

# The Relationship Between Transformational Leadership And Teacher Job Satisfaction: Empirical Evidence From China

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## ABSTRACT

Currently, there are few studies on the relationship between transformational leadership and teacher job satisfaction in the field of education in China. This study aims to explore this relationship within the context of Chinese Confucian culture. A total of 385 primary school teachers in Zunyi School District participated in a questionnaire survey. This quantitative study utilized the 12-item Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ 5X), adapted from Bass and Avolio (1995), and the 5-item Teacher Job Satisfaction (TJS) scale from the International Trends in Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) assessments. The structural equation model (SEM) indicated a good fit with the data:  $\chi^2/df=1.25$  (1-3),  $p<0.001$ , NFI=0.98 ( $\geq 0.90$ ), TLI=0.99 ( $\geq 0.90$ ), CFI=0.99 ( $\geq 0.90$ ), and RMSEA=0.026 ( $\leq 0.08$ ). The results revealed that transformational leadership had a significant positive effect on teachers' job satisfaction ( $\beta=0.36$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). Furthermore, multiple linear regression analysis demonstrated that the dimensions of Intellectual Stimulation ( $B=0.127$ ,  $p=0.028$ ) and Individual Consideration ( $B=0.143$ ,  $p=0.007$ ) significantly affected teachers' job satisfaction. However, the other two dimensions, Idealized Influence ( $p=0.696$ ) and Inspirational Motivation ( $p=0.080$ ), did not show significant effects on teachers' job satisfaction. This study highlights the nuanced impacts of different dimensions of transformational leadership on job satisfaction within a unique cultural context.

**Keywords:** Transformational leadership, Teachers' Job Satisfaction, China

## 1.Introduction

Transformational leadership, as conceptualized by Burns in 1978, represents a significant shift in the understanding of leadership dynamics. Unlike traditional leadership models that primarily focus on transactional exchanges between leaders and followers, transformational leadership emphasizes the role of visionary and inspirational leadership in fostering organizational growth. By appealing to higherorder needs and encouraging employees to transcend their self-interests for the sake of the organization, transformational leaders can catalyze profound changes within their teams. This approach not only aims at achieving superior organizational performance but also at nurturing the personal and professional development of employees. Bass (1985) and Avolio (1999) further elaborated on this theory by highlighting its four core components: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. These elements collectively contribute to creating a work environment that promotes innovation, collaboration, and a shared sense of purpose, ultimately leading to enhanced job performance and satisfaction (Bruce J Avolio, Bass, & Jung, 1999; Bass, 1985).

Teacher job satisfaction remains a focal point of educational research due to its farreaching implications for the educational ecosystem. High levels of job satisfaction among teachers are essential for fostering a stable and motivated teaching workforce. This, in turn, has a positive ripple effect on student achievement, school climate, and overall educational quality. Dinham and Scott (2001) and Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2011) underscore the multifaceted nature of job satisfaction, which encompasses both intrinsic and extrinsic factors (Scott, Stone, & Dinham, 2001; Einar M Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011). Intrinsically, teachers derive satisfaction from the fulfillment of their professional roles, the intellectual stimulation provided by their work, and the relationships they build with students and colleagues. Extrinsically, factors such as competitive salaries, comprehensive benefits, opportunities for professional development, and supportive leadership play crucial roles. Klassen and Chiu (2010) emphasize that an optimal work environment and effective leadership are particularly influential, as they directly impact teachers' day-to-day experiences and long-term career trajectories. Therefore, understanding and improving the factors that contribute to teacher job satisfaction is vital for the sustainability and effectiveness of educational institutions (Klassen & Chiu, 2010).

The interplay between transformational leadership and teacher job satisfaction has attracted considerable academic interest. Research by Leithwood and Jantzi (2005) and Ross and Gray (2006) indicates that transformational leadership positively impacts teachers' self-efficacy and job engagement (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005). This leadership style fosters a sense of autonomy and empowerment among teachers, encouraging them to take initiative and innovate in their teaching practices (Ross & Gray, 2006). Tschannen-Moran (2004) highlights the critical role of trust in this dynamic. Transformational leaders cultivate trust by consistently demonstrating integrity, transparency, and fairness, which reassures teachers and enhances their sense of security and belonging (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004). When teachers feel valued and supported by their leaders, they are more likely to experience higher levels of job satisfaction. This trust-based relationship is fundamental in creating a positive and conducive work environment where teachers can thrive both professionally and personally.

