

**The relationship between principal's leadership styles and teacher's organizational trust and commitment**Mojgan Mirza<sup>1</sup> and Ma'rof Redzuan<sup>2</sup><sup>1&2</sup>: Department of Social and Development Science, Faculty of Human Ecology, University Putra Malaysia, 43400 Serdang, Selangor, MalaysiaE-mail: [Mirza\\_kla@yahoo.com](mailto:Mirza_kla@yahoo.com), [marof@putra.upm.edu.my](mailto:marof@putra.upm.edu.my)

**Abstract:** A few researches are tapped by researchers on relationship between principals' leadership styles and teachers' organizational trust and commitment. This paper tried to indicate this relationship in primary schools of the Golestan province - Iran as an educational organization. Pearson's correlation method (n=268 principals and n=513 teachers respondents) indicated that transformational leadership had a significant positive effect and transactional leadership has no significant effect on organizational trust and commitment. Moreover, results indicated a positive relationship between components of the teacher's organizational trust and commitment. Consequently, school principals should be focused on transformational style of leadership and enhancement of the teacher's trust whereby they can develop the organizational commitment qualities.

[Mojgan Mirza and Ma'rof Redzuan. **The relationship between principal's leadership styles and teacher's organizational trust and commitment.** *Life Sci J* 2012;9(3):1356-1362] (ISSN:1097-8135). <http://www.lifesciencesite.com>. 196

**Key words:** leadership style, trust, commitment, school

**1. Introduction**

In the past, some researchers have argued that the actual influence of leaders on organizational outcomes is overrated and romanticized as a result of biased attributions about leaders (Meindl & Ehrlich, 1987). Despite these assertions however, it is largely recognized and accepted by practitioners and researchers that leadership is important, and research supports the notion that leaders do contribute to key organizational outcomes (Day & Lord, 1988; Kaiser, Hogan, & Craig, 2008).

In the current structure of public education, the principal is typically the person held accountable for all decisions within a school (Ross & Gray, 2006). The school policies are a result of principal leadership (Wahlstrom & Louis, 2008). Martin and Epitropaki (2001) found that high quality instruction will increase as a result of good leadership. When a principal can help a teacher feel like they can be successful in an activity, then the likelihood of success increases (Ross & Gray, 2004). This concept is called teacher efficacy. A principal is able to enhance teacher efficacy and confidence by listening and understanding the teachers (Printy & Marks, 2006).

Teacher perception of principal leadership influences how the teacher performs in the classroom by affecting a teacher's efficacy, commitment, trust, collaboration, and the overall school culture (Butz, 2010). Leadership will either build trust and confidence or tear them down, but good leadership will builds trust that goes to the subordinates from the leader and from the subordinates to the leader (Stroh, 2007). Hoy and Tschannen-Moran (1999)

define trust as an "individual's or group's willingness to be vulnerable to another party based on the confidence that the latter party is benevolent, reliable, competent, honest and open." Trust can be built between teachers and their principal through principal support (Louis, 2007). When principals support their teachers through difficult times then they find more value in their leader and develop a deeper trust (Deal & Peterson, 1994). Teachers learn to trust their principal through experiences and interaction (Muijs et al., 2006). Principals that have built trust with their employees are able to sustain a safe working environment (Stroh, 2007) where the teachers can focus on teaching instead of their own safety. Schools have also shown to be effective when a culture of trust between teachers and the principal is reflected (Nguni et al., 2006). If a principal is unwilling to interact with his or her teachers then there will be no opportunities to build trust. Principals should be visible and accessible to teachers to build strong trust (Sarros & Sarros, 2007). Trust is built vertically with the leader which can help define what the overall organization stands for, and horizontal trust is built between employees which, in turn, increase organizational involvement (Postmes et al., 2001).

Trust is important in organizational life as well as the human relations (Yilmaz, 2008) and it is a key enabler of cooperative human actions (Mcknight, 1995). Managers play a central role in determining the overall level of trust within organizations (Puusa & Tolvanen, 2006). In addition, the beliefs and actions of managers also directly and indirectly influence trust in organizations (Creed & Miles,

1996). Organizations that have been proven to be effective have cultures of trust between leaders and employees (Nguni et al., 2006). Trust in the organization will reflect the employee's faith in corporate goal attainment and organizational leaders, and the belief that ultimately, organizational actions will prove beneficial for the employee. Schools with a high degree of trust tend to be more focused and goal driven.

