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The Impact of Principals' Transformational Leadership on Multidimensionality of Teacher Job Performance: SEM Evidence from Chinese Schools

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Abstract: In the context of school management, effective leadership plays a pivotal role in the enhancement of teacher job performance. However, within the context of China's unique educational governance system and Confucian culture, there has been a limited focus on the impact of transformational leadership on teacher job performance. This study is grounded in the reciprocal nature of social exchange theory and investigates the impact of principals' transformational leadership as perceived by teachers on specific performance in elementary education. Through collecting questionnaires from 453 teachers and using SEM. The results revealed that principals' transformational leadership significantly enhanced teacher job performance and had significant impacts on TP, CP and AP. Moreover, teachers' gender does not moderate the overall model of teacher job performance, but notably, Female teachers are more sensitive in making adaptive responses than male teachers. Therefore, findings suggest that under the challenges of China's educational modernisation and reform initiatives for educators, transformational behaviours represent crucial factors in stimulating adaptive performance among teachers. There is also a clear implication for leaders who are responsible for reforms to adopt management practices that are aligned with adaptive trends. This will support teachers of all different genders in transforming their self-perceived roles within an evolving system.

Keywords: Leadership development, Teacher job performance, Gender differences, Chinese Schools

1. Introduction

In the contemporary globalised educational environment, teacher job performance has become a crucial factor in the development of students, the achievement of educational organisation goals, and the competitiveness of national education. According to international education assessment results (PISA), research shows that teachers' positive classroom behaviours help improve student achievement in math (Zheng *et al.*, 2024), and that teacher support is especially important for student achievement (Zhu *et al.*, 2024). With the advent of the Education Reform 4.0 era, the development of schools is transforming digital development, signifying not solely a physical alteration but also a shift in consciousness and behavioural patterns. As asserted by Indrawan *et al.* (2020), the contemporary age demands critical thinking and problem-solving skills, obliging educators to cultivate adaptability to confront the evolving landscape of education, policy, and the digital transformation in teaching and learning. Therefore, school reform needs to value and satisfy stakeholder demands (Neacşu & Georgescu, 2023).

Within the context of educational institutions, leaders play a critical role in defining the institution's goals and enhancing employee satisfaction. Research has demonstrated that a focus on leadership enhances teachers' performance, thereby fostering employees' organisational commitment, which in turn reflects their performance (Suryadi *et al.*, 2024). However, the prevailing issue remains the discrepancy between the management styles employed by leaders and the demands of teachers (Neacşu & Georgescu, 2023). This issue is especially pronounced in the current context of educational transformation. However, confronted with the challenge of internal school management, the majority of scholars have endeavoured to examine various leadership styles to align with the



distinct context of the school, to provide physical support to teachers, and to prioritise teachers' psychological well-being. In the contemporary era of Education 4.0, five leadership styles have garnered particular attention: transactional leadership, transformational leadership, democratic leadership, authoritarian leadership, bureaucratic leadership, and charismatic leadership. A recent study conducted by Indonesian scholars has substantiated the positive and significant impact of these leadership styles on teacher performance (Kadiyono *et al.*, 2020).

Transformational leadership is a type of leadership behaviour which adapts to the context of school sustainability. In comparison to other types of leadership, transformational leadership emphasises change and progress. In the contemporary educational environment, educators are confronted with numerous challenges and pressures that can result in psychological distress and burnout. This, in turn, can lead to a decrease in teacher initiative. According to Bass & Avolio (2000), who have studied the issue, effective leaders who employ transformational leadership, guiding their teachers through personal charisma and ethics, can foster an environment conducive to creativity and encourage courageous responses to challenges. Concurrently, elucidating the significance of teachers' work and providing individualised support are pivotal for their professional development and the attainment of organisational objectives.

Especially during school reform periods, achieving organisational goals is difficult without effective leaders. However, leaders completely working on hierarchy can lead to negative outcomes, with teachers losing their autonomy (Mincu, 2022). Transformational leadership is a distinctive style that inspires teachers' motivation and self-efficacy by setting clear visions, enabling them to work towards school development (Lin *et al.*, 2022). This leadership style combines leadership with flat management. Wang *et al.* (2024) revealed that in China, principals' transformational leadership behaviours enhance teachers' efficacy and promote job performance in educational practice. Li and Liu (2022) research demonstrated that this approach can facilitate teachers' capacity for self-transformation. Therefore, transformational leadership emphasises teacher support and development, making it more effective than other styles in enhancing performance by stimulating potential and promoting innovation. Moreover, China's Ministry of Education has issued documents for developing elementary education management and teachers. The Outline of the Plan for the Construction of a Stronger Education State (2024-2035) proposes strengthening education quality, enhancing teacher mobility, and increasing resource supply and documents proposed improvements to teacher performance evaluation methods and emphasising practice.

In recent years, Chinese research on teacher job performance has gradually increased, mostly focusing on management systems, resource allocation, and psychological factors. However, in-depth studies on the relationship between leadership and teacher job performance are relatively few in number. In particular, studies have shown that the higher the level of transformational leadership, the better the teacher's job performance at the elementary schools in southern regions. According to evidence, the two notable factors in China hinder the development transformational leadership and teacher performance. The first is the PRS management system within schools, where principals are empowered enough to implement decision-making procedures (Shang, 2021) and can only refer to the suggestions of a few headteachers. Within this system, educators are seldom granted the autonomy to expand their roles beyond the execution of their immediate responsibilities, such as the development of their own initiatives for school advancement. Furthermore, this "non-flat system" engenders a sense of fear among teachers towards leaders, thereby hindering their capacity to engage in the collective risk-taking process with the principal and their colleagues. The second reason is that Confucian culture defines a "mediocrity" work ethic which emphasises the maintenance of the current status and avoids the pursuit of power.

