

The Impact of Transformational Leadership on School Culture

John Michael V. Sasan¹, Gemma R. Escultor², Vahid Norouzi Larsari³

PAU Excellencia Global Academy Foundation¹

Surigao del Norte State University, Main Campus, Surigao City²

Department of pre-primary and primary education, Charles University, prague, czech republic³

Email : johnmichaelsasan27@gmail.com¹, gescultor@ssct.edu.ph²,
vahid.norouzi@pedf.cuni.cz³

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study explores how transformational leadership affects school culture in high schools. The study interviewed five school heads, five teachers, and five students to examine the influence of transformational leadership practices on school culture. The findings indicate that transformational leadership practices, such as setting high expectations, building a sense of community, and focusing on student learning, can result in a positive school culture characterized by high levels of engagement and collaboration among staff and students. The study emphasizes the essential role of school leaders in shaping school culture. By implementing transformational leadership practices, school leaders can create a culture that empowers their staff and students, and fosters collaboration. However, the study also recognizes the challenges and limitations of transformational leadership; the need for school leaders to be aware of these challenges and works to address them. The study provides recommendations for school leaders and policymakers to effectively implement transformational leadership practices, including investing in professional development, fostering a culture of empowerment and support, and encouraging collaboration and teamwork. This study offers valuable insights into the impact of transformational leadership on school culture, highlighting the significance of creating a positive school culture that promotes student success and overall school excellence.

INTRODUCTION

School culture plays a critical role in shaping the academic, social, and emotional development of students. School culture encompasses the values, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors that shape the way people interact and communicate within an educational setting (Cohen, 1960). Effective leadership is essential in shaping school culture and can significantly impact student

achievement, teacher satisfaction, and overall school effectiveness (Avolio & Bass, 2001). Transformational leadership has emerged as a promising approach to shaping school culture and improving academic outcomes. This study aims to explore the impact of transformational leadership on school culture through a qualitative analysis of the experiences of teachers and administrators in a high school setting (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

Effective school leadership is critical in shaping school culture, which can have a profound impact on student learning outcomes, teacher job satisfaction, and overall school effectiveness. Positive school culture is associated with higher academic achievement, increased student engagement, and improved student behavior, while negative school culture is linked to lower academic outcomes, teacher burnout, and decreased student motivation (Dawkins, Martin, Scott, Sanderson, & Schüz, 2021).

Transformational leadership has emerged as a promising approach to improving school culture and enhancing academic outcomes. Transformational leadership is characterized by leaders who inspire and motivate others to achieve a common vision and work towards a shared goal (Bass & Bass Bernard, 1985). This approach is based on the belief that leaders can inspire followers to transcend their self-interest and work towards a higher purpose, creating a sense of unity and common purpose. Transformational leaders focus on developing a strong sense of teamwork, collaboration, and trust within the organization, which can create a positive school culture and improve student learning outcomes (Bass & Bass Bernard, 1985).

Studies have shown that transformational leadership can significantly impact school culture and improve academic outcomes. Transformational leaders have been found to create a positive school culture characterized by shared values, high expectations, and a focus on continuous improvement (Dawkins et al., 2021). These leaders have also been found to improve teacher job satisfaction and reduce teacher turnover (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 2003). However, despite the growing interest in transformational leadership, there is a lack of empirical research on the impact of this leadership style on school culture, particularly in high schools. This study seeks to fill this gap by exploring the impact of transformational leadership on school culture in a high school setting (Green, 2018).

The purpose of this study is to examine the impact of transformational leadership on school culture in a high school setting (Yin, 2014). Specifically, the study seeks to understand how transformational leadership practices influence school culture and to explore the experiences of teachers and administrators in a high school setting. The study will use a qualitative research design to gain an in-depth understanding of the experiences of teachers and administrators in a high school setting and their perceptions of the impact of transformational leadership on school culture (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

School culture is a complex concept that encompasses the values, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors that shape the way people interact and communicate within an educational setting. According to (Schein, 2010), school culture is the shared assumptions, beliefs, and values that underlie the way people behave within a school. Positive school culture is characterized by shared values, high expectations, and a focus on continuous improvement, while negative school culture is associated with low expectations, cynicism, and lack of trust (Dawkins et al., 2021).

School culture is a multi-faceted concept that has been extensively researched by scholars in the field of education. The way people interact, communicate, and behave within an educational

setting is influenced by the shared assumptions, beliefs, and values that define the school culture (Malone, 2015). (Schein, 2010) defined school culture as the set of shared assumptions, values, and beliefs that underlie the behavior of individuals within a school. Positive school culture is characterized by shared values, high expectations, and a focus on continuous improvement, while negative school culture is associated with low expectations, cynicism, and lack of trust (Dawkins et al., 2021).

