

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LEADERSHIP STYLE AND JOB SATISFACTION AMONG PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS IN MALAYSIA

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between head teacher's leadership style and teachers' job satisfaction in the primary schools in Malaysia. The study used a survey questionnaire to collect data from 391 teachers from seven states in Malaysia namely Selangor, Kelantan, Wilayah Persekutuan Kuala Lumpur, Melaka, Johor, Negeri Sembilan and Terengganu. The respondents of the study is limited to only primary school teachers, heads of departments/panels and senior assistants due to the relevancy of the research. The questionnaire consists of questions measuring teachers' perceptions of job satisfaction and dimensions of their school head's leadership style. Moderate to strong positive correlations were found between measures of leadership style and scores on the job satisfaction. No gender differences were found on job satisfaction variables. This paper recognizes the effective leadership style of school heads and the relationship with job satisfaction of primary school teachers in Malaysia.

Keywords: *Leadership style, Job Satisfaction, School Heads, Primary Schools*

INTRODUCTION

With the dawn of the information age and globalization, a wave of restructuring, reengineering and reculturing in education is spreading all across the globe. As such there is a need for Malaysia to make a critical shift from an industrial economy to becoming a prominent player in the information age. In order to realize Vision 2020, Malaysians need to become a technologically literate, thinking workforce, able to perform in a global work environment and use the tools available in the information age. This calls for the emergence of a workforce where the demand for Total Quality Management (TQM), accountability and

quantum-leap efficiency should be the call of the day (Gill, 2006). Additionally, enhancing accountability and integrity is also one of the main challenges that need to be addressed in order to reach Vision 2020. In regard of that, the government has formulated the National Integrity Plan (NIP) which will act as a master plan to guide not only Federal Government and the State Government but it covers other sectors, such as the private sector, political parties, non-government organizations, religious groups, the media, women, youth and students in an integrated and coordinated movement to enhance integrity (Seminar on the National Integrity Plan, 2005).

In such a scenario learning organizations like schools are changing dramatically and both school heads and teachers alike are grappling with a sea of change. Therefore it is not surprising to note that teachers and school heads find it increasingly difficult to run schools due to a number of reasons. First, both teachers and school heads lament over unattractive remuneration for their increasingly demanding positions. On top of that learning organizations have to cope with a lack of parent and community support. To make matters worse, learning organizations have to face the negativity of media towards teachers and schools as a whole. Finally, there are the changing demands of the jobs that call for increased accountability and the need to show continuous improvement with regards to raising students' performance.

In overcoming all these challenges, school heads in their quest for efficiency and tangible results can put added pressure on teachers. This can result in a domino effect on teachers faced with the increasing demands from all stakeholders including school heads. In such a scenario, job satisfaction becomes important issues at hand. Hence, this study examines the relationship between teachers' perceptions of leadership style and job satisfaction. The study advances our understanding of the issues by examining the following two main aspects – i.e. leadership style and job satisfaction under the current winds of change. Job satisfaction among teachers is important determinant of effective school heads in schools and this may affect the performance of teachers. The extents to which teachers are satisfied with their job also influence students and community satisfaction and compliance.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

This paper concerns on the issue of the relationship between leadership and job satisfaction. Leadership and job satisfaction are closely interrelated and it has implications in the production process as studies indicate that active leadership leads employees to greater commitment and achieve higher standards of quality (Stordeur, Vandenberghe & D'hoore, 2000). Leadership has been variously defined in terms of traits, process, skills, competency, a relationship and a construct (Gill, 2006: 9). Khalili-Mahani, Dedoric. Engert, Pruessner dan Pruessner (2010) stated that leadership consists of knowledge and skills which influence and direct others' activities. Meanwhile, Northouse (1997) highlights

leadership is a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal. Gill (2006: 11) identified that one talent all leaders must possess is the capacity to perceive needs of followers in relationship to their own, to help followers move forward fuller self-realization and self-actualization along with the leaders themselves. The main challenges facing a leader are to build a long-term vision, to increase commitment and to build resilient working teams and coalitions necessary for creating organizational changes. Hence leaders should be people that motivate, inspire and empower their employees. The work of researchers like Burns (1978) and Bass (1985) advocated a new leadership theory called the transformational and transactional leadership. Transactional leadership deals with the daily routines of management and order in an organization where else transformational leadership is aimed at producing organisational change through it emphasis on new values with a passion and vision for the future.

