

The Importance of Leadership Style Towards Perceived Organizational Politics in China School: A Review of Transactional Leadership

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ABSTRACT

Leadership is most effectively understood as a social exchange of resources, and as such, leaders are effective to the extent that they can encourage followers to engage in extra-role behaviour that boosts workers' productivity as well as inspire followers to reach or surpass performance requirements. The researcher contends that political skill is one of these crucial abilities that is essential to effective leadership. While effective leadership required extensive political abilities in order to motivate and mobilize individuals to collaborate in order to achieve important goals and objectives. Organizational politics are a fundamental truth that cannot be avoided. Organizational politics in a company take the shape of competition for resources, interpersonal strife, contests for leadership, and tactical influence used by individuals and groups to gain authority, establish personal stature, restrict information access, conceal true objectives, and forge alliances. In this present study, investigation focuses on the transactional leadership styles of school's principals have relationship towards organizational politics within the climate of the school; the attitudes that teachers have toward leadership; the turnover rate of instructors; and the academic achievements of students. By analyzing the connections between transactional leadership philosophies and organizational politics, this study aims to address these issues. The proposed framework on transactional leadership style and its relationship with perceived organizational politics in China's schools was to understand where each leadership style was applied and how leadership styles are linked to organizational politics in China school. In addition, the future findings will illuminate the situational and contingency theories, paving the way for the next stages of research. Utilizing transactional leadership approaches and enforcing effective organizational politics, principals create conditions that allow for improved leadership on their part. The methodological implications for scholars and policymakers can be taken into account in future studies.

keywords: *leadership style, perceived organizational politics, China, transactional leadership*

I. INTRODUCTION

Numerous scholars have cited leadership style as a significant element influencing workforce productivity. In the past, when identifying the various types of effective leadership styles, such as socially oriented, autocratic, and democratic, scientists attempted to demonstrate a relationship between these styles and a variety of organisational results. Nevertheless, leadership is most effectively understood as a social exchange of resources, and as such, leaders are effective to the extent that they can encourage followers to engage in extra-role behaviour that boosts workers' productivity as well as inspire followers to reach or surpass performance requirements. According to Robinson, Lloyd and Rowe (2008), in order to successfully influence others, a leader must possess a variety of

talents and be able to choose and apply them in the right circumstances. The researcher contends that political skill is one of these crucial abilities that is essential to effective leadership.

[Rivelino \(2022\)](#) claimed that effective leadership required extensive political abilities in order to motivate and mobilise individuals to collaborate in order to achieve important goals and objectives. Other authors have called attention to the role that political skills play in networking, coalition formation, and the development of social capital. Each of these requires the leader to have strong political acumen. According to [Samad \(2012\)](#), political savvy is crucial for a leader to have in order to secure more funding for their teams, which in turn increases the value of those leaders to their teams. Organizational politics will be another factor that people will start to be concerned about. Organizational politics are a fundamental truth that cannot be avoided. Organizational politics in a company take the shape of competition for resources, interpersonal strife, contests for leadership, and tactical influence used by individuals and groups to gain authority, establish personal stature, restrict information access, conceal true objectives and forge alliances. Employee impressions of the political climate at work have an impact on how they view their employer, boss, and coworkers as well as on how productive, satisfied, and likely to leave they feel at work ([Ferris & Kacmar, 1992](#)). As a result, the level of political engagement within a business and the responses of its employees to these actions have an impact on organisational culture.

According to research, employee attitudes such as job satisfaction ([Sentosa, Shamsudin & Sharin, 2021](#)) withdrawal and negligent behaviours such as turnover intention ([Maslyn & Fedor, 1998](#)) and neglect are all predicted by perceptions of organisational politics. Psychological states such as job stress and burnout are also predicted by these perceptions. Politically astute leaders understand exactly what to do in various workplace social situations such as choosing the most situationally appropriate behaviours, but they also know how to do it in a way that conveys sincerity, credibility, trust, and confidence without raising any questions about their motivations. Politically astute leaders frequently exhibit the traits of the effective leadership profile developed by [House and Howell in 1992](#). These writers emphasised the significance of certain actions that supported a favourable follower interpretation. Consequently, those behavioural patterns have a significant impact on effective leadership. The investigation among Chinese school leaders is the context for this study.