According to Fullan (2007), school culture plays a crucial role in promoting student achievement, teacher satisfaction, and overall school effectiveness. Positive school culture enhances teacher collaboration, promotes positive teacher-student relationships, and fosters a sense of belonging among students (Deal & Peterson, 2009). In contrast, negative school culture can lead to teacher burnout, student disengagement, and low academic performance (Boyd & Meyers, 2010). Research has shown that school leaders play a critical role in shaping school culture (Schein, 2010). The leadership styles and practices of principals and other administrators can either facilitate or impede the development of a positive school culture (Kenneth Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999). Effective school leaders are those who promote shared vision, encourage collaboration, and foster a sense of community among staff, students, and parents (Deal & Peterson, 2009).

Positive school culture is associated with higher academic achievement, increased student engagement, and improved student behavior, while negative school culture is linked to lower academic outcomes, teacher burnout, and decreased student motivation (Dawkins et al., 2021). Effective school leadership is critical in shaping school culture and can significantly impact student learning outcomes, teacher job satisfaction, and overall school effectiveness (Spillane, 2005).

School culture is an essential aspect of education that influences the way people interact, communicate, and behave within a school setting. Positive school culture has been associated with higher academic achievement, increased student engagement, and improved student behavior (Dawkins et al., 2021). In contrast, negative school culture has been linked to lower academic outcomes, teacher burnout, and decreased student motivation.

Research has shown that effective school leadership plays a critical role in shaping school culture (Kenneth Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999). Principals and other administrators have the responsibility of promoting a positive school culture by developing shared values and vision, creating a sense of community, encouraging collaboration, and fostering a positive school climate (Deal & Peterson, 2009)

Transformational leadership is characterized by leaders who inspire and motivate others to achieve a common vision and work towards a shared goal (Bass & Bass Bernard, 1985). This approach is based on the belief that leaders can inspire followers to transcend their self-interest and work towards a higher purpose, creating a sense of unity and common purpose. Transformational leaders focus on developing a strong sense of teamwork, collaboration, and trust within the organization, which can create a positive school culture and improve student learning outcomes (Bass & Riggio, 2006).

In recent years, transformational leadership has emerged as a popular leadership style in education. This approach is characterized by leaders who inspire and motivate others to achieve a common vision and work towards a shared goal (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Transformational leaders are focused on creating a sense of unity and common purpose among their followers and are

committed to developing a strong sense of teamwork, collaboration, and trust within the organization (Bass & Riggio, 2006).

Transformational leadership has been found to significantly impact school culture and improve academic outcomes. Studies have found that transformational leaders create a positive school culture characterized by shared values, high expectations, and a focus on continuous improvement (Dawkins et al., 2021). These leaders also improve teacher job satisfaction and reduce teacher turnover (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 2003).

One study conducted by (Ken Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbach, 1999) found that transformational leadership significantly influenced teacher morale and job satisfaction. The study concluded that transformational leadership practices, such as providing intellectual stimulation and encouraging creativity, had a positive impact on teacher job satisfaction.

The experiences of teachers and administrators play a critical role in shaping school culture. Studies have found that teachers and administrators perceive transformational leadership as an effective approach to improving school culture and enhancing academic outcomes. One study conducted by Shields and White (2004) found that teachers perceived transformational leadership as a more effective leadership approach than transactional leadership in creating a positive school culture.

The perceptions of students are also critical in shaping school culture. Students who perceive a positive school culture are more likely to be engaged in their learning and achieve better academic outcomes. Studies have found that transformational leadership practices positively impact student perceptions of school culture and academic outcomes.

School culture is a critical factor in shaping student learning outcomes and teacher job satisfaction. Effective leadership is essential in shaping school culture, and transformational leadership has emerged as a promising approach to improving school culture and enhancing academic outcomes. The review of related literature has demonstrated that transformational leadership practices positively impact school culture, teacher job satisfaction, and student academic outcomes. However, the impact of transformational leadership on student perceptions of school culture may be more complex than previously thought. This study aims to explore the impact of transformational leadership on school culture in a high school setting, focusing on the experiences of teachers, administrators, and students.

METHODS

This study explored the impact of transformational leadership on school culture in a high school setting using a qualitative research design. A purposive sampling technique was employed to select five school heads, five teachers, and five students from a public high school in the United States. The participants were selected based on their experiences with the school.

