, Zhao, Qiu & Li, 2024). Enhancing the quality of educational activities requires dedicated, high-performing, and content-knowledgeable teachers (Harrison, Meyer, Razee, Chitkara, Meyers & Balasooriya, 2022). Happy teachers foster better relationships with students and their families, thereby improving their happiness levels (Ayyıldız & Kahveci, 2022). When teachers work in a peaceful and supportive environment, they contribute significantly to their institutions. This underscores the importance of prioritizing teacher happiness, as it impacts both individual and organizational success (Cilek, Kilinc, Erdogan, Arlsan & Sezgin, 2018).

Research by Asbari (2021) indicates that job happiness is closely linked to participatory decision-making and transformational leadership. Greater autonomy in the workplace and other supportive aspects of the teaching profession are associated with higher job satisfaction. Teachers who entered the profession driven by intrinsic values expressed higher

satisfaction and stronger commitment than those motivated by economic reasons (Purwanto, Purba, Bernanto & Sijabat, 2021; Asbari, 2021). Conversely, those planning to leave the profession reported lower job satisfaction and more negative attitudes toward teaching as a career. Teacher happiness also plays a critical role in retention, influenced by factors such as satisfaction with leadership and the overall work environment.

2.0 DEFINITION AND CONCEPT

2.1 Transformational Leadership

Leadership is not confined to those in top positions; it can emerge at any level and from any individual (Bass, 2006). Bass emphasized the importance of leaders fostering leadership qualities in others, a concept central to transformational leadership. First introduced by James MacGregor Burns (1978) in his exploration of "world-class leaders," the concept was later expanded by Bass (1985, 1997) and Bass and Stogdill (1990). According to Burns (1978), transformational leaders inspire and motivate their followers to achieve extraordinary results while simultaneously enhancing their leadership capabilities.

Avolio, Bass, and Jung (1999) highlighted that transformational leaders consistently provide inspiration, clearly communicate their vision, and model exemplary behavior. This leadership style fosters an inclusive, innovative, and growth-oriented work culture. Transformational leadership is inherently relational, involving the creation of connections that elevate morale and motivation for both leaders and followers (Hakim & Istifadah, 2019). At its core, transformational leadership is about influencing groups to achieve shared goals, emphasizing collaboration, common objectives, and organizational progress.

Research supports the efficacy of transformational leadership in enhancing employee performance. Studies by Yulia and Trinanda (2022) and Andjarwati (2021) demonstrate a positive and significant relationship between transformational leadership and employee performance, indicating that higher levels of transformational leadership lead to better outcomes. Bass (2008) identified four key components that define transformational leadership: (1) Idealized Influence: Leaders act as role models, earning trust and respect, (2) Inspirational Motivation: Leaders articulate a compelling vision, motivating others to achieve, (3) Intellectual Stimulation: Leaders encourage creativity, innovation, and problem-solving, and (4) Individualized Consideration: Leaders provide personalized support and attention to the needs of their followers.

2.2 Work Motivation

Apart from leadership, motivation plays a crucial role in influencing teacher performance (Normianti, Aslamiah, & Suhaimi, 2019). A motivated teacher strives to provide their best performance for the institution, demonstrating a strong connection and commitment to their role. Normianti et al. (2019) emphasized that commitment is essential for teachers to work optimally, take on the responsibilities of an ideal educator, and contribute effectively to the success of their students.

Teachers play a pivotal role in driving improvements within schools. They are entrusted with implementing tasks and activities that foster students' growth and development. By employing effective teaching-learning methods, teachers not only help students achieve academic goals but also shape them into responsible and capable citizens. To perform their duties effectively and achieve the desired outcomes, teachers must remain motivated and engaged in their responsibilities.

Sinclair (2008) defines teacher motivation through the lenses of attraction, retention, and commitment. These dimensions determine what draws individuals to teaching, how long they remain in teacher education programs and the profession, and the extent of their engagement. Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011) further categorized teacher motivation into two dimensions: the motivation to teach and the motivation to remain in the profession. Their comprehensive review identified four key components of teacher motivation: (1) Intrinsic Motivation: Closely linked to a genuine interest and passion for teaching, (2) Social Contextual Influences: Relating to the impact of external conditions and constraints, (3) Temporal Dimension: Highlighting the importance of lifelong commitment to the profession, and (4) Demotivating Factors: Stemming from negative influences that hinder motivation.

Motivation is, therefore, fundamental for teachers to carry out their roles effectively, fostering both their professional growth and the success of their students.