By analysing the connections between transactional leadership philosophies and organisational politics, this study aims to address these issues. This approach might make up for the shortcomings of earlier studies that only looked at the effects of one particular kind of leadership. To comprehend the study more fully, which aims to clarify the idea of leadership and its behaviour in order to improve the effectiveness of the educational system and unintentionally advance knowledge, Studies also demonstrate that when principals support a school environment with timely suggestions and feedback, efficient instruction, political management, a positive work environment for the teaching staff, and opportunities for professional development, teaching and student achievement tend to improve. According to [Wetzstein, Suchanek, and Paul \(2009\)](#), a principal's job has evolved from being a teacher to being an entrepreneurial manager with a variety of responsibilities, the most crucial of which is to raise the bar for performance at the school.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Perceived Organizational Politics

Leadership styles have been thoroughly studied on a global scale. Principal responsibilities serve as the basis for a more in-depth assessment of principal leadership, due to their importance in sustaining school performance and fostering continuous improvement. Previous research has revealed that leadership style has direct or indirect effects on organisation's achievement (Dimopoulos, 2020). For example, a previous study discovered that the behaviour of the principal, specifically the leadership influence on a supportive, collegial, and not overly restrictive school climate, enables the impact of politics on school climate and thus on his or her teaching members to positively influence student achievement. Therefore, the behaviours of principals should have a close correlation with their leadership styles (Pinkas & Buli, 2017). The majority of empirical research on organisational politics has been based on the conceptual model presented by Ferris, Russ, and Fandt (1989), who argued that organisational politics is best conceived as a subjective state. Consequently, academics have investigated worker views of organisational politics and their negative repercussions (Maslyn & Fedor, 1998). The majority of empirical studies have found significant relationships between perceptions of organisational politics and negative individual outcomes, such as higher levels of absenteeism, turnover intentions, anxiety, and stress, and lower levels of job satisfaction, organisational commitment, job performance, and organisational citizenship (Kacmar & Baron, 1999).

Although dispositional characteristics, such as locus of control and Machiavellianism, have been found to predict views of organisational politics, these variables are typically less sensitive to leadership styles. Organizational politics, according to Pfeffer (1981), is the study of power in action. He claimed that the major purpose of leadership is the management of perceptions and meanings that determine the outcomes of an organisation. The perception of politics is an influential organisational characteristic among these perceptions. According to Brauckmann and Pashiardis (2011), who approached leadership from a holistic perspective, a survey of 203 German principals revealed that the instructional, structuring, participative, entrepreneurial, and personnel development styles were influenced by a number of system-level variables, such as the political system's pattern of centralization or decentralization (Wutoy, Waruwu, Ndraha, & Al Hadad, 2022). In contrast, according to Fend (2008), the political system, which stands in for the interests of the community, is a two-way street where societal structures and the educational or school system are traded for one another.

Researchers discovered correlations between political perceptions and largely negative outcomes, such as job-related stress, uncertainty, job ambiguity, organisational ambiguity, lack of understanding regarding the larger organisational impetus, job anxiety, intention to leave, and psychological withdrawal. Other political attitudes adversely correlated with desired outcomes such as organisational commitment, organisational citizenship, and supervisor satisfaction. In general, individuals in companies respond to their views of politics in one of three ways: by withdrawing or intending to leave (intent to turnover), by increasing their work engagement, or by exhibiting similar or more aggressive political activities (Kacmar & Ferris, 1992). A person in a political situation may assume

that hard work will not be rewarded regularly (Cropanzano et al, 1997). Hulin (1991) suggested that individuals are more likely to have a favourable opinion of an organisation if their aims are being accomplished as opposed to their aspirations. The perception of politics appears to be correlated with employees' perceptions of their job happiness, organisational commitment, and job involvement (Cropanzano et al, 1997).

Environments that provide higher quality feedback are connected with fewer views of organisational politics, and fewer perceptions of politics are associated with greater employee morale. As answers to a highly political workplace, employees who choose to remain with the firm (despite being disgruntled) may engage in political activity, such as absenteeism. Perceived politics has also been found to predict a variety of organisational outcomes, including job stress and burnout, employee attitudes, including job satisfaction and organisational commitment, withdrawal and negligent behaviour, including turnover intentions and neglect, and employee performance, including self-reported performance and supervisor-rated performance. According to Leithwood, Harris and Hopkins, (2020), job satisfaction acts as a buffer between employees' perceptions of politics and poorer performance levels and higher organisational withdrawal.

