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Why Teacher Job Satisfaction Matters: Strengthening Headteachers' Transformational Leadership in Sustainable Development Education

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ABSTRACT

Achieving Cluster School of Excellence (CSE) status relies on teachers' job satisfaction. This facet is crucial in driving the school towards its goals. This research employs a mixed-methods approach, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative measures. The quantitative phase includes 177 teachers from six CSE primary schools in Kota Setar, Kedah, Malaysia. In contrast, the qualitative phase involves in-depth interviews with 20 teachers. In the quantitative phase, this study employed two questionnaire instruments, the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) and the Job Satisfaction Index (JSI). These instruments were utilised to assess headteachers' transformational leadership level and job satisfaction in school. Within the qualitative phase, the researchers employed a semi-structured questionnaire to categorise positive and negative ideas regarding the four aspects of transformational leadership. The quantitative results indicated that four transformational leadership dimensions significantly relate to teacher job satisfaction explicitly: charisma (idealised influence), intellectual stimulation, individual consideration, and inspirational motivation. The qualitative results based on content analysis showed the frequency of responses for each dimension as follows: charisma (affirmative = 120, negative = 15), intellectual stimulation (affirmative = 80, negative = 15), individual consideration (affirmative = 70, negative = 16), and inspirational Motivation (affirmative = 40, negative = 16). The study concludes that the critical role of transformational leadership in promoting job satisfaction among teachers is crucial for achieving CSE status. The substantial correlations between teacher job satisfaction and the transformational leadership dimensions emphasise the significance of effective leadership in the school ecosystem. As a result, improving transformational leadership practices within schools can result in a more motivated and contented teaching workforce, contributing to the school's overall success.

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RESUMO

Alcançar o status de Escola de Excelência em Cluster (EEC) depende da satisfação dos professores com o trabalho. Esse aspecto é crucial para impulsionar a escola em direção aos seus objetivos. Esta pesquisa utiliza uma abordagem de métodos mistos, incorporando medidas quantitativas e qualitativas. A fase quantitativa inclui 177 professores de seis escolas primárias EEC em Kota Setar, Kedah, Malásia. Em contraste, a fase qualitativa envolve entrevistas aprofundadas com 20 professores. Na fase quantitativa, este estudo utilizou dois instrumentos de questionário: o Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) e o Job Satisfaction Index (JSI). Esses instrumentos foram utilizados para avaliar o nível de liderança transformacional dos diretores e a satisfação dos professores com o trabalho na escola. Na fase qualitativa, os pesquisadores empregaram um questionário semiestruturado para categorizar ideias positivas e negativas em relação aos quatro aspectos da liderança transformacional. Os resultados quantitativos indicaram que quatro dimensões da liderança transformacional estão significativamente relacionadas à satisfação dos professores com o trabalho, a saber: carisma (influência idealizada), estimulação intelectual, consideração individual e motivação inspiradora. Os resultados qualitativos, com base na análise de conteúdo, mostraram a frequência das respostas para cada dimensão como segue: carisma (afirmativo = 120, negativo = 15), estimulação intelectual (afirmativo = 80, negativo = 15), consideração individual (afirmativo = 70, negativo = 16) e motivação inspiradora (afirmativo = 40, negativo = 16). O estudo conclui que o papel crucial da liderança transformacional na promoção da satisfação dos professores com o trabalho é fundamental para alcançar o status de EEC. As correlações substanciais entre a satisfação dos professores com o trabalho e as dimensões da liderança transformacional enfatizam a importância da liderança eficaz no ecossistema educacional. Como resultado, melhorar as práticas de liderança transformacional nas escolas pode resultar em um corpo docente mais motivado e satisfeito, contribuindo para o sucesso geral da escola.

Palavras-chave: qualidade da educação, liderança transformacional, satisfação dos professores com o trabalho, educação para o desenvolvimento sustentável.

Introduction

Education is one of the areas that catalyses the country's growth in line with the government's goals as envisaged in Malaysia's Education Development Plan 2013 to 2025. The Cluster School of Excellence, called CSE, was established to accomplish this education in blueprints. The CSE is a scheme of merit applied in Malaysia given to high-performing schools, which, in turn, have a broader administrative autonomy and an additional allowance for the development of specific fields such as sciences, athletics and extra-curricular activities (Ministry of Education, 2013). In addition, the purpose of classifying daily schools as CSE is to produce more prestigious, innovative schools that excel in various fields, including academic achievement, management, and personality (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2018). This aligns with the findings of Rahman and Noor (2018), who emphasised that the government has been working to enhance the quality of primary education following the Malaysian Education Development Plan 2013 to 2025.

The success of a school is closely linked to the effectiveness of the headteacher's leadership (Bush, 2021). Additionally, the excellent performance of a school organisation and its administrative leadership style are closely intertwined (Igunnu, 2020). Transformational leaders have great potential to impact teachers' job satisfaction (Zhang, 2023). A likely reason is that transformational leaders constantly inspire and motivate teachers to perform their tasks well (Bormann & Diebig, 2020). Transformational leadership also focuses on building shared goals, enhancing communication and collaborative decision-making (Avolio & Bass, 2004). In this regard, a leader can change the teacher's satisfaction level towards the organisation's excellence.

