Article

The Impact of Transformational Leadership and Meaningful Work on Organizational Commitment among Mid-School Teachers

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Abstract: Education's primary goal is to enhance the quality of human resources; consequently, if a country hopes to improve its quality of education, teachers must be prioritized. Indonesian teachers deserve particular acknowledgment. From 2012 to 2015, 1.3 million teachers took the Teacher Competency Test (UKG), indicating their efficiency in managing points and understanding material was below the required standard. This reveals that the competence and quantity of teaching employees are below standards, which impacts education quality. The inadequate standard of education in Indonesia cannot be solved merely by modifying the curriculum; rather, special attention must be given to teachers. This study examines the relationship between transformational leadership and meaningful work towards the organizational commitment of teachers in Junior High School, Padang, West Sumatra. Quantitative research was conducted with 159 teachers in six schools who completed online questionnaires. The data were analyzed using SPSS 26.0. The results found a relationship between transformational leadership and meaningful work on organizational commitment, and both variables affect organizational commitment. It can be concluded that this study provides understanding to educational organizations to help improve transformational leadership and meaningful work for teachers and school principals.

Keywords: Transformational leadership; meaningful work; organizational commitment; teachers

Introduction

Education in Indonesia has an unwavering connection to the elements of the educational targets that the country is striving for. Entering the era of SDGs (Sustainable Development objectives), which have been acknowledged by 193 UN member states as a framework for the next 15 years until 2030, there are 17 goals, one of which is concerned with the quality of development education (Syubhan et al., 2018). The 20th law of 2003 defines the objectives of Indonesian education under the National Education System. Regarding the National Education System, it provides to develop and shape the character and civilization of a dignified nation in order to educate the nation's life, with the goal of developing learners' potential to become mankind who respect and revere God, have noble qualities, are well-rounded, competent, inventive, self-sufficient, and become democratic and responsible citizens.

A shortage of teacher competency in Indonesian schools has contributed to the country's low standard of education. Data from the Teacher Competency Examination (UKG) indicate that teachers' mastery of subject matter and pedagogical knowledge remains below the required standard. Results from 2012–2015 and the most recent UKG in 2019 show that a substantial proportion of teachers scored below the competency threshold, with approximately 70% obtaining scores under 80. These findings suggest that both the quality

and quantity of competent teaching staff remain inadequate, which ultimately affects the quality of education in Indonesia (Kemdikbud, 2022).

Official statistics further indicate that the proportion of qualified teachers in Indonesia remains below 50%. Certification functions as an instrument for assessing professional eligibility. At the junior secondary level (SMP), 48.44% of teachers are certified, followed by primary schools (45.77%), while vocational secondary schools record the lowest proportion at 28.49%. These conditions suggest that efforts to improve educational quality in Indonesia should prioritize enhancing teacher quality rather than focusing solely on curriculum reform (Kemdikbud, 2022). It is crucial to recall that inadequate competency in teachers is caused by elements other than educational background, one of which is commitment to the organization. Teachers have a disadvantaged motivate to acquire knowledge, creativity, more effectively themselves, and elevate the standard of their job, as well as a low belief in commitment. Recruiting teachers for frequently participation in school events might be challenging. Aside from that, during the COVID-19, teachers must be able to use technology as a learning alternative, as well as be imaginative and creative while providing online learning. However, in practice, teacher enthusiasm and inspiration to adapt and actively engage in making a valuable contribution to achieving this goal seems to be very rare.

Organizational commitment to teachers is shown by high work engagement in people low levels of intentions to quit positions, minimal inactivity, better organizational actions, higher student accomplishment, enhancing the quality of service, and lowering present bad behavior. Employees who carry out specific actions are more responsible, loyal, adaptable, work hard, creative, and innovative (Manuaba & Astiti 2014; Widya & Izzati, 2018; Ruhyaningtias & Hapsari, 2013; Wardianto & Hendrati, 2014), improve work quality, achieve goals, and become more competitive (Hidayat, 2017; Susiawan & Muhid, 2015; Humala, 2014; Suseno, 2010; Nida & Simarmata, 2014; Januardha & Nurwidawati, 2014).

On the other hand, Steger (2012) passed on his thoughts on the meaning of work, which he defined as an individual's subjective experience of labor that serves a purpose and leaves a lasting impact. According to him, meaningful job provides someone a favorable edge. Work serves an idealized objective, promoting self-development and goal-setting, rather than hedonistic fulfillment. Keeping organizational commitment requires leadership. Every leader must have a distinctive way of leading, one of which is transformational leadership. Hartanto (2009) defines transformational leadership as the capacity to encourage people to bring out their finest qualities and contribute to value creation. Transformational leadership is crucial for implementing an organization and motivating employees to do responsibilities effectively, as defined. Transformational leadership aims to improve motivation among employees.

