

A CORRELATIONAL STUDY OF TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT AMONG TEACHERS IN SELECTED HIGH SCHOOLS IN BEIJING, CHINA

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to examine the relationship between transformational leadership and organizational commitment among teachers and educational personnel in high schools in Beijing, the People's Republic of China. A quantitative survey research design was employed, with a sample of 320 respondents drawn from a population of 604 using Yamane's formula. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire measuring transformational leadership across four dimensions, including idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration, and organizational commitment across three dimensions, namely affective, continuance, and normative commitment. Descriptive statistics and Pearson's correlation analysis were used for data analysis. The results indicated that respondents perceived both transformational leadership and organizational commitment at a high level. Furthermore, a very strong positive relationship was found between transformational leadership and organizational commitment, with a statistically significant correlation at the .001 level. All dimensions of transformational leadership were significantly correlated with all dimensions of organizational commitment, suggesting that leadership behaviors play a crucial role in enhancing teachers' emotional attachment, perceived obligation, and intention to remain with the organization. These findings support transformational leadership theory and Social Exchange Theory, indicating that when school leaders provide vision, support, and motivation, teachers are more likely to reciprocate with higher levels of commitment. The study suggests that educational administrators should adopt transformational leadership practices to strengthen organizational commitment and improve overall school effectiveness.

Keywords: Transformational Leadership, Organizational Commitment, CHINA

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INTRODUCTION

Beijing Normal University is a higher education institution that plays a significant role in teacher education and educational research in the People's Republic of China. Established in 1902, the university has continually grown into a nationally recognized institution specializing in the education sciences and systematic teacher development. For more than a century, Beijing Normal University has served as a major provider of educational professionals, a research center, and a hub of knowledge influencing educational development policies in China. The university has been widely recognized as a leading institution participating in several national and global university development initiatives, reflecting its mission to achieve academic excellence and to cultivate educational leaders capable of driving systemic change (Beijing Normal University, n.d.). This institutional background highlights the importance of studying educational administration and leadership within the Chinese context, particularly considering that the quality of education at the school level depends not only on curriculum and resources but also on human resource management and teachers' organizational attachment, which form the foundation for continuity and stability in educational management over time.

Under China's educational reforms over the past several decades, the goals of the education system have expanded from emphasizing academic achievement to promoting holistic student development. As a result, schools are increasingly expected to enhance instructional quality and adapt to complex social and economic contexts. The role of school administrators has therefore shifted from rule-based management toward visionary leadership that establishes shared direction and creates a supportive working environment for teacher development and collaboration. Transformational leadership has consequently received increasing attention, as it emphasizes inspiring followers, fostering shared values, and helping organizational members recognize the meaning of their work and institutional goals. Such leadership practices contribute to teachers' sense of belonging, dedication, and willingness to remain part of the school organization. Research on the professional development of school leaders in China indicates that challenges remain in aligning administrator training and evaluation systems with the evolving expectations of educational reform, particularly in developing leadership competencies that can effectively drive school-level change and strengthen teachers' organizational attachment (Chu & Cravens, 2012).

At the operational level, teachers are the primary mechanism for ensuring educational quality, as they directly deliver instruction and shape students' learning experiences. However, as teachers' workload and professional pressures increase, teachers' organizational commitment has become a central concern in school administration. Organizational commitment reflects teachers' sense of attachment to the school, willingness to devote effort, pride in organizational membership, and intention to remain in the organization over time. These factors directly influence workforce stability and the continuity of school development. Contemporary research indicates that teacher attrition and turnover have become systemic challenges, making strengthening teachers' organizational commitment an urgent priority for achieving stability and sustainability in education systems (Li, Liu, & Yang, 2024). Schools, therefore, need to pay close attention to administrative factors influencing teachers' commitment, particularly the role of school leaders in shaping the organizational climate, interpersonal relationships, and shared values within the school.

Empirical evidence from public schools in China suggests that transformational leadership by school administrators is positively associated with teachers' attitudes and behaviors reflecting stronger attachment to the school and greater willingness to contribute to organizational goals. Administrators who communicate a clear vision, build trust, recognize teachers' contributions, and promote participation can foster teachers' sense of pride and belonging, which are central components of organizational commitment. A recent study by Yin (2025) in public primary and secondary schools indicates that transformational leadership is positively related to

teacher-level and organizational outcomes, highlighting the critical role of school leaders in strengthening teachers' attachment to their schools (Yin, 2025). Therefore, examining the relationship between school administrators' transformational leadership and teachers' organizational commitment in the context of Chinese public primary and secondary schools is important for explaining how leadership contributes to school stability and for providing empirical evidence to support leadership development and strategies for strengthening teachers' organizational commitment in a sustainable manner (Chu & Cravens, 2012; Li et al., 2024; Yin, 2025).

