

**PRINCIPAL'S LEADERSHIP STYLE AND JOB SATISFACTION
AMONG TEACHERS AT AN URBAN PRIMARY SCHOOL IN
KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA**

Nurhamizah Ishak¹
Farah Nadzirah Khairuddin
Nur Shaziella Aziz
Universiti Teknologi Mara Melaka, Malaysia¹

Corresponding Author's Email: hamizahishak@uitm.edu.my

Article history:

Received : 2 July 2021

Accepted : 16 July 2021

Published : 30 December 2021

ABSTRACT

This study looks at the principal's leadership style and job satisfaction among teachers at an urban primary school in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Data was collected through a questionnaire on a sample of 68 teachers. However, only 57 responded to the questionnaire (response rate=83.82%). It was found that their school principal has frequently exhibited traits of transformational leadership style. As for job satisfaction, findings revealed that the teachers have high overall job satisfaction level, and there is a positive, moderate, and significant relationship between the school principal's leadership style and teachers' job satisfaction. As for the implications of this study, it contributes to the corpus of knowledge in the area of principals' leadership and teachers' job satisfaction in the local school context and provides empirical data to assist the Ministry of Education in conducting strategic planning to enhance job satisfaction among teachers and to train school principals with effective management skills.

Keywords: Leadership Style, Job Satisfaction, Urban School, Government School, Primary School

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini melihat gaya kepimpinan pengetua dan kepuasan kerja dalam kalangan guru di sebuah sekolah rendah bandar di Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Data dikumpul melalui soal selidik ke atas sampel seramai 68 orang guru. Walau bagaimanapun, hanya 57 menjawab soal selidik (kadar maklum balas=83.82%). Didapati pengetua sekolah mereka sering mempamerkan ciri-ciri gaya kepimpinan transformasional. Bagi kepuasan kerja, dapatan mendapati bahawa guru mempunyai tahap kepuasan kerja keseluruhan yang tinggi, dan terdapat hubungan yang positif, sederhana dan signifikan antara gaya kepimpinan pengetua sekolah dengan kepuasan kerja guru. Bagi implikasi kajian ini, ia menyumbang kepada korpus pengetahuan kepimpinan pengetua dan kepuasan kerja guru dalam konteks sekolah tempatan dan menyediakan data empirikal untuk membantu Kementerian Pendidikan dalam menjalankan perancangan strategik untuk meningkatkan kepuasan kerja dalam kalangan guru dan melatih pengetua sekolah dengan kemahiran pengurusan yang berkesan.

Kata kunci: *Gaya Kepimpinan, Kepuasan Kerja, Sekolah Bandar, Sekolah Kerajaan, Sekolah Rendah*

INTRODUCTION

Job satisfaction indeed is a crucial facet that contributes towards employee's productivity in the workplace (Hoy & Miskel, 2010). The issue of job satisfaction among employees currently is no longer limited to those who are working in the industry and business organisations, but it is also a concern among teachers. Nguni et al. (2006) stated that teachers who are satisfied with their job are more enthusiastic and interested in devoting more energy and time for students' achievements. One factor that affects teachers' job satisfaction is the principal's leadership style. As the principal is the highest superior in the school, he/she has the final say in all matters in the school regardless of whether it is an administrative or academic matter. Hence, as subordinates, teachers are direct recipients of his/her orders. If the orders given are relevant, bring good impact to the smooth operation of the school and ease teachers' workload, the teachers would certainly happy and motivated to work. However, if it is vice versa, the teachers' motivation will gradually decline and their dissatisfaction towards their work will escalate rapidly.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

When workers feel their needs are being met and experience a sense of satisfaction in their job, they experience a stronger motivation to exert extra efforts to accomplish organizational goals. When employees feel overwhelmed with their job and feel they have little support from their leader, they experience low level of job satisfaction (Fuming & Jiliang, 2008). Hence, it is imperative that a principal exhibits strong educational leadership within the school in order to provide the support teachers need to be successful in the classroom.

