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## The Influence Of The Principal's Leadership Style On Teacher Motivation And Job Performance In Rural Schools In China

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### Abstract

Teachers' happiness on the job was correlated with the leadership ideologies of rural Chinese school principals, according to the research. Additionally, we looked at how teachers' organisational commitment mediated the relationship between leadership style and performance on the job. Also considered were how the cultural norms of the principals' home nations were shown through their leadership approaches. Data was collected from 51 rural Chinese schools and analysed using a descriptive sequential mixed-methods strategy. To accomplish these four goals, the research gathered quantitative and qualitative data from 438 educators and 51 rural school administrators. Using Mplus Version 7.0, structural equation modelling was conducted. We used IBM SPSS Statistics Version 22 for data cleaning, descriptive, and reliability statistics. To synthesise the qualitative data, we turned to theme analysis. Teachers were more satisfied with their work when their leaders used transformational leadership strategies, as opposed to administrators who were passive-avoidant. When managers displayed the hands-off approach characteristic of passive avoidant leadership, employee productivity declined. In contrast, when managers used motivational methods, intellectual stimulation, or contingent pay typical of transactional leadership, employee output rose. According to several leadership style-happiness connections, employees' involvement in the firm played a role. Interestingly, a certain leadership style or trait was linked to every country's cultural features except masculinity. Scholars and politicians have suggested new research directions in light of these findings.

**KEYWORDS:** *Principal leadership style, Rural schools, Teacher motivation, Job performance.*

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

The educational system is the bedrock of any nation's development, and rural Chinese schools are no exception. However, unique challenges, such as inadequate finance and teacher isolation, often face smaller institutions. Particularly important in this context is the principal's leadership style. In rural Chinese schools, this study aims to investigate how different leadership styles of principals impact teacher motivation and performance. Inspiring and competent teachers are the backbone of every successful school. Educators who have a genuine interest in helping their students succeed are more likely to foster an inclusive classroom climate, actively involve their students, and achieve positive results (Li et al., 2023). When job performance is strong, student learning results are boosted. This study delves into how a principal's leadership style—be it hands-off, collaborative, or directive—can impact these crucial aspects of a rural Chinese teacher's effectiveness. Based on its stated goal of investigating the relationship between leadership style and educators' motivation and performance, this research could be very useful for principals in rural schools. Leaders in these low-income communities may be able to improve educational outcomes for their students by adapting their management style to encourage a more motivated and effective faculty (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2021).

## 2. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Rural areas in China face unique challenges in education, including financial constraints, outdated facilities, lack of specialist supplies, and difficulty in finding and retaining qualified teachers. Teachers may feel isolated and have limited professional development opportunities due to their rural settings. Principals must provide a supportive work environment for teachers, as their leadership style significantly impacts teacher morale, motivation, and classroom performance (Sarwar et al., 2022). Intrinsic motivation and academic success are two crucial aspects of good teaching, and this research seeks to understand how principals' leadership styles relate to these two factors. Participants were rural Chinese school teachers. The study aims to understand how different leadership styles, such as democratic and laissez-faire approaches, impact teacher motivation, engagement, and student learning. Improving leadership strategies in rural areas requires a deep understanding of these dynamics. Administrators should strive to enhance educational opportunities and outcomes for students in low-income communities by fostering a more engaged and effective teaching staff (Haque & Yamoah, 2021).

## 3. PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH

The purpose of this study is to explore how a principal's leadership style shapes teacher motivation and job performance in rural Chinese schools. By examining the connection between leadership approaches and factors like teacher purpose, autonomy, and instructional effectiveness, this study aims to provide valuable insights for principals. Ultimately, the research seeks to help rural school leaders tailor their leadership styles to cultivate a more motivated and effective teaching force, thereby enhancing educational opportunities and outcomes for students in these communities.