Although previous studies have examined transformational leadership and teachers' organizational commitment across various educational contexts in China, including vocational schools, higher education institutions, and minority regions, limited empirical research has focused specifically on university-affiliated secondary schools. In particular, there is a lack of research examining the relationship between school administrators' transformational leadership and teachers' organizational commitment at the High School Affiliated to Beijing Normal University No. 2. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by investigating the level of transformational leadership, the level of teachers' organizational commitment, and the relationship between these variables within this specific educational context.

This research aims to examine the relationship between transformational leadership of school administrators and organizational commitment of teachers and educational personnel in selected high schools in Beijing.

LITERATURE REVIEWS

Concepts and Theories of Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership is a leadership approach that emphasizes inspiring and motivating followers to achieve higher levels of performance by fostering a shared vision, enhancing intrinsic motivation, and developing individual capabilities (Bass, 1999). Unlike transactional leadership, which relies on exchanges such as rewards and supervision, transformational leadership focuses on deeper psychological influence, encouraging followers to transcend self-interest for collective organizational goals. This leadership style is characterized by four key components, namely idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration, which collectively promote trust, creativity, and professional development among followers (Bass, 1999). In educational contexts, transformational leadership plays a critical role in improving instructional quality, fostering teacher collaboration, and supporting sustainable professional development (Sliwka et al., 2024; Lin et al., 2022). Furthermore, the integration of transformational leadership with educational leadership theory highlights the role of school administrators in guiding instructional practices, promoting a learning-centered environment, and strengthening teachers' commitment to organizational goals (Hallinger, 2011). Therefore, transformational leadership serves as a key mechanism for driving organizational change and enhancing educational effectiveness.

Concepts and Theories of Organizational Commitment

Organizational commitment is defined as a psychological state that reflects an individual's attachment to an organization and influences their decision to remain as a member (Meyer, 2016). This concept is widely explained through the three-component model, which includes affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment. Affective commitment refers to emotional attachment and identification with organizational values, continuance commitment is based on the perceived costs of leaving the organization, and normative commitment reflects a sense of moral obligation to remain (Meyer, 2016). In the teaching profession, organizational commitment is particularly important as it contributes to teacher retention, instructional continuity, and overall educational quality. Teachers with high levels of commitment are more likely to demonstrate dedication, collaboration, and willingness

to support organizational goals, even under challenging conditions. Additionally, Social Exchange Theory explains that organizational commitment develops through reciprocal relationships between teachers and school administrators, where perceived support, fairness, and recognition lead to stronger emotional and behavioral attachment (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Thus, organizational commitment represents a multidimensional construct that plays a crucial role in sustaining teacher performance and long-term organizational effectiveness.

Relationship between Transformational Leadership and Organizational Commitment

The relationship between transformational leadership and organizational commitment can be explained through both leadership theory and social exchange theory, as transformational leadership behaviors create supportive and motivating environments that strengthen employees' psychological attachment to the organization. Transformational leaders, through idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration, foster trust, recognition, and professional growth, which enhance teachers' affective commitment and willingness to contribute to organizational goals (Bass, 1999). In educational settings, when school leaders demonstrate vision, support, and encouragement, teachers are more likely to feel valued and develop stronger emotional and moral commitment to their schools. This relationship is further supported by Social Exchange Theory, which suggests that when teachers perceive positive treatment and support from leaders, they reciprocate with higher levels of loyalty, engagement, and commitment (Blau, 1964; Eisenberger et al., 1986). Empirical evidence also indicates that transformational leadership positively influences teachers' attitudes, self-efficacy, and professional development, which in turn reinforce their organizational commitment (Lin et al., 2022). Therefore, transformational leadership acts as a critical antecedent of organizational commitment, contributing to improved teacher retention, collaboration, and overall educational effectiveness.

H1: Transformational leadership of school administrators is positively correlated with the organizational commitment of teachers and educational personnel in selected high schools in Beijing at a statistically significant level.

From the literature review, the conceptual framework can be drawn as shown in Figure 1.