In terms of international context, there have been numerous empirical studies, meta-analyses, and reviews of the literature on the relationship between leadership style and teachers' job satisfaction (see Biggerstaff, 2012; Denton, 2009; Hulpia, Devos & Rossell, 2009; Williams, 2009). However, to date, majority of local research conducted on leadership style and job satisfaction took place on non-teachers sampling (see Ahmad et al., 2013; Yagambaran, 2012). Concerning this research gap, this research intends to examine the relationship between a principal's leadership style and job satisfaction among teachers at an urban primary school in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Research Questions

1. What is the leadership style mostly exhibited by the principal as perceived by teachers?
2. What is the job satisfaction level of teachers based on the Hygiene and Motivator factors?
3. Is there any significant relationship between a principal's leadership style and teachers' job satisfaction level?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Bass And Avolio Full-Range Leadership Theory (1994)

Bass and Avolio's (1994) Full-Range Leadership theory consists of three leadership styles: transformational leadership, transactional leadership, and laissez-faire/passive avoidant leadership. To date, the FRL theory approach is considered the most comprehensive leadership (Trottier, Wart & Wang, 2008). Sims et al. (2009) claimed that this theory represents the most popular current view of leadership. Furthermore, this theory has been utilized in more empirical studies than other theories for the past two decades (Northouse, 2010) due to its universal application.

Transformational Leadership

Transformational Leadership focuses on the relationship between leaders and followers. Transformational leaders are considered to have high ethical and moral standards and are those who motivate, influence, and encourage people to work together (Boberg, 2013). Moreover, this leadership is believed to be the best leadership to be utilized during turbulent environments and poor organisation performance as it enhances positive attitude among the members of the organisation. This leadership style comprises of five sub-dimensions: idealized influence (attributes), idealized influence (behaviours), inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualised consideration.

With regard to educational setting, transformational leaders would incorporate leadership that is visionary and aimed to transform not only the school, but the teachers, staffs and students as well. Furthermore, under this leadership style, trust, collegiality, and rapport would be apparent among the members of the schools. This is in line with Yukl's (2009) definition of transformational leadership: the process of influencing major changes in the attitudes and assumptions of organisational members and building commitment for the organisational mission, objectives, and strategies.

Transactional Leadership

Transactional leadership is underpinned by exchange theory, where a leader identifies the tasks of the followers, establishes the structure, and putting emphasis on planned and scheduled work. When task have successfully been completed, rewards will be given; while disciplinary actions will be executed for the deviation of standard in the task. In other words, this leadership style focuses on rules and procedures to accomplish organizational goals and expectations. The transactional leadership style is also often termed a more traditional form of leadership that follows a structure of leader-follower relationship based on the fulfillment of contractual obligations (Boberg, 2013). The two sub-dimensions associated with transactional leadership are contingent reward and management by exception.

With regards to educational setting, the principal that adopts a transactional style will maintain a tightly structured school operation where there are set of routines to be followed, a clean environment, and orderly procedures that provide a positive influence on student learning and might contribute to better academic success for students (Balyer, 2012).

Laissez-Faire/Passive Avoidant Leadership.

The term laissez-faire is taken from the French phrase and means a "hands-off: approach (Northouse, 2010). Passive avoidant leadership is characterized as non-leadership or the absence of leadership. The passive avoidant leaders have

tendencies to avoid involvement in important issues and are most often not engaged with his or her followers. They avoid making decisions, give no feedback, abdicate responsibility, and do not make effort to assist subordinates in fulfilling their needs (Hoy & Miskel, 2010). Furthermore, as these leaders rarely intervene in organisational matters, subordinates are free to do whatever they like without the need to adhere to the rules of the organisation. This subsequently results in the negative relationship between the satisfaction, performance, and motivation of followers and passive avoidant leadership (Korkmaz, 2007).

Teachers' Job Satisfaction

Teachers' job satisfaction is definitely crucial for the success of learning process at school. Teachers who are happy, dedicated, and committed will bring their best qualities to school. As they spend a great amount of time with their students in class, this may bring significant impact on students' achievement (Jyoti and Sharma, 2009). Meanwhile, according to Luft (2012), a lack of teacher job satisfaction caused frequent teacher absenteeism from school, aggressive behaviour towards colleagues and learners, early exits from the profession, and psychological withdrawal from the work. All of these negative results lead to poor quality teaching. Besides, other studies showed that a lack of job satisfaction is often accompanied by feelings of gloom, despair, anger, resentment and futility (Pinder, 2008).

