

The Impact of Principals' Transformational Leadership on Teachers' Motivation and Commitment

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Abstract

This study examined the impact of transformational leadership attributes on teachers' levels of motivation and commitment. An online survey with 43 items was used to collect data from 100 teachers in Western Belize. The data were analyzed using multiple linear regression. The results indicated a moderate positive impact of transformational attributes on teachers' motivation. The transformational attribute, intellectual stimulation, was significantly related to teachers' current motivation and teachers' motivation by transformational leadership. There was a medium positive impact on teachers' level of commitment. The transformational attribute, intellectual stimulation, was significantly related to the level of teachers' commitment. The results showed that transformational leadership attributes positively impacted teachers' motivation and commitment levels. The findings can support initiatives on teacher motivation and commitment offered by the Ministry of Education and institutions offering teacher education programs.

Keywords: *transformational leadership, teacher commitment, teacher motivation, principal, transformational attributes*

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Introduction

Today's school climate requires principals who are leaders, visionaries, instructional and curriculum experts, public relations officers, budget analysts, facility managers, special program administrators, and expert overseers of legal, contractual, and policy mandates and initiatives (Davis et al., 2005). School leaders and principals are responsible for the school's operational and academic management and have a critical role in the quality of education an institution offers. Recognizing the importance of educational leadership, Belize revised its educational policy, mandating educational leadership certification as a requirement for principals, vice-principals, and heads of departments (Ministry of Education, Culture, Science, and Technology, 2003).

Teacher motivation and commitment are vital to the success of a school. A motivated and committed teacher is willing to continue growing professionally and remains driven despite obstacles (Hauserman et al., 2013). As school leaders, principals must adopt a leadership style that increases teacher motivation and commitment, such as transformational leadership, that focuses on creating new ideas and perspectives to grow the organization (Korejan & Shahbazi, 2016). These leaders aim to develop commitment, passion, and loyalty among members by being just, open-minded, and respectful to improve an organization's quality of work life (Korejan & Shahbazi, 2016). The quality of work life includes any organizational development that helps to improve employee satisfaction, respect their human dignity, and inspire their professional and personal growth (Korejan & Shahbazi, 2016) for increased motivation and commitment. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to determine the impact of high school principals' transformational leadership attributes on teacher motivation and commitment. As such, the following two research questions were explored:

1. Can teachers' level of motivation be predicted from principals' transformational leadership attributes, teachers' gender, age, years of experience, and school location?
2. Can teachers' level of commitment be predicted from principals' transformational leadership attributes, teachers' gender, age, years of experience, and school location?

Review of Relevant Literature

Belize Secondary Education

According to the Ministry of Education (2021) Abstract of Educational Statistics, there are 62 secondary schools in Belize. Western Belize has 18 - two government-funded, seven government-aided, and nine private schools. Government secondary schools are owned and funded by the Belizean Government. Government-aided schools owned by a religious denomination or a community group receive only government funding via grants or direct payment of teachers' salaries. Private schools are funded and owned by individuals, denominations, or private groups and can occasionally receive small government grants (*Education System Overview*, n.d.).

Belize's secondary education parallels the International Standard Classification of Education (I.S.C.E.D.) levels two and three (Ministry of Education, 2022). The lower secondary curriculum targets foundational skills and exposes students to different fields of higher education and possible careers. The upper secondary level corresponds to the I.S.C.E.D. level 3 and Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate Examinations (CSEC) (Ministry of Education, 2022). At the upper secondary level, students decide to specialize in standard concentrations such as Business, Science, and Arts. Students can sit one or more CSEC examinations at the end of the fourth form.

Principal's Role

Principals play a critical role in the daily functioning of the school, the operational management of the school, the guidance and coordination of teachers, student discipline, motivation, and academic achievement (Deal & Peterson, 1990). Murphy et al. (2009) assert that principals are administrative leaders and superintendents who deal with the organization's performance and the success of any change initiative.

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Therefore, principals are in a critical position to support or prevent the success of any change (Murphy et al., 2009).

