

## **Transformational Leadership and Work Performance of Teachers: A Study of Private Schools in Colombo District, Sri Lanka**

**T. Nanthakumar<sup>1</sup>, T. Raveendran<sup>2</sup> and A. Saravanabawan<sup>3</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Deputy Principal, Isipathana College, Colombo – 05, Sri Lanka

<sup>2,3</sup>Senior Lecturer, Department of Human Resource Management,  
University of Jaffna, Sri Lanka

<sup>1</sup>*eeswary16@gmail.com*, <sup>2</sup>*rthanes@univ.jfn.ac.lk*, <sup>3</sup>*bawan@univ.jfn.ac.lk*

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**Abstract:** Transformational leadership behavior is recognized as the principal contributor for the realization of outcomes in schools. The objective of the current study was to examine the impact of transformational leadership on teacher performance and the mediating effect of affective commitment between the variables. This study was conducted in private schools in Colombo District. A sample of 183 teachers participated in the study and the samples were selected based on random sampling technique. A quantitative survey method was employed. Transformational leadership was measured using Multi-factor Leadership Questionnaire. Affective commitment was measured using Organizational Commitment Questionnaire whereas teachers' performance was measured by Five Factor Performance Scale. The regression analysis was performed to test the hypotheses. The results revealed that the transformational leadership style significantly and positively impacts performance as well as affective commitment of teachers. The study further revealed that affective commitment mediates the impact of transformational leadership on teachers' performance. The study emphasizes that the school administrators should adopt transformational leadership to enhance teachers' performance and affective commitment.

**Keywords:** *Affective Commitment, Teachers' Performance, Transformational Leadership Style*

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### **Introduction**

The leadership of today's world is in desperate need of leadership that can embrace modern changes and innovation. The transformational leadership paradigm has speedily become the choice for current research and function of leadership theory (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Teachers' performance is an important factor that should be taken into account when considering uplifting the quality of a school. There are several aims and targets stipulated to the teachers who

are working in a school. Those are planned by the ministry of education which is giving the teaching appointments and controlling the activities of the school in a country like Sri Lanka, which has the strongest public education system. Principal has the responsibility as a school level manager and he has to apply the maximum leadership strategies through different steps to help them, guide them, control them, observe them and motivate them (Dales, Guorino & Santibanez, 2006). Defeat and victory of a leadership depends on the style of management that is adopted

by a principal. Final product of school leadership process is to change student behavior to an excellent manner through teaching learning process (Christie, Thompson & whitely, 2009).

Any school functions smoothly with the help of the teachers being the backbone of it. Hanushek and Rivkin (2004) pointed out that the education quality relies heavily on the efficiency of the teachers in giving out their best performance to the students. Lutego (2016) states that the overall performance of a school is heavily dependent on the performance of the teachers in their respective classrooms and schools. Performance of a teacher is defined as the capability demonstrated by the teacher in performing the task or job. The performance is measured against the determined standards and goals and once they are achieved, it is considered good and satisfactory. In order to achieve the same, the teachers are expected to achieve a performance level with the capacity in providing as well as realizing the expectation of all concerned personnel with special emphasis on the general public who have placed their confidence in the schools and the teachers in fostering students (Andriani et al., 2018). Transformational leadership practised in the scenario of education enables leaders to enhance their commitment as well as their capability in targets achievement (Bush, 2017). Due to the significance realized in the role enacted by the transformational leadership style in educational organizations, worldwide focus has been bent on improvement of their leadership practices using the transformational

leadership principles as the basis (Cabrera, 2018).

Numerous studies have shown that employee performance can be enhanced by favorable leadership behaviors adopted by the managers. However, there are little studies on leadership and teacher performance (For example, Safeena & Ahamed, 2020; Abu Nasra & Arar, 2020). Few studies have investigated the association between transformational leadership and school performance (for example, Fernando, Geethamali & Kularathna, 2019). However, research that investigated the interactions between transformational leadership and teachers' performance are not sufficient in the available literature (Wijesinghe 2018). Hence, it is necessary to investigate about which leadership style works best and how intervening variables influence the relationship between transformational leadership and performance. Recognizing the role of transformational leadership in enhancing teachers' performance through different positive employee behaviors, this study attempts to test a mediation mechanism to explain how affective commitment behavior strengthens the relationship between transformational leadership and teacher performance.