Rai and Beresford-Dey (2023) conferred that leadership is a critical factor in the success of a school, as it plays a crucial role in shaping the institution and guiding the organisation towards achieving its goals. Nevertheless, the role of school leaders is an arduous task to carry out as many focus on leadership in terms of content, processes, impact, teamwork and goal setting (Gougas & Malinova,2021). Leaders who are less skilled in school leadership will create a sense of dissatisfaction among teachers in the school. Therefore, the headteachers should influence every plan and achievement in the school. Indirectly, this emphasises that positive attitudes taken by leaders can positively impact teachers' job satisfaction while boosting their morale and excitement for working in school (Sucuoğlu & Uluğ, 2022).

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Transformational leadership

Transformational leadership continued with the Burns Leadership Analysis in 1978. Burns (1978) connects the position of leaders and staff in inspiring and motivating workers to fulfil the vision and priorities of leaders and employees. Bass (1985) introduced the theory by stressing the emotional elements and triggers of charisma, claiming that charisma is essential but inadequate for circumstances involving transformational leadership. Transformational leadership has outstanding efficiency and potential. Transformational leadership can increase consciousness among its adherents to realise the organisation's goals while allowing them to explore and foresee more than their interests (Sahid et al., 2023).

In comparison, transformative leadership has a solid correlation with the retention of workers, which fosters and builds harmonious relationships, helping to drive employee satisfaction (Suryawan et al., 2021). According to Djatmiko et al. (2019), transformational leadership increases awareness, inspires and impacts subordinates, and builds benefits for team members. Bass (1985) was responsible for separating transformational leadership into various variables and ultimately implemented this principle in the course of a report, such as incorporating all leadership types such as directive, convincing, consultative, participatory or assigned tasks. In addition, transformative leaders encourage followers to transcend their needs for the group or organisation's objectives. The confidence, affection, honesty and respect followers feel for either leader (Chua & Ayoko, 2019; Rijal Fahmi et al., 2021). Moreover, Bass and Avolio's (1993) paradigm incorporates four dimensions of transformational leadership habits that increase charisma (idealised influence), motivational inspiration, intellectual stimulation and individual consideration (see Table 1).

Table 1. Four dimensions of transformational leadership

Dimensions	Application
Charisma(Idealised Influence)	Charisma means that attitudes expressing transformational leadership have often demonstrated self-confidence, emotion and improved self-esteem in their workers. Leaders can clarify and direct their followers to the target set (Bass & Avolio, 1993; Shava, 2021). Leaders will often put high expectations on the skills of their workers and support their subordinates to reach the highest degree of competence they want, instilling loyalty, emotion, trust, excitement, pride and optimism among their subordinates.
Intellectual Stimulation	Intellectual stimulation implies the actions of the leaders to promote innovative thought among the workers. According to Afsar and Umrani (2019), transformational leadership positively impacts employees' innovative work behaviour, with motivation to learn mediating this relationship. Transformational leadership should be able to deliver sound solutions, offer a fresh and productive response to the challenges posed by subordinates, and encourage subordinates to pursue new approaches to their job (Astutik & Karwanto, 2020).
Individualised Consideration	Individual consideration applies to transformational leaders who wish to hear and respond attentively to the needs of their subordinates and pay heed to the topics that occur. A leader who is still the coach, the support, the inspiration and the ability for a new employee to develop his or her experience, looking at the individual from the point of view of individual interests and priorities. Subsequently, transformational leaders presume that subordinate workers are individuals, create relationships independently, interact bilaterally and pay attention to the individual according to the skills and needs of the workers (Chua & Ayoko, 2019). Interactions between transformational leaders and subordinates occur in

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	a comfortable atmosphere since transformational leadership is so concerned with its workers (Anoop & Yang, 2016).
Motivational Inspiration	Motivational inspiration is accomplished using reassuring, motivating, uplifting, commendable and symbolic terms. Staff can carry out a mission with more commitment than the leaders need (Zhang, 2023). Transformational leaders are represented as leaders who will stick to part of the expectation of the performance of employees, convey their contribution to the ultimate aim of the company and be willing to transform the spirit of cooperation in the organisation.

Source: Authors

Job satisfaction

Job satisfaction can be interpreted as the affective inclination of people towards their positions in their work and their thoughts and attitudes towards their work (Madrid et al., 2020). Moreover, job satisfaction leads to motivation, occupational well-being, and work engagement, while dissatisfaction generates stress, pressure, burnout, and work-life balance issues (Briganti et al., 2023). People's experiences often influence their attitudes towards their jobs, and they develop attitudes towards their work depending on whether they have the interpersonal maturity that their work demands (Dekawati et al., 2021). In this way, work satisfaction can be described as an attitude to the job (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017). In addition, job conditions, such as roles delegated to students, support personnel, classroom and behavioural intervention support, connections with superiors, resource efficiency and class size, are frequently listed as essential variables impacting teachers' happiness at work (Hardianto, 2019). Furthermore, Dekawati et al. (2021) found that the value of worker satisfaction in school has been shown, particularly in terms of employee relations, attrition, absenteeism, competitiveness and performance. Instead, disappointment with teaching jobs leads to less commitment and less ability to continue in the teaching field (Saks et al., 2022).

The learning environment also influences the work satisfaction of the teacher and affects the student's learning experience (Zhang, 2020). The results of Türkoğlu et al. (2017) study suggest that if teachers feel that their instruction has resulted in a high degree of academic mastery for their pupils, this belief can lead to a high level of teacher satisfaction with their job performance. This situation needs to draw more attention from the headteacher because low job satisfaction among teachers will lead to low performance (Fei & Han 2018) and the willingness of teachers to make a great deal of effort to help their schools get better (Lee & Swaner, 2023). However, teacher satisfaction has demonstrated a high degree of teacher satisfaction where transformational leadership has been applied (Bormann & Diebig, 2020). Teachers who are passionate and zealous will also inspire teachers to work by extracting determination, affection, interest, excitement and a desire for quality work outcomes, leading to a high degree of teacher happiness and satisfaction with their work as educators (Dekawati et al., 2021; Tang et al. 2024).