In Belize, the amended Education Rules 2012, Rule 37 (2) states that “A Principal and Vice-Principal are required to provide educational leadership to the school, especially in the areas of pedagogy, curriculum, and assessment ...” (Ministry of Education, Culture, Science & Technology, 2012, p. 32). It is important to note that the rule mentions that educational leadership is vital in determining school outcomes by influencing teachers' motivation and capabilities, the school climate, and the environment (Kapur, 2018). Furthermore, educational leadership recognizes that leadership influences staff motivation, commitment, and working conditions, impacting teaching and learning (Kapur, 2018). Belize secondary school principals should support and motivate teachers in their commitment to improving students' academic achievement.

Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership involves inspiring followers to commit to an organization's shared vision and goals, challenging followers to be innovative problem solvers, and aiding in developing leaders through coaching, mentoring, and providing both challenge and support (Bass & Riggio, 2010). The transformational leader focuses on the commitment and capacity of organizational members; therefore, it is a process in which leaders raise awareness, increase motivation, and encourage followers to look beyond personal interests to achieve organizational goals (Prestiadi et al., 2020). In education, transformational leadership is vital in creating learning and teaching systems that adjust to the modern era's need for flexibility and innovative learning approaches (Prestiadi et al., 2020). As leaders, principals of educational institutions need to bring change for the better (Prestiadi et al., 2020). More critical is that the school principal strives to build commitment to the teachers and education through the transformational leadership model and develop educational institutions jointly (Prestiadi et al., 2020). Therefore, the essence of transformational leadership, sharing power by involving all stakeholders to make changes, asserts that transformational leadership is vital to effective principal leadership.

Teacher Motivation

Motivation is the drive for a high level of performance and persistence in overcoming barriers in the process of innovation and change (Gopalan, 2017). Han and Yin (2016) stipulate that motivation is why people do something; motivation regulates how long people are willing to sustain an activity and determines how much perseverance a person has to complete an activity. Personal motivation determines the extent of psychological need satisfaction experienced during teaching and reveals itself in the teacher's enthusiasm and job satisfaction (Reeve & Su, 2014). Teacher motivation encompasses the yearning to teach and the teacher's interpersonal style toward a student (Reeve & Su, 2014). Börü (2018) conducted an in-depth analysis of the internal and external factors that influenced teachers' job motivation and concluded that the participants were motivated by simply being successful, having sufficient working conditions, observing the students' desire to learn autonomy, and the equitable and consistent implementation of the project-based approach to education.

On the contrary, Alam (2011) discovered that factors affecting teacher motivation were their dissatisfaction with their socioeconomic status, choice of profession, students' behavior, and the stress of examinations. Daniels (2016) concluded that the master schedule, time organization, and the physical environments of the school had a significant role in teacher motivation. Furthermore, in a study that focused on identifying the relationship between principal leadership and motivation among national school teachers in Nibong Tebal, Penang, Malaysia, Abdullah et al. (2018) discovered a significant positive correlation between transformational leadership and teachers' work motivation. Another study (Thoonen et al., 2011) examined the impact of transformational leadership practices and concluded that transformational leadership practices stimulate teachers' professional learning and motivation. Therefore, school leaders need a combination of transformational behaviors to foster teacher learning and improve teaching practices (Thoonen et al., 2011).

Teacher motivation impacts many aspects of students' performance. Oko (2014) states that a motivated teacher puts more effort into the classroom to ensure that the concepts taught are accurate and that the

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techniques used will positively affect the learner. In a study with a sample of 41 male English learners from 26 secondary schools taught by 17 teachers, Pelletier et al. (2016) reported a significant relationship between teachers' motivational practice and students' behavior. A motivated teacher demonstrates a zeal to learn that inspires students to work diligently toward the goals, consequently improving student performance (Oko, 2014). Akhtar et al. (2019) indicated a significant relationship between teacher-student interaction and student motivation. Therefore, researching leadership aspects affecting teacher motivation is critical to improving student achievement.