According to Wright (1996), the transactional leader recognises what it is that we want to get from work and tries to ensure that we get it if our performance merits it. It also based more on reinforcement and exchanges (Aarons, 2006). Transformational leadership in contrast, focuses on developing the organization's capacity to innovate. Rather than focusing specifically on direct coordination, control, and supervision of curriculum and instruction, transformational leadership seeks to build the organization's capacity to select its purposes and to support the development of changes to practices of teaching and learning (Hallinger, 2003).

In schools, school heads as leaders are said to be the most salient people that set the tone and climate for effective teaching and learning. They represent the organization's culture and exert a direct influence upon the teachers' behaviours. School heads that advocate transformational leadership encourage employee participation in decision-making and those who encourage a two-way communication process are able to generate a more favourable working climate among their teachers. Such schools are characterised by less interpersonal conflict and hostility and fewer non-cooperative relationships (Stordeur, et al., 2000). In contrast, school heads that focus on closely monitoring teachers to prevent mistakes may be perceived as a lack of trust and evoke higher levels of job stress. Emotional support and adequate feedback provision on teacher performance would be a better strategy, which could lead to an increase in teachers' self-esteem.

Job satisfaction is generally defined as an employee's affective reaction to a job, based on comparing actual outcomes with desired outcomes. Job satisfaction also has been defined as the extent to which a staff member has favourable or positive feelings about work or the work environment (De Nobile, 2003). It takes into account both intrinsic and extrinsic job elements. Employees often expect their job to bring about an accumulation of features such as increased pay, promotion and greater autonomy. The range and importance of these variables however differ across individuals but when the unmet expectations become sufficiently large, job satisfaction is lower and there is a greater probability of withdrawal behaviour (Pearson, 1991).

Job satisfaction also has a direct influence on job commitment. According to Allen and Meyer (1990), views on organisational commitment reflect the following three components: affective commitment, continuance commitment and normative commitment. Affective commitment refers to the degree to which an employee identifies, is involved in and is emotionally attached to the organisation. Continuance commitment refers to the degree to which employees recognise the costs associated with leaving the organisation because they have to do so. Normative commitment refers to one's feelings and obligations to the organisation and whether staying within the organisation is the right and moral thing to do. However, this study is only focusing on the descriptive analysis of leadership style and job satisfaction and the relationships between the two variables. Organizational commitment is not included in this study.

METHOD

This study employed a cross-sectional survey method to examine the relationship between the role of leadership style and job satisfaction. Gay and Airasian (2000) claimed that data from 'good surveys' can provide useful information and input about related populations or events. Hence, a cross-sectional survey design was chosen instead of a longitudinal design for this study, because of the limitation of time and resource.

Vockell and Asher (1995) pointed out that a correlational study is a useful strategy in situations where experimental research is difficult or impossible. Gay (1981), and Leedy and Ormrod (2001) defined a descriptive correlational study as concerned with describing the current status of subjects in a study. A correlation study, on the other hand, determines the existence or non-existence of relationships (or the lack of it) between variables in order to make predictions, though the existence of a relationship between two variables or more through a correlational study does not necessarily imply causation (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001; Cohen & Manion, 1989). Hence, the descriptive-correlational study was chosen to allow a quantitative description of the relevant features of the data collected as well as the relationship between the variables of interest.

The study involved a total of 391 primary school teachers from 27 randomly selected day-time primary schools from seven states in Malaysia namely Selangor, Kelantan, Wilayah Persekutuan Kuala Lumpur, Melaka, Johor, Negeri Sembilan and Terengganu. Once these schools had been chosen the multistage cluster sampling method was applied (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000). Each cluster involved the headmaster, senior assistants, subject heads and classroom teachers in the selected schools.

Data from this study was obtained primarily via a modified instrument of Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire and Job Satisfaction. The independent variables in this study are transformational leadership style and transactional leadership style. Meanwhile the dependent variables include the outcomes of job satisfaction. Two phases of analysis

were used in the study. The first phase included descriptive statistics profiling the sample under investigation. The second phase utilized bivariate analysis to assess the association between the perception of leadership style and job satisfaction.