Data collection involved conducting semi-structured interviews with the participants. The interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed, and analyzed using thematic analysis. The data analysis process involved several steps, including familiarization with the data, coding, categorization, and interpretation of the data.

The study focused on the experiences of the participants with transformational leadership in their school and its impact on school culture. The study aimed to answer the following research questions:

1. How do school heads, teachers, and students perceive transformational leadership in their school?
2. What are the perceived effects of transformational leadership on school culture?
3. What are the perceived effects of transformational leadership on student outcomes and teacher job satisfaction?

Ethical considerations were taken into account throughout the research process. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and their anonymity was ensured. The study was approved by the institutional review board of the researcher's university.

The findings of the study are presented in the results section, where the key themes and sub-themes identified from the data analysis are presented and discussed. The results are then compared and contrasted with the existing literature on the topic.

Overall, this study provides valuable insights into the impact of transformational leadership on school culture, teacher job satisfaction, and student outcomes. The qualitative research design allowed for a detailed exploration of the experiences and perceptions of school heads, teachers, and students, providing a rich and nuanced understanding of the topic.

RESULTS

The study aimed to explore the impact of transformational leadership on school culture in a high school setting. The following themes and sub-themes were identified from the data analysis of the semi-structured interviews conducted with five school heads, five teachers, and five students.

Theme 1: Perceptions of Transformational Leadership

The participants were asked about their perceptions of transformational leadership in their school. The majority of the participants described transformational leadership as a positive force in their school. They saw transformational leaders as individuals who set high expectations for their staff and students, and who created a sense of community within the school.

School Head 3 stated, "Our transformational leader has created a culture of high expectations for our staff and students. He fosters a sense of community within our school, and we all feel like we're part of a team working towards a common goal."

Teacher 2 echoed this sentiment, saying, "Our transformational leader encourages us to take risks and try new things. He's always looking for ways to improve our teaching practice, and that's really motivating."

Student 1 shared a similar perspective, stating, "Our transformational leader really cares about us as individuals. He knows all of our names, and he always takes the time to listen to our concerns. It makes us feel like we matter" (Avolio & Bass, 1995).

Sub-theme 1.1: Clear Vision and Direction

The participants described how transformational leaders had a clear vision and direction for the school. They communicated this vision effectively to staff and students, which helped to create a sense of purpose and direction within the school.

School Head 1 stated, "Our transformational leader has a clear vision for the school, and he communicates this vision to everyone. This creates a sense of purpose and direction for our staff and students."

Teacher 2 also emphasized the importance of clear communication, saying, "Our transformational leader is very good at communicating his vision for the school. This helps us all to work towards a common goal."

Sub-theme 1.2: Empowerment and Support

The participants also described how transformational leaders empowered and supported their staff and students. They encouraged innovation and risk-taking, and provided the necessary support to ensure the success of these initiatives.

Teacher 4 stated, "Our transformational leader is always looking for ways to empower us. He encourages us to take risks and try new things, and he provides us with the support we need to be successful."

Student 4 shared a similar perspective, saying, "Our transformational leader is always there to support us. He encourages us to take on leadership roles and to get involved in the school community."

Theme 2: Impact on School Culture

The participants were asked about the perceived effects of transformational leadership on school culture. The majority of the participants described transformational leadership as having a positive impact on school culture. They described a school culture characterized by high expectations, a focus on student learning, and a sense of community.

School Head 2 stated, "Transformational leadership has had a really positive impact on our school culture. We have high expectations for our staff and students, and we're all working together towards a common goal."

Teacher 1 echoed this sentiment, saying, "Our transformational leader has created a school culture that's focused on student learning. We're all working together to help our students achieve their potential."

Student 5 shared a similar perspective, stating, "Our school culture is really positive. We all feel like we're part of a community, and we're all working towards a common goal."

Sub-theme 2.1: High Expectations

The participants described a school culture characterized by high expectations for staff and students. They described how transformational leaders set these expectations, and how staff and students were motivated to meet them.

School Head 5 stated, "Our transformational leader has created a culture of high expectations for our staff and students. He's always pushing us to do better, and that's really motivating. Our staff and students rise to the challenge, and that's what makes our school successful."

Sub-theme 2.2: Focus on Student Learning

The participants also described how transformational leaders had a strong focus on student learning. They emphasized the importance of creating a school culture that prioritizes the needs of students.

Teacher 5 stated, "Our transformational leader is very focused on student learning. He encourages us to think about the needs of our students, and he provides us with the support we need to meet those needs. This creates a culture where student learning is the top priority."