Teacher Commitment

Organizational commitment has three aspects: affective, continuance, and normative. Affective commitment refers to the emotional attachment between the individual and the organization; continuance is the relationship between the employee and the organization where the employee views the potential loss for the organization when he or she leaves, and normative commitment is the connection built between the individual and organization (Meyer & Allen, 1991 as cited in Ling & Ibrahim, 2013). Therefore, an employee with organizational commitment stays in an organization because he wants, is needed, and must stay (Meyer & Allen, 1991, as cited in Ling & Ibrahim, 2013). Similarly, teacher commitment encompasses various characteristics, such as a teacher who always seeks new ideas, has passion and enthusiasm for teaching and learning, and is always willing to do more (Celik & Yildiz, 2017). Teachers' commitment to the profession positively contributes to their teaching methodology, comprehension, personality, characteristics, and attitudes (Celik & Yildiz, 2017). A highly committed teacher becomes a role model for learners and their colleagues and is critical in shaping the school learning environment (Celik & Yildiz, 2017). A committed teacher identifies with the values and goals of an organization, is willing to exert himself/herself on behalf of the organization, and is committed to staying in the organization (Ross & Gray, 2006). Therefore, school leaders and principals must determine how to increase teacher commitment in educational institutions.

Ling and Ibrahim (2013) assert that transformational leadership qualities are critical in changing teachers' attitudes and increasing their level of commitment. When school leaders adopt transformational leadership, teachers become more committed to their duties, thus enhancing productivity and school quality (Nwiyi et al., 2016). A study by Ross and Gray (2006) asserts that, directly and indirectly, transformational leadership affects teacher commitment to the school's mission and commitment to a professional learning community. A similar study in Malaysia revealed that teacher commitment partly mediates the relationship between transformational leadership and innovative behavior (Ismail & Mydin, 2019). More vital is that committed teachers stay longer on the job and are willing to invest more time and energy (Ling & Ibrahim, 2013; Altun, 2017). Teachers with high levels of commitment are involved in constant professional development, motivate students, and create effective learning environments (Altun, 2017). These actions result in teachers creating learning activities that enable students to learn and improve their achievements (Altun, 2017). In a study concerning the three dimensions of teacher commitment, Park (2005) discovered that teacher commitment and professionalism did affect student achievement; however, there was no evidence that the organizational dimension of teacher commitment had any effect.

Relevance of the Study to Belize

There are only a few published studies on leadership in Belize. These include Oliveras & Hickey (2020), who highlighted the challenges a Mayan woman faced as a principal at a rural school in Belize. Also, Ogaldez & Hilton (2017) conducted a study about Belize's school leadership but focused on measuring the model behavior that faculty members at the University of Belize expect from administrators. Other studies, such as Hickey et al. (2011), focused on principals' leadership perceptions. Therefore, there is limited research on leadership, especially secondary school principals' levels of transformational leadership, and how it affects teacher motivation and commitment. This study helps to narrow the gap in leadership research in Belize and contributes to existing research on transformational leadership globally.

Methodology

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A quantitative approach with a correlational design was used in this study. Quantitative research involves measurements and assumes that the phenomenon under investigation is measurable and that it is possible to analyze the data for trends and relationships (Watson, 2015; Fraenkel et al., 2012). The correlational design predicts outcomes or explains human behavior's importance (Fraenkel et al., 2012) and establishes if there is a relationship between two variables (Tan, 2014). More specifically, the study used a multiple linear regression analysis to determine the presence and significance of the relationship between the combination of the independent variables, the four attributes of transformational leadership, the demographic variables, and the two dependent variables, teacher motivation and commitment.

Population and Sample

The population for the study was secondary schools in Western Belize, which had a population of 344 teachers, 137 males and 207 females, and 18 secondary schools (Abstract of Educational Statistics, 2022). The population was targeted because of its accessibility to the lead researcher. All teachers from the targeted population were invited to participate in the study. The sample consisted of 100 participants; 42% were males, and 58% were females. Regarding location, 91.9% of participants taught at an urban high school, and 8.1% taught at a rural high school; 1 participant did not respond to the high school location item. For the type of school, 24.24 % of participants were from a Government High School, 69.7% were from a Grant-Aided High School, and 6.0 % were from a Private High School; one participant did not indicate the type of high school. Teachers' average age was 38.09 years ($SD = 7.724$). Their average teaching experience was 13.14 years ($SD = 7.535$), with the youngest teacher being 23 and the eldest 55 years.

