PRINCIPALS' TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND TEACHERS' WORK ENGAGEMENT - A RELATIONSHIP STUDY

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Abstract: Purpose- *The purpose of the present paper is to explore the relationship of the Principals' transformational leadership and the work engagement of private school teachers' using correlation technique.* ***Design/methodology/approach-*** *The hypothesis was tested using a descriptive, cross sectional research design. The Judgmental sampling technique was adopted in selecting the 297 school teachers' working in the private schools' of Chennai district.* ***Findings-*** *Results of the correlation analysis revealed that there existed a moderate positive relationship between the principals' transformational leadership dimensions and the work engagement dimensions of private school teachers. Additionally the results also showed that gender of teachers' differed in their perception of work engagement.* ***Practical implications-*** *Based on the study, the results implied that for a teacher to be highly engaged in the work they do, the role behaviors, values and the leadership patterns and styles followed in the organization also plays a significant role and vital part.* ***Originality/ value-*** *The original contribution of the paper suggests that the Principals' transformational leadership is measured using the principal leadership questionnaire (PLQ) and results highlighted that the usage of the transformational leadership behavior highly influences the teaching workforce in the Indian context, especially Chennai district.*

Keywords: Principals' transformational leadership, private teachers, PLQ, work engagement, Chennai

Paper type: Empirical Research paper

1. INTRODUCTION

The 21st century information and service economy has gained critical importance for their employee's psychological connection with their work. The concept of work engagement has gained momentum in the recent research areas to a large extent and is considered as an important concept for the leaders and supervisors of any organizations around the world, which they recognize as a dynamic component affecting the effectiveness of the organizations, innovativeness and

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competitiveness as in the words of, Welch (2011). Modern organizations always need energetic and dedicated employees who are engaged with their work.

Leadership on the other hand, is considered an important organizational factor that influences the traits and behaviors of organization members. Transformational leadership is one of the popular leadership theories for the past several years. This style of leadership is more likely to encourage employees to work energetically, enthusiastically and focused. In the words of B.M Bass *et al.,* (1999) this style of leadership is the most inspiring and visionary leadership style.

This paper, particularly focuses on the impact of the principals' transformational leadership on the work engagement of school teachers working in the private schools of Chennai district. 'Teachers' and 'Principals' are the critical elements of success in the Education sector and generally leaders should play a role-model for the teachers, which on the other hand help the teacher to be engaged in their work and that will have an influence on their students. A frequent theme in educational debate in public and research circles is the critical significance of providing all students with access to teachers who are highly engaged in their work ((Economist Intelligence Unit, 2012; Pianta, Hamre, & Allen, 2012; Rimm-Kaufman & Hamre, 2010; Staiger & Rockoff, 2010).

Need for the Study

The role played by the principals' and the teachers' makes a significant contribution in the growth of the society So, it becomes necessary in studying the relationship between the management and principal's leadership's attitude towards the teacher. However, many studies were conducted examining the principals' transformational leadership behavior on the teachers' job satisfaction, commitment, well being etc. But only very few studies were conducted in measuring the teachers' work engagement. So the study is the need of the hour in understanding the relationship in a developing country like India, where education plays a vital role in its development and encourage teachers' in remaining in the noble profession.

2. LITERATURE OF PREVIOUS STUDIES

2.1. Transformational Leadership

The term 'Transformational leadership' was first given by Bernard Bass (1999). Burns (1978) defined "Transformational leadership occurs when one or more persons engage with others in such a way that leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality. Leaders' address themselves to followers' wants, needs, and other motivations, as well as to their own, and thus may serve as an independent force in changing the make-up of the followers' motive base through gratifying their motives". The dimensions of transformational leadership included in this study are: **Foster Group Goals:** Behavior of the principal aimed at promoting

cooperation among staff and assisting them in working together toward common goals. **Provide Stimulation:** Behavior of the principal that challenges the staff to reexamine some of the assumptions about their work and rethink how it can be performed **Hold High Expectations:** Behavior that demonstrates the principal's expectations for excellence, quality, and high performance on the part of staff.**Articulate Vision:** Behavior of the principal aimed at identifying new opportunities for their school, and developing, articulating, and inspiring others with a vision of the future, as in the words of Jantzi & Leithwood (1996: 515).

2.2. Studies on Principals' Transformational leadership

Leadership of the principal and the ways the head carries out the role has a significant influence on the teachers' and students' in a large way. Among different leadership styles exhibited by the principals' of the school, the exhibition of transformational leadership has a higher impact on the outcomes like satisfaction, commitment, wellbeing and engagement of teachers'.