2.3 Teachers' Happiness

Happiness is a universal pursuit across all cultures, as everyone aspires to achieve it (Fisher, 2010). Philosophers have often regarded happiness as the ultimate motivation behind human actions (Diener, 1984). Despite its widespread usage, "happiness" is a complex term with various meanings in professional and academic contexts, making it difficult to define precisely (Harris, 2018). Myers and Diener (1995) describe happiness as a combination of frequent positive emotions, infrequent negative emotions, and a general sense of life satisfaction.

Beethoven (1992) defines happiness as a positive evaluation of the overall quality of one's life.

Historically, psychological research focused primarily on addressing human unhappiness, such as anxiety and depression, often neglecting the positive aspects of human potential. This changed after Bradburn's discovery that positive and negative emotions are independent constructs, prompting psychologists to explore the correlations, definitions, and predictors of happiness. While understanding and treating distress is essential, prevention remains preferable. Identifying and promoting factors that contribute to happiness can help prevent severe mental health issues.

Job happiness, a related concept, refers to an individual's attitude or feelings toward their work and its various aspects (Claybon, 2008). It encompasses cognitive and emotional perspectives on one's occupation, including the perception of whether personal needs and values are fulfilled (Rezaee, Khoshima, Zare-Bahtash, & Sarani, 2019). Abu-Saad and Hendrix (1995) argue that job satisfaction, a key component of job happiness, results from perceiving that one's work environment and role align with their values. In essence, individuals feel happy in their jobs when their needs and values are met, though these factors are highly personal and can evolve.

3.0 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This concept paper aims to define the scope of the study within the context of secondary schools in the Padawan District, providing a structured framework for future research. It underscores the importance of understanding how leadership styles and motivation influence teachers' well-being, a critical factor in fostering a positive school environment and enhancing educational outcomes. Additionally, the study seeks to address gaps in existing research related to these variables within educational institutions. By exploring these relationships, this concept paper aspires to promote academic dialogue and collaboration, contributing to efforts to improve teacher well-being in similar educational settings.

4.0 PREVIOUS FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The success of any educational institution hinges on the interplay of effective leadership, motivated educators, and the overall well-being of teachers. Transformational leadership has emerged as a critical factor in fostering positive organizational cultures and driving performance, particularly in education. By inspiring and empowering teachers to achieve beyond expectations, transformational leaders create an environment that supports growth and innovation.

Equally important is teacher motivation, a key determinant of performance, commitment, and engagement. Motivated teachers are more likely to develop innovative teaching methods, inspire their

students, and contribute to the overall quality of education. Understanding the factors that drive teacher motivation is essential for addressing challenges and fostering an environment where educators can thrive.

Happiness, as a universal human aspiration, plays a pivotal role in shaping job satisfaction and professional effectiveness. Teachers who are happy in their roles are more engaged, productive, and better equipped to create positive learning experiences for their students. Exploring the concept of teacher happiness provides valuable insights into how educational systems can support their workforce to achieve personal and institutional success.

By examining the definitions and core concepts of transformational leadership, teachers' motivation, and teachers' happiness, this section aims to establish a foundation for understanding their interconnections and their collective impact on educational outcomes.

4.1 Transformational Leadership and Teachers' Work Motivation

Transformational leadership involves motivating individuals to prioritize organizational goals over personal interests and exceed expected responsibilities. This leadership style is characterized by a focus on the organization's vision and mission, effective decision-making, and active engagement with team members.

Bass and Riggio (2006) describe transformational leadership as a process where leaders inspire others to achieve more than they thought possible. By setting high expectations, transformational leaders often attain superior performance. They also foster commitment and satisfaction among followers by addressing their individual needs and supporting personal development, enabling followers to cultivate their leadership potential.

Kiboss and Jemiryott (2014) highlighted that a supportive leadership style positively influences school effectiveness. Similarly, Eranil and Özbilen (2017) found that principals who adopt transformational leadership practices contribute to improved teacher motivation. Wasserman, Ben-Eli, Yehoshua, and Gal (2016) also demonstrated that a principal's leadership style significantly affects teacher perceptions of their profession. To thrive in complex environments, transformational leadership is essential (Balyer & Özcan, 2012). Haj and Jubran (2016) emphasized the importance of maintaining transformational leadership among school principals.

Motivation, a fundamental factor in human behavior, drives attitudes, activates actions, and energizes

individuals to perform. Teachers, as key contributors to educational organizations, require strong motivation to excel in their roles. Gagné (2014) defines teacher motivation as the desire to teach, coupled with interpersonal approaches to engaging students. Teacher motivation is influenced by both internal and external factors and encompasses practices that ensure student engagement and success (Collie, Granziera, & Martin, 2019). Research demonstrates that motivated teachers are linked to higher teaching quality, greater commitment, and enhanced student outcomes (Klassen, Al-Dhafri, Hannok, & Betts, 2011). Providing support to teachers is crucial for their well-being and effective learning environments (Durksen, Klassen, & Daniels, 2017).