In addition to enhancing self-efficacy and trust, transformational leadership significantly contributes to teachers' professional growth. Leithwood and Jantzi (2005) emphasize that transformational leaders prioritize the continuous professional development of their staff. By providing access to training programs, mentorship, and adequate resources, transformational leaders empower teachers to refine their skills and expand their pedagogical expertise. This ongoing professional development instills a sense of accomplishment and professional pride among teachers, which in turn enhances their job satisfaction. Furthermore, the supportive and inclusive culture fostered by transformational leadership is instrumental in nurturing a positive school environment. Hipp and Bredeson (1995) found that transformational leaders, through their inclusive and participatory approach, can create a school culture that values collaboration, mutual respect, and shared goals (Hipp & Bredeson, 1995). This positive culture not only boosts teacher morale but also contributes to a more cohesive and effective educational community.

Despite the robust body of research on transformational leadership, much of the existing literature is predominantly Western-centric (C. Wang & Bird, 2011). This geographic and cultural bias raises questions about the universal applicability of transformational leadership principles, particularly in non-Western contexts such as China. Li, Sun, and He (2014) point out that traditional Chinese leadership styles are often more hierarchical and authoritative, contrasting sharply with the participatory and motivational approach of transformational leadership (C. Li, Sun, & He, 2014). This cultural divergence suggests that the adoption and impact of transformational leadership in Chinese educational settings may differ significantly from Western experiences. Moreover, the limited focus on the educational sector in Chinese studies, with most research being concentrated on the business domain, further underscores the need for empirical investigations into how transformational leadership affects teacher job satisfaction within the unique cultural and structural framework of Chinese schools. This study aims to fill this gap by exploring the current levels of transformational leadership and teacher job satisfaction in Chinese educational institutions and examining the potential impact of transformational leadership on these satisfaction levels. The research seeks to address two primary questions: (1) What are the current levels of transformational leadership and teacher job satisfaction in practice within Chinese schools? (2) How does transformational leadership influence teacher job satisfaction in this specific context? By answering these questions, the study hopes to provide valuable insights into the applicability of transformational leadership in enhancing teacher job satisfaction and fostering educational improvement in China.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Transformational Leadership in the Chinese Context

Transformational Leadership's application in China has primarily focused on the business sector, with limited research in education. Empirical studies on Chinese enterprises reveal that the four core dimensions of transformational leadership (idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration) positively impact the Chinese cultural context. Specifically, transformational leadership significantly enhances employees' professional identity and motivation, improving job satisfaction and performance (C. Li, Qi, & Shi, 2021). Surveys also show that transformational leadership stimulates employees' creativity and innovative behavior, enhancing organizational performance (J. Wang & Gagné, 2018). By addressing individual needs and fostering development, transformational leadership improves team cooperation and cohesion, thereby boosting organizational effectiveness (Z. Zhang, Li, & Fan, 2020).

Despite its success in the business sector, research on transformational leadership in Chinese education is limited. Chen, Zheng, and Li (2019) noted that transformational leadership's application and effects in China's educational system remain underexplored, lacking large-scale empirical research to comprehensively reveal its impact on teacher job satisfaction (Chen, Zheng, & Li, 2019). Some studies suggest positive effects on teachers' professional identity and job satisfaction, but these are often confined to specific cases or regions. Liu and Hallinger (2018) found that research on the adaptability of transformational leadership in Chinese education is scarce. Although it shows positive effects in business, its implementation in education requires cultural adjustments, with its effectiveness still unclear (S. Liu & Hallinger, 2018). Sun and Leithwood (2019) pointed out that under the Confucian cultural backdrop, China's educational system is characterized by strong bureaucracy and hierarchical concepts, with conservative management practices (Sun & Leithwood, 2019). Traditional educational managers prefer control-oriented leadership over transformational leadership, posing significant resistance. Therefore, in-depth exploration of transformational leadership in Chinese education is valuable, enriching its research in China, enhancing teachers' job satisfaction and professional identity, and promoting educational improvement.