Commitment arises from the feel of trust (Kollock, 1994; Yilmaz, 2008). Organizational commitment in the fields of organizational behavior and organizational psychology is, in a general sense, the employee's psychological attachment to the organization. It is employees' attitude towards their organizations. Louis (2007) showed that principal leadership affects teacher commitment. Moreover, effective leadership can motivate subordinates to work harder to complete tasks resulting in high teacher commitment (Postmes, et al., 2001; Chen & Carey, 2009). When teachers and principals can share the development and implementation of goals teachers tend to be more committed to the organization (Youngs & King, 2002). Boxx et al. (1991) theorized that teacher commitment is the result of a leader's ability to manage the organization. Nguni et al., (2006) shared the theory of organizational commitment which is accepting a school's goals and values along with a willingness to give effort for the school and a desire to be affiliated with the school. High organizational commitment can result from a teacher who feels like they belong to the organization and have a strong connection or bond to co-workers and leaders (Martin & Epitropaki, 2001). According to Meyer & Allen (1991)'s theory of commitment, teachers with a strong affective, continuance and normative commitment stay with the organization because they "want to", "has to" and "ought to", respectively.

Since employee behavior and productivity are directly affected by their trust and commitment states, it is imperative to consider employee organizational trust responses to styles of the leaders. Moreover, the leadership style variable, consideration, was also relatively strongly related to organizational commitment (Iok and Crawford, 1999).

Bass (1990)'s theory of behavioral leadership styles has defined beliefs and actions of leaders including the manner and approach of providing organizational direction, implementing organizational plans, and motivating employees in 3 well-known styles; transformational, transactional and Laissez-faire leadership. Transformational leadership behaviors focus on the quality of the relationship with followers, whereas, transactional

leadership behaviors focus on the task to be accomplished by followers (Bass, 1990). According to Abu Daud Silong, (2009), the Bass (1990)'s theory refers to "Full Range Leadership Model".

Koopman (1991) studied how leadership styles affected employees and found those employees who favored their leader's style also favored the organization more. Though there was no direct connect between commitments, it could be argued that this would then affect their levels of commitment to the organization.

Nierhoff et al (1990) found that the "overall management culture and style driven by the top management actions are strongly related to the degree of employee commitment" (p. 344). These correlations bring to light the importance of having strong managers and their roles in the overall organization.

Norazlan Bin Hasbullah (2008), has been carried out the intention of examining the relationship between leadership behavior and organizational commitment in co-operative societies. Experienced employees possessed more stable high commitment regardless of leaders behavior, however new employees commitment are totally dependent on the leader's Nurturant Task plus Participative (NTP) behavior. Overall findings from this study suggest, autocratic and NTP do play important roles in determining the levels of employee's commitment.

Çokluk & Yılmaz (2010) have been focused on the relationship between teachers' organizational commitment and school administrators' leadership behavior. Results indicated that there was a moderate positive relationship between the teachers' perceptions about organizational commitment and supportive leadership behavior of school administrators. There was a moderate negative relationship between organizational commitment and directive leadership behavior of school administrators. Significant relationships were also determined between sub-dimensions of organizational commitment and directive leadership behavior of school administrators

According to Davenport (2010), the existing management and leadership research has demonstrated separately the effects of leadership style on organizational commitment.

## 2. Methodology

This study employed survey design in form of co-relational cross-sectional research. According to Rungtusanatham, et al. (2003), the current research fell into two categories of survey, descriptive and relational, for more elaboration of the data analysis to provide a richer detail and to obtain the most comprehensive information about this

research topic. The present study was carried out at the primary schools of Golestan province - Iran.

