

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TEACHER'S PERCEIVED TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND TEACHER TURNOVER INTENTION OF X PUBLIC KINDERGARTEN IN JINAN, SHANDONG PROVINCE, CHINA

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Abstract: This comprehensive study delves into the relationship between perceived transformational leadership of principals and the turnover intentions of teachers at X Public Kindergarten in Jinan, Shandong Province. Utilizing the widely recognized "Transformational Leadership Scale" and "Turnover Intention Scale," this research gathered data from a significant sample of 152 teachers, employing a robust methodological framework that combines descriptive statistics and inferential analysis to explore the underlying correlations. The findings indicate that the majority of teachers perceive a high degree of transformational leadership qualities in their principals. Notably, the study highlights significant gender differences in these perceptions, revealing that female teachers tend to perceive higher levels of transformational leadership than their male counterparts. Furthermore, a strong negative correlation was observed between the degree of perceived transformational leadership and the turnover intentions among the teachers, suggesting that enhanced leadership practices could play a vital role in reducing turnover rates. Based on these insights, the study recommends the implementation of targeted leadership training programs that specifically address the observed gender disparities and focus on reinforcing leadership qualities that are most effective in promoting teacher retention. This research contributes valuable perspectives to the fields of educational administration and leadership, aiming to foster a more stable and supportive teaching environment through improved leadership practices.

Keywords: Public Kindergarten, Transformational Leadership, Teacher Turnover Intention

Introduction

This study centers on the investigation of transformational leadership within kindergarten settings in Jinan, Shandong Province, China, and its significant impact on teacher retention and turnover intentions. As early childhood education gains prominence within the broader educational system, the stability and effectiveness of teaching staff become crucial metrics of educational quality and

organizational health. Transformational leadership, characterized by its focus on inspiring and motivating change through visionary leadership and personal attention to followers' needs, is hypothesized to play a pivotal role in teacher retention.

Research widely supports the notion that transformational leadership significantly enhances job satisfaction and organizational commitment among teachers, which in turn are key factors in reducing turnover intentions. This study delves into these dynamics within the specific context of kindergartens in Jinan, aiming to provide concrete empirical data on how teachers perceive the transformational qualities of their principals and the influence of these perceptions on their decisions to stay or leave their positions. The focus is on understanding the specific elements of transformational leadership that resonate most with teachers and examining how these elements contribute to creating a more engaging and supportive work environment. By assessing the impact of principals' leadership styles, the study seeks to uncover the nuanced ways in which leadership can directly affect teacher retention and stability in educational settings. This research is pivotal as it extends the existing body of knowledge by applying the concepts of transformational leadership specifically to the kindergarten environment in Jinan, offering insights that could guide future administrative strategies to enhance teacher satisfaction and retention.

This introduction highlights the critical need for research into transformational leadership due to the high rates of teacher turnover observed globally, with a specific emphasis on China. In China, the educational sector is undergoing rapid reforms and experiencing significant demographic shifts, placing increased pressure on educational leaders to maintain a high-quality teaching staff. These changes necessitate a deeper understanding of how leadership styles, specifically transformational leadership, can influence teacher retention. The study aims to employ a robust methodological framework to quantitatively analyze the relationship between teachers' perceptions of their principals' transformational leadership and their own turnover intentions. This analysis will utilize established psychological scales and advanced statistical techniques to provide a comprehensive view of how transformational leadership can mitigate the challenges posed by high turnover rates. By identifying the elements of transformational leadership that are most effective in reducing turnover, this research seeks to offer actionable insights that can help educational leaders in China and globally to develop strategies that enhance teacher satisfaction and commitment, ultimately stabilizing the educational workforce.

This study seeks to fill a significant gap in the existing literature by focusing on the gender dimensions of leadership perceptions, an area often overlooked in previous research. Considering the predominance of female teachers in early childhood education, it is crucial to understand how gender influences perceptions of transformational leadership. This research will explore how different leadership qualities are valued differently by male and female teachers and how these differences potentially affect their intentions to stay or leave their positions.

By examining the nuanced ways in which transformational leadership is experienced across gender lines, the study aims to provide deeper insights that could inform tailored leadership development programs. These programs would ideally address specific needs and perceptions to enhance the effectiveness of leadership in reducing turnover rates among teachers. The gender-focused analysis will highlight potential variances in the experience and impact of transformational leadership between male and female teachers, offering a clearer picture of how gender influences response to leadership styles.