In this study, organisational politics and leadership were both experimentally investigated to see how much each had an impact on job satisfaction, job involvement, turnover intentions, and job stress. Several research have shown that among workers who reported having a great deal of influence over their work settings, politics had little of an effect on job satisfaction, absenteeism, and workplace anxiety (Witt, Andrews, & Kacmar, 2000). The empirical support for the Ferris et al. (1989) model suggests the potential value of actions taken to improve employees' perceptions of understanding and control in order to lessen the detrimental effects of perceptions of organisational politics. Valle and Witt (2001) used regression analyses on data from 355 full-time employees of a customer-service organisation in the eastern United States to test the hypothesis that perceptions of organisational politics are more strongly related to job dissatisfaction among individuals who perceive low levels of teamwork importance than among those who perceive high levels of teamwork importance. The data's hierarchical moderated regression analysis showed that at average to high levels of perceived politics, the moderating influence of teamwork importance was most significant. This finding lends credence to the idea that encouraging teamwork among employees is one method to counteract the damaging effects of organisational politics (Van Wart, 2005).

B. Leadership Style

In the context of today's organisations, leadership is one of the most important factors. It is frequently seen as a component that significantly affects how well businesses, managers, and employees perform (Aldhaheri, 2017). Any facet of managing change in an organisation can benefit from the concept of leadership. A leader is defined as a person who establishes direction and persuades others to follow it. Early scholars tried to categorise effective leadership philosophies and link them to specific organisational outcomes (Boberg & Bourgeois, 2016). A collective phenomenon is leadership. The most effective leader, according to Knezevich (1984), may be the one who assists in setting and defining goals and inspires the group to pursue them. According to Stogdill (1948), behaviour in

relation to the characteristics of the group to be led is vital because qualities alone do not generate a leader. According to Knezevich (1984), a leader's behaviour often varies depending on the issues at hand, the people engaged, and other factors. Despite the fact that leadership styles can change, positions of authority typically reflect a dominating behavioural pattern. Transactional and transformational leadership are the two key elements on which researchers have recently concentrated (Khan, Nawaz & Khan, 2016). However, the topic of this piece is transactional leadership.

C. Transactional Leadership Style

Transactional theories place a strong emphasis on how organisation, supervision, and group output function. According to these views, the basis of leadership is a system of success-based incentives and failure-based sanctions. According to the research, the transactional style hampers creativity and can be bad for employee happiness. Management by exception provides an explanation for leaders' actions by precisely pinpointing departures from followers' expected behaviour. A transactional leader conforms to the dependent rewards system, values excellent performance, and outlines performance objectives for their team members. Transactional leaders, according to Bass and Avolio (1997), view contractual agreements as the primary motivators and use extrinsic rewards to motivate followers.

Depending on the circumstance and context, both groups have various applications. In situations demanding a high level of precision, technical expertise, and time constraints, especially in environments with advanced technology, we will choose transactional leadership. However, in human-intensive situations where the emphasis is on motivating followers and respecting their feelings in light of shared goals, convictions, and values, transformational leadership will be the preferred strategy (McGregor, 2003). A transactional leadership style is composed of three components: dependent reward, management by exception (active), and management by exception (passive).

1) Contingent Reward

Results-oriented leadership is focused on achieving goals. This behaviour has developed as a result of how highly humans value receiving concrete, material rewards for their labour. Transactional leadership promotes compliance by appealing to people's needs and wants, but transformational leadership recognises individual skills and fosters enthusiasm through emotional appeals, values, and belief systems (Avolio & Bass, 2004). Employers are expected to follow directions from managers who use contingent rewards to get the task done. The use of performance-based material rewards, direction-setting, complementarity, and team confidence-building are key indicators of contingent compensation (Sharin, Sentosa & Perumal, 2022).