Key challenges and concerns in the present research

Job satisfaction can enhance the success of a school, as it is anticipated to impact job outcomes directly. According to Thevanes and Jathurika (2021), the impact of happiness at work extends beyond employees to affect employers and society as a whole. Moreover, there is a strong correlation between employee happiness and job satisfaction (Thevanes & Jathurika, 2021). Furthermore, Dekawati et al. (2021) revealed that job satisfaction needs to be prioritised, as work-related issues are a significant source of workplace tension that can

negatively impact teacher productivity. Indirectly, this evidence highlights that job satisfaction is vital to a school's performance in pursuing CSE status.

Despite efforts to implement policy reforms, increasing demand for teachers has strained the workforce and affected job satisfaction among educators (Shava, 2021). Perhaps the shortcomings and inefficiencies of the CSE values contribute to lower work satisfaction and similarity between teachers and other schools in the Ministry of Education. CSE primary schools have the highest academic, co-curricular, and academic achievement levels in the Kota Setar. However, in recent years, the success of CSE schools in Kota Setar has possibly deteriorated due to a lack of leadership and job frustration.

The effect of leadership is not as inspiring as its contribution to teachers' job satisfaction in schools is happening but scarce. Some teachers feel obliged to fulfil the duties of the headteacher in order to accomplish the targets set, irrespective of the opinion of the teacher, unprincipled behaviour, and only wish to achieve academic success without taking into consideration the variables of teacher satisfaction in the school (Arslan et al., 2024). As a result, the headteacher faced numerous challenges and difficulties in improving his education. Among the challenges often encountered by the headteachers are a handful of teachers who do not wish to consider reform, teachers who cannot accept guidance and critique, teachers who are not constructive, do not have a sense of cohesion, do not embrace, are pessimistic and less disciplined (Djatmiko, 2019). In reality, this condition is a sign of disappointment with the instructor.

Signs of workplace discontent include boredom, truancy, poor engagement, complaints, demonstrations, resignations, early retirement, lack of trust, fatigue, burnout, deteriorating results and applying for reform (Munian & Hasan, 2020). Guchait and Madera (2016) claimed that work stress is a condition of tension that influences an individual's feelings, thinking processes and condition. Too much tension can threaten the capacity of an individual to deal with the environment. In addition, the increasing burden of teacher work interferes with the original work of teachers, which leads to dissatisfaction among school teachers and causes teachers to resign early or leave to work in other industries (Suryawan et al., 2021). Workload and adverse effects have a positive relationship with the intention to leave the current workplace and profession, with workload being the most substantial direct predictor (Jasiński & Derbis, 2022). This is in line with Saks et al. (2022), which notes that job tension has a positive and vital impact on the intention to leave turnover. However, while they do not support it, it does not directly influence and affect the research carried out because, in Malaysia, the shortcomings of teachers and the burden of teachers have a substantial impact on school success and job satisfaction. Consequently, the headteachers should not encourage this issue to linger because it would impact school success and hinder the headteachers from being successful school leaders.

Research Questions

The research questions were formulated as follows:
1. Is there a substantial relationship between transformational leadership and the job satisfaction score of CSE primary school teachers?
2. What factors contribute to a substantial relationship between transformational leadership and the job satisfaction score among CSE primary school teachers?

Research Methodology

The present study used a mixed-methods procedure. Integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches is crucial for comprehensively understanding the study's concerns. Indeed, integrating both methodologies is

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specifically crafted to exploit the advantages of both quantitative and qualitative data. Furthermore, it guarantees robust and comprehensive conclusions.

Study one: quantitative methodology

For the quantitative component of the study, data were collected using a structure consisting of a three-part questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed to gather detailed information across diverse aspects relevant to the research objectives, as follows:

1. Section A collected demographic information about the respondents, including gender, age, job grades, and work experience.
2. Section B focused on assessing teacher job satisfaction. The Job Satisfaction Index (JSI), initially developed by Brayfield and Harold (1951), was adapted to evaluate the level of job satisfaction among teachers in six CSE primary schools.
3. Section C examined transformational leadership qualities using the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) developed by Avolio and Bass (2004). The MLQ measures leadership across four key dimensions: charisma (idealised influence), motivational inspiration, intellectual stimulation, and individualised consideration.

Population and sampling

The target population for this study comprised teachers working in six CSE primary schools in Kota Setar, with a total population of 326 teachers. A sample size of 177 teachers was determined using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) formula, ensuring a statistically significant population representation. Stratified random sampling was employed to select participants, ensuring that various demographic factors such as age, gender, and job grades were proportionately represented.