### 2.2 The Consequences of Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership significantly impacts both organizations and individuals. It enhances organizational innovation by promoting employees' innovative behavior and new thinking (Hirst, Knippenberg, & Zhou, 2010). There is a positive relationship between transformational leadership and organizational performance, as leaders' vision and goals drive overall growth and development (Walumbwa, Avolio, Gardner, Wernsing, & Peterson, 2008). Transformational leadership also improves team collaboration and cohesion by promoting interaction and cooperation, thus enhancing team performance (Bass, Avolio, Jung, & Berson, 2003). Moreover, transformational leadership positively influences employees' work motivation through inspirational motivation and intellectual stimulation, making them more proactive (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, & Bommer, 2014). It also improves employees' emotional intelligence through emotional inspiration and individualized consideration, enhancing the emotional climate within the organization (Wong & Cummings, 2009). Transformational leadership increases employees' organizational commitment by strengthening their sense of belonging and loyalty through idealized influence and participative decision-making (Dumdum, Lowe, & Avolio, 2013).

Additionally, transformational leadership focuses on employees' personal development and growth, helping them realize their potential and career advancement (Northouse, 2021). It improves leader-employee relationships by establishing trust, resonance, and open communication and support (B. J. Avolio, Zhu, Koh, & Bhatia, 2009). Ultimately, transformational leadership significantly enhances employees' job satisfaction through inspiration, idealized influence, and individualized consideration (Judge & Piccolo, 2004). However, more research is needed to explore the specific mechanisms and mediating variables behind these effects. How transformational leadership enhances employee satisfaction through emotional intelligence, self-efficacy, or teamwork requires detailed analysis and validation.

### 2.3 Teacher Job Satisfaction and Its Antecedents

Teacher job satisfaction is influenced by various organizational and personal factors. Educational policies and management support significantly affect teacher job satisfaction. Good management support and policy environments enhance teacher job satisfaction, motivating them to engage in teaching and student services (Day & Gu, 2013). Working conditions and resource support are crucial factors in maintaining teacher job satisfaction, including classroom facilities, adequate teaching resources, and technological support (E. M. Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2018). Social support and teamwork also significantly impact teacher job satisfaction, as good colleague relationships and support networks reduce work stress and enhance job satisfaction (Brouwers & Tomic, 2016).

Research indicates that high workloads and work pressure negatively affect teacher job satisfaction, reducing their work motivation and career development (E. M. Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2018). Leadership styles directly influence teacher job satisfaction, with supportive and effective leadership significantly improving satisfaction and performance, while coercive or controlling leadership may have negative effects (D. Ng & Hallinger, 2019). Teachers' perceptions of career development and growth opportunities affect their job satisfaction. Providing good career development paths, training opportunities, and promotion spaces enhances teachers' work motivation and satisfaction (Ding & Chen, 2020). Teaching autonomy and control also significantly impact teacher job satisfaction, with more teaching autonomy and decision-making power enhancing satisfaction and motivation (E. M. Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2018). Fair and competitive compensation and reward mechanisms are also important factors influencing teacher job satisfaction (Ding & Chen, 2020). Furthermore, the quality of teacher-student relationships and teaching outcomes significantly impact teacher job satisfaction. Good student interactions and positive feedback on teaching outcomes can enhance teachers' satisfaction and professional identity (E. M. Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2018).

Although many studies have explored the factors influencing teacher job satisfaction, most focus on Western countries, with limited research on teacher job satisfaction in different cultural contexts, especially in regions like Asia and Africa, such as China. Further, studies on job satisfaction must be based on specific environmental characteristics, and the Confucian culture and regional differences in China provide more interesting samples for satisfaction research.