Additionally, by concentrating on kindergartens, which represent a foundational stage in educational development, this research has the potential to significantly influence educational policy and leadership training programs in China. The findings are expected to propose actionable strategies for enhancing principal training programs, aiming to stabilize the teaching workforce and improve educational experiences for early learners. Such targeted improvements could lead to a more supportive and enriching environment for both teachers and students, ultimately benefiting the broader educational landscape.

Research Objectives

This study aims to explore the relationship between the principal's transformational leadership and teacher's turnover intention as perceived by teachers in a public kindergarten in Jinan City. The research questions were carried out from the following aspects:

- 1) What is the current teacher's perceived public kindergarten principals' transformational leadership in Jinan City?
- 2) What is the current turnover intention of teachers in X public kindergarten in Jinan city?
- 3) What is the impact of the turnover intention of teachers in X public kindergarten?
- 4) How does the effectively enhance principals' transformational leadership and reduce the turnover tendency of teachers?

Literature Review

Research on Kindergarten Principals' Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership, a concept initially introduced by James MacGregor Burns and further developed by Bernard M. Bass, has been instrumental in transforming educational settings, with a notable impact in early childhood education. This leadership style empowers principals to move beyond traditional administrative duties to assume roles as visionary leaders who inspire and motivate their staff towards greater achievements and personal development. Literature consistently emphasizes the critical role these leaders play in fostering environments where teachers feel genuinely valued, supported, and motivated.

Research highlights how kindergarten principals who embody transformational leadership traits—namely inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration—not only enhance teacher satisfaction but also significantly boost their commitment to the institution. These leadership qualities are directly linked to reducing teacher turnover rates by creating a supportive work atmosphere that aligns well with teachers' personal aspirations alongside the broader institutional goals. Under such leadership, teachers often report increased job satisfaction, lower job-related stress, and a robust commitment to the educational mission, which significantly decreases their likelihood of leaving.

Given the profound impact of transformational leadership on both enhancing teacher retention and improving educational outcomes, it is crucial for educational leader training programs, especially those catering to early childhood education, to include strategies that foster these essential leadership skills. Such training should focus on equipping leaders with the ability to inspire, engage, and support their teachers effectively, thereby ensuring a stable, motivated, and committed teaching workforce.

Impact of Transformational Leadership on Teacher Turnover

Teacher turnover is a pressing concern in the education sector, significantly disrupting educational continuity and negatively impacting student learning. Research consistently highlights those key factors such as job satisfaction, workplace environment, and leadership styles, particularly transformational leadership, play critical roles in influencing teachers' decisions to stay or leave. Transformational leadership, which emphasizes vision, inspiration, and personalized support, effectively aligns with teachers' professional goals and personal values, fostering environments that enhance job satisfaction and reduce turnover intentions. This leadership style not only motivates but also instills a sense of belonging and purpose among teachers, which are crucial for minimizing turnover rates.

Current studies on transformational leadership show that it must adapt to contemporary challenges like digital transformation in education and the increasing demand for personalized learning environments. As educational paradigms shift, transformational leaders are required to effectively integrate digital tools and technologies while ensuring that technology enhances rather than replaces the human elements of education. This adaptability is vital as it supports the development of learning strategies that cater to diverse student needs, fostering an inclusive and adaptive educational setting.

The broader impacts of teacher turnover extend beyond individual classrooms, affecting the development of a cohesive school culture and the overall stability of educational institutions. High turnover rates lead to a chain reaction that diminishes the morale of the remaining staff and undermines the establishment of a consistent nurturing environment, which is vital for both student achievement and teacher satisfaction. Effective transformational leadership can mitigate these issues by creating a supportive and engaging work environment that promotes teacher autonomy and professional growth.

To combat teacher turnover, recent research suggests the implementation of strategies that

foster professional development, enhance communication, and prioritize teacher engagement and growth. Providing continuous learning opportunities and maintaining open communication channels are essential for making teachers feel competent, valued, and heard within the school community. Furthermore, educational institutions are encouraged to invest in leadership development programs that enhance transformational leadership skills among administrators. Such training should focus on enabling leaders to understand and meet their teachers' needs and effectively motivate them towards shared goals, thereby fostering a stable and committed teaching workforce.

Summary of Reviewed Literature

The literature review summarizes key findings, highlighting transformational leadership's vital role in reducing teacher turnover and enhancing job satisfaction through strong vision, inspirational motivation, individualized consideration, and intellectual stimulation. These elements effectively lower turnover intentions by creating a supportive environment that promotes professional and personal growth, with their effectiveness confirmed by various studies.