The target population of this study was school principals and their teachers on 2010-2011. The schools were selected by simple random sampling. The necessary Cochran (1977)'s samples were computed ( $n=179$  principals,  $n=332$  teachers), but for increasing confidence level of sampling 300 principals and 600 teachers considered as real sample size. Based on real sample size and proportional fraction of teachers of the cities within area study, teacher's sample sizes of the cities were computed.

The quantitative data for the study was gathered utilizing; 1) the leadership behaviors (Bass, 1990) to ascertain the well-known styles of leadership, 2) the employee's organizational behavior to assess the organizational trust (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 1998; Ferres, 2002, 2003 Organizational Trust Inventory) that is thought to be central to the interpersonal relationships that are characteristic of organizations, and 3) the employee's psychological attachment to the organization as the organizational commitment (Meyer and Allen, 1991).

Pearson's correlation statistical method ( $n=268$  principals and  $n=513$  teachers respondents) was applied for determination of the strength and direction (nature) of the relationship between independent variables toward dependent variables. The Correlation coefficient only aids in determining the strength and direction (positive or negative) of the relationships; no indication is reflected on the significance of the relationship. Hence, t-test statistical method was used to analysis of interval-ratio data on differences between groups of subjects.

### 3. Result and discussion

Research used descriptive statistics as a way to examine the mean, standard deviation and other information of data. Descriptive analysis contains three sections including: 1) principal's leadership styles, 2) teacher's organizational trust, and 3) teacher's organizational commitment.

#### 3.1. Descriptive analysis of the principals' leadership styles

Table 1 contains descriptive data for the five transformational (relations-oriented) subscales, three transactional (task-oriented) subscales, and one laissez-faire subscale of principal's leadership styles. The overall scores of data for the transformational and transactional subscales were, in some instances, approximately equal to what Bass & Avolio (1995) consider "ideal" levels for effective leadership. Suggested scores for the most effective leaders include a mean of 3.0 or higher for idealized

influence (attributed), idealized influence (behavior), inspirational motivation, and intellectual stimulation. Mean scores for current research's data for transformational subscales ranged from 2.70 to 2.95. The suggested score for contingent reward is 2.0, only slightly upper than the current sample data mean of 1.66. The score for management-by-exception (active) was 1.48; this was within the suggested range of 1.0 and 2.0. Suggested scores for management-by-exception (passive) and laissez-faire are between 1.0 and 0.0; however, mean scores for the current data had slightly higher ranges of 0.85 and 0.5, respectively.

This pattern of scores for collected data of this research suggests that principals were not exhibiting the "ideal" levels of transformational leadership behaviors. The mean for contingent reward suggests that principals as doing a below average job of clarifying expectations and recognizing accomplishments. This was also the above case for the management-by-exception (active) mean, which implies that principals are taking corrective action in a timely manner. Mean scores for management-by-exception (passive) and laissez-faire suggests that principals have tendency to wait too long before resolving a problem or taking corrective action.

#### 3.2. Descriptive analysis of the teacher's organizational trust

Table 2 contains descriptive data for the total and three subscales of the teacher's organizational trust. A ranking with trust in co-workers ( $M=3.44$ ,  $SD=1.6$ ), trust in supervisor ( $M=3.25$ ,  $SD=1.2$ ) and trust in organization ( $M=3.18$ ,  $SD=1.11$ ) is showed in the table 2.

#### 3.3. Descriptive analysis of the teacher's organizational commitment

In describing the application of their Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ) scales, Meyer & Allen (1997) do not provide guidance about expected, desired, average, or ideal means for affective, continuance, and normative commitment. Instead, Meyer & Allen (1997) and other researchers (Dunham, Grube, & Castaneda, 1994; Hackett, Bycio, & Hausdorf, 1994; Whitener & Walz, 1993; Lee, 1992; Vardi, Wiener, & Popper, 1989) examined whether there was a positive or negative relationship between the different types of organizational commitment and the outcomes that are being measured, as well as the pattern for those findings. The desired pattern is the highest scores for affective commitment, followed by normative commitment, then continuance commitment. The mean scores for current study's data reflect that

affective commitment score (M=3.18, SD=1.28) were higher than normative commitment (M=3.04, SD=1.09) and continuance commitment (M=2.95,