Few studies have contributed in measuring the transformational leadership of the school principals' which are as follows.

Aydin Balyer (2012) conducted a qualitative review study based on the transformational leaderships of principals' on the basis of teachers' perception. Findings revealed that the school principals', who demonstrate a high level of characteristics of transformational leadership in terms of idealized influence, inspirational motivation, individualized consideration and intellectual stimulation behaviors enhanced higher levels of commitment and engagement by the teachers'.

In the works of Joel Tham Kah Marn (2012) a study was made in understanding the college lectures, job satisfaction in Malaysia and the results of the findings revealed that in the private higher educational institutions the role of principals who implement transformational leadership do have a significant impact on the job satisfaction of the lectures.

The work of Ling and Ibrahim (2013) *c*onducted a study among 1014 trained teachers and the results revealed that there was a moderate level of teacher commitment and a low level of transformational leadership qualities among the respondents. The further results also provided little to moderate support and offered insights on how leadership development of school leaders, especially transformational leadership qualities play a crucial role in changing teachers' attitude and improve their commitment level.

Gkolia, Belias and Koustelios (2014) studied the link between the principals' transformational leadership and the Greek school teachers' job satisfaction. The study examined the principal leadership questionnaire in the Greek context and the relationship. Finding reveled that there was a significant effect representing

that all the items of the principals' transformational leadership have an effect upon all the constructs of the Teacher's Satisfaction.

2.3. Work Engagement

The Conceptual Framework of the term 'Work Engagement' was first given by Kahn (1990) through ethnographic study on an architecture firm. Kahn highlighted that In the words of Shuck and Wollard (2010) work engagement is "an individual employee's cognitive, emotional and behavioral state directed toward desired organizational outcomes."The dimensions of work engagement included in this paper are:

Emotional engagement: This is a feeling of enthusiasm in doing a work and being inspired and proud of being in their job.

Cognitive engagement: This dimension is described as being totally involved and happily immersed in the work they do.

Social engagement with colleagues: This dimension describes the teacher's relationship with their fellow peers at the work place and

Social engagement with student: This dimension describes the relationship of the teachers' with their students.

2.4. Studies on Work Engagement of teachers

Baskin (2007) studied the English teachers' work engagement in the Indonesian schools. The results of the study revealed that teachers' work engagement in the schools was generally very high. Following this, the study by Lac, Tho and Cuong (2015) conducted among the college faculty reveled the relationship between the individual psychological characteristics of the teachers of public colleges and universities in the engagement of their work creates effective quality training in meeting the needs of the social and economic integration. The study further revealed that the demographic factors highly predicted the level of engagement of teachers in teaching.

Meenakshi Gokhale (2015) in her study explored the relationship between quality of work life and work engagement amongst college teachers and the study findings revealed that there was a positive, but not a significant correlation between Work-related quality of life and Work engagement. Further, based on the gender significant differences were found.

2.5. Direct relationships of transformational leadership and work engagement

The employees' feelings of involvement, cohesiveness, commitment, potency, and performance are enhanced by the transformational leadership style (Shamir, House, & Arthur, 1993) an employee who receives support, inspiration and quality coaching from the supervisor, is likely to experience work as more challenging, involving

and satisfying, and consequently, to become highly engaged with the job tasks.

Few popular studies studying the relationships between the transformational leadership exhibited and the work engagement in different sectors are as follows. The works by Mahin Ebrahimi and Khodaverdi (2015) a study was conducted on the banks in Iran and found out that ideal traits, ideal behaviors, inspirational motivation, intellectual persuasion and individual considerations are linked positively to work engagement and overall the transformational leadership leaders' of the banks highly influences the work engagement of the employees. In the work of James Edward Dibley (2009) he emphasized that, Transformational leadership focuses on developing the follower, providing motivation and inspiration, challenging the intellect and being a role model with well-defined values and morals. By applying this approach, leaders in an organization probably have an impact on followers that result in people developing, thinking, having hope and being able to identify with their leader. These outcomes of leadership in all probability result in employees who are enthusiastic about the workplace, exhibit behaviors conducive to productivity and are generally more engaged at work. Moynihan, Pandey and Wright (2009**)** in their study in the public service motivation investigated the different ways in which the organizational leaders' can reinforce and expand the potential, the results found out that the transformational leadership is highly associated with the public service motivation and the study also suggests that transformational leadership that it has a direct effect on both the mission as well as on organizational goals.

