

# The Impact of Transformational Leadership Styles on Task Performance and Psychological Capital: a Study on College Teachers in China

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## Abstract

This research aims to investigate Transformational leadership styles, task performance and psychological capital in a college based on Shaanxi province. The study will include three variables: transformational leadership, task performance, and psychological capital. We hypothesized that different leadership styles would have a diverse effect on the task performance and psychological capital of teachers. The research was conducted using three different questionnaires on a specific population sample. Participants were from a vocational college in Shaanxi province and they completed the questionnaires on transformational leadership, task performance and psychological capital. Results indicated that transformational leadership can impact task performance and psychological capital, but not what kind of effect leadership has. Therefore, we will also explore the relationship between transformational leadership styles, task performance and psychological capital. Using correlation analysis of SPSS, results show that leadership style has a positive correlation with task performance, psychological capital. Psychological capital has mediated effect between transformational leadership and task performance. Overall, this study contributes to our understanding of the effect of leadership styles on task performance and psychological capital in the context of China.

**Keywords:** Leadership Style, Transformational Leadership, Task Performance, Psychological Capital, Chinese Universities.

## **Introduction**

The competition for talents is intensifying in the context of economic globalization, multi-polarization of the world and the rapid development of science and technology. In order to adapt to the development pattern of accelerated economic transformation, China's socialist modernization to promote the comprehensive development of human beings, cultivate high-quality talents put forward more urgent mission requirements, the important role and status of education is increasingly prominent.

In order to meet the needs of social and economic development, the Party Central Committee insists on giving priority to the development of education, adheres to the strategy of strengthening the country with talents, promotes the transition from a large country with human resources to a strong country with talents, and points out in the report of the Nineteenth National Congress that we should do a good job of people's satisfaction with the education, and further emphasizes that educating people is the foundation of the development, and insists on giving priority to the development of the education cause at the strategic level.

For decades, both academic and practical discussions have argued that the improvement of an individual's experience, academic qualifications, social relationships, etc. can provide motivational support for task performance. However, with the development of today's society, traditional resources can no longer be a unique advantage created by individuals in a sustainable manner, due to the fact that academic qualifications can be acquired through learning, experience can be gained through practice, and even social resources can be copied and imitated.

More and more college administrators are recognizing faculty psychological resources as an important source of competitive advantage for organizations. Numerous studies have also shown that psychological resources such as employees' excellent psychological quality, good mental state, and positive work attitude are important sources for individuals to produce high performance. Therefore, how to acquire, develop and utilize teachers' psychological resources to improve teachers' task performance has become an important issue facing university management.

## **Literature Review**

### *Transformational Leadership Styles*

The concept of transformational leadership was first introduced in 1973 by Downtown. He argued that a leader's influence on his subordinates is related to all aspects of the subordinate's life. The development of transformational leadership theory was further advanced by Bass's (1985) study of transformational leadership theory, in which Bass argued that transformational leaders, through their personal charisma and charisma, enable subordinates to realize the importance of their performance to the organization.

Avilio and Bass (1997) for transformational leadership in the vision of motivation aspects of a detailed study, they will be the leader's self-confidence, positivity, value orientation, and for the staff to inspire employees as a motivation of several aspects, and set up the work of the task and goals and the details of the process of work, the results show that the leader's appeal, and their own self-confidence, will produce better staff motivation effect. motivational effect on employees. This is because the leader can let the employees feel the future prospects of the enterprise, and can show full confidence and optimism, so that the employees have great confidence in the future development of the enterprise, and then have greater motivation to work hard.

In China, there are also many scholars who have researched the theory of transformational leadership. Chen (2023) believes that transformational leadership improves employees' performance at work by allowing workers to perceive their self-worth, increasing their self-confidence, and the psychological effect of self-esteem. In a study of police service quality in Taiwan, Cao (2020) found that transformational leadership had a positive predictive effect on leadership effectiveness satisfaction, service quality satisfaction, effort, and self-assessment in these areas.

Although mainland scholars' research on transformational leadership is relatively late, the research on transformational leadership has been deepening. Li (2023) has empirically analyzed the theory of transformational leadership proposed by Bass according to the actual situation in China, and its validity has been verified. He also explored the structure of transformational leadership more deeply and proposed a structural model of transformational leadership.