## **Objective/s of the Study**

The objective of this study is to identify the impact of perceived transformational leadership style on teacher performance and the mediating effect affective commitment in the relationship between transformational leadership style and teacher

performance in the private schools in Colombo District.

## **Research Questions**

The current research attempts to answer the following research questions.

*To what extent transformational leadership style impacts teachers' performance in the Colombo District private schools?*

*Does affective commitment mediate the impact of transformational leadership on teachers' performance in the Colombo District private schools?*

## **Theoretical Underpinnings and Hypotheses**

### **Transformational Leadership**

Transformational leadership style is defined as a clear vision of the future organizational objectives which must be achieved. This model is based on several factors, the most important of which are encouraging employees to build a long-term shared vision, seeking change and organizational development required by adopting a flexible leadership style that enables adapting to all external variables, in light of the interest in teamwork, providing a healthy working environment, and encouraging dialogue between different managerial levels (Negussie & Demissie, 2013).

### **Teachers' Performance**

Teachers' job performance is related to the duties performed by a teacher at a

particular period in the school system in achieving organizational goals (Obilade, 1999). Principals can therefore encourage effective performance of their teachers by identifying their needs and trying to satisfy or meeting them. How effective the principal is in performing these roles has been a matter of concern to many educationists (Aghenta, 2000; Ige, 2001). Research shows that many principals do not consider their leadership styles as crucial in the teachers' job performance. Hence some of them seem to find it difficult to effectively administer their schools (Adeyemi, 2010). It is argued that effective leadership has a positive influence on the teachers' performance (Charlton, 2000).

### **Organizational Affective Commitment**

The first dimension of organizational commitment in the model is affective commitment, which represents the individual's emotional attachment to the organization. According to Meyer and Allen (1997) affective commitment is the employee's emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in the organization. Organizational members, who are committed to an organization on an affective basis, continue working for the organization because they want to (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Members who are committed on an affective level stay with the organization because they view their personal employment relationship as congruent to the goals and values of the organization (Beck & Wilson, 2000).

## **Empirical Evidence**

### ***Association between transformational leadership style and teachers' performance***

There are empirical evidence in the subject of leadership to understand the association between leaders' leadership styles and employees' performance in the Sri Lankan context (For example, Raveendran & Gamage, 2019; Chamika & Gunasekara, 2016; Athukorala, Perera & Meedeniya, 2016). Researchers argue that it is important for organizations to stimulate their leaders' transformational leadership behavior (Breekaart et al., 2014). Werang (2014) examined the factors that determine the quality of the teacher performance and found that transformational leadership greatly affects the employee's performance. Collision (1993) pointed out the importance of the headmaster's transformational leadership to the teacher performance. The transformational leadership a style that encourages the teachers to have vision, mission and goals, encourage and motivate the teachers to demonstrate the maximum performance. Munawaroh (2011) found that the transformational leadership style has a significant effect on the performance of teachers. By surveying 630 Arab Israeli teachers, Abu Nasra and Arar (2020) have reported that teachers' in-role performance increases when they perceive that their principals' leadership style is more transformational and less transactional. Wang et al (2011) found that there is a positive link between the

transformational leadership and individual-level performance of followers. Xu and Wang (2010) stressed that performance is the total activities carried out using the skills, abilities, knowledge, and motivation in order to get a set behavior. Further this study revealed that the overall capabilities of the followers tend to be enhanced by the transformational leadership style practiced by the leaders. The followers of transformational leadership can be easily identified to be in a self-defining and satisfying relationship with an individual or group. The followers tend to be identified with the leader attracted by the idealized and behavioral charisma of the transformational leaders (Jyoti & Bhau, 2015).

Principal-teacher interactions are school specific as well as teacher specific to be more effective. Hence these interactions play a major role in the job performance of a teacher (Walsh, 2005). Awaru (2015) stated that there is a positive and significant association between the transformational leadership styles and job performance. Considering the empirical evidence, the first hypothesis was formulated as follows.

H1: Perceived transformational leadership style has a significant positive impact on teachers' performance.