The Ministry of Education evaluates teacher performance by measuring dedication and commitment (Seniwoliba, 2013). Motivated teachers play a pivotal role in inspiring students to achieve academic success through their strategies (Soenens, Sierens, Vansteenkiste, Dochy & Goossens, 2012). Teacher motivation significantly impacts student interest in specific subjects (Keller, Neumann, & Fischer, 2017) and is critical for teachers' commitment to their roles and students' academic achievements (Davidson, 2007).

Empirical evidence consistently supports the positive impact of transformational leadership on employee performance. Judge and Piccolo (2004), Piccolo and Colquitt (2006), and Bono, Foldes, Vinson, and Muros (2007) found that transformational leadership significantly enhances performance outcomes. Lai, Tang, Lu, Lee, and Lin (2020) confirmed the positive influence of transformational leadership behaviors on employee performance. In a study using Bass's four-dimensional framework, Top, Abdullah, and Faraj (2020) discovered that motivation and individualized consideration strongly affect employee performance, while idealized influence and intellectual stimulation have a relatively weaker impact. Similarly, Andriani, Kesumawati, and Kristiawan (2018) demonstrated that transformational leadership significantly improves teacher performance.

4.2 Transformational Leadership and Teachers' Happiness

The education system aims to nurture healthy, happy, and successful individuals across all professions (Basic Law of National Education No. 1739). Happy and peaceful teachers are fundamental to fostering happy individuals. In nearly every society and culture, happiness is considered the ultimate goal of life, encompassing concepts such as "life satisfaction," "good health," "subjective well-being," "optimism," "positive emotions," and "flow." These terms are often

used interchangeably (Harju & Bolen, 1998; Diener & Ryan, 2003; Eryilmaz, 2012).

Teachers play a crucial role in shaping the future by imparting knowledge and fostering the intellectual and emotional growth of students. Their well-being is closely tied to the quality of education they deliver and, by extension, the effectiveness of the educational system. Given the association of transformational leadership with creating positive work environments, understanding its influence on teacher well-being is vital for developing strategies that support educators and enhance the overall educational experience.

While transformational leadership is widely recognized, its origins lie in Western contexts, and there is limited research on its application in Asia. Existing studies often fail to address the specific dimensions of transformational leadership. According to in-depth interviews conducted by Ng and Rivera (2018), individualized consideration emerged as the most notable dimension of transformational leadership demonstrated by leaders. Su, Wang, and Chen (2020) describe leadership as a multifaceted process involving interactions with individuals, groups, and multiple teams. Effective leadership establishes the organizational tone, fosters innovation, and creates a work environment conducive to change (Harb & Sidani, 2019).

In today's dynamic and uncertain environment, managing organizations effectively requires leaders to understand complex challenges and empower stakeholders to achieve shared goals (Alsayed, Suifan, Sweis, & Kilani, 2020). Schools, like organizations, benefit from leaders committed to driving institutional improvement. Transformational leadership provides a framework to align mindsets and introduce fresh perspectives globally. This style inspires educators, motivating them to exceed expectations and embrace continuous growth. Transformational leaders focus on advancing both individual and organizational goals, helping educators recognize that their contributions extend beyond personal interests (Andriani, Kesumawati, & Kristiawan, 2018).

Transformational leadership is widely regarded as a critical strategy for success in modern organizational settings. According to Northouse (2018), this approach effectively encourages creativity and high performance. Transformational leaders connect with their teams by articulating a compelling vision, providing direction, and inspiring individuals to prioritize collective goals over personal interests. By offering charismatic communication and personalized support, these leaders empower their followers to unlock their full potential and view change as an opportunity for personal and professional growth. This approach fosters trust, collaboration, and continuous improvement, enabling organizations to adapt to

challenges and seize new opportunities, resulting in enhanced performance and innovation.

To sustain a thriving educational community, school leaders must prioritize support mechanisms and ensure teachers have access to necessary tools and resources. Leaders who emphasize support create environments where teachers feel valued, motivated, and equipped to overcome challenges. This focus on support enhances teacher effectiveness, job satisfaction, and, ultimately, the quality of education for students. Harris and Jones (2018) emphasized the vital role of school leaders, particularly principals, in developing and sustaining professional learning communities. Supportive leadership fosters collaboration, empowering teachers to exchange ideas, discuss effective teaching practices, and pursue ongoing improvements. Principals play a crucial role in providing the resources, vision, and professional development opportunities necessary to cultivate such environments. By adopting these practices, school leaders can improve teacher effectiveness, leading to better student outcomes and fostering a school culture grounded in trust and shared progress.