Following this, the study by Tims, Arnold B. Bakker, Despoina Xanthopoulou (2011) investigated how transformational leaders enhance followers daily work engagement and suggest that among other dimensions of work engagement, employee dedication, absorption and social persuasion are strongly correlated with an effective adaptation of transformational leadership. In addition to these studies, the study conducted by Kursheed and Gunaseelan (2014), in the education sector contributed in understanding the perception of the teachers' of their principals' leadership capacities and the results revealed that teachers' with different monthly incomes and designations perceived their leadership differently and the overall results revealed that there was a high positive perception of their principals'. Based on these few positive reviews can be predicted that there may be a significant relationship between principals' transformational leadership and school teachers' work engagement.

3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

a) What is the nature of the principals' leadership as perceived by the teachers'?
b) Is the principals' transformational leadership associated positively with work engagement?

c) Are there differences in teachers' perception toward work engagement dimensions based on their gender?

3.1. Null Hypotheses

a) There is no significant relationship between principals' transformational leadership and work engagement.

b) There is no significant difference between the gender of the teachers' and their work engagement.

3.2. Methods

Study sample and population

The present study adopted a descriptive research design approach. The study population consisted among the 15 private schools in Chennai District selected using Judgmental sampling. Samples have been carefully chosen after in- depth analysis in the particular field of study and the participants were private school teachers' working in the same schools' for 2 or more years and who have completed teacher education training programs. Among these the participants included 192 female and 107 male teachers' from different schools, age groups, and localities.

3.3. Instruments

Research instruments included two scales: The Principal Leadership Questionnaire and the Engaged Teacher Scale.

3.3.1 The Principal Leadership Questionnaire (PLQ) by Jantzi and Leithwood (1996) was used to measure the principals' transformational leadership of the private schools'. The number of items in the instrument is 24 and all the items are positively worded. The instrument consists of 4 dimensions. The dimension Foster Group Goals have 9 items, Provide stimulation has 4 items, Hold High Expectations has 4 items and Articulate vision has 7 items. The overall Cronbach reliability of the instrument is .94 and the validity of the instrument was done using the Exploratory factor analysis and the Content validity.

3.3.2 Engaged Teacher Scale (ETS) by Klassen *et al.,* (2013) was used in measuring the work engagement of the school teachers'. The scale consists of 16 positively worded items comprising of 4 dimensions. In our study the scale was adopted to measure the level of engagement of teachers and the responses were collected using a five point scale (1- Strongly Disagree; 2- Disagree; 3- Neutral; 4- Agree; 5- Strongly Agree), such that higher scores indicate that there is a higher level of engagement among the teachers and lower the scores indicate lower engagement levels. The minimum possible score was 16 and the maximum possible score was 80. The scale has 4 items for emotional engagement, 4 items for cognitive

engagement, 4 items for social engagement with colleagues and 4 items for social engagement with students. The overall Cronbach reliability of the scale was.86 and the validity of the scale was done by using the content validity technique.

4. STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

Data analysis was carried out by the methods of descriptive statistics, which includes the mean and standard deviation, along with inferential statistical method of simple correlation to evaluate the correlations between the transformational leadership, as independent variable and the work engagement, as the dependent variable. It is imperative to note that errors of accepting or rejecting the null hypothesis were considered in this research. Research tends to accept that when p d" 0.05, then acceptable levels of significance have been achieved. The demographic profile of the teachers' is presented as in Table 1.

Table 1

Demographic details	N	%
Male	107	35.8
Female	192	64.2
Below 30	45	15.1
31-40	101	33.8
41-50	125	41.8
Above 50	28	9.4
Rural	121	40.5
Urban	178	59.5
Graduate with B.ed	152	50.8
Postgraduate with B.ed	138	46.2
Diploma/others	9	3
Single	72	24.1
Married	227	75.9
Primary teacher	87	29.1
Upper Primary teacher	45	15.1
High school teacher	93	31.1
Higher secondary teacher	74	24.7
2-5 years	124	41.5
6-10 years	108	36.1
11-15 years	29	9.7
Above 15 years	38	12.7
Nuclear family	204	68.2
Joint family	95	31.8
Below 10000	74	24.7
11000-20000	80	26.8
21000-30000	55	18.4
Above 30000	90	30.1

*Source: Primary Data

On the basis of the demographic profile of the teachers' it was found out that the majority of the teachers' (64.1 percent) in the profession were female and 41.8 percent of them were in the age group of 41-50 years. More of the half of the teachers' (59.5 percent) were from rural areas, with 50.8 percent they were graduate with teacher education and married (75.9 percent). Most of the teachers' were high school teachers with 41.5 percent having an experience of 2- 5 years. 68.2 percent of the teachers' were from nuclear families and earning above 30000.

4.1. Results

Based on the research questions the following are the results of the analysis are discussed as follows.

Research question 1: Perceptions on the level of principals' leadership.