Transformational leadership involves influencing followers to align their personal values with the organization's vision and goals by fostering a climate of trust and engagement, while encouraging creativity and innovation through inspirational behaviors. This leadership style comprises four core dimensions: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Bass, as cited in Stone et al. 2004). In parallel, meaningful work refers to individuals' perceptions that their work is purposeful, value-driven, and contributes positively to the organization. Job meaningfulness consists of three aspects: positive meaning, meaning-making, and motivation toward the greater good (Steger et al., 2012).

Allen and Meyer's (1990) Dimensional Theory of Commitment Organization provide an explanation for organizational commitment. This theory claims that emotional commitment, normative commitment, and continuity exist simultaneously. Next, Sheldon (1971) defined organizational commitment as an orientation toward an organization that aligns a person's identity to the organization. It has been divided into three. The key components are identification, participation, and loyalty. Organizational commitment contains a desire to remain a member, faith in the organization's ideals, and a readiness to act in the best interests of the organization.

Transformational leadership
Transformational leadership develops admiration, loyalty, respect, and trust among followers, inspiring them to go above and beyond their expectations. According to Bass and Riggio (2011), transformational eadership is characterized by individual consideration, intellectual stimulation, and charisma. Transformational

leadership stands apart from charismatic leadership in that it encourages followers to challenge both accepted viewpoints and the leader's own convictions. In line with Lencioni (2012), the transformation of perspectives into actions or real actions as a leader requires supporting factors or other conditions such as facilities and support from several parties, which include (1) vision, (2) motivation, (3) facilitation, (4) innovation, (5) mobility, (6) alertness, and (7) determination. Bass and Riggio (2011) presented the "4I" framework for transformational leadership, focusing on ideal influence, inspiring motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual concern.

Meaningful work
Meaningful work refers to an individual's perception that their work is purposeful, aligns with personal values, and contributes positively to the organization. It encompasses both the experience of meaning derived from one's job and the pursuit of work goals grounded in personal principles, while also involving three core aspects: positive meaning, meaning-making through work, and motivation toward the greater good (Steger, Dik, & Duffy 2012). In addition, meaningful work is described as a work experience perceived as personally significant, fostering a positive self-image, organizational commitment, and productive collaboration (Canboy et al. 2010). From a broader perspective, the meaning of work reflects how individuals interpret what they do at work and what they are expected to accomplish, which can be experienced as a job, a career, or a calling (Rosso, Dekas, & Wrzesniewski 2010).

Organizational commitment
Organizational commitment refers to an individual's psychological attachment to and concern for their organization, reflecting the extent to which employees identify with organizational values and are willing to remain members of the organization. Individuals with high organizational commitment tend to demonstrate loyalty in both favorable and unfavorable conditions, actively contribute to organizational goals, and strive to maintain and enhance organizational performance. Such commitment is characterized by a strong belief in and acceptance of organizational values, a willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization, and a strong desire to maintain organizational membership. Conceptually, organizational commitment comprises three dimensions: affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment (Meyer & Allen 1990; Griffin 2013; Dessler 2013).

Methodology
This study employs a quantitative design targeting men and women aged 22–60 working as secondary school teachers in Padang. Padang has 98 secondary schools, totaling 1,595 teachers, including 1,254 permanent and 341 contract teachers. Using cluster sampling (Sugiyono 2013), the researcher selected six schools: one for a pilot study and five for the main study. The recommended sample size ranges from 30 to 500. The initial target sample size was 150 teachers. However, all data that met the inclusion criteria were analyzed, resulting in a final sample of 159 respondents. The cluster method was based on location, with respondent criteria being teachers aged 22–60 in Padang. A pilot study was conducted over seven days (November 7–14, 2022) at Junior High School 17 Padang, involving 35 respondents. The main study followed over four weeks from December 21 to January 21, 2022.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, convenient sampling was also used to distribute questionnaires via Google Forms shared on WhatsApp, ensuring confidentiality. This method facilitated communication and allowed respondents to complete the self-administered questionnaire in about 20 minutes. Data analysis was performed using SPSS version 26.0, applying descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation), correlation, and regression to explore the relationships between transformational leadership, meaningful work, and organizational commitment among teachers in Padang's secondary schools. All respondents provided informed consent. Before distributing the questionnaire, we sent the participating organizations a request letter and information about the research.