## 2.4 Transformational Leadership and Teacher Job Satisfaction

The relationship between Transformational Leadership and Teacher Job Satisfaction has garnered extensive international attention. Leithwood and Jantzi (2006) found that transformational leadership could significantly enhance teachers' job satisfaction by improving their self-efficacy and professional identity through studies in multiple schools in Canada and the United States (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006). These leaders inspire teachers' work enthusiasm and commitment by establishing a shared vision, encouraging innovation, and providing individualized support. The four core dimensions of transformational leadership—idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration—play important roles in enhancing teacher job satisfaction.

Nguni, Slegers, and Denessen (2006) pointed out in their study in Tanzania that transformational leadership can significantly enhance teacher job satisfaction by encouraging teachers' participation in decision-making, providing professional development opportunities, and creating a supportive work environment (Nguni, Slegers, & Denessen, 2006). Their research also shows that this leadership style can reduce teachers' burnout and enhance their professional well-being. Furthermore, research has shown that school culture has a significant impact on teacher job satisfaction and that transformational leadership plays a key role in creating a positive school culture (Hipp & Bredesqn, 1995). Chen, Zheng, and Li (2019) indicated that although China's educational system is relatively traditional and hierarchical, transformational leadership can enhance teacher job satisfaction by promoting teacher participation, stimulating innovative thinking, and providing emotional support (Chen et al., 2019). Their research, based on surveys of several Chinese middle schools, found a positive correlation between transformational leadership and teacher job satisfaction.

However, most of the existing international research focuses on Western countries, whose cultural backgrounds and educational systems differ significantly from China's, necessitating further verification of the specific implementation and effects of transformational leadership on teacher job satisfaction in China. Wang and Bird (2011) pointed out that most studies focus on Western education systems and lack comparative research on the impact of transformational leadership on teacher job satisfaction in different cultural contexts (C. Wang & Bird, 2011). Research on the relationship between transformational leadership and teacher job satisfaction in China's educational system is still in its early stages, lacking large-scale, systematic empirical research, especially in the field of primary education. Therefore, studying the relationship between transformational leadership and teacher job satisfaction in the Chinese context is of great significance. This study proposes the hypothesis H: transformational leadership significantly affects teacher job satisfaction in the Chinese context.

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1 Participant

This study conducted a questionnaire survey on 385 primary school teachers in Zunyi School District, Guizhou Province, China. All in-service teachers in Zunyi School District (excluding administrative staff and principals) were invited to participate in the survey. 401 questionnaires were distributed in total, and 385 valid responses were collected. Specifically, female teachers accounted for 69.09% (266) and male teachers accounted for 30.91% (119). Most of them were young and middle-aged teachers, with 35.06% (135) aged 30 and below, 39.22% (151) aged 31-40, 15.84% (61) aged 41-50, and 9.87% (38) aged 51-60. Their educational background was mainly bachelor degree, accounting for 67.53% (260), 20.78% (80) of

the teachers have junior college degree, 10.13% (39) of the teachers have master degree, and 1.56% (6) of the teachers have doctor degree. Teachers with teaching experience of less than three years accounted for 30.65% (118), 24.19% (93) have 4-6 years of teaching experience, 20.52% (79) have 7-15 years of teaching experience, 7.79% (30) have 16-23 years of teaching experience, and 16.88% (65) have 24 years or more of teaching experience.

### 3.2 Instrument

A questionnaire consisting of two scales was used in this study: Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ 5X), Teachers' Job Satisfaction Scale (TJS). These two scales are mature scales that have been widely used and have high reliability and validity. The teachers rated each item on a five-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree".

The 12-item Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ 5X) adapted from Bass & Avolio (1995). This scale comprised the four facets of a PLC, namely, idealized influence (three items), inspirational motivation (three items), intellectual stimulation (three items), individual consideration (three items). The use of MLQ has a good reliability with a Cronbach's alpha value of the overall tool was 0.80 (Dhammika, Ahmad, & Sam, 2013). The 5-items TJS scale is an international comparative assessment of teachers' job satisfaction developed by the International Trends in Mathematics and Science Research (TIMSS) and the Progress in Reading and Literacy Research (PIRLS) assessments (Mullis, Martin, & Gonzalez, 2004). The reliability of this scale in Chinese context was high, with Cronbach's  $\alpha$  was 0.915 (H. Wang et al., 2022).