### ***Association between transformational leadership style and affective commitment***

Number of studies has proved the relationship between transformational leadership and affective commitment

of the employees. Timoti (2020) has confirmed the significance of employee commitment as a tool that leads to organizational performance. Mathotaarachchi (2018) in support of Chen et al (2006) highlighted that it is necessary for every organization to have full levels of employee commitment to have outstanding performance on long term basis. As per the study conducted by Riaz, Akram and Ijaz (2011), the relationship was confirmed. This study was carried out selecting 293 employees from the banking sector in Islamabad, Pakistan. It was identified that the transformational leadership style increased the level of affective commitment among the employees. Another study was conducted by Chou, 2013 consisting of the members of Farmers' Associations in Taiwan. The study arrived at the conclusion that the transformational leadership style practiced by the leaders tend to impact an effective and compelling force for the employees. Further, Jackson, Meyer, and Wang (2012) also noted the correlation between transformational leadership and affective commitment instill a positive vibration in which the transformational leaders use emotional appeals and create a compelling vision that make employees want to stay. Similarly, the same results were derived based on results of the study conducted in China which covered 186 family businesses (Gao & Bai, 2011). Based on the literature, the second hypothesis was established as follows.

H2: Perceived transformational leadership style has a significant positive impact on affective commitment of teachers.

### ***Association between affective commitment and teachers' performance***

Negin et al (2013) reported that organizational commitment impacts the work performance of Malik Bank employees. The results specify that continual, normative, and affective commitment have direct relationship with job performance of employees. Qaisar et al. (2012) examined the influence of organizational commitment on employee's performance within the context of Pakistani police and the results showed that organizational commitment predicts the employee's performance. Somers and Birnbam (1998) found that career commitment features a relationship with job performance, but organization commitment and employee performance haven't any relationship jointly. However, continuance commitment features a positive relationship with job performance. Shore et al. (1995) conducted a study on 339 subordinates and 231 managers in multinational companies in USA and determined that affective commitment has a positive relationship with job performance while continual and normative commitment haven't any positive relationship with employee's performance. Gulzar (2020) also found positive relationship between affective commitment and employee performance.

The above review of literature indicates that there is relationship between Affective commitment and employees job performance. Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis.

H3: Affective commitment has a significant positive impact on of teachers' performance.

***Association between transformational leadership style and teachers' performance through affective commitment***

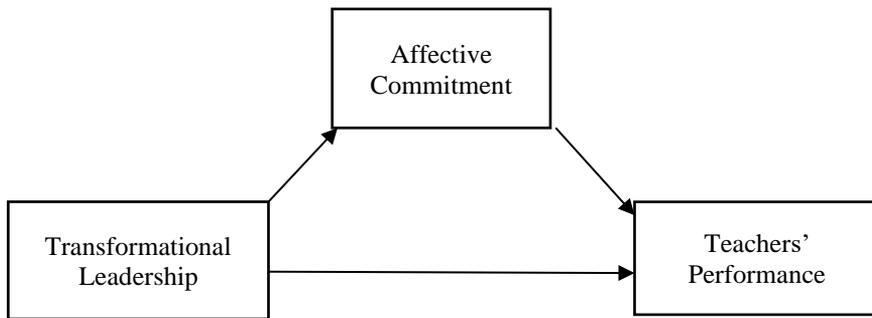
If leaders and organizations care for their workers, they in return will improve their performance, because of their affective commitment (Ribeiro et al., 2018). Mahfouz et al (2020) found that employee commitment mediated the relationship between transformational leadership and employee performance, specifically, workers from construction organizations in Jordan. Chen (2004) arrived at the conclusion that organizational commitment will play a mediating role between job performance in an organization which practiced supportive and bureaucratic culture and the transformational leadership behavior. Yeh and Hong (2012) found that organizational commitment partially mediates the relationship between leadership style and job performance. Yousef (2000) tested the role of organizational commitment as a mediator in the relationship between leadership behavior with job satisfaction and

performance, specifically in a multicultural, non-western country. Chi, Tsai and Chang (2007) reported that organizational commitment fully mediates the relationship between leadership style and job performance. Even though Raveendran (2019) found that transformational leadership is a predictor of employee performance and, organizational commitment doesn't mediate the effect of transformational leadership on employee performance. Yiing et al. (2009) also stated that leadership style practiced would influence organizational commitment which tends to create an impact on job performance but doesn't mediate the relationship between leadership style and job performance. Based on the literature review, the hypothesis 4 was formulated as follows.

H4: Affective commitment mediates the relationship between transformational leadership and Teachers' Performance.

## **Methodology**

Based on the empirical evidence, the following model has been constructed for investigating the association between transformational leadership and performance and the mediating effect of affective commitment.