Research instruments

The survey instrument consisted of demographic questions, the socialization tactics scale, and the graduate employability scale. Respondents provided information about gender, age, education level, years worked, and organization name. Transformational leadership was measured using the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) by Bass and Avolio, containing 20 items across 5 aspects. Responses ranged from "very often" to "never" on a 1–5 scale. Examples include: "I am honored to be involved with them" and "Talk beneficially about the future." The scale showed internal reliability with Cronbach's alpha values from 0.60 to 0.92 (Grey 2005).

Meaningful work was measured by the Work and Meaningful Inventory (WAMI) developed by Steger, Dik & Duffy (2012). It included 10 items covering positive meaning, meaning making, and greater good motivations. Responses also used a 1–5 frequency scale. Example: "I discover how my work leads to the worth of being alive." The scale showed high reliability with a Cronbach's alpha over 0.93. Organizational commitment was measured with the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ) by Meyer et al. (1993), consisting of 24 items across affective, continuous, and normative commitment. It also used a 5-point Likert scale. An example item: "I have the privilege to spend the remaining time of my professional existence at this organization." Previous studies showed Cronbach's alpha values over 0.875, indicating strong reliability.

The Findings

The characteristics of the participants are presented in Table 1. A total of 159 respondents from Indonesia were obtained, of which 17% were men (*n=27*), while women comprised the majority, accounting for 83% (*n=132*). The largest group consisted of those aged 50 to 60 years old, representing 35% (*n=56*) of the respondents. Regarding educational status, 76% (*n=121*) had a diploma level of education. A large percentage of respondents 64% (*n=101*) had been with within the organization for at least 6 years. SMP Negeri 24 Padang had the most responds in the organization category, totaling 30% (n=47).

Table 1. Characteristic of Participants (N=159)

Characteristic	N	%
Gender		
Male	27	17
Female	132	83
Age		
22-29	28	18
30-39	42	26
40-49	33	21
50-60	56	35
Educational level		
Diploma	1	1
Strata 1	121	76
Strata 2	36	23
Strata 3 (Dr/Phd)	1	1
Years contributed		
< 1 year	13	8
1 year – 3 years	26	16
3 years – 6 years	19	12
> 6 years	101	64
Organization		
SMP Negeri 5 Padang	24	15
SMP Negeri 8 Padang	36	23
SMP Negeri 10 Padang	28	18
SMP Negeri 20 Padang	10	6
SMP Negeri 24 Padang	47	30
SMP Negeri 33 Padang	14	9

Descriptive statistics, specifically mean comparison, were analyzed to identify the transformational leadership, meaningful work and organizational commitment used among teachers in Padang. The ulitization of all the measurements among teachers was studies by comparing the mean values of all aspects in the statistical data results from variables (Table 2). Regarding the measurement, the highest mean from 3 instruments used was found in (transformational leadership, $M=80.70$, $SD=10.538$), (meaningful work, $M=41.84$, $SD=4.595$) and (organizational commitment, $M=71.87$, $SD=13.237$).

Table 2. Statistical data results from variables

Variable	Minimum Score	Maximum Score	Mean	Standar Deviation	Skewness Index	Kurtosis Index
Transformational Leadership	33	100	80.70	10.538	-.427	1.494
Meaningful Work	25	50	41.84	4.595	-.761	1.220
Organizational Commitment	38	120	71.87	13.237	.506	1.433
Affective Commitment	14	40	23.53	4.955	.823	1.077
Continous Commitment	8	40	23.52	6.220	-.102	.170
Normative Commitment	12	40	24.82	4.900	.350	.609

This study explored the correlation through multiple regression analysis to determine significant correlation between transformational leadership, meaningful work and organizational commitment. In the transformational leadership table column, 25% of respondents have significant work under 39.00. The average amount of meaningful work for 50% of respondents is less than 42.00, while 50% have meaningful work that surpasses 42.00, as the proportion is equal to the median. 75% of respondents possess significant work that is less than 46.00, and 90% of respondents' average meaningful work is less than 47.00. Furthermore, in the meaningful work line, 25% of respondents indicate an organizational commitment of less than 64. The average organizational commitment of 50% of respondents is less than 72.00; nonetheless, the organizational commitment of 50% of respondents is greater than 72.00 since the proportion of 50% is equal to the median. 75% of respondents had an organizational commitment of less than 78.00, with 90% reporting an average of less than 92.00.