Instrumentation

To collect the data for this study, a version of the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ), a teacher motivation survey (Gilbar, 2015), the Organizational Questionnaire (OCQ; Mowday et al., 1979 (Robinson et al., 2015)), and the motivation survey by Shora and Sing 1998 and Everard and Morris (Gokce, 2010) were used to create the overall instrument. The MLQ is a well-known instrument used in thousands of research projects, doctoral dissertations, and master's theses to assess transformational leadership style. The Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ; Mowday et al., 1979) measures employee commitment to work organizations. International research investigating the validation of the ORC questionnaire in six languages was conducted, and the examination of the internal consistency resulted in acceptable reliability values of Cronbach's Alpha between 0.72 and 0.93 (Kanning & Hill, 2013).

The overall instrument consisted of 43 items. The first section had five items to collect demographic data. The second section had 18 items on the four dimensions of transformational leadership (idealized influence 1-8, inspirational motivation, 9-11, intellectual stimulation 12-14, and individual consideration 15-18). The third section had eight items to assess teacher motivation. The items on teacher motivation were further subdivided into four items addressing teachers' current motivation and four items addressing teachers' motivation by transformational leadership. The fourth section had 12 items to assess teacher commitment. Participants responded to items in sections two, three, and four using a 5-point Likert-type scale (0 = Not at all; 1 = Once in a while; 2 = Sometimes; 3 = Fairly often; 4 = Frequently, if not always).

Data Analysis

The IBM SPSS 23 statistics software was used to analyze the data. Descriptive statistics were computed to understand the general nature of the participants. Further, multiple linear regressions were conducted to determine the impact of high school principals' transformational leadership attributes on teacher motivation and commitment.

Results

To answer research question one, a multiple linear regression analysis was conducted using a stepwise design to determine the impact of high school principals' transformational leadership attributes, teachers' gender, age, years of experience, and school location on teacher motivation. The results indicated that $R = .398$; thus, the combined relationship of the independent variables had a 39.85% chance of influencing

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teacher motivation. Also, $R^2 = .158$ further indicated that 15.8% of the variation in teachers' current level of motivation could be explained by principals' transformational leadership attributes and teachers' age. The regression model tested was statistically significant $F(2, 91) = 8.559, p < .01$. Therefore, the transformational attribute, individual consideration, and teachers' age were significantly related to the teachers' current motivation level.

The results from Table 1 indicated that individual consideration can predict teachers' current level of motivation. For every one-point increase in the attribute of transformational leadership, individual consideration, a teacher's current level of motivation increases by .055. Also, age can predict teachers' current motivation. For every one-year increase in teachers' age, a teacher's current level of motivation increases by .016.

Table 1. Multiple Linear Regression Coefficients				
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error		
(Constant)	1.896	.312	6.074	.000
Individual Consideration	.055	.015	3.533	.001
Age	.016	.008	2.099	.039
Dependent Variable: Current Motivation				

The resulting regression model was:

$$\hat{Y} = 1.896 + .055 X_1 + .016 X_2 + \text{error}$$

Where: X_1 = Individual Consideration \hat{Y} = Teachers' Current Motivation
 X_2 = Age

Further analysis was conducted to determine the impact of high school principals' transformational leadership attributes on teacher motivation by transformational leadership. The results indicated that $R = .464$; thus, the combined relationship of the independent variables had a 46.4% chance of influencing teacher motivation through transformational leadership. Principals' transformational leadership attributes could explain 21.5% ($R^2 = .215$) of the variation in teachers' motivation by transformational leadership. The regression model tested was statistically significant $F(1, 92) = 25.226, p < .01$. Therefore, the transformational attribute, individual consideration, was significantly related to teachers' motivation level by transformational leadership.

As presented in Table 2, individual consideration can predict teachers' level of motivation through transformational leadership. For every one-point increase in the attribute of transformational leadership, individual consideration, a teacher's level of motivation by transformational leadership increases by .155.