## 4. LITERATURE REVIEW

Teacher motivation is a complex concept that influences a teacher's purpose, passion, and devotion to their job. It significantly impacts their work, engagement, education, and impact on the classroom. However, rural educators face unique challenges such as social isolation, inadequate funding, and limited professional growth opportunities. Chinese schools have a hierarchical structure, reflecting authoritarian leadership styles (Wen & Jantan, 2023). This study aims to investigate the impacts of various leadership styles on inspiration and productivity in this setting for educators. Educational organizations prioritize staff members' efficient performance, motivation, and happiness. Effective leadership practices, work performance, and financial need are key factors in employee retention. Leaders play a crucial role in decision-making by motivating their teams and bringing everyone onto the same page. Evidence suggests that administrators and teachers who communicate effectively, build strong connections, and value teachers' professionalism have higher morale and better student outcomes. Improving teachers' effectiveness in the classroom requires a concerted effort from school administrators and individual educators. The ethical behavior of organizational leaders greatly influences workers' work behavior, inventive ideas, and job happiness (Huang & Hsin, 2023).

## 5. RESEARCH QUESTION

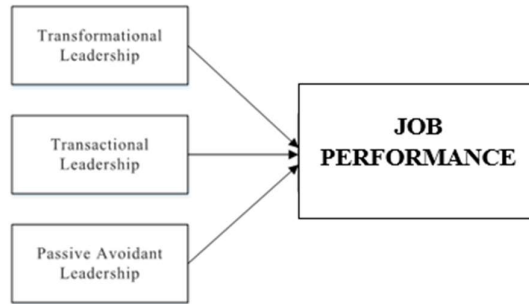
- How much do aspects of organizational commitment moderate the links between job performance and leadership styles?

## 6. METHODOLOGY

Chinese researchers used a mixed-methods explanatory sequential strategy to examine data from fifty-one rural schools. Four hundred thirty-eight teachers and fifty-one school administrators from rural areas contributed quantitative and qualitative information to help the study reach its four objectives. Researchers used IBM SPSS Statistics Version 22 to clean the data, perform descriptive statistics, and construct reliability statistics. The qualitative data was summarised using theme analysis, and structured comparisons were produced using Mplus Version 7.0. Teachers reported higher levels of work satisfaction when their administrators used transformational management strategies, as opposed to when administrators displayed avoidant, passive leadership. To further comprehend the complex link between leadership style and work happiness, the research also looked at teachers' organisational commitment. The research aimed to determine how administrators' cultural or national backgrounds influenced their teaching styles. To accomplish its goals and overcome its obstacles, the research relied on a multi-method approach. The study's purpose guided the choice of research method and methodology;

thus all of the questions were adequately answered.

**6.1 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**



**7. RESULTS**

**7.1 Organisational**

The instructors' level of organisational commitment was examined using descriptive statistics, such as means or standard deviations. Next, research was done to determine how much organisational commitment acts as a mediator between the leadership philosophies of school administrators and the quality of their job output. The average score on a global scale that gauges organisational commitment was 3.75. Normative dedication (M = 3.79, SD = 0.77) and emotional dedication (M = 3.79, SD = 0.80) had the highest mean scores. The standard deviations of the two groups were inside the bottom limit of the distribution. The feature with the lowest average score (M = 3.66, SD =.85) was commitment and perseverance, according to the information shown in Table 1.

**Devotion of Educators**

organisational

**Table 1: Data Characteristics for Engagement in Organisations**

Variables	M	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
Organisational Commitment	3.75	.72	-.48	.25
Affective Commitment	3.79	.80	-.61	.25
Normative Commitment	3.79	.77	-.57	.58
Continuance Commitment	3.66	.85	-.30	-.23

**7.2 Leadership Styles and Their Mediating Impact on Organisational Commitment Dimensions and Work Performance**

Using bootstrapped analysis of simultaneous indirect consequences using Mplus Version 7.0, the research examined the influence of organisational dedication quality on the link between leadership styles and worker performance. According to Table 2, the findings indicated that leaders' transformational leadership styles had an indirect influence (E =.165, BC 95% CI of .107 to.248) on teachers' emotional involvement with their work. E = -.001, BC 95% CI of -.060 to.064; E =.006, BC 95% CI of -.059 to.053) did not support any of these theories, however. Instructors' normative or continuity commitments were anticipated to act as a mediating factor in the relationship between leaders' transformational leadership style and instructors' job performance. However, the overall indirect impact (E =.008, BC 95% CI of -.039 to.054) did not reach the statistically important threshold for this relationship. E =.000, BC 95% CI of -.008 to.005, respectively, showed that neither normative commitment nor continuation commitment of teachers statistically significantly moderated the association between the passive avoidant leadership style of administrators and teachers' work performance. On the other hand, teachers' emotional commitment substantially moderated the association between administrators' avoidant, passive leadership style and their overall job performance (E = -.026, BC 95% CI of -.050 to -.002).