Moreover, teacher performance evaluations in China rely heavily on summative assessment criteria, while formative evaluations are underdeveloped. Less attention devoted to investigating specific teacher behaviours and competencies. Researcher illustrated that the three dimensions of teacher job performance must be considered (Bhat & Beri, 2016; Limon & Nartgün, 2020). Teacher job performance is a multidimensional concept; due to job complexity, teacher behaviour plays an important role in all aspects of school development. Therefore, this study attempts to fulfil the research gaps concerning sample diversity, cultural applicability, and performance dimension analysis. To examine the impact of transformational leadership on various dimensions of teacher job performance, the moderating role played by gender in this context is examined based on the sample from Northern China. This study also provides guidance to school managers on improving teacher job performance. Based on the above, three research questions were addressed :



RQ1: What is the impact of transformational leadership on teacher job performance in Chinese schools?

RQ2: What are the transformational leadership impact components of teacher job performance in Chinese schools?

RQ3: Does gender moderate the relationship between transformational leadership and components of teacher job performance in Chinese schools?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Development of Transformational Leadership

The theory of transformational leadership, developed by Burn in 1978, distinguishes between transactional and transformational leadership, which defines transformational leadership as enhancing followers' motivation and ethical commitment toward shared goals. Burns highlighted the leader's role in uniting followers and motivating them beyond self-interest. Bass (1985) operationalised this theory, showing that transformational leaders exceed expectations, who identified four dimensions: idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualised consideration. Then, Bass and Avolio created the MLQ scale for leadership, but there remain four dimensions of transformational leadership, studied by Bass and Avolio (2011). Another classical model of transformational leadership from Leithwood and Jantzi (1999) included: 1) build vision, 2) build consensus, 3) individualised support, and 4) intellectual stimulation. Leithwood's model emphasises school applicability and organisational elements (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006), while Bass's theory shows that leader behaviour directly influences subordinates. Most studies on transformational leadership in China have used Bass' model for quantitative analysis (Han, 2020), and they are applied depending on situational application by Leithwood's model.

Transformational leadership positively impacts organisations, as transformational leaders have a broader vision, focus on systemic factors, and foster deep learning within organisations by moderating factors like teacher collaboration and resource application (Sliwka *et al.*, 2024). A review article found that the influence of transformational leadership is linked to three themes: 1) perceptions, attitudes, and behaviours; 2) psychological resources, learning, and innovation; and 3) school climate and culture (Toprak, 2023). In terms of the macro-level, it enhances culture and climate. In a knowledge-oriented era, it boosts teachers' knowledge self-efficacy, leading to knowledge-sharing behaviours (Hoang & Le, 2025). A study also found that transformational leadership improves school culture and instructional performance (Alzoraiki *et al.*, 2024). In terms of interaction with the teacher, principals' transformational leadership improves psychological cognition and teacher behaviour. Research shows that transformational leadership promotes teacher leadership and enhances efficacy, supporting technology use and organisational goals (Ruloff & Petko, 2025). Teachers who perceive the benefits of transformational leadership are more committed to the school, positively influencing their behaviour and enhancing teachers' psychological resilience (Wang *et al.* 2025). In addition, principals' transformational leadership and teacher leadership were significantly and positively correlated and jointly contributed to teachers' efficacy in China (Li & Liu, 2022). Besides, Lin *et al.* (2020) found that Chinese elementary school principals' transformational leadership contribute to teachers' collective efficacy through task analysis and direction. A national survey of principals' transformational leadership showed that their leadership behaviours were at a high level, but lacked individualised consideration for teachers (Han, 2020).

In conclusion, Current research demonstrates the positive impact of transformational leadership on institutions and teachers. However, it ignores the importance of leadership-organisation integration. According to some statements, implementing appropriate leadership depends on context and program type (Abbas & Ali, 2023) and management context (Gal-Arieli *et al.*, 2020). Therefore, local, empirical research is crucial to understanding leadership mechanisms.

2.2 Teacher Job Performance: Dimensions and Antecedents

Scholars disagree on defining teacher job performance due to varying school measures. Kumar (2023) states that teacher job performance includes effective teaching, curriculum supervision, and ethical contributions. However, Bhat and Beri (2016) argued that scholars mainly focus on classroom teaching, overlooking broader changes in



teachers' roles. *Wei et al. (2023)* claimed that teacher performance evaluations now include both classroom instruction and professional obligations.

According to definitions of teacher job performance in China, no clear definition exists in China's literature. This study defines teacher job performance as behaviors occurring when teachers perform different performance, including task, contextual, and adaptive performance. Task performance covers school-assigned duties during working hours. Contextual performance includes voluntary activities during non-working hours, such as improving professional competence and after-school tutoring. Adaptive performance refers to behaviors through which teachers adapt to changing environments and professional pressures, adjusting organizational goals (*Bhat & Beri, 2016; Limon & Nartgün, 2020*).

In addition, teacher job performance is essential for improving education quality and school improvement. Teachers improve performance through emotion regulation, influenced by job expectations, environments, and well-being. The authors compared teacher performance in unsupportive settings to supportive setting, findings showed that key elements are school support and personal characteristic (*Wang et al. 2023*). In addition, *Soto-Pérez et al.(2020)* emphasized that educational institutions should focus on fostering intrinsic job satisfaction over extrinsic influences. Therefore, leadership affects teachers' job satisfaction and self-efficacy, helping reduce negative emotions from stress which proved teachers' satisfaction relates to self-efficacy and leadership (*Jentsch et al., 2023*). Given Chinese scholars have examined antecedents affecting teacher job performance, including emotional intelligence, organisational support (*Li, 2020*), job identity and psychological empowerment (*Zhang, 2024*), leadership styles (*Yuan & Yang, 2024*), job stress, and job satisfaction (*Gao, 2022*).

As above statements, a supportive environment influences teacher job performance and satisfaction through external and psychological factors. However, most quantitative studies fail to use appropriate methods for enhancing teacher job performance in educational reform contexts and lack of consideration for measuring teacher job performance of different aspects.