Leadership And Job Satisfaction

Leadership style is an important determinant of employees' job satisfaction. The reaction of employees towards their leaders will usually depend on the characteristics of the employees as well as on the characteristics of the leaders (Hoy & Miskel, 2010). According to Yukl (2009), employees are more satisfied with leaders who are considerate or supportive than with those who are either indifferent or critical towards subordinates. In support of this idea, Korkmaz (2007) argued that it is stressful for employees to work with a leader who has hostile behaviour and is unsupportive. If subordinates are not capable of figuring out how to perform the work by themselves they will prefer a leader who will provide adequate guidance and instructions.

Similarly, the leadership style of school principals also significantly influences the job satisfaction of the teachers. A leadership style that involves teachers in the decision-making processes will give the teachers a higher level of job satisfaction than if they were not involved. The teachers report greater satisfaction in their work when they perceive their principal as someone who shares information with them, who delegates authority, and who keeps open channels of communication with them (Bogler, 2001).

To date, a good number of research works have been devoted regarding the influence of transactional, transformational, and laissez-faire leadership styles on teachers' job satisfaction. Much of the studies indicated that school principals who exhibit transformational leadership style cultivate higher teachers' job satisfaction than transactional and laissez-faire styles (see Siroos & Asghar, 2014; Jamallullail et al., 2014). Moreover, a study by Korkmaz (2007) who surveyed 630 teachers in Turkey about their perceptions of the transformational and transactional leadership styles of principals and the effects on teacher job satisfaction found that the more transformational the teachers perceived the principals to be, the more the teachers' job satisfaction increased. Nevertheless, in very few literature and empirical investigations, transactional leadership is found to be effective as it gives rewards for good performance and provides constructive feedback to the employees.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This research is descriptive and correlational as it aims to examine the level of teacher's job satisfaction, the most perceived leadership style, and the relationship between a principal's leadership style and teacher's job satisfaction level. To achieve this purpose, this research employed quantitative research design.

Population and Sample

The total population of this study was school teachers at an urban primary school in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. About 68 teachers were teaching there. Due to its quite small population size, total population sampling technique was applied. All 68 teachers were selected as the sample size of this study. Nevertheless, after two weeks of data collection process, only 57 out of 68 responded to the questionnaires (response rate = 83.82%).

Instrumentation

In this study, the instrument took the form of a questionnaire. This questionnaire was divided into three sections: Section A, Section B, and Section C with a total of 70 items. Section A focused on the demographic data of the teachers. It consisted of six items regarding gender, marital status, age, academic qualification, years of service, and years working with the current principal.

Section B answered the first research question which was the leadership style mostly exhibited by the principal as perceived by teachers. It was adopted and adapted from the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire by Avolio and Bass (2004). The original questionnaire consisted of 45 items. However, 11 items from the original questionnaire were omitted in this section. The rationale behind the omission of these items was because researchers had detected some ambiguities in

these items that might confuse the teachers who answered this questionnaire. Hence, this section consisted of 34 items of transformational leadership, transactional leadership, and laissez-faire leadership.

Section C answered the second research question which was the level of teacher's job satisfaction. It was adopted and adapted from a questionnaire that was based on Herzberg's Motivation Hygiene Theory in a research entitled Job Satisfaction Among Elementary Level Educators by Greene, Jensen, Madden, and Maloon (2010). There were some adjustments made on the questionnaire as the original questionnaire setting was for a private school located in the United States of America. Thus, certain words in the items were changed in order to make them suitable for the local school setting. There were 2 sub-dimensions under hygiene factors that were omitted from the original questionnaire which were work security and relationship with superiors. Work security sub-dimension was omitted as it was not relevant with government school settings in Malaysia where the teachers have high retention rate. As for the relationship with superior sub-dimensions, it was omitted due to overlapping items in Section B. Overall, this section consists of 30 items that were divided into motivators and hygiene factors. For items under motivators, they were further divided into five sub dimensions which were achievement, advancement, work itself, recognition and growth. Meanwhile, for items under hygiene factors, they were further divided into four sub-dimensions which were school policy, relationship with peers, salary, and working condition.