The review also points to the necessity for ongoing research, especially to address modern challenges like digital integration and personalized learning, urging future studies to explore how transformational leaders can meet these evolving educational demands. This ongoing research is essential for developing leadership practices that remain effective and relevant in the changing educational landscape, encouraging further investigation into how transformational leadership can continuously adapt to new educational challenges. This concise summary underlines the enduring importance of transformational leadership in education and calls for sustained exploration and dialogue on refining leadership strategies across educational settings.

Methodology

This part presents the methodological framework used to examine the relationship between perceived transformational leadership by kindergarten principals and the turnover intentions of teachers at a public kindergarten in Jinan City. Employing a mixed-method approach, the study integrated quantitative surveys with qualitative literature reviews to offer a comprehensive analysis of how leadership influences teacher retention.

A total of 152 questionnaires were distributed among teachers across four sub-parks of the kindergarten, yielding 141 valid responses, which equates to a 92.8% response rate. The survey utilized the "Transformational Leadership Scale" and "Turnover Intention Scale," known for their established reliability and validity. These instruments measured various aspects of transformational leadership and turnover intentions alongside demographic variables to identify potential differences among respondents. The reliability and factor analysis of these scales are detailed in Table 1 and Table 2

Table 1: Reliability Coefficient of Kindergarten Teacher’s Perception of Principals’ Transformational Leadership Questionnaire

Dimension	Number of questions	Cronbach’s α
Moral modeling	8	0.760
Leadership charm	6	0.879
Vision motivation	6	0.767
Personalized care	6	0.857

Table 2: Reliability Coefficient of the Turnover Intention of Kindergarten Teachers Questionnaire

Dimension	Number of questions	Cronbach’s α
Turnover intention	4	0.712

Results

This section presents the findings from the study conducted on the perceptions of transformational leadership and turnover intentions among teachers at X Public Kindergarten in Jinan, incorporating detailed statistical analysis to understand the influence of principal's leadership on their intentions to stay or leave.

Descriptive Statistics

In the study, descriptive statistical methods were employed to assess the current levels of perceived transformational leadership among teachers at the kindergarten. The analysis revealed that the overall mean rating for perceived transformational leadership was categorically high. This general positive reception extends across several key dimensions of leadership such as moral modeling, leadership charm, vision motivation, and personalized care. Each of these aspects received similarly high ratings, which collectively indicates a strong approval of the leadership qualities demonstrated by the principals. This favorable perception underscores the effective embodiment of transformational leadership traits by the principals, suggesting that their leadership style significantly contributes to fostering an inspirational and supportive work environment. These findings set the stage for further analysis into how these perceived leadership qualities correlate with teachers' job satisfaction and turnover intentions, providing a crucial link between leadership efficacy and organizational outcomes in educational settings.

Inferential Statistical Analysis

In the study, the analysis of differences in perceptions of transformational leadership among teachers was conducted using statistical tests such as independent samples t-tests and one-way ANOVA to explore various demographic variables. The findings highlighted significant gender differences in the perceptions of transformational leadership, with female teachers consistently reporting higher levels than their male counterparts. This suggests that female teachers might be more responsive to or appreciative of the characteristics associated with transformational leadership, such as empathy,

inspiration, and personal attention. Further analysis focused on age and educational background, revealing that older and more educated teachers perceived higher levels of transformational leadership. This could be attributed to these teachers' longer exposure to different leadership styles and possibly a greater appreciation for the nuances of transformational leadership, which emphasizes growth and development. Additionally, the relationship between teaching experience and leadership perception was examined. More experienced teachers reported higher levels of perceived transformational leadership quality, which was also found to correlate with a decreased intention to leave their positions. This correlation suggests that experienced teachers who value transformational leadership traits may feel more professionally fulfilled and less likely to pursue opportunities elsewhere. These differentiated perceptions across gender, age, educational background, and experience underscore the need for tailored approaches in leadership training and development. Understanding these variations can help educational administrators design more effective leadership strategies that address the specific needs and expectations of diverse teacher groups, ultimately reducing turnover intentions and enhancing job satisfaction.

