

Original Article (Quantified)

Investigating the Mediating Role of Organizational Innovation in the Relationship Between Transformational Leadership and Teachers' Organizational Commitment

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Abstract

The present study was conducted with the aim of investigating the fit of the presented model in relation to transformational leadership and teachers' organizational commitment with the mediation of organizational innovation. The statistical population of the present study consisted of all school teachers in District 15 of Tehran in the academic year 2024-2025. From the aforementioned statistical population, 300 people were selected based on random cluster sampling. To collect data, the transformational leadership questionnaire of Bass and Avolio (1995), the organizational commitment questionnaire of Allen and Meyer (1997), and the researcher-made organizational innovation questionnaire of Choupani (2011) were used. Cronbach's alpha was used to determine the reliability of the instrument. The correlation matrix and structural equation model were used to analyze the data, and the Lisrel 10.30 and Spss 25 software were used to analyze the research data. The results of data analysis indicated that: transformational leadership has a direct and significant relationship with teachers' organizational commitment; organizational innovation has a direct and significant relationship with teachers' organizational commitment; transformational leadership also has a significant relationship indirectly and through organizational innovation with teachers' organizational commitment; and the conceptual model presented has a good statistical fit. In other words, the model for explaining organizational commitment based on transformational leadership and organizational innovation fits the empirical data. Finally, based on the information obtained from the structural equation model, it can be said that all the components in the three variables of the present study have a positive and significant relationship with each other.

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Extended abstract

Introduction

Today, organizations need capable employees who can adapt to changes and developments in diverse and dynamic environments, make deliberate decisions, be responsible and accountable, and find novel and effective ways to overcome problems and obstacles with creativity, innovation, and initiative (Majooni, Ardalan, Ghanbari & Afzali, 2021). Countries that prioritize the use of their resources to provide quality education to their people will ensure their economic progress, and this is one of the most important challenges facing educational leaders (Boonla & Treputtharat, 2014). Amidst these developments, teachers' organizational commitment has emerged as a key variable that influences educational reform, teacher retention, and organizational success (Yue et al., 2025). Since individual commitment to the organization leads to important outcomes such as reduced turnover (Chang et al., 2007); reduced transfer, and increased quality of teaching and research (Wang et al., 2020); educational organizations are looking for a responsible and committed workforce. In this regard, one of the factors that fosters identification of individuals with the organization and leads to increased organizational commitment is leadership (Raman et al., 2015). Although there are many perspectives on leadership, it is generally agreed that leadership is an influential process, occurs in a group, and involves shared goals (Northouse, 2010). In the field of leadership, many theories have been proposed by different schools, one of which is the theory of transformational leadership. It states that leaders have specific behaviors that accelerate employees' innovative thinking through improved performance, organizational innovation, and organizational performance (Colbert et al., 2008). Also, innovation is increasingly being mentioned today as one of the main factors for the long-term success of an organization in competitive markets (Martínez-Pérez & García, 2016). Innovation is a process that provides added value and a degree of novelty to the organization, its suppliers and customers through the development of new ways of doing business and the creation of approaches, solutions, products and services (Wikhamn, 2019). Therefore, if education managers and leaders know that by changing their policies and behaviors they can effectively increase commitment and innovation in their organization, then doing so will definitely be their top priority. Understanding what has been raised and the research gap, the relationships between these variables in education spaces have become the concern of researchers. Therefore, the present study seeks to answer the fundamental question: "is transformational leadership related to the mediator variable of organizational innovation on teachers' organizational commitment?" and whether the conceptual model presented in this study has statistical validity or not?

Theoretical Framework of Organizational Innovation

Organizational innovation is a new creation of knowledge or the development of new information such as a concept, hypothesis or theory; in other words, organizational innovation means something new to use (Ghanbari & Ahmadi, 2022). The innovations, knowledge, expertise and commitments of teachers are valued as key inputs in the innovation process. Meanwhile, organizations with higher innovativeness will be more successful in responding to environmental changes as well as developing new capabilities that help them achieve higher performance (Lloréns Montes, Ruiz Moreno & Miguel, 2004). However, innovation is an expensive and risky activity, with positive results on organizational performance, which can sometimes be accompanied by negative results, such as rapid environmental changes, increased costs, employee dissatisfaction or unnecessary changes (Jiménez-Jiménez & Sanz-Valle, 2011).