FINDINGS

Demographic Data

A total of 386 respondents from the 391 samples had returned their questionnaires. Findings indicated that out of the 386 respondents, 74.7% of them were females and 25.3% were males. This indicates the fact that a majority of teachers in Malaysian schools were females. As for the ethnic groups, the results showed that 85.3% of the respondents were Malays, 5.1% were Chinese and 2.3% were Indians. This data corresponds with the distribution of ethnic groups in Malaysia, as the majority are Malays followed by Chinese, Indians and other ethnic groups. The majority (136) of the respondents were in age group of 31 to 40 years (34.9%) while only 30 (7.7%) of the respondents are above 51 years old.

The study also revealed that 75.4% of the respondents had a Diploma or Certificate, 24.1% had a Bachelor's degree, and only .5% had a Master's degree. This distribution indicated that the majority (more than 70%) of teachers were non-graduates and less than 30% of teachers were graduates. In terms of academic job titles, the results showed that 95% of the respondents were teachers, and only 5% were senior management team members.

Leadership Style

Table 1 indicates the overall transformational leadership style practiced by the school heads. The items responded are tabulated according to the highest mean score in appearance. The school heads were noticed as often considering moral and ethical consequences of decision ($M=3.0$, $SD=.7$), talking optimistically about the future ($M=2.9$, $SD=.8$), articulating compelling vision of future ($M=2.9$, $SD=.7$), and increasing willingness of the staff to try harder ($M=2.9$, $SD=.8$). Respondents also agreed their school heads help them to develop their strengths, work with others in a satisfactory way, talk important values and beliefs, and act in ways that build others' respect. However, the findings also identified some pitfalls of leadership. School heads in this study were noticed that they seldom treat their staff as an individual ($M=2.4$, $SD=1.0$), consider individuals as having different needs, abilities and aspirations ($M=2.3$, $SD=1.0$) and act as a firm believer ($M=2.1$, $SD=1.0$).

As for the transactional leadership components, most of the items in Table 2 were at the mean score of below 3. Under certain circumstances, school heads in this study were also identified as transactional leaders by displaying sense of power ($M=3.1$, $SD=1.7$), expressing confidence that goals will be achieved ($M=3.0$, $SD=.8$), concentrating on

mistakes ($M=2.9$, $SD=.8$), discussing who is responsible for achieving performance targets ($M=2.9$, $SD=.9$), talking enthusiastically what needs to be accomplished ($M=2.9$, $SD=.9$), specifying the importance of having a strong sense of purpose ($M=2.9$, $SD=.8$), and leading group effectively ($M=2.9$, $SD=.7$). However, the respondents in this study did not agree with certain issues such as their school heads only take action when the condition has become chronic ($M=1.5$, $SD=1.3$), is absent when needed ($M=1.5$, $SD=1.2$), fail to interfere ($M=1.4$, $SD=1.1$), avoid getting involved when important issues arise ($M=1.4$, $SD=1.3$), avoid making decisions ($M=1.3$, $SD=1.3$), delay responding to urgent questions ($M=1.3$, $SD=1.2$) and waits for things to go wrong before taking action ($M=1.0$, $SD=1.2$). The findings indicated actually negative aspects of leadership were seldom noticed in this study. On top of that, the respondents also exhibited that they were fortunate enough to work under good leaders, who had demonstrated more transformational than transactional style in the working place.

Table 1: *Transformational Leadership Style*

Transformational Leadership	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Considers moral and ethical consequences of decision	382	3.0	.7
Talks optimistically about the future	377	2.9	.8
Articulates compelling vision of future	362	2.9	.7
Increases willingness to try harder	384	2.9	.8
Helps me to develop my strengths	386	2.8	.9
Effective in meeting others' job-related needs	377	2.8	.7
Uses methods of leadership that are satisfying	381	2.8	.8
Works with others in a satisfactory way	381	2.8	.8
Re-examines critical assumptions to question whether they appropriate	364	2.7	.8
Talks important values and beliefs	380	2.7	.9
Acts in ways that build others' respect	376	2.7	.9
Gets other to look at problems from many different angles	382	2.7	.9
Emphasizes importance of having collective sense of mission	372	2.7	.8
Expresses satisfaction when meet expectations	379	2.7	.8
Heightens others' desire to succeed	373	2.7	.8
Seeks differing perspectives when solving problems	375	2.6	.8
Instils pride in others for being associated with him/her	362	2.6	.9
Goes beyond self-interest	374	2.6	.9