**Table 2: Mediating the Effects of Normative, Continuance, and Affective Commitment Leadership Styles**

on Work Performance

	Transformational Leadership			Transactional Leadership			Passive Avoidant Leadership		
	Estimate (SE)	Lower limit	Upper limit	Estimate (SE)	Lower limit	Upper limit	Estimate (SE)	Lower limit	Upper limit
<b>Mediators</b>									
AC	.161 (.039)*	.105	.235	.008 (.024)	-.034	.045	-.026 (.014)*	-.050	-.002
NC	-.001 (.038)	-.060	.064	.000 (.014)	-.024	.023	.000 (.009)	-.015	.013
CC	.006 (.034)	-.059	.053	.000 (.009)	-.010	.016	.000 (.004)	-.008	.005
Total	.165 (.043)*	.107	.248	.008 (.028)	-.039	.054	-.025 (.016)*	-.053	-.002

BC bias-corrected, CI confidence interval, SE standard error, AC affective commitment, NC normative commitment, CC continuance commitment. Confidence intervals containing zero are interpreted as being not significant at the .05 level \*p<.05

7.3 Organisational Commitment Dimensions as a Mediator Between Workplace Transformational Leadership and Its Elements

Examining the correlation between emotional commitment (E=.109, BC 95% CI of .066 to .167) and teachers' work happiness, the research delves into how transformational leadership stimulates their intellectual development. This data lends credence to the idea that transformational leadership has a good effect on teachers' productivity in the classroom. Unfortunately, there was no statistically significant mediation of this association by teachers' normative commitment or continuing commitment (E = -.002, BC 95% CI of -.040 to .023). With a statistically significant total indirect impact (E = .107, BC 95% CI = .059 to .179), the research also indicated that teachers' job performance was indirectly increased by intellectual stimulation connected to transformational leadership. As measured by affective commitment, normative commitment, or continuance commitment, there was no significant relationship between teachers' job performance and the inspirational inspiration dimension of transformational leadership. The corresponding CIs for the three variables were -.026 to .092, E = .000 for BC, and -.001 for BC, respectively. Results showed that there was no significant difference in the indirect effect of the idealised influence (Attributed) component of transformational leadership on instructors' performance at work (E = .020, BC 95% CI of -.025 to .071; E = .000, BC 95% CI of -.012 to .014; E = .000, BC 95% CI of -.016 to .006 accordingly). No significant effect of the idealised impact (Behaviour) component of transformational leadership on teachers' overall job performance was seen (E = .032, BC 95% CI of -.001 to .076; E = -.002, BC 95% CI of -.015 to .019; E = -.002, BC 95% CI of -.013 to .008).

Table 3: Integrating Normative, Emotional, and Continuation Commitments to Balance the Impact of

**Transformational Leadership Aspects on Work Performance**

BC 95% CI			
	Estimate (SE)	Lower limit	Upper limit
<b>Intellectual Stimulation</b>			
<b>Mediators</b>			
AC	.109 (.030)*	.066	.167
NC	.001 (.030)	-.046	.050
CC	-.002 (.019)	-.040	.023
Total	.107 (.036)*	.059	.179
<b>Inspirational Motivation</b>			
<b>Mediators</b>			
AC	.030 (.037)	-.026	.092
NC	.000 (.018)	-.026	.034
CC	-.001 (.014)	-.032	.016
Total	.029 (.036)	-.028	.086
<b>Individual Consideration</b>			
<b>Mediators</b>			
AC	.011 (.025)	-.026	.056
NC	.000 (.008)	-.010	.015
CC	.000 (.007)	-.016	.006
Total	.011 (.028)	-.027	.061
<b>Idealised Influence (Attributed)</b>			
<b>Mediators</b>			
AC	.020 (.030)	-.025	.071
NC	.000 (.009)	-.012	.014
CC	.000 (.008)	-.016	.006
Total	.020 (.031)	-.029	.071
<b>Idealised Influence (Behaviour)</b>			
<b>Mediators</b>			
AC	.032 (.024)	-.001	.076
NC	-.002 (.011)	-.015	.019
CC	-.002 (.008)	-.013	.008
Total	.030 (.025)	-.003	.080