Table 2 shows the Means and Standard Deviation of the teacher's Perceptions.

Table 2

Survey Items	Mean	SD
Has both the capacity and the judgment to overcome most obstacles	3.91	1.070
Commands respect from everyone on the faculty.	4.01	1.084
Excites faculty with visions	3.88	.928
Makes faculty members feel and act like leaders	4.10	.896
Gives the faculty a sense of overall purpose	3.99	.908
Leads by doing	4.18	.898
Symbolizes success and accomplishment	3.93	.991
Provides good models for faculty members to follow	4.22	.889
Provides participation in developing school goals	4.20	.969
Encourages faculty members to work toward the same goals	4.16	.866
Uses problem solving with the faculty to generate school goals	4.14	.957
Works towards the agreement in establishing priorities	4.08	.794
Regularly encourages faculty members to evaluate	4.16	.969
Provides training to develop knowledge and skills	4.01	.871
Provides necessary resources in support	4.16	.904
Treats me as an individual with unique needs and expertise.	4.04	.830
Takes opinion into consideration	3.92	.953
Behaves in a manner, thoughtful of personal needs	4.02	1.002
Challenges to reexamine basic assumptions	3.67	.927
Stimulates to think about what to do for the school's students	3.94	.863
Provides information that helps to think in different ways	4.14	.945
Insists on only the best performance	3.94	1.110
Shows there are high expectations to work	4.11	1.019
Does not settle for second best performance	3.86	.996

Source: Primary Data

Findings: The mean and standard deviations were analyzed for all the 24 items of the instrument. These scores were used to summarize the perception of the teachers' on the leadership capacity of their principals'. These scores were used to distinguish between positive perception, moderately positive and negative perceptions. According to the Human Sciences Research Council (1994, as cited in Odendaal & Roodt, 1998), research shows that an average of 3.20 can be seen as a reasonable cutoff point to differentiate between positive and negative perceptions, but in this study no mean score value was less than 3.86 so the teachers' did not perceive any of the items of their principals' leadership negatively. The results presented in Table 2, suggest in general that teachers perceived their principals' leadership capacities more positively. The items are categorized and interpreted into 3 categories according to means and standard deviations (higher, moderate and lower) The teachers perceived their principal leadership levels to be more positive in; Provides good models for faculty members to follow (M= 4.22,SD=.889), Provides participation in developing school goals (M=4.20,SD=.969), Leads by doing (M=4.18, SD= .898), Provides necessary resources in support (M=4.16,SD=.904), Encourages faculty members to work toward the same goals (M=4.16,SD=.866), Uses problem solving with the faculty to generate school goals (M= 4.14,SD= .957), Provides information that helps to think in different ways (M=4.14,SD=.945).

The teachers' perceived their principals' leadership moderately for the following items; Shows there are high expectations to work (M=4.11,SD=1.09), Makes faculty members feel and act like leaders (M= 4.10,SD=.896), Works towards the agreement in establishing priorities (M= 4.08,SD= .794), Works towards the agreement in establishing priorities (M=4.08,SD= .794), Treats me as an individual with unique needs and expertise (M=4.04, SD= .830), Behaves in a manner, thoughtful of personal needs (M= 4.02,SD= 1.00).

As none of the item score had a mean value below 3.86 no items were perceived negatively, but some items were perceived to be leastly to the items of the principals' leadership. Gives the faculty a sense of overall purpose (M=3.99,SD=.908), Stimulates to think about what to do for the school's students (M= 3.94,SD= .863), Insists on only the best performance (M= 3.94,SD= 1.11), Symbolizes success and accomplishment (M=3.93,SD= .991), Takes opinion into consideration (M=3.92,SD= .953), Has both the capacity and the judgment to overcome most obstacles (M= 3.91, SD= 1.07), Excites faculty with visions (M= 3.88,SD= .928), Does not settle for second best performance (M= 3.86,SD= .996), Challenges to reexamine basic assumptions (M= 3.67,SD= .927). Thus, based on the mean scores of the descriptive statistics it was found that the teachers' perceived their principals' leadership levels to be highly positive and highly transformational.

Research question 2: To test the relationship between the principals' transformational leadership and work engagement. Based on this research question the Spearman's Rank correlation analysis was used to test the hypothesis.

H$_0$1: There is no significant relationship between principals' transformational leadership and work engagement as in Table 3.

Table 3

Variables		Work Engagement
Principals' transformational leadership	Spearman Rank correlation (r)	0.631**
	Sig. (2 tailed)	0.000

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

Interpretation: Based on the results of the analysis, it was found out that there exists a positive correlation between the principals' transformational leadership and the school teachers' work engagement at 0.01 level of significance, hence the null hypothesis 1 was rejected and the alternate hypothesis 1 "There is a significant relationship between principals' transformational leadership and work engagement " was accepted.