### 3.3 Analysis

Data analysis was conducted using SPSS 25.0 and AMOS 28.0 software. Initially, descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and internal consistency reliability (measured using Cronbach's alpha coefficient) were performed using SPSS. Subsequently, AMOS was utilized to conduct confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) in order to assess structural validity, convergence validity (as indicated by the mean variance extraction value, AVE), differential validity (ensuring that the square root of AVE exceeds the correlation between latent variables), and composite reliability (CR) of the two scales. Thirdly, the relationship between PLC composition and teachers' job satisfaction is discussed by using structural equation model (SEM). Finally, the multiple linear regression model was used to detect which of the four dimensions of transformational leadership are the factors that significantly affect teacher job satisfaction? According to the suggestion of Kline, some standard fitting indicators are used to measure the model fitting degree in CFA and SEM analysis (Kline, 2005). Including Chi-square statistics ( $\chi^2$ ),  $RMSEA \leq 0.06(0.08)$ ,  $CFI \geq 0.95(0.90)$ ,  $GFI \geq 0.95(0.90)$ ,  $TLI \geq 0.95(0.90)$  were used as cutoff values for good (or acceptable) data fitting.

## 4. Results

### 4.1 Scale Reliability and Validity

**Table 1** Descriptive statistics, correlation matrix, Cronbach's  $\alpha$ , AVE, CR, and square root of AVE

	II	IM	IS	IC	TJS
II	1				
IM	.47**	1			
IS	.50**	.42**	1		
IC	.48**	.42**	.43**	1	
TJS	.21**	.23**	.25**	.27**	1
M	3.56	3.72	3.70	3.71	3.70
SD	1.04	1.10	0.96	1.04	0.94
$\alpha$	0.84	0.85	0.88	0.84	0.93
AVE	0.64	0.66	0.72	0.64	0.75
CR	0.84	0.86	0.88	0.84	0.94
SQUARE ROOT OF AVE	0.80	0.82	0.85	0.80	0.87

Note. \*\*\*p < 0.001; Std= Standardized regression weight estimates; II=Idealized influence; IM=Inspirational motivation; IS=Intellectual stimulation; IC=Individual consideration; TJS= teachers' job satisfaction.

For the MLQ scale, the results showed satisfactory reliability. As shown in Table 1, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the four dimensions of transformational leadership was: Idealized influence  $\alpha=.84$ , Inspirational motivation  $\alpha=.85$ , Intellectual stimulation  $\alpha=.88$ , Individual consideration  $\alpha=.84$ , indicating that the MLQ scale has good reliability. The AVE values of the four subscales were 0.64, 0.66, 0.72, 0.64, respectively, which were all higher than 0.50. The CR values of the four subscales were 0.84, 0.86, 0.88, 0.84, respectively, which



were all higher than 0.70. The square roots of AVE of the four subscales were 0.80, 0.82, 0.85, 0.80, respectively, which were all higher than correlations among the latent variables. The result suggested a satisfactory data fit:  $\chi^2/df=1.64(1\sim3)$ ,  $p<0.001$ ,  $GFI=.97(\geq 0.90)$ ,  $TLI=.98(\geq 0.90)$ ,  $CFI=.99(\geq 0.90)$ ,  $RMSEA=.04(\leq 0.08)$ . Therefore, the MLQ scale showed good construct validity, convergent validity, discriminant validity, and reliability.