BC bias-corrected, CI confidence interval, SE standard error, AC affective commitment, NC normative commitment, CC continuance commitment. Confidence intervals containing zero are interpreted as being not significant at the .05 level \*p<.05

**7.4 The Function of Organisational Commitment Elements in Changing the Connection Between Transactional Leadership and Productivity**

Teachers' work performance was not substantially impacted by the leadership by Exception (Active) aspect of transactional leadership. This impact was mediated (E =.000, BC 95% CI of -.018 to .013) by teachers' normative, emotional, and ongoing commitments. For more information on the lack of significance of the indirect influence on this connection, please refer to Table 4 E =.006, BC 95% CI-.025 to .036. The contingent incentive component of transactional leadership had an indirect influence on teachers' job performance. Of these, emotional commitment differed substantially above zero (E =.192, BC 95% CI of .143 to .252). This demonstrates how the relationship between work performance and transformational leadership's contingent remuneration is mediated by teachers' emotional engagement. Interestingly, the association between the contingent incentive of transactional leadership and teachers' work performance was not statistically significantly mediated by either normative commitment or continuation commitment among instructors. This suggests that norms and ongoing devotion are not reliable indicators of the quality of instructors' professional work experiences. The relationship's total indirect effect was likewise substantial, as Table 4 demonstrates (E =.186, BC 95% CI of .126 to .265).

**Table 4: Affective, Normative, And Continuation Commitments Mediate the Effects of Transactional Leadership Dimensions on Job Performance**

	Management by Exception (Active)			Contingent Reward		
	Estimate (SE)	Lower limit	Upper limit	Estimate (SE)	Lower limit	Upper limit
<b>Mediators</b>						
AC	.005 (.002)	-.026	.037	.192 (.034)*	.143	.252
NC	.000 (.007)	-.018	.013	-.008 (.049)	-.007	.089
CC	.000 (.006)	-.011	.005	-.019 (.038)	-.083	.044
Total	.006 (.019)	-.025	.036	.186 (.042)*	.126	.265

BC bias-corrected, CI confidence interval, PE point estimate, SE standard error, AC affective commitment, NC normative commitment, CC continuance commitment. Confidence intervals containing zero are interpreted as being not significant at the .05 level \*p<.05

**7.5 The Mediating Role of Organisational Commitment Factors in the Relationship Between Employee Outcomes at Work and Passive-Avoidant Leadership Attributes**

Teachers' job performance was statistically equivalently impacted by continuance and negative obligations ( $E = -.005$ , BC 95% CI of  $-.037$  to  $.006$ ;  $E = -.010$ , BC 95% CI of  $-.018$  to  $.015$ ). Teachers' emotional commitment revealed that administrators' use of leadership by instance (Passive), a kind of passive avoidant leadership, had an indirect impact on teachers' performance at work ( $E = -.059$ , BC 95% CI of  $-.108$  to  $-.016$ ). This was made feasible by the instructors' emotional support. This was brought about by the teachers' emotional involvement. The relationship between teachers' work performance and passive avoidant management of leadership by exception (Passive) is statistically mediated by emotional commitment. This is supported by positive connections found between emotional involvement and teaching effectiveness. This is shown by the substantial correlation found between the parameters and the emotional engagement of the teachers. The research population was negatively impacted by the relationship's overall statistical effect ( $E = -.065$ , BC 95% CI of  $-.125$  to  $-.015$ ). Emotional commitment also served as a mediator between the job performance of instructors and the laissez-faire nature of passive-avoidant leadership. Teachers' emotional commitment to their jobs was negatively impacted by the passive avoidant leadership style indirectly, and this effect was of statistical significance ( $E = -.076$ , BC 95% CI of  $-.132$  to  $-.026$ ). The link between laissez-faire or passive avoidant leadership and teachers' work performance, however, did not seem to be mediated by the normative or continuous commitment of teachers ( $E = .009$ , BC 95% CI of  $-.051$  to  $.013$ ;  $E = .005$ , BC 95% CI of  $-.028$  to  $.0230$ , respectively). A statistically significant indirect impact between these two factors is shown in Table 5 ( $E = .090$ , BC 95% CI of  $-.154$  to  $-.033$ ).