The method of response for Section B and C was 5-point Likert scale with a scale of 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5, in which 1 indicated "strongly disagree", 2 indicated "disagree", 3 indicated "neutral", 4 indicated "agree", and 5 indicated "strongly disagree". The respondents ticked the scale that accurately described their response for each item.

Data Collection and Analysis Procedure

68 questionnaires were personally distributed by the researchers to the respondents. As the teachers were busy with their work and need time to answer the questionnaire, they were given a week to answer the questionnaire. A gatekeeper who is a teacher in the school was appointed to collect all the completed questionnaires. However, only 57 teachers returned completed questionnaires (*response rate=83.82%*).

The completed questionnaires were analysed using SPSS. To answer the first and second research questions, descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation were used. Besides, in order to determine the level of job satisfaction, scores were divided into three different levels. Scores below 1.33 indicated low job satisfaction, scores between 1.34 and 3.32 indicated moderate job satisfaction, and scores above 3.33 indicated high job satisfaction. Next, to answer the third research question, Pearson correlation coefficient was

employed to determine the relationship between the teachers' job satisfaction and the leadership style of their leaders. The strength of correlation index is as follow:

Index	Strength
$ r > 0.8$	Strong
$0.5 < r < 0.8$	Moderate
$ r < 0.5$	Weak

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings on Leadership Style

RQ 1: What is the leadership style mostly exhibited by the principal as perceived by teachers?

Table 4.1: Mean scores of leadership style

Leadership style	N	Mean	SD
Transformational leadership	57	3.667	0.578
Transactional leadership	57	3.557	0.503
Laissez faire leadership	57	3.538	0.590

Out of the three leadership styles, the respondents generally agreed that transformational leadership is the leadership style that is mostly exhibited by their school principal. Nevertheless there are not huge differences recorded between the three leadership styles [Transformational: $M=3.667$, $SD=0.578$; Transactional: $M=3.557$, $SD= 0.503$ and Laissez-faire = $M=3.538$, $SD=0.590$]. This means that although the school principal has exhibited traits from transformational leadership style most of the times while administering the school, yet, there are several occasions in the past where he has exhibited traits from transactional and laissez-faire leadership styles.

Previous studies already indicated that transformational leadership is an ideal leadership style that should be adopted by leaders due to its caring, supportive and visionary nature (see Boberg, 2013; Balyer, 2012; Luft, 2012). Furthermore, transformational leaders tend to be regarded with great respect by their subordinates compared to transactional leaders who tend to be feared by the subordinates. These probably are the reasons why the principal tend to exhibit more traits of transformational leadership style compared to the other two leadership styles of transactional leadership and laissez-faire leadership.

Findings on Job Satisfaction

RQ 2: What is the job satisfaction level of teachers based on the Hygiene and Motivator factors?

Table 4.2: Mean scores of job satisfaction

Job Satisfaction	N	Mean	SD	Level
Motivators factors	57	3.707	0.558	High
Hygiene factors	57	3.618	0.522	High
Total Mean Score	57	3.663	0.541	High

Overall, the teachers have high job satisfaction level ($M=3.663$, $SD=0.541$). Furthermore, both motivators factors ($M=3.707$, $SD=0.558$) and hygiene factors ($M=3.618$, $SD=0.522$) also scored high level. The teachers probably are happy and motivated to work in this school due to the positive environment of the school as indicated by the findings: teachers are more affected by motivator factors than hygiene factors. Fuming and Jiling (2008) once stated that although satisfaction seemed to be more associated with personal factors, the influence of environmental factors cannot be ruled out. If the atmosphere provides greater support for the teachers with appropriate working loads and financial rewards, higher job satisfaction might be reported.