### **Task Performance**

The concept of performance was first introduced in management science. Although job performance is not a new concept, performance is still the focus of many scholars. Scholars pay so much attention to the study of performance, one point is because of the significance of performance itself, and the other is because human resources have become one of the core competitiveness of enterprises in the future, and human resources focuses on the work performance of employees. Researchers have also put forward different views on how to define employee performance and what dimensions should constitute employee performance.

In this paper, the performance we study refers to teachers' task performance. Scholars at home and abroad have given a lot of definitions for job performance, and scholars such as Porter (1968) are the scholars who defined performance earlier. He believes that performance is the quantity and quality of work and the degree of work effort. Kenbel (1990) believes that performance is a kind of behavior, which is manifested in the fact that employees can control their own behavior to make it develop in the direction of helping to achieve the goal, and he believes that this kind of behavior of employees can be measured and evaluated, and it can be quantified.

Chinese scholar Wen Zhiyi in 2005, to the company's middle management as the object of study, the structure of the employee's work performance was explored. The research results show that the structure of this performance can be divided into four dimensions, including task performance, effort performance, adaptive performance and interpersonal performance. The study verified the good reliability and validity of the scale based on the four dimensions of the constructed performance scale.

Then, Han Wing and other predecessors summarized, and proposed a four-dimensional construct model to validate the performance of employees. The four dimensions are relationship performance, task performance, learning performance and innovative performance. Wang Hui investigated the validity of the two-factor model of task performance and scenario performance in the context of Chinese culture. Their results show that task performance and situational performance have good structural validity, which makes the

applicability of task performance and situational performance in certain contexts in China.

### *Psychological Capital*

Teachers' psychological capital is the mediating variable in this study. Most of the current definitions of the concept of psychological capital are based on the views of Luthans, the author of the theory, therefore, this study considers that the psychological capital of teachers is a positive and positive psychological state possessed by teachers, which is a measurable and developable intra-personal resource that is helpful in helping teachers to respond to the difficulties and frustrations they face with positive attitudes and quick replies to them, so as to promote the growth and development of the individual teachers.

Following Luthans' structural division of psychological capital, this study subdivided teachers' psychological capital into four dimensions: first, self-efficacy, the individual's ability to motivate himself or herself to accomplish a task or encounter difficulties, and his or her self-efficacy in assessing the success of the outcome after taking action. Second, hope, the individual's positive willingness to choose the best way to reach a goal or complete a task and to adjust actions to the best strategy based on motivation during the task path.

Third, optimism, the individual's ability to make positive predictions about current and future events and to make positive attributions in interpreting these events. Fourth, resilience, an individual's ability to quickly search for solutions to help him or her get out of a difficult situation and back to normal when faced with a setback or unexpected situation. The psychological capital of teachers in this study also refers to the psychological capital of college teachers, which is the level of their positive psychological state as reflected in their perceptions based on the four dimensions. Transformational leadership and task performance for the study of leadership effectiveness, the indicators for its measurement are mainly, the behavioral performance of employees, employee performance and other aspects (Li, 2024; Liang, 2016, Li et al.,2024. Although scholars at home and abroad conduct research related to leadership behavior and enterprise performance and employee performance, whether leadership behavior plays a substantial role in enterprise performance has been the focus of debate in various studies. On the one hand, some scholars believe that according to the empirical analysis of previous enterprise research, the leader's behavior does have a certain impact on enterprise performance, but some other scholars believe that the impact of the leader's behavior on the performance of the enterprise does not play a decisive role.

In China, there are relatively few studies on transformational leadership and employee performance. Scholars Chen (2023), after analyzing the data on leader-subordinate matching, concluded that transformational leadership has a positive impact on organizational citizenship behavior. At the same time, he also believes that transformational leadership can make employees clearly know the goals and values of their work, which can enhance their motivation to work, thereby increasing their trust in their leaders, improving their work efficiency, and thus enhancing their work performance. Wu and Wu Ji (2017) studied high-tech team leaders and verified that transformational leadership behavior has a positive relationship with team performance. Domestic scholar Jia (2024) found that transformational leader behavior has

significant correlation with task performance and adaptive performance by analyzing them. In this paper, in Chinese cultural context, we borrowed scholars Jing and Wang (2024) classification method on the dimensions of transformational leadership behaviors and classified them into four dimensions, which are Idealized influence, intellectual stimulation, individual consideration and inspirational motivation.