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Table 2. Multiple Linear Regression Coefficients				
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error		
(Constant)	1.942	.234	8.305	.000
Individual Consideration	.155	.031	5.023	.000
Dependent Variable: Motivation by Transformational Leadership				

The resulting regression model was:

$$\hat{Y} = 1.942 + .155X_1 + \text{error}$$

Where: X_1 = Individual Consideration \hat{Y} = Motivation by Transformational Leadership

To address research question two, a multiple linear regression analysis was conducted using a stepwise design to determine the impact of high school principals' transformational leadership attributes, teachers' gender, age, years of experience, and school location on teacher commitment. The results indicated that $R = .675$; thus, the combined relationship of the independent variables had a 67.5% chance of influencing teacher commitment. Also, $R^2 = .455$ further showed that principals' transformational leadership attributes could explain 45.5% of the variation in teachers' level of commitment. The regression model tested was statistically significant $F(1, 92) = 76.901, p < .01$. Therefore, the transformational attribute, intellectual stimulation, was significantly related to teachers' commitment level.

The results from Table 3 indicated that the transformational attribute, intellectual stimulation, can predict teachers' level of commitment. For every one-point increase in the attribute of transformational leadership, intellectual stimulation, a teacher's level of commitment increases by .110. The resulting regression model was:

$$\hat{Y} = 1.573 + .110 X_1 + \text{error}$$

Where: X_1 = Intellectual Stimulation \hat{Y} = Teacher Commitment

Table 3. Multiple Linear Regression Coefficients				
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error		
(Constant)	1.573	.096	16.318	.000
Intellectual Stimulation	.110	.013	8.769	.000
Dependent Variable: Teacher Commitment				

Conclusions and Recommendations

This study highlighted that in Western Belize, transformational leadership attributes had a moderate positive impact on teachers' level of motivation and teachers' level of commitment. Specifically, individual consideration can predict teachers' current level of motivation. For every one-point increase in the attribute of individual consideration, a teacher's current level of motivation increases by .055. Also, age can predict teachers' current motivation. For every one-year increase in teachers' age, a teacher's current level of motivation increases by .016. Further, the attribute of individual consideration can predict teachers' level of motivation through transformational leadership. For every one-point increase in the attribute of individual consideration, a teacher's level of motivation by transformational leadership increases by .155. Also, the transformational attribute, intellectual stimulation, can predict teachers' level of commitment. For every one-point increase in the attribute of intellectual stimulation, a teacher's level of commitment increases by .110.

Similarly, Abdullah et al. (2018) discovered a positive correlation between transformational leadership and teachers' work motivation and found that transformational leadership was the best predictor of teachers' motivation. Hyseni-Duraku and Hoxha (2021) also determined that transformational attributes, idealized influence and inspirational motivation, predicted autonomous teacher motivation, and individual consideration predicted motivation for complementary tasks. Ibrahim et al. (2014) identified the three transformational leadership attributes, inspirational motivation, individualized consideration, and intellectual stimulation, as the main factors contributing to teachers' commitment to the profession. Thus, several studies indicated a relationship between transformational leadership attributes and teacher motivation and commitment; however, the different transformational attributes affect teacher motivation and commitment to different degrees. The degree may vary based on environmental and demographic factors.

This study revealed that individual consideration affects teacher motivation, and intellectual stimulation affects teacher commitment. Therefore, teachers need encouragement and support to attempt new teaching and assessment methods and to get involved in education forums, research, and other programs that challenge them and result in professional growth. They also need to feel that principals are empathetic to their situations. Hence, the Ministry of Education and policymakers can create policies that provide more support and incentives for professional growth, which also target the development of teacher motivation and commitment and aid the development of transformational leadership in educational leaders.

Further research on transformational leadership and teacher motivation and commitment in Belize's primary, secondary, and tertiary institutions, with an expansion on their impact on student performance, should be conducted. Research on institutional actions, inactions, policies, and climate affecting teacher motivation and commitment should be explored.

Competing Interests

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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