**Table 5: Employee Performance and Leader Passivity or Avoidance are Mediated by Affective, Normative, and Continuity Commitments.**

	Management by Exception (Passive)			Laissez Faire		
	BC 95% CI			BC 95% CI		
	Estimate (SE)	Lower limit	Upper limit	Estimate (SE)	Lower limit	Upper limit
<b>Mediators</b>						
AC	-.059 (.026)*	-.108	-.016	-.076 (.026)*	-.132	-.026
NC	-.005 (.012)	-.037	.006	-.009 (.018)	-.051	.013
CC	-.010 (.006)	-.018	.005	-.005 (.013)	-.028	.030
Total	-.065 (.034)*	-.125	-.015	-.090 (.037)*	-.154	-.033

BC bias-corrected, CI confidence interval, SE standard error, AC affective commitment, NC normative commitment, CC continuance commitment. Confidence intervals containing zero are interpreted as being not significant at the .05 level \* $p < .05$

## 8. DISCUSSION

Using the Multi-Level Questionnaire (5X-Short), the TCM Employee Commitment Questionnaire, and Spector's Work Happiness Survey as research sources on leadership or employee happiness in the workplace, the study sought to ascertain the role of organisational commitment in the relationship among leadership styles and job performance between teachers.

### 8.1 Commitment of Educators to Their Institutions

The study examines teachers' organizational loyalty using descriptive statistics, revealing that the average score for all dimensions of employees' commitment to the company was close to the standard norm. The lowest score for extension commitment, which pertains to the expenses related to leaving the company, supports the claims made by Meyer and Allen (1997) and Tetrick (1995) that commitment is transactional and determined by the costs associated with it. The average continuing commitment score was most likely influenced by the availability of alternative professions with greater benefits and a higher salary. Teachers with at least 15 years of experience may be eligible for a pension when this period has elapsed. The availability of work choices or side bets that might reduce the cost of stopping are important predictors of continuance commitment. The degree of dedication to ongoing education may indicate that the concerned educator is worried about their current level of knowledge and whether it has led to improved job possibilities. The study also found that teachers' normative and emotional commitments did not vary statistically significantly, based on the mean ratings. Normative commitment occurs when workers sense a moral obligation to remain with the company instead of leaving just for the benefits they get from their employment. The underlying issue causing the apparent performance disparity is the variation in work pace.

### 8.2 Mediating the Relationship Are Organisational Commitment Dimensions

There is a paucity of research on the function of organisational commitment dimensions as job performance or leadership style mediators, especially in academic settings. This study examined the relationships between transformational leadership, and the elements of such leadership related to employees' job performance levels. The results showed that teachers whose principals were viewed as more transformational may be happier in their jobs due to the boost in affective commitment they receive from working under a more transformational leader. This finding was consistent with some of the few literatures that examined the role of organizational commitment characteristics as moderators of the relationship between employee satisfaction and leadership styles. The study also found that the association between intellectual stimulation offered by transformational leadership and the enjoyment felt at work was statistically significant to be mediated by emotional commitment. The association between transactional leadership and employee satisfaction did not seem to be statistically significantly mediated by any of the organizational commitment components. The only statistically significant mediator between passive avoidant leadership and work performance was emotional commitment, but this mediation had an adverse effect. The negative relationships between work performance and exception-passive and laissez-faire management were also significantly lowered by the emotional commitment component.

## **9. CONCLUSION**

Among the leadership styles seen among rural school principals in China are transactional, passive-avoidant, and transformative, according to the research. According to the findings, leaders have a better chance of success when they use a mix of transactional and transformational leadership styles. After transactional and passive-avoidant styles of leadership, participants choose transformational styles. Teachers were pleased with their careers and coworkers but dissatisfied with their perks and performance-based compensation. Teachers reported higher levels of work satisfaction when leaders used transformational tactics, compared to those whose leadership styles were more constrained or avoidant. Intellectual stimulation and a feeling of purpose are crucial components of transformational leadership, which is directly associated with individual job happiness. Administrators may influence staff relationships, team performance, and communication by encouraging teachers to boost their job satisfaction. Having one's needs met on the work did not, however, correlate with happiness in one's position. Contrary to contingent incentives, transactional leadership styles did not increase employee satisfaction. Over time, educators developed deeper emotional and normative connections to their schools, with greater success being linked to more normative commitment. Affective commitment mediated the negative relationship between employees' perceptions of their performance on the job and leaders' tendency to be passive and avoidant, but emotional commitment was shown to be a strong mediator between intellectual stimulation and work performance.

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