Concerning this, certain initiatives could be taken by the government to enhance better job satisfaction among teachers. One of the initiatives is by increasing the salary and remuneration (Wu, 2009) as the teachers nowadays do not only teach but also involve in various administrative work and event management duties. It is undeniable that money cannot replace the time and efforts that they spent outside of the working hours to fulfil the above tasks, yet, it is a form of consolation to lift up their spirit to continue working. The second initiative is reducing the teaching hours for teachers who are teaching students that are going to sit for the national examination (Jamallullail et al., 2014). The rationale behind this initiative is teachers are always subjected to enormous exam stress because of the pressures exerted by society and parents. This is due to our nation's examination-oriented culture where student scores at the national exams and its percentage continuously become the hot issue among the public each year. Other than that, if possible, the class size for government schools should be reduced (Denton, 2009) to enable teachers to give better attention to all students in the class. Nevertheless, this initiative is subjected to the school facilities.

Findings on Relationship between Leadership Style and Job Satisfaction

RQ 3: Is there any significant relationship between leadership style and teachers' job satisfaction?

Table 4.3: Correlation between leadership style and teachers' job satisfaction

		Principal's Leadership Style	Teachers' Job Satisfaction
Principal's Leadership Style	Pearson Correlation	1	.621**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	57	57
Teachers' Job Satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	.621**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	57	57

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 4.3 shows the result of Pearson Correlation Coefficient analysis between school principal's leadership style which is transformational leadership and teachers' job satisfaction at an urban primary school in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The analysis depicts a positive, moderate, and significant relationship between the school principal's leadership style and teachers' job satisfaction ($r = .621$, $p = .000$). This means that the transformational leadership style exhibited by the principal while administering the school leads to higher job satisfaction among the teachers. This is in line with previous studies (see Siroos & Asghar, 2014; Jamallullail et al., 2014) where the teachers are feeling more motivated and at ease with their job when the school is administered by a transformational leader because this leader constructs and executes clear visions for the schools, has established credibility, and typically inspires the teacher to produce better job performance (Biggerstaff, 2012).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

To conclude, the principal's leadership style and teachers' job satisfaction are interrelated. Both are fundamental mechanisms that enhance the effectiveness of the school. A capable principal provides clear direction for the schools, leads subordinates towards achieving desired goals as well as gives moral and technical supports to the subordinates when they are accomplishing their tasks. This subsequently might bring the contentment among the teachers to continue working in the school. In a similar vein, teachers with high job satisfaction are likely to exert more effort in their assigned tasks which lead to better job performance and

higher job productivity as well as are willing to work alongside the principal to pursue the collective school goals.

As for recommendations, future research can employ mixed-method and use bigger samples in order to gain in-depth analysis of the issue. Besides that, future research might also study these two variables of leadership style and job satisfaction with other related variables such as decision making and job performance for a more detailed insight of the dynamic in the leader-follower rapport

REFERENCES

- Ahmad Abdul Rahman, Mohd Nazir Mohd Adi, Haris Md Noor, Abdul Ghafar Abdul Rahamn & Tan Yu Shuang. (2013). The influence of leadership style on job satisfaction among nurses. *Asian Social Science*, 9(9), 172.
- Avolio, B. J., & Bass, B. M. (2004). *Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire. Manual and Sampler Set (3rd ed.)*. Redwood City, CA: Mindgarden. Retrieved from http://dx.doi.org/10.1207/s1532754xjpr1602_2
- Balyer, A. (2012). Transformational leadership behaviors of school principals: A qualitative research based on teachers' perceptions. *International Online Journal of Educational Sciences*, 4(3), 581-591.
- Bass, B.M. & Avolio, B.J. (1994). *The Full Range of Leadership Development*. Binghamton, NY: Center for Leadership Studies.
- Biggerstaff, J. K. (2012). *The Relationship Between Teacher Perceptions of Elementary School Principal Leadership Style and Teacher Job Satisfaction*. (Doctoral thesis, Western Kentucky University, USA). Retrieved from <https://digitalcommons.wku.edu>
- Boberg, J. E. (2013). *High School Principal Transformational Leadership Behaviours and Teacher Extra Effort During Educational Reform: The Mediating Role Of Teacher Agency Beliefs*. (Doctoral thesis, University of Texas Arlington, USA). Retrieved from <https://rc.library.uta.edu>
- Bogler, R. (2001). The influence of leadership style on teacher job satisfaction. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 37(5), 662-683.
- Denton, E. M. (2009). *Teachers' Perceptions of How Leadership Styles and Practices Of Principals Influence Their Job Satisfaction and Retention*. (Doctoral Thesis, Liberty University, USA). Retrieved from <https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/doctoral/207>
- Fuming, X., & Jiliang, S. (2008). Research on job satisfaction of elementary and high school teachers and strategies to increase job satisfaction. *Chinese Education and Society*, 40(5), 86-96.
- Greene, A., Jensen, D., Madden, T., Maloon, R., & Stark, E. (2010). *Job Satisfaction among Elementary Level Educators*. Retrieved from <http://circle.adventist.org>