Suggests new ways of looking at how to complete assignments	382	2.6	.9
Spends time teaching and coaching	381	2.5	.9
Effective in representing me to higher authority	368	2.5	.8
Treats me as an individual rather just member of a group	378	2.4	1.0
Considers as having different needs, abilities and aspirations from others	372	2.3	1.0
Firm believer	349	2.1	1.0

Scale: 0=not at all, 1=once in a while, 2=sometimes, 3=fairly often, 4=frequently if not always

Table 2: Transactional Leadership Style

Transactional Leadership	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Displays sense of power	381	3.1	1.7
Expresses confidence that goals will be achieved	383	3.0	.8
Concentrates full attention on dealing with mistakes	381	2.9	.8
Discusses who is responsible for achieving performance targets	378	2.9	.9
Talks enthusiastically what needs to be accomplished	359	2.9	.9
Specifies importance of having a strong sense of purpose	375	2.9	.8
Is effective in meeting organizational requirements	378	2.9	.7
Leads group that effective	382	2.9	.7
Makes clear one can expect to receive performance when goals are achieved	373	2.8	.9
Focuses attention on irregularities, mistakes, exceptions and deviations in standard	370	2.7	.9
Keeps track of all mistakes	373	2.7	.9
Provides others with assistance in exchange for their efforts	372	2.6	.9
Directs others attention toward failures to meet standards	365	2.5	1.0
Gets others do more than they expected to do	384	2.5	1.0
Demonstrates problems chronic before taking action	372	1.5	1.3
Is absent when needed	379	1.5	1.2
Fails to interfere until problem become serious	381	1.4	1.1
Avoids getting involved when important issues arise	376	1.4	1.3

Avoids making decisions	374	1.3	1.3
Delays responding to urgent questions	382	1.3	1.2
Waits for things to go wrong before taking action	380	1.0	1.2

Scale: 0=not at all, 1=once in a while, 2=sometimes, 3=fairly often, 4=frequently if not always

Job Satisfaction

The mean scores for all the items of job satisfaction (Table 3) recorded a score of 3.10 (agree). This suggests that the respondents in this study were satisfied being teachers at their work place. Furthermore, the results indicated that most of the school teachers liked ($M=3.31$, $SD=.59$) and were satisfied with their current job ($M=3.31$, $SD=.64$). The respondents also revealed that knowing what they know now, they still will decide without hesitation to take the same job again ($M=3.00$, $SD=.61$). They agreed that their job measures up to the sort of job they wanted when they first took it ($M=2.99$, $SD=.61$) and would recommend the job to a good friend of theirs who was interested in working in a job like them for their employer ($M=2.96$, $SD=.74$). Respondents also admitted that given if the choice to go into any type of job they wanted, they would still choose the same job as they have now ($M=2.83$, $SD=.74$). Overall, the result revealed that a large majority of the respondents were satisfied with being teachers in school ($M=3.10$, $SD=.45$).

Table 3: Job Satisfaction

Job Satisfaction	Mean	Std. Deviation
You like your current job	3.31	.591
You are satisfied with your current job	3.31	.636
Knowing what you know now, you still will decide without hesitation to take the same job again	3.00	.605
You job measures up the sort of job you wanted when you first took it	2.99	.611
Recommend this job to a good friend of yours who was interested in working in a job like yours for your employer	2.96	.644
Choose the same job as you have now if you were free to go into any type of job you wanted	2.83	.738
Overall Job Satisfaction	3.10	.454

Scale: 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=agree, 4=strongly agree

Relationship of Leadership Style with Job Satisfaction

Transformational leadership behaviours ($r=.28$) were positively and significantly correlated with job satisfaction as shown in Table 4. However, transactional leadership behaviour ($r=-.23$) were negatively correlated with job satisfaction, but at a lower magnitude than transformational leadership behaviour. It was important to understand the relationships of leadership style and job satisfaction in this study. It can be seen from this study that leadership style and job satisfaction are interrelated. The leadership style exhibited by the school head plays an important role in teacher job satisfaction. The findings indicated that transformational leadership behaviours are positively and significantly correlated with job satisfaction in this study. On the other hand, transactional leadership behaviours are negatively correlated with job satisfaction.