4.3 Work Motivation and Teachers' Happiness

Effective management is essential for ensuring the optimal operation of educational institutions and schools. In Malaysia, education aims to cultivate individuals whose personalities are shaped by societal values and culture. Schools serve as the primary educational institutions, guided by clear visions, missions, objectives, and functions. These institutions are supported by professional staff, structured organizational processes, and adequate resources. To stay relevant, educational institutions must embrace change across their structures, methods, and systems.

Teachers play a pivotal role in enhancing the quality of school graduates. Their performance is influenced by both internal and external factors, as well as by supportive leadership (Hattahin & Widodo, 2019). School principals hold a strategic position in realizing the school's vision, mission, and objectives while ensuring overall quality improvement. Teachers bear significant responsibility for helping students achieve educational goals. To fulfill these responsibilities, teachers must develop well-rounded personalities, advance their knowledge and technological skills, and employ methods that spark students' interest in learning. Despite their importance, challenges persist in Malaysia, including issues related to the quantity and quality of teachers.

Wahyudi, Fitria, and Rohana (2024) define work motivation as the effort to initiate, direct, and sustain

behavior in an organizational work environment. Motivation, a fundamental human need, serves as a driving force that influences the success of work-related activities. Highly motivated employees strive to perform their tasks to the best of their ability. Within the framework of management, behavior is often driven by the need for achievement, which acts as a key motivator. Several factors contribute to work motivation, including fair remuneration, a conducive work environment, opportunities for professional development, recognition of achievements, and goal-oriented incentives.

Job happiness, as defined by Locke, Sirota, and Wolfson (1976), refers to an internal positive state derived from an individual's assessment of their job or work experiences. This concept is closely tied to emotions and perceptions about work. Phoa and Nazarudin (2019) describe job happiness as positive feelings such as joy, comfort, and contentment arising from work experiences. Mihat, Hassan, and Anwar (2020) expand on this definition, emphasizing that job happiness is a combination of psychological, physiological, and environmental factors that contribute to overall job satisfaction. It encapsulates a range of positive and negative emotions about work and is closely linked to employee behavior. Job happiness signifies achievement, productivity, and well-being, often sparking joy and satisfaction in one's professional role. Zakaria, Sosiawani, and Surya (2016) highlight that job happiness contributes to higher levels of job performance.

Teachers who find joy and fulfillment in their work are more likely to educate students effectively, fostering a generation of capable individuals for the nation's future. However, in Malaysia, reports frequently highlight teachers' dissatisfaction with their careers. For instance, Berita Harian Online (January 3, 2023) reported that the National Union of Teaching Professions (NUTP) estimates over 10,000 teachers retire early each year due to excessive workloads. Job dissatisfaction often leads to disengagement and undisciplined teaching approaches, which, in turn, can contribute to problematic student behavior (Sidi, Hamzah & Tamuri, 2021).

5.0 IMPLICATIONS

The implications of this study are as follows: (1) Educational Leadership Practices: This study encourages the development of leadership training programs that emphasize enhancing interpersonal relationships, motivation, and emotional support within schools. The findings can guide school leaders in adopting transformational leadership styles, fostering a positive and supportive environment that increases teacher happiness and productivity. (2) Teacher

Retention and Recruitment: Insights from this study highlight the relationship between leadership, motivation, and teacher happiness. These insights can inform strategies to reduce teacher turnover, enhance job satisfaction, and improve workplace motivation. Schools may use these strategies to attract and retain highly qualified and passionate educators. (3) Policy Development: The study's findings can support investments in leadership training and motivational incentives that align with national and local educational initiatives. Policymakers can prioritize transformational leadership and motivation as key components of education policy and reform, ultimately improving teacher well-being. (4) Enhancing Educational Outcomes: The study underscores the critical role of a well-supported teaching workforce in achieving educational excellence. Happier teachers are more engaged and effective in their teaching, directly contributing to improved student learning outcomes and fostering a more positive school culture. (5) Future Research: This study provides a foundation for exploring similar dynamics in other regions or educational contexts, enriching the broader understanding of teacher well-being. Future research could delve deeper into qualitative aspects, such as personal narratives from teachers experiencing transformational leadership and motivation, offering richer insights into these dynamics.

6.0 CONCLUSION

This study explores the relationship between transformational leadership, work motivation, and teachers' happiness, aiming to offer valuable insights for improving the educational environment in secondary schools. The findings are expected to influence leadership practices, teacher support systems, and policy development, all geared toward enhancing teacher satisfaction and productivity.

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