Correlation Analysis

In this study, Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated to explore the relationship between teachers' perceptions of transformational leadership and their turnover intentions. The analysis revealed a significant negative correlation between these variables, indicating that teachers who perceive higher levels of transformational leadership from their principals are less likely to have intentions to leave their jobs. This finding underscores the potential of transformational leadership to enhance teacher retention by fostering an environment where leaders are viewed as supportive, inspiring, and attentive to the needs and growth of their staff. This significant negative correlation is crucial as it highlights the effectiveness of transformational leadership qualities in reducing turnover intentions among teachers. Such leadership not only motivates but also aligns with the intrinsic and extrinsic motivations of teachers, making them feel valued and supported in their professional roles. The implications of this finding suggest that school administrators and policymakers should consider strengthening leadership development programs that focus on cultivating transformational qualities in school leaders. By doing so, schools can create a more stable teaching workforce, which in turn can lead to enhanced educational outcomes for students. A significant negative correlation exists between perceived transformational leadership and turnover intentions, suggesting that better perceived leadership correlates with lower turnover intentions.

Discussion

Analysis of Principals' Transformational Leadership

The analysis of transformational leadership at X Public Kindergarten revealed that principals

are highly regarded for their leadership qualities. Teachers reported strong perceptions of moral modeling, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration from their principals. These elements collectively enhance the work environment, making it more supportive and empowering, which aligns well with teachers' values and professional goals. Such a positive perception of leadership significantly contributes to reducing turnover intentions among teachers, as it fosters a sense of being valued and supported in their professional development and daily challenges. This suggests that the principals' effective transformational leadership is a key factor in retaining staff and maintaining a stable educational setting.

Gender Differences in Perception and Turnover Intentions

The analysis highlighted notable gender differences in the perception of transformational leadership and turnover intentions at X Public Kindergarten. Female teachers demonstrated higher perceptions of transformational leadership than their male counterparts, possibly reflecting gender-specific expectations or experiences within the workplace. This variance suggests that female teachers may more strongly value the relational and supportive aspects of transformational leadership, which in turn influences their lower turnover intentions. Understanding these differences is essential for developing leadership strategies that effectively cater to the diverse needs of all staff members, enhancing job satisfaction and retention.

Correction of Transformational Leadership on Teacher Retention

The significant negative correlation between perceived transformational leadership and turnover intentions highlights the crucial role of effective leadership in retaining educational staff. Teachers who recognize their principals as transformational leaders are less likely to leave their positions, likely due to increased job satisfaction and a stronger sense of organizational commitment engendered by such leadership styles. This effect underscores the transformative impact that leadership qualities such as empathy, vision, and motivational prowess can have on the educational environment, fostering a workplace where teachers feel valued and inspired.

Given these findings, it is imperative for educational policymakers and school administrators to prioritize the development and enhancement of transformational leadership qualities within school leadership. This can be achieved through targeted training programs focused on key aspects of transformational leadership including vision sharing, individualized consideration, and inspirational motivation. Such initiatives not only cultivate a supportive leadership environment but also contribute to the overall effectiveness and stability of educational institutions.

Despite the promising results, the study does acknowledge certain limitations that might affect the generalizability of the findings. The sample size and the subjective nature of teacher perceptions could potentially limit the applicability of the conclusions across different contexts. To build on the current research and enhance its validity, future studies should explore these dynamics using a larger

and more diverse sample, possibly across multiple regions. Furthermore, longitudinal studies would be beneficial in examining the sustained impact of transformational leadership on teacher retention over time, providing deeper insights into the causative relationships and enabling more nuanced policy adjustments in the educational sector.

Conclusions

This study investigated the impact of perceived transformational leadership by principals on the turnover intentions of teachers at X public kindergarten in Jinan. The analysis of responses from 141 teachers demonstrated that there is a generally high perception of transformational leadership among the staff, with particularly strong scores in personalized care and moral modeling. These factors are significantly associated with lower turnover intentions, indicating that effective leadership can substantially influence teacher retention.

Significant differences were noted in the perceptions of leadership based on demographic factors, especially gender, with female teachers reporting more favorable views on transformational leadership than their male counterparts. Additionally, the study found a strong negative correlation between the level of perceived transformational leadership and the turnover intentions of teachers, confirming that better leadership is inversely related to the likelihood of teacher turnover.

While the findings provide insightful contributions to the understanding of leadership effects in educational settings, they are bound by the limitations of using self-reported data and the focus on a single geographic area. To enhance the generalizability of these results, future research should expand to include multiple locations and consider longitudinal studies to track the impact of leadership over time.

Based on these insights, it is recommended that educational policymakers and school administrators focus on enhancing the transformational leadership capabilities of principals through targeted training programs. These initiatives should particularly emphasize the aspects of leadership that have been shown to impact retention positively, such as personalized care and moral modeling.

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