On the organizational commitment graph, 25% of respondents had affective commitments below 21.00, 75% have affective commitments below 26.00, and 90% have an average emotional commitment of less than 31.00. Meanwhile, continuous commitment revealed that 25% of respondents had continuous commitment below 20.00, 75% have continuous commitment below 28.00, and 90% have an average continuous commitment of less than 32.00. Finally, normative commitment. 25% of responders have a normative commitment under 22.00. 75% of respondents have a normative commitment of less than 28.00, whereas 90% have a mean normative commitment of less than 32.00.

Discussion

The current study aims to examine the relationship between transformational leadership and meaningful work on teachers' organizational commitment in secondary schools. Teacher organizational commitment is receiving attention because it impacts performance and optimization in education. The findings show transformational leadership, meaningful work, and organizational commitment have significant relationships. From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to the organizational behavior and educational leadership literature by empirically integrating transformational leadership and meaningful work as key antecedents of teachers' organizational commitment. The findings extend existing commitment theories by demonstrating that meaningful work functions as a psychological mechanism through which transformational leadership enhances affective and normative commitment among teachers, particularly in the context of secondary education in developing countries.

This study might assist educational institutions in understanding why it is crucial to focus on the character and personality of school leaders, ensuring all secondary schools in Padang City adopt transformational leadership styles. Findings indicate that transformational leadership impacts meaningful work and teacher organizational commitment. When principals demonstrate transformational leadership, they strive, encourage, inspire, and lead teachers to perform efficiently while developing creativity and innovation. This enhances teacher quality and organizational commitment, as role models motivate teachers to collaborate and become more involved, making them pleased to accomplish tasks they believe benefit others and themselves. A school leader's transformational leadership increases teachers' emotional, continuation, and normative commitment, consistent with prior studies by Kumala and Qomariyah (2022), Yubo (2013), Atmojo (2012), and Susiawan and Muhid (2015). Meaningful work strongly connects with emotional and normative commitment but not with continuation commitment. This indicates meaningful work behavior increases affective and normative commitment among Padang High School teachers, aligning with findings from Widyastuti and Nugroho (2016) and Azwar (2022).

This study focuses on the correlation of transformational leadership, meaningful work, and organizational commitment among teachers in Padang City. Transformational leadership contributes to meaningful work and greater organizational engagement. Role models enhance teacher quality and commitment by motivating them to work harder and engage deeply. Positive encouragement and job fulfillment yield beneficial outcomes. From a practical standpoint, the findings offer clear implications for educational policymakers and school management. Transformational leadership development should be prioritized through structured training, leadership workshops, and continuous professional development programs for school principals. In addition, schools are encouraged to design work environments that enhance teachers' sense of meaningfulness by expanding professional roles beyond classroom instruction, recognizing contributions, and fostering collaborative school cultures. These practices are expected to strengthen teachers' affective and normative commitment, ultimately improving school effectiveness and educational quality.

Conclusion

To inspire future research, the current study has listed topics that may interest potential researchers. The concept of transformational leadership, meaningful work, and organizational commitment lacks in-depth discussion, particularly regarding teachers. In Indonesia, few researchers explore this area, although it is widely discussed elsewhere. Enabling variables, such as meaningful work and organizational commitment, contribute to transformational leadership and offer many benefits. Given cultural similarities in Southeast Asia (SEA), a comparative study on transformational leadership across these countries could also yield valuable insights.

This study faced limitations due to a small number of participants and a response rate that was sufficient but not satisfactory. The researcher struggled to gain responses from half of the participants. The questionnaire was delivered online to teachers at six middle schools in Kota Padang; future research is advised to use both online and face-to-face methods to improve participation. The questionnaire also had many questions, which discouraged responses; future studies could use shorter questionnaires. Additional research could examine the influence of transformational leadership and meaningful work on organizational commitment in various contexts, such as private, public, and social organizations.

Research remains limited to transformational leadership, meaningful work, and organizational commitment; future studies could explore other leadership styles, like transactional and situational leadership, and other variables affecting organizational commitment, especially among teachers. Despite a large number of potential respondents, the response rate was only 55%, so future studies should aim for higher participation. Practically, this study could be expanded to teachers at all school levels. Principals and instructors are also encouraged to develop transformational leadership to foster student creativity, as teachers remain essential assets to educational institutions.

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Conflict of interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest

Statement of informed consent: Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to their participation in the study.

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