2.3 The Link between Transformational Leadership and Teacher Job Performance

Through past research, transformational leadership impacts the whole institution, particularly the teacher group. This section discusses how transformational leadership affects teacher job performance. In educational reform, transformational leadership drives enhances teacher competence and motivation through organisational vision, intellectual stimulation and individual consideration (*Yu & Jang, 2024*) and other ways affect teachers' emotions and autonomy, to develop leadership skills and self-reform capabilities (*Li & Liu, 2022*). Besides, transformational leadership positively affects teacher job performance through psychological elements and directly influences sustainable performance (*Alzoraiki et al., 2023*). A study showed in private Chinese universities, teacher identifying organisational vision, intellectual stimulation, and personal recognition from transformational leadership as drivers (*Yu & Jang, 2024*). When teachers who perceived principal leadership as positive in their self-efficacy get better performance (*(Da'as, 2023; Xie et al., 2022)*). This effect is more pronounced in teacher development than growth-oriented thinking (*Lin et al. 2022*). Leaders building trust enhance commitment (*Kılınc et al., 2024*), encouraging autonomy (*Khan, 2025*), and fostering innovation during school reform. It encourages teachers to use innovative technology and hold beliefs, promoting innovation in performance (*Schmitz et al., 2023*). The above empirical studies demonstrate that transformational leadership has a significantly positive impact on teacher behaviour. Through the perspective of social exchange theory, transformational leadership is essentially an investment in teachers' "social-emotional". In turn, teachers reciprocate by improving their attitudes and enhancing their performance.

Moreover, transformational leadership affects different aspects of teacher job performance through various characteristics. According to social exchange theory, interpersonal interactions are viewed as a process of social exchange. Transformational leadership was implementing by principal, who will fosters teacher commitment by setting an ideal standard, which makes educators more willing to embrace high-standard task behaviours (*Saleem et al., 2020*). At once, leaders give teachers' work high value by conveying an ambitious and inspiring vision. In return, teachers proactively advocate for the school, aligning with their shared values. (*Bakker et al.,2023*). This proactive participation in school activities is regarded as contextual performance. Research showed transformational



leadership directly predicted teachers' intrinsic motivation and initiative, facilitating non-tasks through individual consideration and inspirational motivation (Bakker *et al.*, 2023).

Additionally, the social exchange process functions as an "investment-return" exchange. When leaders invest in the growth of their teachers through intellectual stimulation and individualised consideration, the teachers feel obligated to reciprocate this nurturing and trust through their actions. For instance, transformational leadership encourages a challenging culture, provides individual support, and empowers teachers to make decisions and practice innovative ideas (Messmann *et al.*, 2022). Teachers are more willing to embrace the uncertainty of challenges and maintain their composure when facing change because they trust their leaders' foresight (Poza-Rico *et al.*, 2023). Especially during school reform, transformational leadership is crucial for motivating teachers to change their behaviour, due to teachers' perception of leadership. When teachers perceive leadership support and care, they feel more courageous in dealing with challenges.

2.4 The Moderating Effect of Gender

Gender is a frequently controlled variable in research, due to its influence on distinct socialised roles and behaviours. According to the social learning theory (Bandura, 1977), the process of gender role socialisation exerts a significant influence on the inclination of female teachers to cultivate interpersonal relationships, display empathy, and foster collective harmony in the workplace. When principals implement reforms, female teachers tend to perceive and accept these changes and support school development. Conversely, the predominant social image for males focuses on independence and competitiveness rather than relationships and cooperation. Furthermore, the occupational gender role for teachers is perceived to require qualities of compassion and patience, aligning with the occupational gender role of female teachers, according to the gender role theory of Bem (1981). Moreover, empirical research findings provide a strong explanation. For instance, Qin and Liu (2023) recognised that gender differences lead to different outcomes in professional learning, and female teachers are more sensitive than male teachers to the perception of principal support. In another study of Danish high schools, female teachers were promoted by transformational leadership, while they were not interested in the financial rewards provided by transactional leadership (Fjendbo, 2021).

3. Methodology

3.1 Sample and Participants

This study was conducted in Shenyang City, Liaoning Province, China. Shenyang is the capital city of Liaoning Province. As indicated in the official annual report of the Liaoning Bureau of Statistics, 8,056 professional teachers are employed in the 42 high-model schools. The Bukhari Sample Size Calculator (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970) can be used to determine a sample size of 368 and ensure the stability of SEM for the maximum likelihood method for cases exceeding 400 (Hair *et al.*, 2010). Consequently, the researcher determined that the minimum sample size should be increased by 25%. The final sample size for the teacher population was determined to be 460 ($368 \times 125\% = 460$) samples out of a total population of 8,056, which satisfies the recommended minimum sample size. To ensure a representative sample, the researcher employed proportion stratified sampling, calculating the sample size for samples of teachers in each school (for example, the school population /the total population = $273/8056 = 15.58$, ≈ 16 teachers. The second step of sampling, the random sampling method, was employed to select a proportion of teachers from each school for the distribution of questionnaires. The researcher adopted the online questionnaire for data collection to mitigate the potential for data loss and obtained 453 questionnaires, with a response rate of 98.5%. In order to protect the privacy of teachers and to employ anonymous online collection methods, no individual information can be identified. In addition, explain to respondents that the data will only be used for research purposes and will be destroyed at the end of the study, ensuring that the ethical standards of teachers are not compromised.