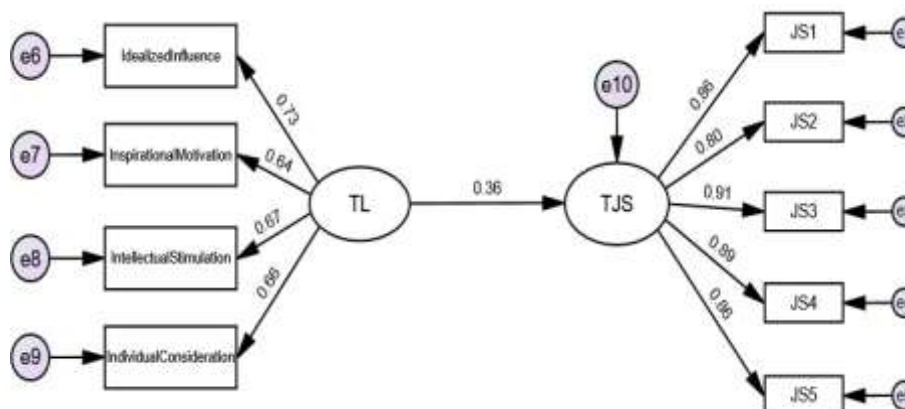
For the TJS scale, the results showed satisfactory reliability. As shown in Table 1, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was  $\alpha=.93$ , indicating that the TJS scale has good reliability. The AVE value was 0.75, which was higher than 0.50. The CR value was 0.94, which was higher than 0.70. The square root of AVE was 0.87, which was higher than correlations among the latent variables. The result suggested a satisfactory data fit:  $\chi^2/df=2.374(1\sim3)$ ,  $GFI=.99(\geq 0.90)$ ,  $TLI=.99(\geq 0.90)$ ,  $CFI=.99(\geq 0.90)$ ,  $RMSEA=.06(\leq 0.08)$ . Therefore, the TJS scale showed good construct validity, convergent validity, discriminant validity, and reliability.

#### 4.2 Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

The descriptive statistics of all of the factors are displayed in Table 1. On the average of the four dimensions of transformational leadership, inspirational motivation scored the highest ( $M=3.72$ ,  $SD=1.10$ ), followed by Individual consideration ( $M=3.71$ ,  $SD=1.04$ ), and Intellectual stimulation ( $M=3.70$ ,  $SD=0.96$ ), while Idealized influence scored the lowest ( $M=3.56$ ,  $SD=1.04$ ). And the average of the teachers' job satisfaction was  $M=3.70$ ,  $SD=0.94$ . In addition, there was a significant correlation between the five variables.

#### 4.3 SEM Results

A model was developed to examine the relationship between transformational leadership and teachers' job satisfaction. The SEM results showed that the model had good data fitting:  $\chi^2=32.609$ ,  $df=26$ ,  $PCMIN/df=1.254$ ,  $p<0.001$ ,  $NFI=0.98$ ,  $CFI=0.99$ ,  $TLI=0.99$ ,  $RMSEA=0.026$ . The SEM analysis results are shown in Figure 1.



**Figure 1 Relationship between transformational leadership and teachers' job satisfaction.**

The results showed that transformational leadership significantly affect teacher job satisfaction. Standardized Regression Weights was  $\beta=0.36$  ( $p<0.001$ ). This indicates that implementing transformational leadership in schools can significantly improve teacher job satisfaction. Therefore, H was supported.

#### 4.4 Multiple linear regression analysis

Multiple linear regression analysis was used to detect which dimensions in transformational leadership (Idealized Influence, Inspirational Motivation, Intellectual Stimulation, Individual Consideration) had a significant impact on teachers' job satisfaction. The results showed that transformational leadership does not have a high degree of explanation for teachers' job satisfaction ( $R^2=0.104$ ) in Zunyi School District, indicating that there are other factors affecting teachers' job satisfaction. Among the four dimensions of transformational leadership, Intellectual Stimulation ( $B=0.127$ ,  $p=.028$ ) and Individual Consideration ( $B=0.143$ ,  $p=0.007$ ) significantly affects teachers' job satisfaction. The other two dimensions (Idealized Influence,  $p=0.696$ ; Inspirational Motivation,  $p=.080$ ) have no effects on teachers' job satisfaction. Multiple linear regression model: Teachers' job satisfaction =  $2.304 + 0.127 \times \text{Intellectual Stimulation} + 0.143 \times \text{Individual Consideration}$ .