Data collection

Data collection was carried out in a structured and systematic manner, as mentioned below:

1. Ethical approval was obtained from the Ethical Committee Board of the School of Education at Universiti Utara Malaysia. Subsequent permissions were sought from the Education Policy and Research Division (EPRD) of the Ministry of Education Malaysia, the Kedah State Education Department (KSED), and the Kota Setar District Education Office (DEO). Following these approvals, the researcher liaised with the headteachers of the participating schools to arrange the logistics of the study.
2. The questionnaires were personally distributed to the selected teachers at their respective schools. Each participant received a detailed cover letter, an informed consent form, and clear questionnaire instructions. The confidentiality of their responses was assured.
3. Teachers were given two weeks to complete and return the questionnaires. During this time, the researcher remained available to answer any queries and provide additional guidance.
4. Upon collection, the completed questionnaires were systematically recorded and prepared for analysis using IBM-SPSS version 27. Descriptive statistics, as well as inferential statistical methods, were employed to analyse the data.

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Study two: qualitative methodology

The qualitative aspect of this study involved in-depth interviews designed to complement and provide further insights into the quantitative findings, particularly concerning the transformational leadership strategies employed by the headteachers in CSE schools.

Sampling and participant selection

From the 177 teachers who participated in the quantitative survey, a purposive sample of 20 teachers was selected for the qualitative interviews. The selection was based on their responses to the survey, ensuring a range of perspectives and experiences were represented. All participants were provided with informed consent forms, which they signed to agree to the interview process, including the recording of the sessions.

Data collection procedure

The interviews were conducted in the participating schools at times convenient for the teachers. Each interview lasted approximately 30 to 40 minutes. The semi-structured interview protocol allowed flexibility in probing deeper into areas of interest that emerged during the conversations. The interview questions were derived from critical themes identified in the literature review and the quantitative findings.

Questions focused on the headteachers' transformational leadership practices, including their influence on teacher job satisfaction and professional development. The following questions were employed in the qualitative section:

1. Do you think the headteacher has taken sufficient measures to ensure the teacher's job satisfaction? How was this accomplished?
2. What strategies may the headteacher apply to set ambitious standards for the abilities of their staff and facilitate their subordinates in achieving the desired level of proficiency, thereby fostering loyalty, emotion, trust, enthusiasm, pride, and optimism among them? Is that to your satisfaction?
3. How did the headteacher motivate you to develop new strategies and approaches to overcome obstacles, concentrate on problem-solving, and prioritise action?
4. How can the headteacher designate projects for teachers to foster and enhance learning experiences while treating each teacher as unique? Is how he/she performs it to your liking?
5. How can the headteacher demonstrate his/her motivational inspiration using reassuring, motivating, uplifting, commendable and symbolic phrases? Are you happy dealing with him or her?
6. What is the power and vulnerability of your headteacher's leadership?

All interviews were audio-recorded with the consent of the participants. The recordings were transcribed verbatim, and participants were provided with the transcripts to verify and offer any clarifications or additional comments.

Data analysis

The transcribed interviews were subjected to a line-by-line analysis to identify key themes and categories. Initial coding was open, with codes later grouped into themes reflecting broader patterns in the data. Both positive and negative responses were considered to ensure a balanced analysis. In order to enhance the reliability of the findings, the interview data were cross-checked with the quantitative data, ensuring consistency across the different methods. Additionally, two teachers participated in a pilot study to validate the interview questions

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before the primary data collection. Complex coding techniques were applied to interrelate themes and provide a comprehensive context for the findings. The final analysis focused on understanding the interplay between transformational leadership and teacher job satisfaction in the specific context of CSE schools.

Results and Discussion

The respondents' profile

A total of 200 questionnaires were distributed to the respondents, and 190 were returned. However, only 177 responses were usable; the remaining questionnaires were incomplete or invalid. The respondents' profiles include gender, age, and teaching experience. A detailed description of the respondents' profiles is provided in Table 2.

Table 2: The respondents' profiles

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	77	44
Female	100	56
Age		
30 years old and below	26	15
31-40 years old	68	38
41 and above	83	47
Teaching experience		
10 years and below	79	45
11 to 20 years	48	27
21 years and above	50	28

Source: Authors

The headteachers' level of transformational leadership

Based on a study conducted at six CSE primary schools in Kota Setar, this study concluded that the headteacher's transformational leadership is satisfactory. Furthermore, the study found that the mean level of leadership dimension of intellectual stimulation was 4.60 (SD=.35), the mean dimension of influence and the dimension of individual consideration was 4.59 (SD=.34), while the mean dimension of motivational inspiration was 4.57 (SD=.33) (see Table 3). The four dimensions of transformational leadership are at a high level. This aligns with a study conducted by Alessa (2021), which stated that the four dimensions of transformational leadership are in good standing. The finding is also consistent with a study conducted by Jamilah and Yusof (2011) regarding high school leaders (headteachers) (SBTs) in Selangor, where all four dimensions of transformational leadership are high (M = 4.33).

Table 3: The Mean and standard deviation score

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Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation
Charisma (idealised influence)	4.59	.34
Individual consideration	4.59	.35
Motivational inspiration	4.57	.33
Intellectual stimulation	4.60	.35
Transformational leadership	4.59	.33
Teacher Job satisfaction	4.55	.26

Source: Authors

Transformational leadership, teachers' job satisfaction, and content analysis of leadership dimensions

Based on the Pearson correlation analysis, there is a significant relationship between the transformational leadership of the headteachers and the teacher's job satisfaction (see Figure 1). Headteachers have a decent leadership pattern to ensure high job satisfaction among employees (Udin, 2020). The Pearson correlation of the four transformational leadership dimensions is as follows: Charisma ($r=0.585^*$, $p<.05$), Intellectual stimulation ($r=0.504^*$, $p<.05$), Individual consideration ($r=.053^*$. $p<.05$), and motivational inspiration ($r=0.429^*$, $p=0.05$). On the other hand, the coding for each of the four transformational leadership had been recorded through content analysis from the interview transcript as follows: Charisma (affirmative=120; Negative=15), intellectual stimulation (affirmative=80, negative=15, individual consideration (affirmative=70, negative=16), and inspirational motivational inspiration (affirmative=40, negative=16) (see Figure 2). Both the quantitative and qualitative analyses found that transformational leadership helps teachers to be satisfied with their jobs and working environment.