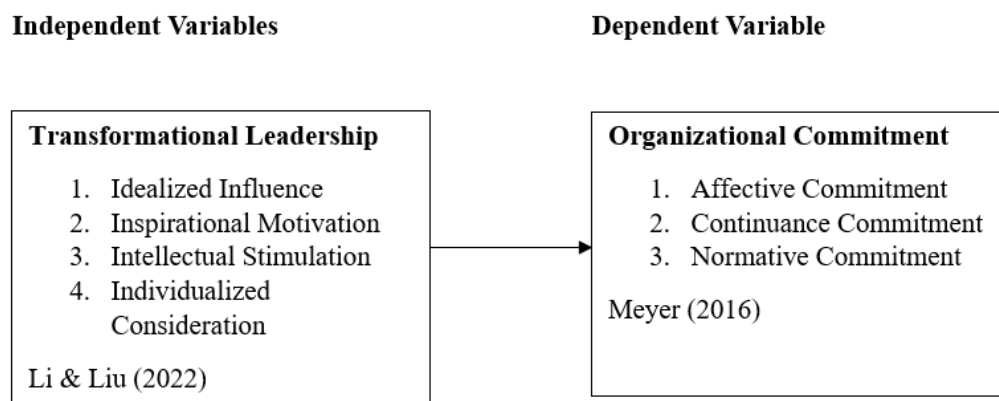


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

To examine the relationship between transformational leadership and organizational commitment among teachers and educational personnel in high schools in Beijing, this study adopted a quantitative research approach using a survey design. The population consisted of 604 teachers and educational personnel from two selected schools: The High School Affiliated to Beijing Normal University No. 2 and Beijing Changping No. 2 High School. The sample size was initially determined using Yamane's (1973) formula at a 95% confidence level with a

margin of error of .05, resulting in a minimum required sample of 241 respondents. To improve statistical power, enhance the precision of estimates, and reduce sampling error, the sample size was increased to 320 respondents. This approach is consistent with recommendations in quantitative research that larger sample sizes provide more stable and reliable estimates (Hair et al., 2014). A proportional sampling technique was employed to ensure appropriate representation from each school. Specifically, the sample was allocated based on the proportion of the population in each institution, resulting in approximately [insert number] respondents from the High School Affiliated to Beijing Normal University No. 2 and [insert number] respondents from Beijing Changping No. 2 High School. This procedure enhances the representativeness and replicability of the study. The research instrument was a structured questionnaire developed based on relevant theories and prior studies, consisting of four sections: demographic information, transformational leadership, organizational commitment, and open-ended suggestions. Transformational leadership was measured across four dimensions: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. Organizational commitment was measured across three dimensions: affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment. A five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (lowest) to 5 (highest) was used to measure respondents' perceptions. The content validity of the instrument was assessed using the Index of Item Objective Congruence (IOC) by three experts. Reliability was tested through a pilot study with 30 respondents using Cronbach's alpha, which indicated acceptable internal consistency (Hair et al., 2014). Data were collected through questionnaire distribution with official permission from the selected schools. Both primary and secondary data sources were utilized. For data analysis, descriptive statistics, including frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation, were used to describe respondents' characteristics and variable levels. Inferential statistics were applied using Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient to examine the relationships between transformational leadership and organizational commitment, as well as between their respective dimensions, at a significance level of .05.

RESEARCH RESULTS

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

A total of 320 respondents participated in the study, consisting of 160 females (50.0%) and 160 males (50.0%). The majority of respondents were aged between 41–50 years, accounting for 116 individuals (36.3%). Most respondents held a master's degree, totaling 128 individuals (40.0%). Regarding monthly income, the majority earned between 4,000–5,000 yuan, representing 131 respondents (40.9%). In terms of work experience, most respondents had more than 10 years of experience, accounting for 141 individuals (44.1%). Overall, respondents' perceptions of both transformational leadership ($\bar{X} = 3.64$, $SD = .90$) and organizational commitment ($\bar{X} = 3.65$, $SD = .92$) were at a high level.

Results of Hypothesis Testing

Table 1 Relationship between Transformational Leadership and Organizational Commitment

	Transformational Leadership	Organizational Commitment
Transformational Leadership	-	
Organizational Commitment	.978***	-

*** Statistically significant at the .001 level

From the table 1, it was found that transformational leadership has a very strong positive relationship with organizational commitment, with a correlation coefficient of .978, which is statistically significant at the .001 level. This indicates that as transformational leadership increases, organizational commitment among teachers also increases at a very high level. The

strength of the relationship suggests that transformational leadership plays a critical role in shaping teachers' psychological attachment and loyalty to the organization. In other words, when school leaders demonstrate transformational leadership behaviors, such as providing vision, motivation, and individualized support, teachers are more likely to develop a stronger sense of commitment toward their school. This finding highlights the importance of transformational leadership as a key factor in enhancing organizational commitment in educational settings.