**Figure 1: Conceptual Model**

This study was carried out in private schools in Colombo with a sample of 183 teachers selected based on convenience sampling method. The study is cross sectional one and a quantitative survey method was employed.

Transformational leadership was measured using Multi-factor Leadership Questionnaire of Avolio and Bass (2004). Affective commitment was measured using Meyer and Allen’s (1997) Organizational Commitment

Questionnaire whereas teachers’ performance was measured by Five Factor Performance Scale of Welbourne, Johnson and Erez (1998).

**Analysis**

The regression analysis was performed to test the hypotheses using SPSS 21.0. The hypotheses were tested based on the regression results. The reliability of the instruments was assessed based on Cronbach’s alpha and the results are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1: Reliability Statistics**

	<b>Cronbach's Alpha</b>
Transformational leadership style	.874
Job performance	.763
Affective commitment	.771

Source: Survey data

The Table 1 depicts that the Cronbach’s alpha values of the study variables exceed the minimum requirement of 0.7 (Nunnally, 1978). Hence, the instruments used in the present study were reliable and the analysis was performed.

***Transformational leadership and performance***

The tables 2, 3 and 4 depict the results of regression analysis to find the effect of transformational leadership and performance.

**Table 2: Regression model summary for transformational leadership and performance**

Model	R	R square	Adjusted R square	Std Error of Estimate
1	.558 <sup>a</sup>	.311	.302	1.1655

**Table 3: Anova table for the impact of transformational leadership on Teachers' performance**

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	4.232	2	3.116	20.784	.000 <sup>b</sup>
Residual	23.462	247	.137		
Total	27.694	249			

a. Dependent Variable: Teachers' performance

b. Predictor: Transformational leadership

Source: Survey data

**Table 4: Coefficients table for transformational leadership and teachers' performance**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	11.490	3.1409		3.642	.000		
Transformational Leadership	.312	.009	.407	11.834	.002	.951	1.132

a. Dependent Variable: Teachers' performance

Source: Survey data

The results of the regression analysis shown in Table 4 indicated that transformational leadership has a significant positive impact on teachers' performance (B= .312, sig = 0.01 level). As can be seen in Table 2, R

square value of .311 indicates that 31.1% of the variation in teachers' performance is accounted for the variation in transformational leadership style. Based on the finding, hypothesis 1 was supported.

***Transformational leadership style and affective commitment***

The tables 5, 6 and 7 depict the results of regression analysis to find the effect of transformational leadership on teachers’ affective commitment.

**Table 5: Regression model summary for transformational leadership and affective commitment**

Model	R	R square	Adjusted R square	Std Error of Estimate
1	.478 <sup>a</sup>	.228	.213	1.1571

**Table 6: Anova table for the impact of transformational leadership on Teachers’ affective commitment**

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	3.032	2	3.133	16.485	.000 <sup>b</sup>
Residual	19.462	247	.109		
Total	27.694	249			

a. Dependent Variable: Affective commitment

b. Predictor: Transformational leadership

Source: Survey data

**Table 7: Coefficients table for transformational leadership and affective commitment**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	12.327	3.149		4.022	.000		
Transformational Leadership	.286	.014	.366	11.834	.002	.761	1.661

a. Dependent Variable: Affective commitment

Source: Survey data

The results of the regression analysis shown in Table 7 indicated that transformational leadership has a significant positive impact on teachers’ affective commitment (B= .286, sig = 0.01 level). As can be seen in Table 5,

R square value of .228 indicates that 22.8% of the variation in teachers’ performance is accounted for the variation in transformational leadership style. Based on the finding, hypothesis 2 was supported.

***Affective commitment and teachers' performance*****Table 8: Regression model summary for Affective commitment and teachers' performance**

Model	R	R square	Adjusted R square	Std Error of Estimate
1	.501 <sup>a</sup>	.251	.212	1.2141

**Table 9: Anova table for the impact of Affective commitment on teachers' performance**

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	3.122	2	2.126	18.466	.000 <sup>b</sup>
Residual	21.422	247	.134		
Total	25.545	249			

a. Dependent Variable: Teachers' performance

b. Predictor: Affective commitment

Source: Survey data

**Table 10: Coefficients table for affective commitment and teachers' performance**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	13.117	3.149		4.022	.000		
Transformational Leadership	.402	.112	.387	12.164	.003	.881	1.545

a. Dependent Variable: Teachers' performance

Source: Survey data

As can be seen in Table 10, affective commitment has a significant positive impact on teachers' performance (B= .402, sig = 0.01 level). As can be seen in Table 8, R square value of .251

indicates that 25.1% of the variation in teachers' performance is accounted for the variation in affective commitment. Based on the finding, hypothesis 3 was supported.