SD=.94). Table 3 contains information for the three organizational commitment scales.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics for transformational, transactional and laissez-faire leadership's subscales

Subscales	Mean	SD	Kurtosis	Skewness
<b>Transformational Leadership</b>	2.83	.77	-.44	.52
-Idealized Influence (attributed)	2.95	.95	.52	.94
-Idealized Influence (behavior)	2.82	.70	-.66	.33
-Inspirational Motivation	2.70	.69	-.21	.60
-Intellectual stimulation	2.80	.72	-.58	.43
-Individualized consideration	2.85	.80	-1.26	.30
<b>Transactional leadership</b>	1.33	.43	.27	-.26
-Contingent reward	1.66	.74	-.67	.34
-Management-by-exception (active)	1.48	.68	-.16	.41
-Management-by-exception (passive)	.85	.53	.29	-.14
<b>Laissez - Faire</b>	.5	.52	-1.40	.23

Table 2: Descriptive statistics for trust scales

Trust scales	Mean	SD	Kur.	Sk.
co-workers	3.44	1.60	-.26	1.04
supervisor	3.25	1.20	-.33	.77
organization	3.18	1.11	-.35	.69
Total Trust	3.28	1.14	-.84	.76

Table 3: Descriptive statistics for commitment scales

Commit.scales	Mean	SD	Kurt.	Sk.
Affective	3.18	1.28	-.36	.89
Continuance	2.95	.94	-.06	.76
Normative	3.04	1.09	-.24	.87
Total Commitment	3.06	.96	-.31	.90

Table 4: Pearson coefficient between principal's leadership styles and teachers' organizational trust

Subscales Trust Leadership styles	TC	TS	TO	TT
Idealized Influence (attributed)	.672**	.518**	.497**	.657**
Idealized Influence (behavior)	.559**	.447**	.389**	.544**
Inspirational Motivation	.494**	.350**	.336**	.463**
Intellectual stimulation	.563**	.456**	.466**	.574**
Individualized consideration	.599**	.509**	.467**	.610**
• Transformational Leadership	.744**	.589**	.557**	.735**
Contingent reward	-.357**	-.196**	-.291**	-.330**
Management-by-exception (active)	-.351**	-.374**	-.294**	-.390**
Management-by-exception (passive)	-.218**	-.226**	-.243**	-.260**
• Transactional leadership	-.451**	-.382**	-.400**	-.475**
• Laissez - Faire	-.272**	-.205**	-.193**	-.262**

TC=trust in co-worker, TS=trust in supervisor, TO=trust in organization, TT=total trust, \*\*=correlation is significant at  $\alpha=.01$  level

### 3.4. Relationship between principal's leadership styles and teacher's organizational trust

Table 4 shows the results from testing of the relationship between principal's leadership styles and teacher's organizational trust by using the Pearson's statistical method. Results showed a statistically significant relationship between principal's leadership styles and teacher's organizational trust at 99% of the confidence level. This statistical significant relationship is positive-high between teacher's organizational trust and principal's transformational leadership style ( $r=.735^{**}$ ,  $p\leq.01$ ), negative-moderate relationship between teacher's organizational trust and principal's transactional

leadership style ( $r= -.475^{**}$ ,  $p\leq.01$ ), and negative-low relationship between teacher's organizational trust and laissez - faire style ( $r= -.262^{**}$ ,  $p\leq.01$ ).

The result of the analysis indicated that the teachers with high level of the organizational trust are related to the principal's transformational leadership style. Furthermore, principals with laissez-faire leadership style are related to lower level of teacher's organizational trust. In other words, increasing of the teacher's organizational trust is positively influenced by principal's transformational leadership styles. Consequently, finding is supported by Puusa & Tolvanen (2006), managers play a central role in determining the overall level of trust within

organizations. Moreover, the beliefs and actions of managers also directly and indirectly influence trust in organizations (Creed & Miles, 1996). Since teacher's trust states are directly and indirectly affecting on their behavior and productivity, it is imperative to consider teacher's organizational trust responses to styles of the school principals. It is clear that the role of the principals, in relationship between principal's leadership style and teacher's organizational trust, is very important and thus educational organizations endeavor to recruit and nurture transformational leadership qualities among the principals for increased trust among their teachers.