3.2 Instrument

This study was a survey that collected data using a questionnaire with two main scales. Three experts examined all questionnaires for content validity. Expert A was responsible for reviewing translation issues between English and Chinese, ensuring the original English questionnaire was fully and clearly rendered into Chinese. Experts



B and C, specialists in educational management and educational psychology, were tasked with examining the professionalism of the questionnaire. Furthermore, Experts B and C were from the same city as the research population who were very knowledgeable about the local educational situation. The questionnaire was revised in accordance with expert recommendations and was highly suitable for the cross-cultural application of the questionnaire. Finally, its reliability was validated, and it passed the Harman single-factor test. Principal component analysis (unrotated) was conducted on all measurement items, revealing that the first principal component accounted for only 34.02% of the total variance. This fell below the 50% critical threshold, indicating that no serious common method bias existed in this study (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2003).

One of them was the researcher-adapted sub-scale of transformational leadership from the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ 5X) (Avolio & Bass, 1993; Posner & Flood, 2016; Northouse, 2012), which the majority of previous studies employed. The reliability of the scale has been demonstrated in past studies, which have shown that Cronbach's alpha ranges from 0.62 to 0.91 (Dabke, 2016), with one study reaching a value of 0.977 (Olcer, 2015). The Transformational Leadership Scale has demonstrated its applicability in cross-cultural research. Most Chinese studies on transformational leadership have adopted the original scale as a guideline, with each dimension achieving a reliability of 0.7 or higher (Han, 2020; Guan, 2019). The transformational leadership scale comprises four dimensions: idealized influence (three items), inspirational motivation (three items), intellectual stimulation (three items), and individual consideration (three items). Additionally, the researcher employed the following response: Never =1, Rarely=2, sometimes=3, Usually=4, and Always=5 (Avolio, Bass & Jung 1995), to measure the extent to which teachers perceive principals' transformational leadership.

The scale employed to assess teacher job performance by Teacher Job Performance Scale (TJPS) from Limon & Nartgün (2020). This scale was derived from the Teacher Perceived Job Performance (TPJP) with 55 items, which was established by. Initially The scale composition comprised 32 items across three dimensions: task performance (16 items), contextual performance (9 items), and adaptive performance (12 items), Which internal consistency, as measured by Cronbach's alpha: task performance ($\alpha = 0.890$), contextual performance ($\alpha = 0.881$), and adaptive performance ($\alpha = 0.889$). The total scale demonstrated a Cronbach's alpha of 0.937. However, some items did not correspond to the Chinese context. For instance, "I cooperate with families in educational activities" or "I use my personal relationships to fund the school" in the Contextual Performance Dimension, it is a rare occurrence in China in elementary education. Therefore, the researcher adapted to the Chinese cultural context and teachers' situations, and retained the three dimensions and reduced them to 29 items through the pre-test. As indicated by the results of the study, Task Performance (11 items) has a Cronbach's alpha of 0.952, and Contextual Performance (9 items) has a Cronbach's alpha of 0.927. And Adaptive Performance (9 items) with Cronbach's alpha =0.933. The scale's responses, ranging from "Never =1, Rarely =2, Sometimes = 3, Usually =4, Always =5," offer a self-assessment of the participant responses.

3.3 Data Analysis

This study used quantitative analysis to conduct inferential analysis based on research questions. Following data screening, normality testing and common method bias, measurement models of transformational leadership and teacher job performance were validated by CFA in Amos. It examined reliability, structural validity, and convergent validity of the scale. The researcher validated overall measurement models of transformational leadership and teacher job performance, focusing on discriminant and structural validity. After these steps, inferential analysis addressed the three research questions. The impact of transformational leadership on teacher job performance was examined using SEM in AMOS. The independent variable was transformational leadership, and dependent variable was teacher job performance. Furthermore, the impact of transformational leadership on three components of teacher job performance was verified through path coefficients in AMOS. Finally, analysis was conducted on the structural model of TL and Components of TJP with gender as moderating variable through Multiple Group Analysis (MGA) to determine if gender moderates the structural model.



4. Findings

4.1 Descriptive Analysis of the Study Condition

Among the sample, 142 were male (31.3%), while 311 were female, representing 68.7% of the total. By age category, 171 teachers (37.7%) were under 30 years old, 175 teachers (38.7%) were aged 31-40, and those over 41 years old constituted 23.6% of the total. Regarding academic qualifications, 13 teachers had associate degrees and 18 teachers had Ph.D. degrees. The largest groups were teachers with bachelor's degrees (217, 47.9%) and master's degrees (205, 45.3%).

Moreover, for the examination of the actual conditions at Shenyang High School, Mean values were used to assess levels of principals' transformational leadership and teacher job performance. Results indicated that principals' transformational leadership was at a high level (Mean=3.388) and teacher work performance was also at a high level (Mean=3.435), according to Hamzah *et al.*, (2016) interpretation of levels.

4.2 Validate Measurement Model by CFA

This study applied SPSS and AMOS software to analyze the data. First, before conducting AMOS, the researcher must examine the data for normality and multicollinearity. The collinearity test revealed no multicollinearity between the TL and TJP. ($p < 0.05$, tolerance = 1.00, VIF < 5), and the correlation coefficient between TL and TJP was significantly positive ($r = 0.458^{**}$). Normality assumptions were evaluated using skewness and kurtosis indices. TL and TJP demonstrated a near-symmetrical distribution, TL normality results (skewness = 0.174 and kurtosis = -1.290), and TJP normality results (skewness = -0.017 and kurtosis = -1.347) within acceptable thresholds for univariate normality (skewness < |2|, kurtosis < |7|) (Kline, 2015). These results likely reflect the sensitivity of normality tests to large sample sizes ($N = 453$) rather than meaningful non-normality (Hair *et al.*, 2010). Given the normality results, the researcher suggested that the data satisfy the robustness criteria for maximum likelihood (ML) estimation in SEM (Byrne, 2016).