### DISCUSSION

This study aims to explore the relationship between transformational leadership and teachers' job satisfaction within the context of Chinese Confucian culture. China's unique cultural context enriches the global discourse

on transformational leadership outcomes and highlights specific factors that influence teacher job satisfaction in China. The following sections delve into the findings of this study in greater detail.

### **The degree of transformational leadership and teachers' job satisfaction in China**

The findings indicate that transformational leadership in Chinese primary schools is practiced at a medium-high level. Among the four dimensions of transformational leadership, inspirational motivation scored the highest ( $M=3.72$ ,  $SD=1.10$ ). This suggests that school leaders are particularly effective at inspiring and motivating teachers with a compelling vision and enthusiasm. Individual consideration ( $M=3.71$ ,  $SD=1.04$ ) and intellectual stimulation ( $M=3.70$ ,  $SD=0.96$ ) follow closely, indicating that personalized support and the encouragement of intellectual growth are also significant aspects of leadership in these schools. Idealized influence scored the lowest ( $M=3.56$ ,  $SD=1.04$ ), which may reflect the challenges school leaders face in consistently exemplifying behaviors that build respect and trust.

These results are consistent with previous research on transformational leadership. For instance, a study by Buil, Martínez, and Matute (2019) found that inspirational motivation is often the most prominent dimension of transformational leadership, highlighting its importance in driving organizational commitment and performance (Buil, Martínez, & Matute, 2019). Similarly, high scores for individual consideration and intellectual stimulation align with findings by Ng and Chan (2021), who emphasized that personalized support and intellectual engagement are essential for improving employee satisfaction and development (K. Y. Ng & Chan, 2021). In China, similar conclusions have been drawn. Liu et al. (2019) found that inspirational motivation was the most prominent dimension of transformational leadership among Chinese school leaders, underscoring the importance of visionary leadership in educational settings (Y. Liu, Wang, & Huang, 2019). High scores for individual consideration and intellectual stimulation were also reported by Zhang and Sun (2020), who noted that personalized support and intellectual encouragement are key factors in improving teacher professional development and satisfaction (L. Zhang & Sun, 2020). Conversely, previous research has shown low scores for idealized influence. Eisenbeiß and Boerner (2020) reported similar challenges in achieving high levels of idealized influence, especially in environments where traditional hierarchical structures prevail (Eisenbeiß & Boerner, 2010). For example, Li and Chen (2018) found that Chinese leaders often struggle to maintain behaviors that consistently generate trust and respect among teachers (X. Li & Chen, 2018). This suggests a general difficulty in consistently embodying the moral and exemplary behaviors required for this dimension of transformational leadership.

The study also found that teachers' job satisfaction was at a medium-high level ( $M=3.70$ ,  $SD=0.94$ ). This suggests that overall, teachers are relatively satisfied with their jobs.

This satisfaction can be attributed to various factors, such as supportive leadership, adequate professional development opportunities, and a positive work environment. These results align with recent global studies. For instance, a study by Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2017) in Norway found that teachers' job satisfaction is significantly influenced by supportive school leadership, opportunities for professional growth, and a collegial work environment (Einar M Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017). Similarly, research by Collie, Shapka, and Perry (2012) in Canada highlighted the importance of school climate and leadership in enhancing teachers' job satisfaction (Collie, Shapka, & Perry, 2012). In the context of China, recent research also supports these findings. Liu and Li (2018) investigated teachers' job satisfaction in Chinese secondary schools and found that supportive leadership, professional development opportunities, and a positive school culture were significant predictors of job satisfaction (X. Liu & Li, 2018).

### **Effects of transformational leadership on Teachers' Job Satisfaction**

The results of structural equation modeling (SEM) showed that transformational leadership has a significant positive impact on teacher job satisfaction, with a standardized regression weight of  $\beta=0.36$  ( $p<0.001$ ). This indicates that transformational leadership behaviors are positively related to higher job satisfaction among teachers. However, the results of multiple linear regression analysis show that transformational leadership can only explain 10.4% of the variance in teacher job satisfaction in Zunyi School District ( $R^2=0.104$ ). This suggests that although transformational leadership is an important factor in Zunyi School District, it is not the main determinant of job satisfaction, indicating the presence of other influencing factors. Among the four dimensions of transformational leadership, intellectual stimulation ( $B=0.127$ ,  $p=.028$ ) and individual consideration ( $B=0.143$ ,  $p=.007$ ) were found to have a significant impact on teachers' job satisfaction. These findings highlight the importance of encouraging innovative thinking and providing personalized support to teachers. On the other hand, idealized influence ( $p=.0696$ ) and inspirational motivation ( $p=.080$ ) did not show significant effects on job satisfaction, indicating that these dimensions are not effectively implemented in leadership behaviors in Zunyi School District.