2) Management by Exception (Active)

Laissez-faire management practises serve as an example of management by exception (active), which is not the same as giving up on leadership. Leaders who utilise management by exception (active) have a natural faith in their team members' capacity to accomplish assignments successfully and maintain the status quo. However, if the goal

is achieved, the system has worked, everyone is happy, and business continues as usual, this style of leadership does not encourage staff to go above and beyond expected results (Avolio & Bass, 2004). There is little sense of risk-taking, fresh insights, or white-water thinking in management by exception leaders. It is consistent with a need-driven transformational culture. Inadequate communication, maintaining the status quo, lack of confidence, and management by exception (active) are characteristics.

3) *Management by Exception (Passive)*

It is a form of transactional leadership in which CEOs refrain from outlining agreements and fail to provide staff members goals and standards to meet. Sometimes a leader will wait until something goes wrong before acting (Avolio & Bass, 2004).

Based on the descriptive literature and arguments, the researcher formulates two hypotheses for the present article, which are:

Hypothesis 1: Contingent Rewards is confirmed as a significant measurement of transactional leadership.

Hypothesis 2: Management by Exception (Active) is confirmed as a significant measurement of transactional leadership.

Hypothesis 3: Management by Exception (Passive) is confirmed as a significant measurement of transactional leadership.

Hypothesis 4: Transactional leadership is positively and significance relationship with perceived organizational politics in China school.

III. CONCEPTUAL DEVELOPMENT

To bolster and support the complete body of research, the researcher chooses the Situational Theory or Contingency Theory. The situational leadership theory has historically suggested that the style of leadership should be in line with the degree of development of the subordinates (Khan, Nawaz & Khan, 2016). The situational leadership paradigm, which was first presented in 1969, asserted that there is no one best way to lead and that effective leaders must be able to change their leadership style from task-oriented to relationship-oriented in response to changing conditions. Greenleaf then develops this situational theory from a different angle in 1997. No leadership style can be considered accurate on its own, according to the theory of contingency, because it depends on factors like the followers' situation, quality, and quantity of variables." This theory contends that there is no one best technique to lead because each situation calls for a different approach depending on the environment's internal and external factors." Most of the time, leaders affect not just the people of the organisation but also its dynamics and environment.

Theories of contingency are, broadly speaking, a category of behavioural theory that contests the idea that there is no one optimum way of leading or organising, and that a leadership approach that works well in one scenario may

not work well in another (Greenleaf, 1977). However, contingency theorists thought that the leader was the main focus of the leader-subordinate interaction, despite the fact that they thought that employees played a significant part in defining the leader-subordinate relationship. Although the contingency approach still places a lot of emphasis on the leader, it also emphasises the importance of group dynamics (Chen, Ning & Bos, 2022). Some of our current concepts of group dynamics and leadership have been developed as a result of these examinations into the interactions between groups and their leaders. According to the idea of situational leadership, the leadership approach should be proportional to the level of development of the subordinates (Bass & Avolio, 1997)