Table 1. Overall Measurement of Validity and Model Fit

	AP	CP	TP	IC	IS	IM	II
AP	1						
CP	0.551	1					
TP	0.565	0.539	1				
IC	0.327	0.312	0.32	1			
IS	0.354	0.338	0.346	0.555	1		
IM	0.368	0.352	0.36	0.577	0.624	1	
II	0.326	0.311	0.319	0.511	0.553	0.576	1
CR	0.93	0.934	0.935	0.831	0.799	0.802	0.801
AVE	0.594	0.61	0.567	0.621	0.57	0.575	0.574
AVE square root	0.771	0.781	0.753	0.788	0.755	0.758	0.758
Index	PCMIN/DF	RMSEA	GFI	AGFI	TLI	CFI	NFI
Value	1.255	0.024	0.902	0.89	0.981	0.982	0.917

After completing all preliminary tasks, we validated the separate TL and TJP measurement models using CFA, including internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha), structural validity, and convergent validity (CR/AVE), to validate the instruments. For the TL scale, the results were satisfactory. First, according to the reliability results by SPSS, four dimensions range ($\alpha = 0.797-0.830$) were greater than 0.7, proving internal consistency of the instrument. For structural validity, the TL measurement model showed good fit: $\chi^2(48) = 53.474$, all path loadings > 0.7 (0.711-



0.819), as well as PCMIN/DF = 1.114 (<5.0), RMSEA = 0.016 (≤.08), GFI = 0.980, and other metrics AGFI = 0.967, TLI=0.997, CFI=0.998, and NF1=0.977 (≥0.8). Based on CFA results for four dimensions II, IM, IS, and IC, CR ≥ 0.7 range (0.799-0.831) and AVE ≥ 0.5 (0.570-0.621).

The TJP scale showed good results in this study. Cronbach alpha, which validates the internal consistency of the instrument, was found to be greater than 0.7 for Task Performance (α=0.935), Contextual Performance (α=0.934) and Adaptive Performance (α=0.929). For structural validity, the TJP measurement model showed a good fit: $\chi^2(374) = 572.873$, all path loadings > 0.7 (0.735-0.809), PCMIN/DF = 1.532 (<5.0), RMSEA = 0.034 (≤.08), GFI = 0.912, and other indicators AGFI = 0.898, TLI = 0.975, CFI = 0.977, and NF1 = 0.936 (≥0.8). According to the results of the CFA for the four dimensions, TP, CP, and AP, the CR values were 0.935, 0.934 and 0.930, respectively, all ≥ 0.7. The AVE values were 0.566, 0.610, and 0.594, respectively, all satisfying acceptable values greater than or equal to 0.5. Finally, the overall (TL-TJP) measurement model was further validated. According to discriminant validity (AVE square root) to verify the independence between the different concepts (Table 1). The overall measurement model has good reliability and validity, and the structural equations can be used to test the hypotheses.

4.3 Validate Structural Model by SEM and Test Hypothesis

Structural equation modelling of TL and TJP (Figure 1) was used to verify RQ1. First, the model fit index of TL-TJP was satisfactory and consistent with the TL-TJP measurement model. TL explains 0.362 (36.2%) of the TJP variability through the R2. The results indicated that TL has a significant positive impact on TJP ($\beta = 0.601$, S.E. = 0.078, C.R. = 7.512, $p < .001$). In terms of judging the impact criteria, ($\beta \geq 0.5$) has a high impact, medium impact $0.10 < \beta < 0.50$, and low impact $\beta \leq 0.10$ (Cohen, 1988), which proves that TL has a high impact on TJP. This finding demonstrates that transformational leadership can effectively enhance teacher job performance.