These results align with previous studies conducted globally and in China. For instance, a study by Eyal and Roth (2011) found that transformational leadership positively influences teacher job satisfaction, particularly through intellectual stimulation and individual consideration (Eyal & Roth, 2011). Their research supports the notion that when leaders challenge teachers to think creatively and cater to their individual needs, it enhances job satisfaction. Similarly, research by Bush and Glover (2019) in the UK indicated that transformational leadership contributes to teacher job satisfaction by fostering a supportive and intellectually stimulating

environment. This aligns with our findings that intellectual stimulation and individual consideration are significant predictors of job satisfaction (Bush & Glover, 2019).

In the context of China, Li et al. (2018) demonstrated that transformational leadership enhances job satisfaction among Chinese teachers, particularly through individualized support (Y. Li, Sun, & He, 2018). This is corroborated by the present study's findings that individual consideration significantly affects job satisfaction. Another study by Huang et al. (2020) highlighted the role of intellectual stimulation in improving teacher satisfaction in Chinese schools (Huang, Liu, & Chen, 2020), further supporting our results. However, it is noteworthy that idealized influence and inspirational motivation did not significantly impact job satisfaction in our study, contrasting with findings from some Western contexts where these dimensions are often highlighted as critical (Northouse, 2021). This discrepancy suggests cultural differences in leadership dynamics and their impact on job satisfaction, emphasizing the need for contextualized leadership approaches in different educational settings.

### Conclusion and Implications

This study, conducted in primary schools in Zunyi City, Guizhou Province, identifies a positive correlation between transformational leadership and teacher job satisfaction. Specifically, among the four dimensions of transformational leadership, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration significantly influence teacher job satisfaction, whereas idealized influence and inspirational motivation do not show significant impacts. Notably, prior research has established a close relationship between various dimensions of transformational leadership and teacher job satisfaction, with the degree of impact varying by context. Consequently, this study underscores the importance of transformational leadership in enhancing job satisfaction for school leaders and educators in China and similar settings.

Theoretically, this research contributes to the validation of transformational leadership theory's applicability and effectiveness within the Chinese educational context. While the theory has been extensively verified and applied in Western countries, its efficacy in China, with its unique cultural background and educational system, warrants further investigation. Empirical data from this study highlight the crucial role of intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration in boosting teacher job satisfaction, thereby offering fresh perspectives and support for the application of transformational leadership theory in China.

Practically, the findings offer valuable management insights for school leaders. Firstly, leaders should prioritize intellectual stimulation to enhance job satisfaction by fostering teachers' creativity and innovative thinking. Secondly, individualized consideration is vital for improving job satisfaction; school leaders should address teachers' individual needs by providing appropriate support and care. These practices not only elevate teacher job satisfaction but also improve overall educational quality in schools. However, the study has limitations. The sample is restricted to primary school teachers in Zunyi City, Guizhou Province, which may limit its representativeness and generalizability. Furthermore, the effects of other dimensions of transformational leadership in different contexts require further investigation. Future research should broaden the sample to include various regions and educational stages to affirm the widespread applicability of transformational leadership theory. Additionally, exploring the specific impacts of other dimensions of transformational leadership across different cultural and educational contexts would provide comprehensive theoretical and practical insights.

In summary, this study offers significant theoretical and empirical support for educational management practices through a detailed examination of the relationship between transformational leadership and teacher job satisfaction. It emphasizes the critical roles of intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration in enhancing job satisfaction, which is vital for advancing educational reform and improving educational quality in China.

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