Research question 3: To test the differences in teachers' perception toward work engagement dimensions based on their gender. Based on this research question the Mann Whitney U test was used in order to test the hypothesis.

H$_0$2: There is no significant difference between the gender of the teachers' and their work engagement as in Table 4.

Table 4

Variable	Mann-Whitney U	Wilcoxon W	Z	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
Overall engagement	8677.5	14455.5	-2.229	**0.026***

*Source: Primary data

Interpretation: From the table 4., since the asymptotic significance value for the overall work engagement variable engagement is less than 0.05 (5% level of significance) so H$_0$2 is rejected and the alternate hypothesis "there is a significant difference between gender of the teachers' and their work engagement" is accepted.

Table 5

Gender	N	Mean Rank
Male	107	135.1
Female	192	158.3

*Source: Primary data

Based on the mean rank table 5, it is inferred that the female teachers' perceive their work engagement to be high compared to their male counterparts. The

possible reason for this may be as by nature the female gender is more concerned for their work and has a sense of care and satisfaction teaching the young and children.

4.2. Findings and Discussions

The main objective of the study was to identify how the teachers perceive their principals' leadership level followed by the objective to find a relationship between the principals' transformational leadership and the work engagement. Based on the perceptions, the study has found out the teachers have a very high positive level of perception of their principals and considered their principals' to be great role models. This result of the study is parallel with the study findings by Mahin Ebrahimi, Y. Khodaverdi (2015) conducted among the bank employees in Iran and proved that there existed a positive correlation among the transformational leadership behavior of the manager and the employees' work engagement level. Further, the study conducted among school teachers' in Indonesia by Freddy Arifin *et al.* (2014) also concluded that it is important for the principals' of the school to be a transformational leader and the relationship between their transformational leadership will significantly positively correlate with the teachers' work engagement levels. Following this, the significant difference was found between the gender of the teachers' and their work engagement levels and the results showed that the female teachers' to be more engaged in the job they do. This result of the study was consistent with the previous study by Ying Kong (2009) conducted among the middle school teachers' and the job engagement. The results revealed that female teachers' were more engaged in job engagement than the male teachers.Based on the results of the demographic profile of the respondents it was found out that among the teachers' majority of them were female as teaching is considered traditionally a female dominated job (Greenglass & Burke, 1988) as in a developing economy like India, most of the females choose the profession on the basis of three motives which are classified as extrinsic, intrinsic and altruistic motives (Brookhart and Freeman, 1992) thus, making it a caring and noble profession.

5. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Even though the study was first of its kind in understanding the relationship of principals' transformational leadership and the work engagement of private school teachers' in Chennai district, the study was limited in some regards. First, the study was conducted only in the private schools following the Samcheer Kalvi syllabus in the Chennai district alone, so the generalizations of the results was not possible. So, further research should concentrate on the different mediums of school pedagogy and also in the different districts. Second, the effect of the demographic variable gender differences was only highlighted in the paper so future research

can concentrate on the other demographic variables like the age, tenure in the school, designation of the teachers, the type of school. Finally, this study was done using cross sectional design of research so further research can be done using the same variables as a longitudinal study to check if the results vary or not.

6. IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

i) Based on the study findings, it was found that the transformational leadership behavior of the principals' was high based on the perceptions of the teachers' and the results also proved that there was a moderate positive relationship between their leadership and their teachers' work engagement, but to improve it more efficiently it becomes necessary of the principals' of the schools to adopt friendlier strategies, create a positive conducive environment and collaborate with the teachers' in generating new ideas so that they get a feeling of involvement in the school affairs which in turn helps in them more work engagement.

ii) Further, as the results revealed that female teachers' to be significantly more engaged the department of education can make use of these characteristics of the females' and provide them more employment opportunities and benefits so that they work the best, show high levels of engagement and devote more time into teaching to contribute to the society by producing efficient students.

7. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the present study contributed in understanding the effective relationship of the transformational leadership of the principal to be effective in arousing the teachers' work engagement. Thus, based on the primary objective of understanding the perceptions of the school teachers' on their principals' leadership behavior among the schools in Chennai it was found to be high and the majority of teachers rated their principals' to be highly transformational and also revealed that the leadership behavior of the principals is highly involved in knowing how they feel in the school and shares his or her experience in motivating them in accomplishing the tasks assigned to them thus to achieve excellence in the vision and mission targeted by the school and the Education Ministry.

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