The results are consistent with the study by Mahdi et al. (2021), which demonstrated a strong connection between transformational leadership and teachers' job satisfaction. Moreover, Astutik and Karwanto (2020) found that the transformational leadership behaviour of the headteacher has had a significant effect on the work satisfaction of the teacher. Transformative leaders are family members, friends, mentors, and a gentleman who can be trusted as an educator under their administration. According to Bass (1985), transformational leadership has characteristics conducive to school practice and transformational forces that drive transformational leadership in any school. In addition, transformative school leaders can also prioritise the accomplishment of a variety of core priorities, including helping teachers to shape, grow and sustain a positive working community, cultivating a collaborative environment and encouraging professional growth, and empowering teachers to solve challenges effectively (Dekawati et al., 2021; Tang et al., 2024). In order to better analyse the facets of transformational leadership, the thematic coding and quotation abstracted from the interview transcript are explored and supported.
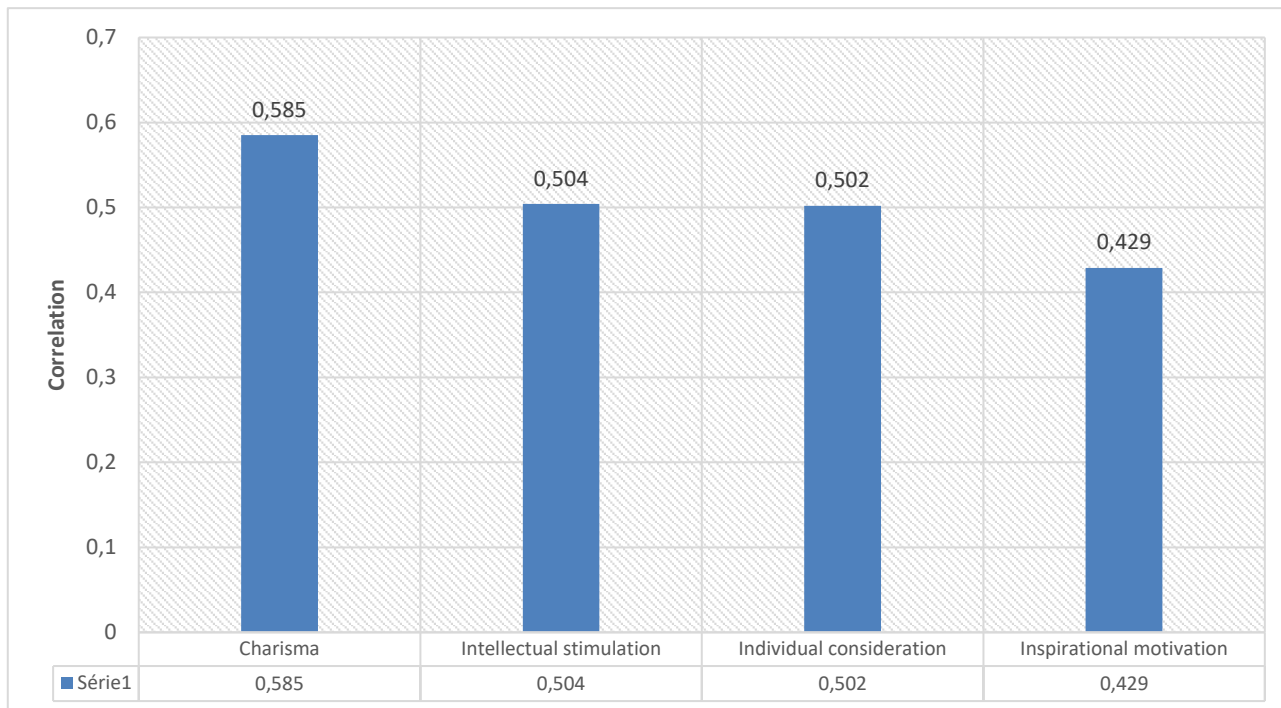
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Figure 1. The relationship between the transformational leadership dimensions and the teacher job satisfaction. Source: Authors
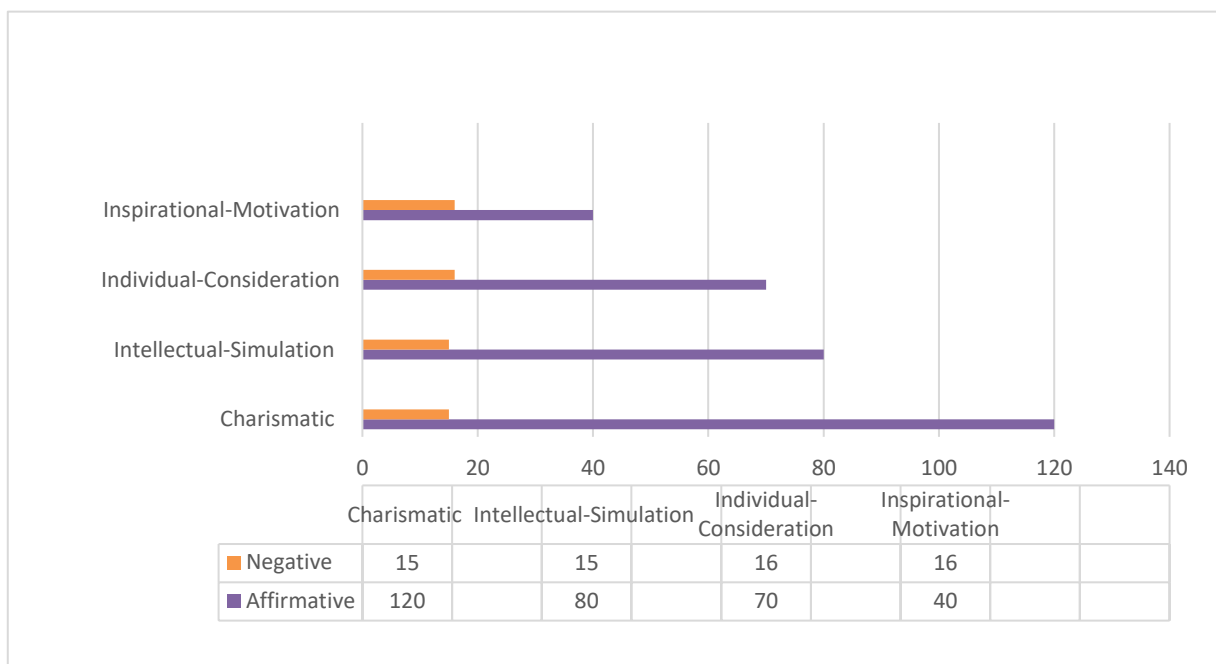