- Hoy, W.K & Miskel, C.G. (2010). *Educational Administration: Theory, Research And Practice*. New Jersey: McGraw-Hill Inc.
- Hulpia, H., Devos, G., & Rosseel, Y. (2009). The relationship between the perception of distributed leadership in secondary schools and teachers' and teacher leaders' job satisfaction and organizational commitment. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, 20(3), 291-317.
- Jamallullail Abdul Wahab, Che Fuzlina Mohd Fuad, Hazita Ismail & Samsidah Majid. (2014). Headmasters' transformational leadership and their relationship with teachers' job satisfaction and teachers' commitments. *International Education Studies*,7(13), 40.
- Jyoti, J. & Sharma, RD. (2009). Job satisfaction of university teachers: an empirical study. *Journal of Services Research*, 9(2), 51-80.
- Korkmaz, M. (2007). The effects of leadership styles on organizational health. *Education Research Quarterly*, 30(3), 22-54.
- Luft, K. A. (2012). *A Research Study of Transformational Leadership Comparing Leadership Styles of The Principal*. (Doctoral Thesis, Duquesne University, USA). Retrieved from <https://www.duq.edu/>
- Nguni, S., Slegers, P. and Denessen, E. (2006). Transformational and transactional leadership effects on teachers' job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and organizational citizenship behavior in primary schools: The Tanzanian case. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, 17 (2), 145-177.
- Northouse, P. G. (2010). *Leadership, Theory And Practice* (5th Ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications Inc.
- Pinder, CC. (2008). *Work Motivation in Organizational Behaviour* (2nd Ed.). New York: Psychology Press.
- Shieh, H., Mills, M., & Waltz, C. (2001). Academic leadership style predictors for nursing faculty job satisfaction in Taiwan. *The Journal of Nursing Education*, 40(5), 203.
- Siroos Ghanbari & Asghar Eskandari (2014). Transformational leadership, job satisfaction, and organizational innovation. *International Journal of Management Perspective*, 1(4), 81-94
- Sims H. P., Faraj, S., & Yun, S. (2009). When should a leader be directive or empowering? How to develop your own situational theory of leadership. *Business Horizons*, 52, 149-158.
- Trottier, A. M., Van Wart, M., & Wang, X. (2008). Examining the nature and significance of leadership in government organizations. *Public Administration Review*, 68, 319–333.
- Williams, M. D. (2009). *The Relationship of Principal Leadership Behaviors with School Climate, Teacher Job Satisfaction, and Student Achievement*. (Doctoral Thesis, University of Southern Mississippi, USA). Retrieved from <https://core.ac.uk/>

- Wu, F. (2009). The relationship between leadership styles and foreign English teachers job satisfaction in adult English cram schools: Evidences in Taiwan. *The Journal of American Academy of Business*, 14(2), 45-65.
- Yagambaram, L. (2012). *Effects of Leadership Style on Job Satisfaction in Small And Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Malaysia* (Master's Dissertation, USM, Malaysia). Retrieved from <http://eprints.usm.my/>
- Yukl, G. (2009). *Leadership in Organizations*. New Delhi: Dorling Kindersley.