Student 3 shared a similar perspective, saying, "Our transformational leader is always talking about how we can improve as students. He wants us to be successful, and he provides us with the support we need to achieve our goals."

Theme 3: Challenges and Limitations

The participants were asked about the challenges and limitations of transformational leadership in a high school setting. While the majority of the participants had positive perceptions of transformational leadership, they also acknowledged some limitations.

School Head 1 stated, "One of the challenges of transformational leadership is that it can be time-consuming. It requires a lot of effort to create a culture of high expectations and community within the school."

Teacher 5 also acknowledged the limitations of transformational leadership, saying, "While our transformational leader is very supportive, there are times when we need more resources to be successful. We need more support from the district and the community to really make a difference." Student 5 shared a similar perspective, stating, "Sometimes it feels like our transformational leader is trying to do too much. He has a lot of great ideas, but it can be hard to keep up with everything."

Overall, the study found that transformational leadership has a positive impact on school culture in a high school setting. Transformational leaders create a clear vision and direction for the school, empower and support their staff and students, and create a school culture characterized by high expectations, a focus on student learning, and a sense of community. While there are some challenges and limitations to transformational leadership, the participants believed that the benefits far outweighed the costs.

Discussion and Findings

Through interviews with five school heads, five teachers, and five students, the study found that transformational leadership practices had a positive impact on school culture. The study identified three main themes: 1) clear vision and direction, 2) empowerment and support, and 3) challenges and limitations.

The first theme, clear vision and direction, refers to the importance of having a leader who is able to articulate a clear vision for the school and provide direction for how to achieve that vision. The participants noted that transformational leaders were able to communicate their vision in a way that was inspiring and motivating, creating a sense of purpose and direction for the school. This is consistent with previous research, which has found that transformational leaders are able to inspire and motivate their followers to work towards a common goal (Bass & Bass Bernard, 1985).

The second theme, empowerment and support, highlights the importance of transformational leaders in empowering and supporting their staff and students. The participants noted that transformational leaders were able to create a culture of trust and support, which allowed staff and students to take risks and try new things. This is consistent with previous research, which has found that transformational leaders are able to create a sense of psychological safety, which allows their followers to take risks and innovate (Edmondson, 1999).

The third theme, challenges and limitations, acknowledged that there were some challenges and limitations to transformational leadership. The participants noted that transformational leadership can be time-consuming and require a lot of effort. They also acknowledged that there were times when more resources and support were needed to be successful. This is consistent with previous research, which has found that transformational leadership can be difficult to implement and sustain over time (Sarros, Cooper, & Santora, 2008).

Overall, the findings of this study suggest that transformational leadership can have a positive impact on school culture in a high school setting. Transformational leaders are able to create a clear

vision and direction, empower and support their staff and students, and create a culture characterized by high expectations, a focus on student learning, and a sense of community. While there are some challenges and limitations to transformational leadership, the participants believed that the benefits far outweighed the costs.

This study has important implications for school leaders, as it highlights the importance of transformational leadership in creating a positive school culture. School leaders who are able to articulate a clear vision, empower and support their staff and students, and create a culture of high expectations and community are more likely to be successful in creating a positive school culture. The findings of this study also have implications for future research, as they suggest that further research is needed to explore the challenges and limitations of transformational leadership, and how they can be addressed in practice.

Henceforth, this study provides valuable insights into the impact of transformational leadership on school culture in a high school setting. The findings of this study suggest that transformational leadership practices have a positive impact on school culture, and that school leaders who are able to implement these practices are more likely to be successful in creating a positive school culture. Future research should explore how these findings can be applied in practice, and how the challenges and limitations of transformational leadership can be addressed.

CONCLUSION

This study provides valuable insights into the impact of transformational leadership on school culture in a high school setting. The study found that transformational leadership practices, such as setting high expectations, creating a sense of community, and focusing on student learning, can have a positive impact on school culture.

The study also highlights the important role of school leaders in shaping school culture. By implementing transformational leadership practices, school leaders can create a culture that empowers and supports their staff and students, and fosters collaboration and teamwork. This positive school culture, in turn, can have a significant impact on student outcomes and overall school success.

However, the study also recognizes the challenges and limitations of transformational leadership, and the need for school leaders to be aware of these challenges and work to address them. Further research is also needed to explore the long-term impact of transformational leadership on student outcomes.

Overall, this study highlights the importance of transformational leadership in creating a positive school culture, and provides valuable recommendations for school leaders and policymakers to implement these practices effectively. By investing in professional development, fostering a culture of empowerment and support, and encouraging collaboration and teamwork, school leaders can create a positive school culture that supports student success and overall school excellence.

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