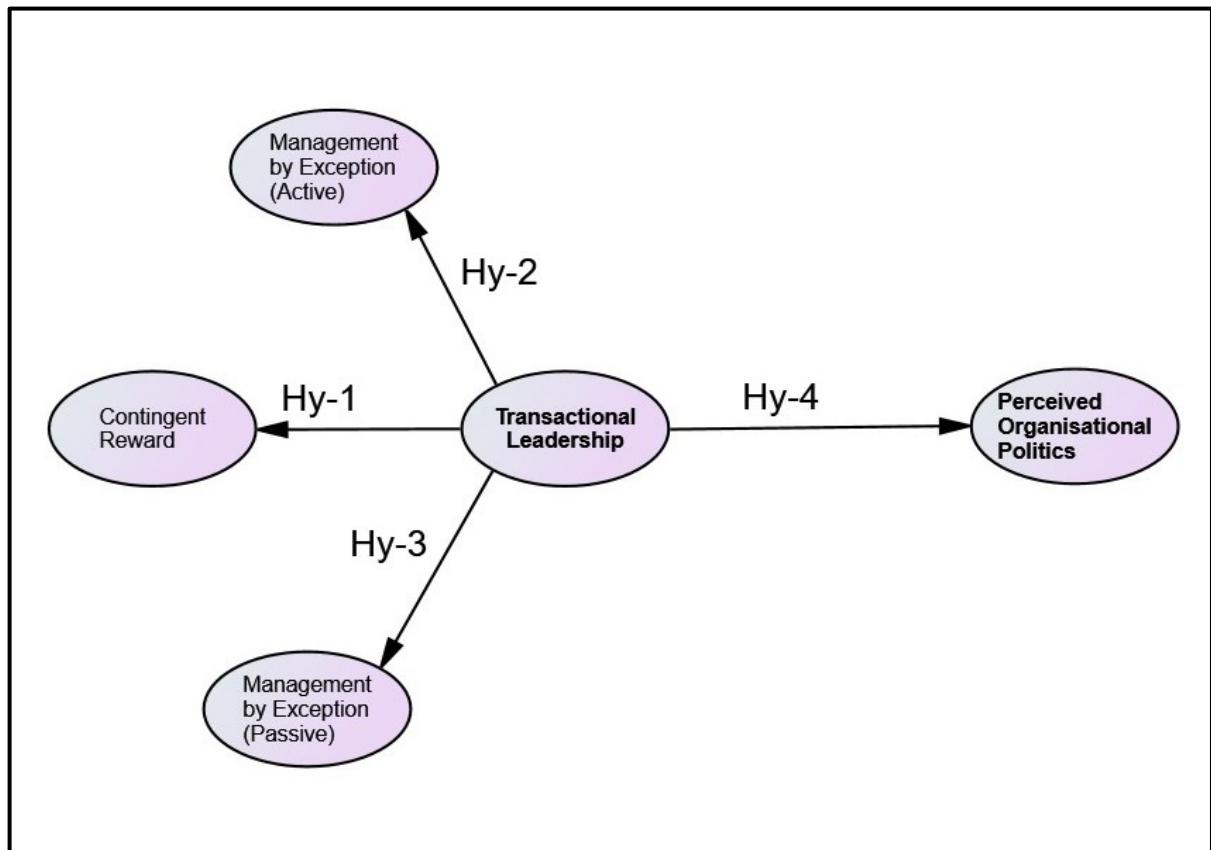


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 shows how this study lays the framework for constructing a theory of transactional leadership and its implications for perceived organizational politics. The researcher presented a second-order construct approach to measuring the relationship between the independent variable, transactional leadership, and its components (contingent reward, management by exception (active), and management by exception (passive), and the dependent variable (perceived organizational leadership). The study's methodology also considers how educational institutions, particularly secondary schools in China, might be involved in order to improve the quality of their service delivery and institutional efficiency. Adopting a holistic perspective is allows to understand and explain complicated and well-organized occurrences in which all parts have important relationships to one another and make significant contributions to the whole. Because the population of interest in this study is Chinese school leaders or principals,

data will be collected from them to act as a sample. This framework works well with any management system and is easily adaptable to new systems, and there is a clear distinction between the various sections in terms of their ability to manage resources and achieve the organization's goals. This framework can be applied extensively in the domains of political science and education management.

IV. DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

To better understand where each leadership style was implemented and how leadership styles linked to student accomplishment, this study developed and proposed a framework on transactional leadership and its relationship with perceived organisational politics in China's schools. For further analysis to confirm that leadership techniques (transactional leadership) and their ideologies were substantially associated to the contingency of principals positioned, the proposed study design is crucial. It is possible to make educated guesses about a school principal's leadership style and professional ambitions by considering how various contextual or situational factors interact with one another (Bellibas & Liu, 2018). Different leadership styles may either benefit or hinder organisational performance, which is a predictor of leadership effectiveness (Li, 2020).

Since the leadership style is a predictor of the effect, most previous research has examined how one particular style of principal affects student achievement in particular contexts. Within the context of the association between primary leadership styles and perceived organisational politics, we investigate additional system-related background information on national politics. The competitive climate between schools, encouraged by educational policy and the national system (Li, 2016), significantly impacted principals' actions related to leadership for learning with instructional, transformational, and distributed or shared leadership styles. In addition, the findings will illuminate the situational and contingency theories, paving the way for the next stages of research. Utilizing transactional leadership approaches and enforcing effective organisational politics, principals create conditions that allow for improved leadership on their part. The methodological implications for scholars and policymakers can be taken into account in future studies.

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