Table 2 Correlation Matrix of Transformational Leadership and Organizational Commitment Dimensions

	II	IM	IS	IC	AC	CC	NC
II	-						
IM	.903***	-					
IS	.887***	.939***	-				
IC	.903***	.950***	.941***	-			
AC	.899**	.939***	.936***	.938***	-		
CC	.899**	.944***	.935***	.935***	.937***	-	
NC	.891***	.934***	.940***	.937***	.936***	.932***	-

Note: II = Idealized Influence; IM = Inspirational Motivation; IS = Intellectual Stimulation; IC = Individualized Consideration; AC = Affective Commitment; CC = Continuance Commitment; NC = Normative Commitment.

*** $p < .001$.

From Table 2, it was found that all dimensions of transformational leadership, including idealized influence (II), inspirational motivation (IM), intellectual stimulation (IS), and individualized consideration (IC), have strong positive relationships with all dimensions of organizational commitment, namely affective commitment (AC), continuance commitment (CC), and normative commitment (NC), with correlation coefficients ranging from .887 to .950, all of which are statistically significant at the .001 level. Among the relationships, individualized consideration shows the strongest correlation with inspirational motivation ($r = .950$) and intellectual stimulation ($r = .941$), indicating a high level of interrelationship among transformational leadership dimensions. Furthermore, all dimensions of transformational leadership are highly correlated with affective commitment, with coefficients above .899, suggesting that leadership behaviors strongly influence teachers' emotional attachment to the organization. Similarly, strong positive relationships are observed with continuance commitment and normative commitment, indicating that transformational leadership also contributes to teachers' perceived costs of leaving and their sense of obligation to remain. These findings support the conceptual framework, which posits that transformational leadership significantly influences organizational commitment, highlighting that effective leadership behaviors play a crucial role in enhancing teachers' commitment across all dimensions.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

After addressing the research objective, the findings revealed that transformational leadership has a statistically significant positive relationship with organizational commitment among teachers and educational personnel in high schools in Beijing. The correlation analysis indicates an exceptionally strong relationship between the two constructs ($r = .978$, $p < .001$), with all dimensions of transformational leadership—idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration—being highly correlated

with all dimensions of organizational commitment, including affective, continuance, and normative commitment.

While these findings appear to strongly support transformational leadership theory, which posits that leaders who inspire, support, and intellectually stimulate followers can enhance their attitudes and commitment (Bass, 1999), the magnitude of the correlation observed in this study is unusually high for behavioral and social science research. Correlation coefficients approaching unity ($r > .90$) may indicate potential methodological concerns, such as common method bias, multicollinearity, or conceptual overlap between measurement constructs. Therefore, the results should be interpreted with caution.

From a theoretical perspective, the findings can also be explained through Social Exchange Theory, which suggests that when individuals perceive strong support and fair treatment from their leaders, they reciprocate with positive attitudes such as organizational commitment (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). In addition, the results are consistent with Meyer's (2016) three-component model, indicating that transformational leadership is associated with affective, continuance, and normative commitment. However, the extremely high correlations may also imply that respondents perceived transformational leadership and organizational commitment as closely intertwined constructs, potentially due to overlapping questionnaire items or a shared measurement context.

From a practical perspective, the findings suggest that school administrators should adopt transformational leadership behaviors, such as articulating a clear vision, motivating teachers, encouraging innovation, and providing individualized support, to enhance teachers' commitment. However, given the unusually high correlation, future applications should be approached carefully, ensuring that leadership development programs are evaluated using multiple data sources and measurement methods.

This study has several limitations. First, the use of a single-source, self-reported questionnaire may have contributed to common method bias, inflating the observed relationships. Future research should employ methodological remedies, such as collecting data from multiple sources or at different time points, and conducting statistical tests (e.g., Harman's single-factor test or VIF analysis) to assess potential bias. Second, the study was conducted in only two high schools in Beijing, which may limit generalizability. Future studies should expand the sample across different regions. Finally, future research should further examine the discriminant validity between transformational leadership and organizational commitment to ensure conceptual distinction and improve measurement accuracy.

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