Transformational leadership and psychological capital Helland et al. argued that transformational leaders motivate employees through vision by foreshadowing hopeful prospects and communicating to them ways to achieve the visionary goals, and that these advocated goals and actions become the basis for employees' motivation and show them the path to the achievement of the organization's goals, which can stimulate more of their psychological capital, especially hope and self-efficacy.

Focusing on the transformational leadership of principals in the field of education, there is a significant lack of research at home and abroad, although the significant correlation between other leadership styles of principals and the psychological capital of teachers has been confirmed by a number of studies. Wang (2017) survey of 1,429 primary and secondary school teachers in Taiwan found that principals' sincere leadership fostered teachers' positive psychological capital and was significantly positively correlated with it. Using teachers' psychological capital as a mediating variable, Su and Hahn (2023) verified that principals' leadership behaviors significantly affect teachers' psychological capital, and through this effect, their organizational citizenship behaviors.

From a comprehensive point of view, the research on the relationship between transformational leadership and teachers' psychological capital in colleges and universities is still in its infancy, and scholars at home and abroad have not yet shifted their research perspectives to the educational context. However, because the significant impact of managers' leadership style on teachers' psychological capital has been more confirmed, coupled with the results of existing research in business management, it is reasonable to infer that transformational leadership in colleges and universities and its dimensions can positively affect the psychological capital of teachers, and the subsequent empirical research can test the inference, and it is just to be able to enrich the results of the research in this area.

In addition, at present, whether in the field of business or education, the relevant research mostly puts psychological capital as a mediating variable into the mechanism of transformational leadership and a certain outcome variable, and discusses the relationship between the two as a part of the research, which also ensures to a certain extent that this study puts the teachers' psychological capital as a mediating variable of the reasonableness of the mediating variable.

Task performance and psychological capital Numerous scholars have found that psychological capital has a positive correlation with job performance, and psychological capital also has a positive effect on task performance. However, different scholars hold different views on the influence mechanism of psychological capital on job performance. Chinese scholar Du (2022) proved that the effect of psychological capital on job influence is higher than that of human capital and social capital through survey research. Zhang's (2010) empirical research results show that between psychological capital and job performance, the main manifestation is the effect of psychological capital on job

performance. Du et al (2022) further subdivided the effect of psychological capital on job performance and conducted a study on the effect of psychological capital on task performance and relationship performance and found that psychological capital has a significant effect on both task performance and relationship performance.

### **Objectives**

In the current study on Chinese universities and colleges, there is less research related to transformational leadership, task performance and psychological capital. But with the gradual perfection in the management mechanism within universities and colleges in China, the problems of improve task performance of lecturers have become an important research task. Therefore, there is important theoretical and practical significance in researching the relationship between transformational leadership, task performance and psychological capitals in Chinese colleges and universities.

On the one hand, there is less research into transformational leadership, task performance and psychological capital for Chinese colleges and universities, so the research of this article can further supplement and perfect the correlational studies, and can be the foundation of the following studies. On the other hand, there is also less literature regards the teachers psychological capital as a mediated variable to research the relationship between transformational leadership and task performance in China, especially focus on universities and colleges. Therefore, through the research of this report, a better understanding of the relationship between the specific mechanisms of these three factors might exist.

In the study we will look if:

1. Transformational leadership styles have a effect on task performance and psychological capital of teachers.
2. Teachers psychological capital exerts an obvious effect on the correlation between transformational leadership and teachers task performance.

### **Method**

Participants were recruited from a college in Shaanxi province. A total of 82 participants joined the research, details of which are included below in Table 1.

Table 1

*Demographics of Participants*

Demographic	Frequency (n=82)	Percentage (%)
Age		
20-29	30	36.6
30-39	49	59.8
40-49	2	2.4
Above 50	1	1.2
Gender		
Female	42	51.2
Male	40	48.8
Education		
Bachelor's	27	32.9
Master Degree	54	65.9
PhD	1	1.2

The test samples is described below. Gender: the total participants are 92; the percentage of males is 48.8% and females are 51.2%. Age. Participants were divided into 4 age groups, 20 to 29, 30 to 39, 40 to 49, and above 50. There are 36.6% participants between 20 to 29, 59.8% are in the 30-39 group, 2.4% are in the 40-49 group, and only 1.2% are above 50. The majority of participants are younger. Education included undergraduate, master and PhD. 32.9% of participants are undergraduate, 65.9% participants has master degree, and only 1.2% are PhD. The colleges in Shaanxi province, most teachers are masters.