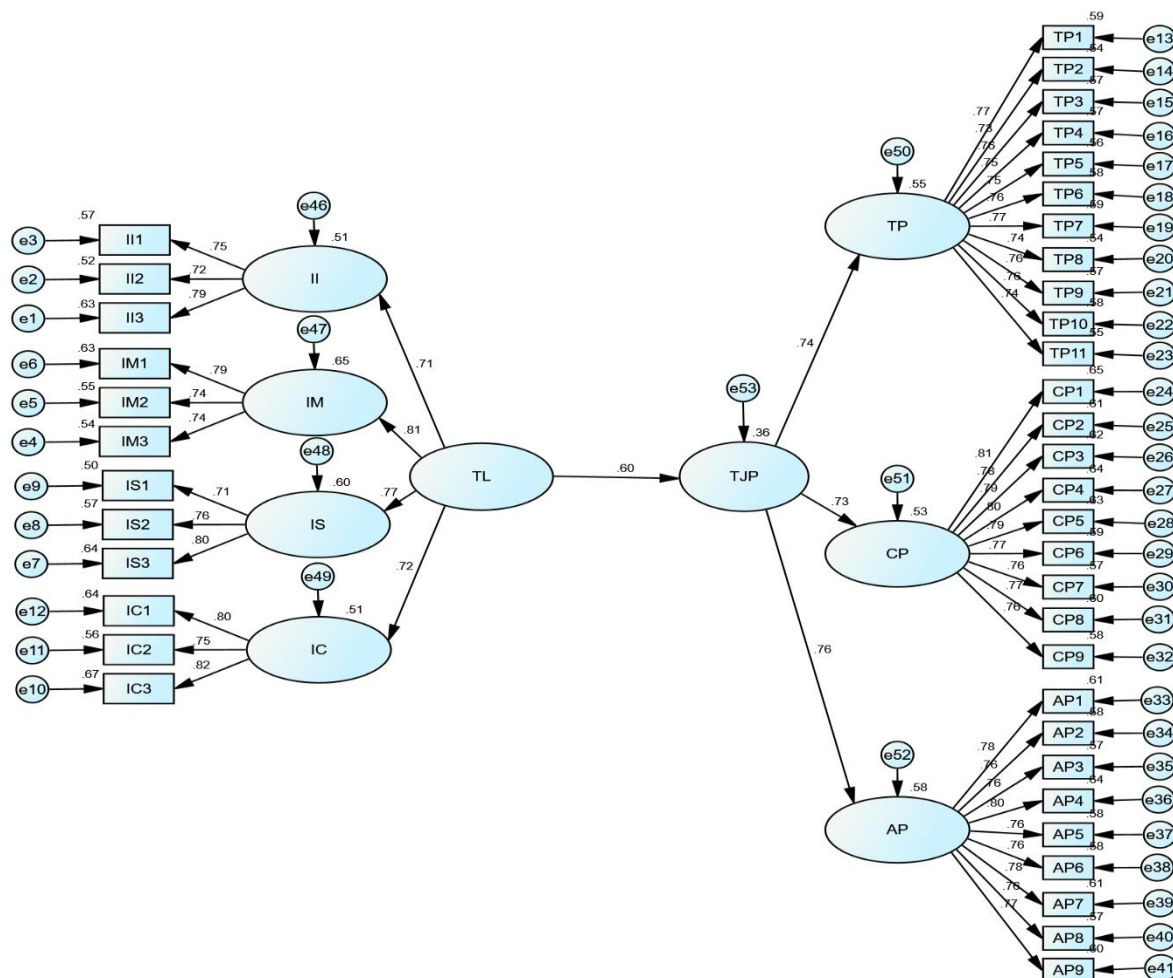


Figure 1. Structural Model of TL-TJP



Further, to explore the impact of transformational leadership on the three components of TJP (TP, CP, and AP). Structural equations for TL impact on TP, CP, and AP were answered to RQ2. Results showed good model fit with $\chi^2 (772) = 1119.693$, PCMIN/DF = 1.45 (<5.0), RMSEA = 0.032 (≤ 0.08), GFI = 0.884, other indicators AGFI = 0.87, TLI = 0.966, CFI = 0.966, TLI = 0.966, CFI = 0.966, and other metrics AGFI = 0.984, and other metrics AGFI = 0.984. 0.87, TLI = 0.966, CFI = 0.968 and NF1 = 0.904 (≥ 0.8).

Regarding the impact of TL on the components of TJP (Figure 2), TL had a significant positive impact on TP ($\beta = 0.605$, S.E. = 0.091, C.R. = 8.344, $p < .001$). TL has a significant positive impact on CP ($\beta = 0.574$, S. E. = 0.112, C.R. = 7.747, $p < .001$). TL had a significant positive impact on AP ($\beta = 0.624$, S.E. = 0.124, C.R. = 7.58, $p < .001$). According to Cohen (1988), TL has a high impact on the three components of TJP (TP, CP, and AP). Thus, it is proven that transformational leadership can effectively promote teachers' task performance, contextual performance, and adaptive performance in model high schools.

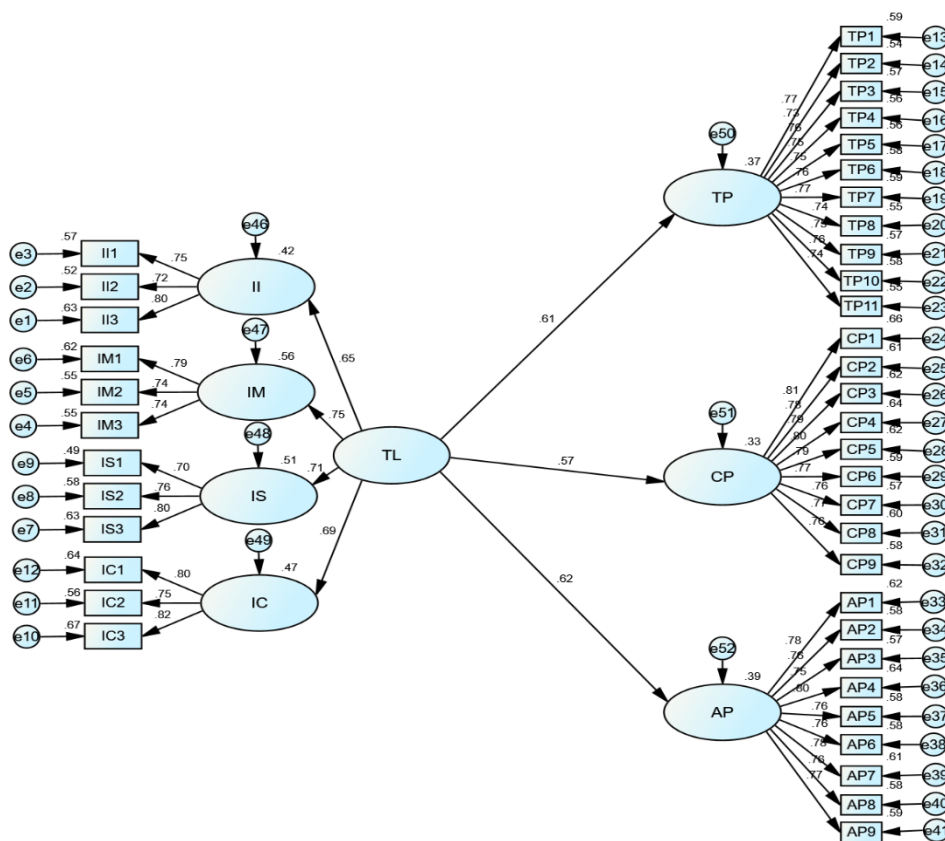


Figure 2. Structural Model of TL - Components of TJP

4.4 Multiple-Groups Analysis (MGA)

This section is the validation of gender as a moderating factor on the second model (Figure 2). The researcher created two groups, designated as "Group 1" for males and "Group 2" for females, and conducted the multigroup analysis in AMOS. The initial step was to assess the fit of the baseline model (unrestricted model) to determine its suitability for the MGA. The Amos results demonstrated an adequate model fit: PCMIN/DF = 1.317 (<5.0), RMSEA = 0.027 (≤ 0.08), GFI = 0.817, TLI = 0.952, CFI = 0.955, and IFI = 0.956 (≥ 0.8). This suggests that the overall structural model can be used in MGA analyses.