Transformational leadership

This type of leadership represents a process that leads to changes and transformations in people and is related to values, moral qualities, long-term goals, satisfaction of needs, assessment of the drivers influencing employees and how to treat them (Azizi Nejad, Jenaabadi & Moradzadeh, 2014: 77). All transformational approaches emphasize the feelings, values and participation of employees in achieving a common basic goal and increasing capacity and a high level of commitment to organizational goals. Recent evidence suggests that transformational leadership activities can be widely spread throughout the organization (Brent Davis et al., 2010). Transformational leadership is a style according to which the leader encourages subordinates to perform beyond expectations. Unlike the transactional leader who motivates people to work by relying on material needs and rewards, the transformational leader motivates subordinates' higher needs (progress, independence, success, etc.) (Zeinabadi, 2010).

Organizational Commitment

Organizational commitment is directed towards organizational characteristics such as organizational values and behaviors and often includes commitment to the organization and superiors (Koshazade, Rahimnia & Afkhani, 2013). On the other hand, organizational commitment is the positive or negative attitudes of individuals towards the entire organization (not the job) in which they work (Allen et al., 2007). Allen and Mayer (1990) have made the greatest contribution to this field by publishing more than 15 studies on organizational commitment since 1984. They created a three-dimensional model based on the observation of similarities and differences in the definitions of organizational commitment (Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001) and defined organizational commitment as the intention of employees to stay in the organization and also consider it a psychological state that expresses a kind of need, desire and obligation to continue working in an organization. Need means that the individual is forced to continue serving in that organization due to the investments he has made in the organization; desire means the heartfelt willingness and interest to continue serving in the organization; and obligation means the duty, religion and responsibility that the individual has towards the organization and considers himself obligated to stay in it (Klein et al, 2012).

Research Methodology

The method of conducting the present study is descriptive-correlational \ of structural equation modeling type. The statistical population in question includes all teachers working in District 15 of Tehran in the academic year 2024-2025. Using cluster sampling in the first stage and stratified random sampling in the second, 300 of them were selected for the study. Morgan table was used to estimate the sample size. In order to comply with ethical considerations, the subjects were coded and the confidentiality of the information and the principle of confidentiality were observed. Finally, the statistical methods of frequency distribution, mean, standard deviation, Pearson correlation matrix and confirmatory path analysis were used to analyze the data using LISREL10.30 software.

Research findings

According to the results of structural equation analysis, it can be said: The transformational leadership variable has a positive direct effect (0.33), a positive indirect effect (0.0147), and a positive total effect (0.3447); and is significant on the organizational commitment variable at the 0.05 level. The organizational innovation variable has a positive direct effect (0.07) and a positive total effect (0.07) and is significant on the organizational commitment variable at the 0.05 level. The transformational leadership variable with an



indirect path coefficient through organizational innovation (0.0147) and T-value (4.09) has an indirect, positive and significant effect on the organizational commitment variable at the 0.05 level. Considering the total effects of the independent variables, it can be said that the transformational leadership variable (0.3447) has the highest effect and the organizational innovation variable (0.07) has the lowest effect on the organizational commitment variable.

Conclusion

In general, the literature review and research background confirm that the presented conceptual model has a good statistical fit, that is, the model for explaining organizational commitment based on transformational leadership and organizational innovation fits the empirical data and is consistent with the results of the research of Nugraha (2025); Siregar & Winarso (2025); and Babazadeh & Taymouri (2024). Therefore, according to the results obtained, it is suggested that school administrators emphasize all four dimensions (ideal influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual encouragement, and individual considerations) in order to influence employee commitment to the organization. Or, more precisely, it can be said that administrators should consider:

- Participation in decision-making, organizational management style, appropriate salaries and benefits, and similar issues can affect the level of commitment of teachers to the workplace and school, and overshadow their interest in education, teaching, work, and career.
- Stimulate innovation and creativity by questioning old assumptions, traditions, and beliefs; reframing problems; and approaching old situations in new ways.
- Build trust and respect in teachers.
- Change the expectations of group members to believe that the organization's problems can be solved.
- Pay special attention to the needs of each individual for their progress and growth.