Table 4: *The Relationship of Leadership Style with Job Satisfaction*

Leadership Style	Job Satisfaction
Transformational Leadership	.28**
Transactional Leadership	-.23**

*N = 374 ** $p < .01$, two-tailed*

IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A majority of the respondents indicated that they were satisfied with their current job as they agree that their job measures up to the sort of job they wanted when they first took it. They also revealed that they would recommend this job to a good friend of theirs who was interested in working in a job like them for their employer. Given the choice they would choose the same job as they have now. According to Allen and Meyer (1990), all these are indicators reflective of high organisational commitment as they identify with the organisation (affective commitment) and have close feelings of attachment and obligations towards the organisation (normative commitment).

The correlations between all the transformational leadership factors and job satisfaction indicate a higher desire of teachers to engage in activities demanded by the school head even when some demands go beyond what is expected of them. These findings are congruent with other related research findings that have demonstrated that ratings of leadership effectiveness relate positively and significantly to transformational leadership and negatively to transactional leadership (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Bycio, Hackett & Allen, 1995; Hatter & Bass, 1988).

Such findings imply that transformational leadership has a greater impact on teachers' performance and more on effective schools. Improving our understanding of transformational leadership would help encourage greater teacher empowerment where decision making seeks participation from fellow colleagues. Such a two-way communication generates a more favourable working climate among their teachers. Emotional support and adequate feedback provision on teacher performance practised by transformational leaders also lead to an increase in teachers' self-esteem and job satisfaction. According to Tichy and Devanna (1990) schools with transformational heads are characterised by less interpersonal conflict and hostility.

Since schools today, face demands for increased accountability and the need to show continuous improvement with regards to raising students' performance, effective teachers play a critical part in ensuring effective teaching and learning takes place. Both literature and research indicates that an effective teacher has twice the impact on student achievement as compared to other variables such as school policies regarding curriculum, staff collegiality and community involvement (Marzano, 2003; Wang, Haertel & Walberg, 1993). To ensure effective teaching and learning takes place in schools, school heads need to take steps to ensure a positive working environment is created in their schools. Measures must also be taken to ensure teachers do not suffer from burn-out due to increased work load to achieve optimum performance.

CONCLUSION

The challenges ahead are at once demanding, scary, exciting and in significant measure as yet unknown. Commentators speak and write about today's turbulent times, in which uncertainty and chaos are now the norm (Gill, 2006: 292). On the prolific prescriptions for the kind of leadership that is needed, Garten (2001: 112-113) says that "Leaders should be coaches, they should be nannies, they should be servants, leadership should flow from the bottom to the top". Current leadership styles can no longer reflect the traditional methods of planning, organizing, directing and controlling within a closed vertical managerial hierarchy. In today's demand for greater accountability there is a dire need to ensure quality education is of prime importance.

The 'New Deal' for teachers announced by the Minister of Education, who is also Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia during the celebration of Teachers' Day will see teachers getting between RM 900 and RM 7, 500 in yearly incentives for excellent performance. He highlighted that the incentives were several measures adopted to inject 'enthusiasm' among teachers to work harder in improving the standard of the schools and quality of students nationwide (The Star, Monday 17 May 2010, N4). It is hence the role of school heads to work collaboratively with their team of teachers to create their schools as dynamic organizations that can learn and change and work towards continuous improvement. The new leadership must learn to operate within open systems taking on new frames

of reference with more empowerment to all players in the school. Transformational leadership appears as a novel way to conceptualize leadership, which has far reaching implications for the understanding of the dynamics of organizational leadership in relation to the job satisfaction. Using a participative leadership style is a feature of empowering people. A positive relationship has been established between participation, satisfaction, motivation, quality, productivity and performance (Bartol & Martin, 1991). As we move into today's digital age, the development of a K-culture workforce becomes critical. Today's leaders cannot know everything: they often have to lead people who know more than they do (Cockburn, 2000). Human capital has become a competitive battleground with the rising importance of employees as producers and users of information and knowledge that enables organizations to compete (Drucker, 1995) in the knowledge society. Hence, all personnel of the school have to arm themselves with knowledge management skills, which can be achieved via lifelong learning and committed to their roles and responsibilities under transformational leadership to obtain excellent achievements.

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