In the second step, gender was examined as a moderating effect. This study determined the chi-square difference and its significance by comparing the unconstrained model to the structural weights (Table 2). The result was $\Delta\chi^2 (40) = 45.216$, $p = .261 > .05$. This indicates that gender does not have a significant moderating impact



on the path coefficients (structural weights), and there is no significant moderating impact. Furthermore, the model comparison was based on an unrestricted model in which the structural weights were restricted for all paths (IV → DV1/2/3). It was constrained to be equal for both males and females. The overall path coefficients showed no statistically significant impact of gender, and the results demonstrated that the overall model is invariant to gender. Moreover, the researchers conducted a more extensive analysis of the differences between genders in the pathways (TL → TP/CP/AP). A comparison of the z-values from Group 1 and Group 2 in the unrestricted model was used to assess the impact of gender on different pathways.

Table 2. Moderation with Chi-Square(χ^2)

Model	NPAR	CMIN	DF	p	CMIN/DF
Unconstrained	178	2033.545	1544	.000	1.317
Structural weight	138	2078.761	1584	.000	1.312
Chi-square(χ^2) sig.	—	45.216	40	.261	1.130

As demonstrated in Table 3, Group 1 (males) and Group 2(females) achieved statistical significance across all path coefficient groupings, thereby confirming the impact of TL on TP/CP/AP in both male and female groups. According to formulate of $z = \frac{\beta_1 - \beta_2}{\sqrt{SE^2_{\beta_1} + SE^2_{\beta_2}}}$, calculated and checked related p-value (two-tailed) was used to determine which pathway differs between two groups (Table 3). z-tests results showed that although the female group had a greater impact than the male group, the differences were not significant, TL→TP (p=0.072) and TL→CP (p=0.276) (p >.05) in the two groups. In addition, only the TL→AP pathway has a significant difference between the two groups, given results of $\Delta B = 1.109 - 0.599 = 0.51$ (z=2.31, p=0.021<.05). Thus, it can be explained that gender has a significant moderating impact in adaptive performance.

Table 3. Results of MGA & z-Tes

Structural path	B (G.1)	B (G.2)	B (G.1)	B (G.2)	S.E. (G.1)	S.E. (G.2)	z	p
IV→ TP	0.595	0.974	0.468	0.652	0.144***	0.154***	1.80	0.072
IV→ CP	0.755	1.011	0.518	0.592	0.167***	0.166***	1.09	0.276
IV→ AP	0.599	1.109	0.491	0.669	0.14***	0.171***	2.31	0.021

5. Discussion

This study examined three research questions through data analysis of principals’ transformational leadership impact on teacher job performance and gender’s moderating effect in Liaoning Province, China. Descriptive statistics revealed that the majority of teachers are female and young, under the age of 40, with advanced qualifications at bachelor’s and master’s levels. Furthermore, Mean values suggest that the principal’s transformational leadership and teacher job performance are both at a high level. As abovehigh school possess high quality in capital of province and high level whole educators.

Besides, the SEM results showed that transformational leadership had a positive and significant impact on overall teacher job performance ($\beta = 0.601$, p < .001). This finding provides evidence that when teachers perceive transformational leadership behaviours by the principal, these significantly and directly influence teacher job performance in model high school Shenyang.This finding further validates the hypothesis that high-performing schools in the provincial capital of Liaoning are equipped with excellent teachers, implement effective teaching methodologies, and foster a positive learning environment. The findings are consistent with social exchange theories, the transformational leadership as principal investment in teachers, in turn, teachers will provide feedback as a



counterpart of job performance under the transformational leadership model. This aligns with the empirical results that examine the adaptation of cross-cultural theory from Bass (1985) and Bass and Avolio (2004).

The empirical results is consistent with views, Da'as (2023) and Xie *et al.* (2022) stated when teachers perceive principals' transformational leadership, performance is further enhanced. Besides, the research findings provide answers regarding how transformational leadership influences teacher performance within the context of educational reform. This aligns with the perspective of the behaviour articulated by Yu and Jang (2024), who contend that in China's era of educational transformation, all organisations must cultivate a mindset for reform. Transformational leadership is a style possessing this characteristic, enhancing teachers' capacity and motivation to achieve high performance through vision creation, intellectual stimulation, and individualised consideration. Furthermore, these findings align with Lin *et al.* (2020) notion that headteachers foster teachers' growth mindsets through inspirational motivation and individualised consideration, and Khan(2025) observation that idealised influence encourages teachers' proactive engagement in practice. Concurrently, within the Education 4.0 framework, intellectual stimulation approaches stimulate teachers' creative thinking while embracing new technologies and pedagogical methods (Schmitz *et al.*, 2023). Consequently, this research supplements the lack of regional studies on transformational leadership in China, which explains that transformational leadership styles represent a crucial skill for contemporary principals. This plays a significant role in managing teacher performance and fostering harmonious "leader-follower relationships".

Transformational leadership can address two major issues present in China's current situation. First, it can mitigate the shortcomings of the PRS system. Because China's political system centres on party governance and the pursuit of party ideology, schools have developed multi-tiered management structures. These structures lead to delayed internal communication and isolated "leader-subordinate" relationships, as principals and secretaries largely determine institutional decisions and planning (Shang, 2021). However, the four behaviours of transformational leadership have significantly improved the current situation. The principal has a noble character, which has earned him the trust of all the teachers who guide them to work together toward a promising vision. By supporting creative ideas and fostering a harmonious work environment, the principal cultivates teachers' professional capabilities. Furthermore, paying individualised attention to each teacher strengthens smooth working relationships. Another reason lies in the prevalence of Confucian culture, which fosters a "neutral and moderate" mindset among most teachers in low-performing schools. They hesitate to challenge authority, offer suggestions, or attempt new technologies. This results in a seemingly unvarying level of performance, which traps schools in a cycle of low achievement. While this study focuses on high-performing schools, where teachers proactively engage with their work and embrace challenges, potentially avoiding the rigid management and cultural pitfalls, principals should be aware of how their transformational leadership behaviours influence teachers. By communicating these efforts appropriately, principals can more effectively foster improved job performance.