Figure 2. The themes of affirmative and negative assumption towards the four dimensions of transformational leadership. Source: Authors

Charisma (Idealised influenced)

Based on the result, it was found that the relationship between increasing charisma (idealised influence) and job satisfaction among CSE primary school teachers in Kota Setar was the highest for this population sample. This result is associated with a study conducted by Handayani et al. (2019), which found that the role of headteachers as the school's organisational leader leads to the success and satisfaction of teachers at work.

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In addition, Zhang (2023) discovered that implementing evidence-based practices by school headteachers to improve teacher job satisfaction and retention can ultimately improve student learning outcomes.

One of the respondents described the leadership of their headteachers as:

> "I have immense regard for my headteacher because his way of guiding us to school is very encouraging, and he has always inspired us to develop our abilities to reach the optimum standard of each child. They always put high expectations on our ability and enable teachers to attain the highest performance they want, instilling loyalty, emotion, trust, excitement, pride and optimism among their subordinates. You should call all the constructive reinforcement you like on how he worked to make us a better teacher. My support to the headteacher makes me believe that my experience is too important to be spread to our school students".

This demonstrates the popularity of highly successful figures as a source of inspiration for any school teacher. Waal-Andrews and Vugt (2020) also argue that skill leaders can raise consciousness among their followers about realising the organisation's needs while enabling them to foresee more than their own.

On the other hand, one of the teachers said negatively:

> "I am not sure how an arrogant headteacher can make me feel important; her disrespect for a teacher like me makes me feel that my name is not in her book." This means that it depends on the person. Perhaps some staff, particularly senior teachers, might intimidate younger headteachers who run the school, and some might feel like they have become disrespectful because of their background and their point of view not being included in school policy.

Regarding the cases, the headteacher must serve as a transformative leader to handle teachers so that they know their skills and knowledge have been respected (Cansoy, 2018). Prominent headteachers are selected for their strong sense of purpose, mission, and trust and their ability to increase teachers' enthusiasm for their work. Transformational leaders consistently encourage and inspire teachers to enhance their teaching practices (Bormann & Diebig, 2020).

Intellectual stimulation

The findings showed that the intellectual stimulation dimension among primary school teachers in the Kota Setar region was strong (M = 4.60, SD = 0.35). It can be seen that the headteacher of the CSE elementary school in Kota Setar strongly encourages the pursuit of new knowledge and the exploration of new learning skills among teachers to create a sound mindset when faced with problems and challenges. These criteria need to be applied as a culture of lifelong learning and not only as a focus on individual roles. The dimensions of influence are measured not only on their personality characteristics but also on the behaviour of the headteacher towards academic advancement, the encouragement of knowledge-enhancing teachers and the provision of new concepts for the use of more imaginative and inventive ideas. The shift in traditional thinking among teachers has been forced out by the headteacher so that the teachers are more prepared (Astutik & Karwanto, 2020).

Perhaps the point put forward by one of the respondents may ensure that the headteacher did his utmost to help teachers improve with a different approach to teaching:

> "I thought our headteacher had done his utmost to ensure new ways to turn old-fashioned teacher work patterns into more fruitful and successful teaching results. As usual, though, not all teachers will change

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> their habit of doing stuff dramatically. Some may require time to shift their practice into a different working style. It is not shocking to me that some of them may take up to three or four years to turn themselves into creative forms. I admire my headteacher, who did not push those considered sluggish learners to adapt, and he never discouraged them from adapting old practices to modern ways of functioning. We do not have any issues for me and some of my mates because what the headteacher did was already acceptable. It has always provided sound ideas, offered an innovative and productive solution to the challenges encountered by subordinates and encouraged them to pursue new approaches to their job. I assume he knows how to stimulate the intelligent instructor to improve, which some do well, but some also need time to change their actions. After all, I can see that my school teacher is pleased and relaxed with our headteacher's leadership style."