***Mediating effect of affective commitment in the transformational leadership- performance relationship***

To achieve the objective of the study, the mediation effect of affective commitment was tested through regression model. The results are reported in tables 11, 12 and 13.

**Table 11: Model Summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics					Durbin-Watson
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change	
1	.655 <sup>a</sup>	.429	.422	.303	.118	2.548	2	247	.000	1.838

a. Predictors: Transformational leadership, Affective commitment

b. Dependent Variable: Teachers’ performance

Source: Survey data

**Table 12: Anova table for mediation of affective commitment between transformational leadership and teachers’ performance**

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
	Regression	3.232	2	3.546	23.332	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	21.422	247	.198		
	Total	24.654	249			

a. Dependent Variable: Teachers’ performance

b. Predictors: Transformational leadership, Affective commitment

Source: Survey data

**Table 13: Coefficients table for mediation of affective commitment between transformational leadership and teachers' performance**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	14.351	.173		3.764	.000		
Transformational leadership	.433	.232	.446	12.760	.003	.996	1.109
Affective commitment	.156	.122	.187	7.662	.004	.911	1.009

a. Dependent Variable: Teachers' performance

Source: Survey data

As per the results reported in Table 11, 12 and 13, impact of transformational leadership style on teachers mediated by affective commitment is significant ( $p < 0.05$ ;  $B = .433$ ). Here, the impact of transformational leadership on teachers' performance remained significant with the inclusion of affective commitment. Therefore, affective commitment mediates the impact of transformational leadership on teachers' performance. Thus, the hypothesis 4 was supported.

## Discussion

The present study has revealed that transformational leadership has a significant positive impact on teachers' performance. The finding is consistent with the existing empirical evidence (for example, Werang, 2014; Munawaroh, 2011). The current study also found that affective commitment mediates the association between transformational leadership and teachers'

performance. The finding also is consistent with the reported studies in the field (for example, Chen, 2004; Yeh & Hong, 2012).

The transformational leader encourages teacher involvement by motivating for higher commitment through their development of intellect for the attainment of the goal. Transformational leadership practice creates a challenging and creative school thinking culture for problem resolution. This type of leaders tends to identify new opportunities for their school and aspire others with the school vision for the future. This type of leadership behavior does not only help and encourage cooperation among their followers but also navigate their followers towards the set goal. The leader will set a good consistent value as example for the followers to diligently follow and provide appropriate models.

The organization with a corporate strategy and plan automatically builds up commitment to justify its existence and know what its final destination is and how it could reach there. This kind of clearance increases the chances that an organization will be successful, and success builds commitment as all the members in the organizations are assigned with specific tasks to be fulfilled by them. In addition, if the plan and the strategy are clear and well communicated, the employees would be more motivated, and remain focused and this situation leads to increase in the performance of the individuals and organizations (Mahfouz et al., 2020).

## Conclusion

The current study revealed that transformational leadership style has a significant positive impact on teachers' performance as well as on affective commitment. Affective commitment has a positive impact on teachers' performance. At the same time, affective commitment mediates the impact of transformational leadership style on teachers' performance. Although several studies show that transformational leadership is positively associated with performance, the relationship between

transformational leadership and performance in educational sector has been largely overlooked. The leaders of the schools in Sri Lanka will be requested to foster their role in the effort to turn the vision into reality by demonstrating the attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors expected of the school community. The findings would be useful in understanding the crucial influence of transformational leadership on teachers' performance in the education sector.

Since the world is highly volatile and complicated by nature, leadership is compelled to maneuver people into adapting new practices to meet it. Leadership plays a major motivating role for individuals' performance overcoming the toughest hurdles in the way. The present study has revealed there is association between transformational leadership and teacher performance. Future researchers may investigate the phenomenon in the schools in other regions in Sri Lankan context as well as in other contexts to identify the suitability of transformational leadership in promoting teachers' performance and the mediating role of affective commitment in the leadership-performance relationship.

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