### 3.5 Relationship between principal's leadership styles and teacher's organizational commitment

Table 5 shows the results from testing of the relationship between principal's leadership styles and teacher's organizational commitment by using Pearson's statistical method. The result illustrated a statistically significant relationship between principal's leadership styles and teacher's organizational commitment at 99% of the confidence level. This significant positive relationship is moderate between principal's transformational style and teacher's affective commitment ( $r=.671^{**}$ ,  $p\leq.01$ ), continuance commitment ( $r=.631^{**}$ ,  $p\leq.01$ ), and normative commitment ( $r=.626^{**}$ ,  $p\leq.01$ ), respectively. In addition, results showed that there was a positive-high relationship between principal's transformational leadership style and teacher's organizational commitment ( $r= .741^{**}$ ,  $p=.000$ ). Moreover, it resulted that there was a negative low

and moderate relationship between teacher's organizational commitment, transactional ( $r= -.515^{**}$ ,  $p\leq.01$ ) and laissez – faire ( $r= -.296^{**}$ ,  $p\leq.01$ ) leadership styles, respectively. Results are supported by Wu (2006), managers have a significant positive relationship with employees' organizational commitment. These research results from the correlation analysis also support the hypothesis that teachers managed under a transformational style of leadership will have a higher organizational commitment. Moreover, findings are supported by Emery (2007), transformational factors are more highly correlated with organizational commitment than transactional factors. The result of Buciuene & Skudiene (2008) and Chiun (2009)'s research indicated that transformational leadership had a significant positive effect and transactional leadership has no significant effect on organizational commitment. In other words, transformational leadership style was positively affected on development of the teacher's organizational commitment. In contrast, transactional leadership might foster reduced commitment because teachers want to avoid principals who appear only when thing go wrong. Moreover, Passive-avoidant leadership had a negative and significant relationship with employees' affective and normative commitment and doesn't have any significant correlation with continuance commitment (Buciuene & Skudiene, 2008). Consequently, transformational style of leadership should appear to have value in leader selection and training programs within the educational service sector.

Table 5: Pearson coefficient between principal's leadership styles and teachers' organizational commitment

Subscales Commitment Leadership styles	AC	CC	NC	TOC
Idealized Influence (attributed)	.591**	.576**	.509**	.643**
Idealized Influence (behavior)	.484**	.494**	.441**	.544**
Inspirational Motivation	.457**	.370**	.423**	.484**
Intellectual stimulation	.509**	.514**	.492**	.581**
Individualized consideration	.562**	.490**	.572**	.627**
• Transformational Leadership	.671**	.631**	.626**	.741**
Contingent reward	-.371**	-.323**	-.294**	-.381**
Management-by-exception (active)	-.341**	-.311**	-.393**	-.402**
Management-by-exception (passive)	-.220**	-.267**	-.246**	-.278**
• Transactional leadership	-.454**	-.436**	-.451**	-.515**
• Laissez - Faire	-.251**	-.251**	-.271**	-.296**

AC=affective commitment, CC=continuance commitment, NC=normative commitment, TOC=total organizational commitment, \*\*=correlation is significant at  $\alpha=.01$  level

### 4. Conclusion

Various past literatures supported the relationship between leadership and commitment where leader's style do have influence on employee's

commitment. Since no similar research has been done in primary schools, this research may contribute to the understanding and improvement of teacher's trust and commitment in educational societies. In this



research population, findings explored that currently principal's exercises initiating structure style in their schools while literature has highlighted that transformational style of leadership is most favorable and influential style of leadership on organizational effectiveness. Moreover, result indicated that transformational factors are more highly correlated with teacher's organizational trust and commitment than transactional factors. It is clear that the role of the principals, in relationship between principal's leadership style and teacher's organizational trust and commitment, is very important and transformational style of leadership should give a specific impression to have value in school principal's selection and training programs within the educational community. Consequently, principals must reward and support their teachers for the work that they do because this perceived support allows for more trust and commitment in the organization.

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