This indicates, however, that to turn the teaching mindset from old models to modern styles, some teachers may require some attention to make them more likely to execute new patterns and information in teaching (Rahman & Noor, 2018). In contrast, even though replacing the old form of teaching with modern ways of teaching is known to be successful, some teachers still have a more vital perception of not changing themselves.

One of the students expressed her frustration:

> "In education, I believe that every particular teacher has his or her way of teaching, including the old conventional type. You do not try to push people to improve things if they do not want to change them, and it will leave them so demoralised and disappointed to change something they have been building after so many years. I hope our headteacher will give some thought to teachers like me and give me time to pursue others."

In other words, what the teacher means is to give her time to adapt and to combine other transformational qualities, such as individual and motivational, and to allow them to change to something different in teaching. It is worth a try, but as it is a force to alter, it will make any teacher feel unsafe because what they have built their good teaching style for several years is not worth it. It is also the leadership style of the headteacher that would help teachers who need time to adapt to new ways of teaching and feel welcome to diversity. While it is known that the development of negative success results from the effects of transformational leadership, as described above, transformational leadership is still viable as an alternative to an efficient leadership style since the transformational method is deeply knowledge-based and more lasting, resulting in constant improvement and continues to improve performance (Rijal Fahmi et al., 2021).

Consequently, with continual progress in results, teachers' affirmation, satisfaction and work at school will continuously increase (Mahdi et al., 2021). In order to address the negative interpretation of transformational leadership and perhaps to explain the goal and mission of the school and ministry, in particular the MEDP 2013-2025 blueprint, teachers should also be motivated to ensure that the quality of education in Malaysia is at the same level as in other countries globally (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2018).

Individual considerations

From the study, it has been found that the individual consideration of CSE primary school teachers in the Kota Setar is vital. This shows that the headteacher who performs transformational leadership is concerned about the humanitarian approach towards the teachers under his guidance and acknowledges the teacher as a person with his strength (Chua & Ayoko, 2019). This indicates, however, that the headteachers in the CSE primary school in the Alor Setar district use individual consideration, one of the transformational aspects of leadership. Thus, this means that the leader can give followers responsibility to cause and encourage knowledge and the leader's consideration of each follower as a unique individual (Gougas & Malinova, 2021; Udin, 2020). Astutik and Karwanto (2020) agreed that her research promoted the transformational leadership of

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headteachers to affect teachers' happiness at work substantially. The priorities and direction of the school are specific instructions for teachers to carry out their duties. Teacher satisfaction is also an essential factor in assessing the success and excellence of a school.

One of the respondents said:

> "I felt that the treatment I received was so special that I felt so happy to work as a team at this school."

This indicates that if the leaders understood what the teacher did, they would create a positive working atmosphere for the school.

The other respondent suggested that:

> "How would you feel if your headteacher appreciated the job you did as a pupil? Of course, you felt so appreciated and pleased. At my age, where I have served for over 20 years, I wanted praise from the headteacher. I do not ask them to give me monetary appreciation, but it is enough to accept their friendly actions towards me as a way to say thank you. My headteacher's style of leadership (transformational leadership), which considers individual specialities and acknowledges each other's ways of doing work, made me so happy with my job."

This further indicates a significant relationship between individual consideration and work satisfaction. The impression of teachers was that their work was appreciated by the transformational leadership style of the headteacher expressing gratitude to them. Overall, reflecting on each person's individuality would help them believe their skills have been excellent (Chua & Ayoko, 2019).

On the other hand, school negativity is still the case, as one of the teachers argues:

> "I have my own style of making progress for my pupils, but our headteacher did not understand it. I don't know what else I need to explain to her. Often, I feel like she abandoned me, and I was the only one she did not like. Is it because of me as a person or because of my teaching skills that she does not like?"

In situations like these, it is not something where one needs to take sides by saying that the headteacher is not a strong leader and that the ministry should support the teacher in achieving a degree of trust. It can happen the way she said, but it also happens the other way around because when the headteacher has a chat with her, she thinks it will happen in a week and not necessarily like that. Therefore, if this happens, the headteacher, using a transformational leadership style, should encourage the teacher by having a nice chat about how to overcome her disappointment. Any of the concerns may have been due to school tension, disciplinary problems caused by students, and personal family problems that contributed to such a poor decision (Ertekin et al., 2023). Maas et al. (2021) also emphasised that time constraints, work overload, and student discipline issues drive mental tension among teachers. Sorting out the problems with the teacher would help make frustration shift away and bring the situation back to normal. In other words, teachers need to be respected by the leader in order to be pleased with their performance, which would build incentive and interest to work together as a team with the administration (Tang et al., 2024; Zhao et al., 2024) In the other hand, those teachers who do not get high moral encouragement and inspiration from school administrators would be utterly dissatisfied with their jobs (Suryawan et al., 2021). Therefore, fun and enjoyment must be reiterated because job-related issues are a significant source of workplace stress that can affect teachers' well-being (Dekawati et al., 2021).