Another SEM modelling explored the impact of transformational leadership on task, contextual, and adaptive performance. On the one hand, this study emphasizes components of teacher job performance, it addressed critiques by Bhat and Beri (2016) regarding teacher job performance assessment in classroom instruction, illustrated that teacher behavior occurs in multiple scenarios. This study recommends implementing a daily evaluation system for teachers' multidimensional performance through self-assessment. This approach enables teachers to identify their own shortcomings, facilitating prompt adjustments. On another hand, the results illustrated that transformational leadership exerts a positive and significant impact on three components of teacher job performance. This further validates the normative mechanism of social exchange theory within high-performing school settings, demonstrating that principals can effectively enhance teachers' individual work performance, stimulate contextual behavior, and encourage active participation in adaptive initiatives. This finding aligns with Saleem *et al.* (2020), who emphasized that transformational leadership centers on "interpersonal relationships" to motivate teachers to achieve high-performance standards. Regarding contextual performance, results align with mechanisms proposed by Bakker *et al.*(2023) for transformational leadership, designed to stimulate teachers' motivation and initiative. The study verified the impact of individual consideration and inspirational motivation on teachers' spontaneous behaviours. It is noteworthy that the findings reveal that when teachers perceive principals exhibiting transformational leadership behaviours, this has a substantial positive impact on teachers' adaptive performance ($\beta = 0.624$). Past studies reinforcing the results that school create the supportive environment and stable emotions foster teachers' adaptive capacity (Messmann *et al.*,2022; Pozo-Rico *et al.*, 2023).



The multi-group analysis, with gender as a moderator, revealed similarities and differences with previous studies. First, the study showed that gender does not moderate the TL components of the TJP structural model. This finding contrasts with those of most other studies (Fjendbo, 2021). Although there is no difference in teacher job performance between male and female teachers. However, researchers have proposed that gender differences exist in different performance aspects. The multi-group analysis indicated that gender differences were only significant in the impact of TL on AP. This finding is consistent with that of Qin and Liu (2023), who stated that female teachers were more sensitive to support from their principals. This finding suggests that gender differences are context-dependent. This research provides empirical validation of the findings of social learning theory (Bandura, 1977) and gender theory (Bem, 1981), which proposed that female teachers show heightened sensitivity and empathy due to their gender-specific traits, but this is different from male teachers in terms of gender characteristics. This finding also helps explain how the principal's transformational leadership and interactions with the teachers are primarily characterised by 'interpersonal relationship and socio-emotion' rules, with female teachers tending to display a greater propensity for social engagement and collectivism. Moreover, this finding also extends to the reality that even when principals are not familiar with transformational thinking or behaviour, all gendered teachers still fulfil their duties and engage in voluntary behaviours based on their sense of professional commitment. For instance, undertaking additional duties at home, assisting novice teachers in adapting to their environment, and providing extra tuition to students apart from school hours. However, female teachers who rated their own cooperation with the headteacher demonstrated better adaptive performance. For instance, they adapted promptly to the school environment and facilities; interacted effectively with colleagues from diverse cultural backgrounds; and managed work-related stress, professional challenges and unexpected incidents efficiently.

Furthermore, this study has three theoretical implications. First, it integrates a new model of how transformational leadership affects teacher job performance across task, contextual, and adaptive dimensions, enriching the application of social exchange theory. Secondly, this study provides a gender angle for understanding the impact of transformational leadership. Third, the applicability of transformational leadership in local contexts was verified in northern China, providing a foundation for cross-cultural leadership research. At the practical level, this study guides administrators' development with transformational leadership and improves teacher job performance. To suggest that leaders leverage strengths across gender groups improves teaching effectiveness and provides suggestions for optimising education management and quality. In addition, it reforms the teacher evaluation method, suggesting that they add daily evaluation of teacher job performance.

Despite its theoretical and practical importance, this study has limitations. First, the sample was restricted to model high schools in Shenyang City, Liaoning Province, which may limit the applicability of the findings due to regional and school-type constraints. Second, the data were collected via a cross-sectional survey and did not include longitudinal or qualitative research, which are necessary to uncover long-term causal relationships between transformational leadership and teacher job performance development. Although the moderating effect of gender was examined, the potential influence of other demographic variables (such as age, teaching experience, or academic qualifications) on leadership effects remains uninvestigated. The researcher recommends that future studies employ mixed methods to thoroughly explore the mechanisms and impacts of transformational leadership on teacher job performance, using samples from multiple districts and various types of schools. Furthermore, integrating interdisciplinary theories could enrich the leadership model and support innovations in educational management.

6. Conclusion

This study aims to conduct regional empirical research using an innovative model. Furthermore, it enriches the theoretical interpretation and empirical validation of social exchange theory, thereby helping to fill gaps in the existing literature. First, findings revealed that transformational leadership significantly and positively affected teacher job performance, as well as task, contextual, and adaptive performance. This validates the key role of principals' transformational leadership on teacher job performance in the school reform of the Chinese situation. Moreover, multi-group analysis revealed that female teachers expressed greater willingness to engage with change initiatives, maintaining composure even under pressure and challenging situations. The above evidence demonstrates that in the new era of education, the necessity for principals' transformational leadership has a noticeable effect on enhancing various aspects of teacher job performance. It also reminds leaders in low-performing schools that they



should flexibly implement management approaches and reform the current PRS system. In addition, they should guide teachers to improve their understanding of rigid culture and enhance their own skills, enabling them to develop alongside the organization under the wave of reform.

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Does this article screen for similarity?

Yes

Conflict of Interest

The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare. There is also no financial interest to report. The author certifies that the submission is original work and is not under review at any other publication.

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