Motivational inspiration

The study showed that the motivation level for CSE primary school headteachers in the Kota Setar was high (M = 4.57, SD =.33). This is because the leaders who exercise transformational leadership pay attention to direction, providing a sense of purpose for the teachers under their management. The motivational inspiration factor is crucial for teachers to produce ideas and motivations for teachers to contribute to the realisation of the school's goal and mission. Motivational inspiration is accomplished using reassuring, relaxing, uplifting, commendable and symbolic terms. Thus, with this form of action, the headteacher will convince the teacher to be inspired in their profession, improving their work satisfaction in teaching (Bormann & Diebig, 2020; Mahdi et al., 2021). In this way, the transformational leaders are seeking to build a mood in which teachers can distribute their learning; they are also working to define the personal interests that bind them to the school mission and to concentrate on improving the organisation (Shava, 2021).

One of the respondents believes in inspiration-motivated behaviour:

> "It is not the influence that the headteacher has; it is not the instruction. It is not the rule that kept me happy with my work. It is how my headteacher was trying to encourage me to do a good job and empower me to do a good teaching job. The way he encouraged us personally made me more involved in doing what I was meant to do. I am so glad that our headteacher oversees our school by individual consideration. The way she spoke and convinced us to do the work made me feel inspired to complete her assignment. She has inspired me and other teachers to be part of the administrative team".

Transformational leadership will persuade teachers to do their jobs more efficiently in teaching and other roles at school (Udin, 2020). Leaders who can encourage and empower teachers have helped them feel happy that they are qualified to be better, successful teachers (Ansley et al., 2019).

On the other hand, other respondents had a different view:

> "While our school is doing quite well in a National exam in Kedah, I do not feel like working in this kind of setting, where our headteacher is rude. The headteacher only knows how to make instructions without looking at the burden and workload we already have. She cannot see the real problems faced by teachers. In other words, our headteacher disrespected our hard work".

While individualisation also plays an essential role in making the teacher feel comfortable and pleased with their job, it has also occurred that the headteacher has also been found to neglect individual teachers. Thus, if this disrespect exists, the teacher will feel distracted and dissatisfied with their job. Thus, it would make teachers feel disappointed and discouraged from working (Djatmiko et al., 2019). Perhaps those headteachers who did not use the transformational governance style of the administration might build an unmotivated and arrogant situation among teachers that would end up with a frustrated working atmosphere for teachers.

Limitations and recommendations

This research has some limitations and could benefit from a more structured approach. Future studies should consider a larger sample size, including more schools across Malaysia. Additionally, comparing primary and secondary schools in both urban and rural areas would provide valuable insights. Future research should also examine differences in transformational leadership between male and female headteachers, as well as

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between experienced and junior headteachers and between leaders in CSE and other schools' clusters. Understanding these differences is crucial for avoiding misunderstandings, particularly in developing academic excellence.

Also, it is recommended that future studies use various methods, not just quantitative measures and interviews. For example, interviews could be supplemented with observation techniques, and a longitudinal study over a year could help identify the real challenges headteachers face in practising transformational leadership. Including school support staff in the research might also provide more diverse results. Future research should also explore the relationship between job satisfaction and factors such as bonuses and benefits, considering how these impact employee feelings, motivation, and the interactions between headteachers and teachers. This could lead to increased job satisfaction among teachers.

Transformation leaders aim to improve the ability of teachers and other relevant individuals in the school to achieve good academic performance. Moreover, transformational leaders seek to create an environment where teachers can share their learning, and they also work to define personal priorities that connect them to school goals and concentrate on improving the institution (Shava, 2021). Moreover, transformational leadership goes beyond the direct contact between leaders and followers. Furthermore, transformational leaders, through creativity, encouraging motivation, academic stimulation and radical egalitarianism, create an environment in which workers have a sense of institutional belonging and a more positive working relationship between leaders and employees (Udin, 2020; Yuliastuti et al., 2023).

The analysis further shows that effective school management by headteachers fosters a strong working relationship between them and their teachers. This positive leadership leads to consistent motivation and job satisfaction among teachers. Motivated teachers are more likely to find their work fulfilling and aligned with their needs, raising their enthusiasm and energy. This passion inspires teachers to excel in their roles. These findings align with Handayani et al. (2019), who found that the leadership role of headteachers significantly impacts teacher job satisfaction. Moreover, cooperation between headteachers and teachers in decision-making enhances teacher happiness, leading to higher satisfaction and better work outcomes (Alzoraiki et al., 2024; Dekawati et al., 2021; You et al., 2017).

Transformational leadership, characterised by positive and inspiring behaviour, is crucial for teachers' career fulfilment and life satisfaction (Mahdi et al., 2021). For instance, when teachers face difficulties at work, a transformational leader can help by providing guidance and solutions. Beyond work-related satisfaction, transformational leadership also positively influences teachers' overall life satisfaction. Positive examples set by headteachers can help teachers navigate daily challenges more effectively (Bernarto et al., 2020).

Conclusion

This research highlights high levels of transformational leadership among headteachers and teachers' job satisfaction in CSE in the Kota Setar. These findings are projected to inform future initiatives to strengthen school leadership and improve teacher satisfaction. Transformational leadership is vital in improving educational outcomes by fostering a positive relationship with job satisfaction. The results of this study may contribute to the advancement of national education standards and support Malaysia's long-term goals, such as Malaysia's National New Economic Policy Strategy by 2050 (TN50) initiative. To build a solid and capable nation, headteachers must understand and apply effective leadership styles that motivate and manage teachers, ultimately improving school performance and reducing teacher attrition. Transformational leadership is about guiding change and improvement. Such leaders inspire followers to prioritise the group or organisation's goals over personal desires, driven by respect and trust. Notably, the transformational leadership of headteachers can

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elevate individuals' mindsets and habits, leading to sustained success, higher job satisfaction, and improved performance.

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