**Materials**

This research uses the transformational leadership as the independent variables; teachers task performance is the dependent variable and the mediating variable is psychological capital. To measure transformational leadership, task performance and psychological capital, three questionnaires were used in this research. The collected data were analyzed using IBM's Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 29.

**Results**

82 questionnaires were received in total, and 82 were calculated valid questionnaires.

Table 2

*Mean scores for transformational leadership (TL), task performance (TP) and psychological capital (PsyCap) (standard deviations in parentheses)*

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Transformational Leadership	82	3.82	0.94
Task Performance	82	3.98	0.99
Psychological Capital	82	4.60	1.12

To better investigate the impact of transformational leadership on task performance and psychological capital, four different measures of transformational leadership style were included in the correlation analysis: idealized influence (II), intellectual stimulation (IS), individual consideration (IC) and inspirational motivation (IM).

The first analysis was carried out, in which correlations between transformational leadership style and task performance were obtained. The measures were: idealized influence (II), intellectual stimulation (IS), individual consideration (IC) and inspirational motivation (IM) of transformational leadership, and teachers task performance. 82 participants provide the data, and the results shows in Table 3. Table 3. Correlation between Task Performance with Transformational Leadership

		TL	II	IS	IC	IM
Task Performance	Pearson Correlation	.750**	.677**	.709**	.730**	.765**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	82	82	82	82	82

The correlation analysis of transformational leadership and its dimensions with teachers' task performance showed that the correlation coefficient between the two variables in general was 0.750, which reached the significant level ( $p < 0.01$ ), and the two showed a significant positive correlation. And the four dimensions of transformational leadership also showed a significant positive correlation with teacher task performance with correlation coefficients of: idealized influence ( $r = 0.677$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), intellectual stimulation ( $r = 0.709$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), individual consideration ( $r = 0.730$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and inspirational motivation ( $r = 0.765$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ).

The second analysis was carried out in which a correlation between transformational leadership and psychological capital were obtained. The measures were: transformational leadership with dimensions self-efficacy (SE), hope (HO), optimism (OP) and resilience (RE) psychological capital. Results are presented in Table 4.



Table 4

*Correlation between Initiating Structure Dimension of Transformational Leadership with Psychological Capital*

	PsyCap	SE	HO	OP	RE
Transformational leadership	.802**	.00082	.756**	.767**	.773**
Sig. (2-tailed)		.82	.00082	.82	.00082
N					

The correlation analysis of transformational leadership with psychological capital and its dimensions showed that the correlation coefficient between the two variables in general was 0.802, which reached the significant level ( $p < 0.01$ ), and the two showed a significant positive correlation. And the four dimensions of psychological capital also showed a significant positive correlation with transformational leadership, with correlation coefficients of: self-efficacy ( $r = 0.756, p < 0.01$ ), hope ( $r = 0.767, p < 0.01$ ), optimism ( $r = 0.753, p < 0.01$ ) and resilience motivation ( $r = 0.773, p < 0.01$ ).

The third analysis was carried out in which the correlation between transformational leadership, task performance and psychological capital were obtained. Through the previous analysis, on the basis of verifying that there is a significant positive direct influence effect of transformational leadership in general on teachers' task performance, according to the research hypothesis, teachers' psychological capital is introduced as a mediating variable to join the model, so as to construct a mediating effect model. Results are presented in Table 4.

Table 5

*Mediating effect of Psychological Capital on Transformational Leadership and Task Performance*

Path	Efect	SE	t	p	95% Lower	95% Upper
TL -> PC -> TP	0.216	0.133	1.623	0.000	0.100	0.417

The calculation of the effect size of the mediation path shows that the effect size of the indirect influence of the independent variable transformational leadership on task performance through psychological capital is 0.216, with a significance test result of  $p < 0.001$  and a 95% confidence interval that does not contain 0. Therefore, the mediation path is established.

**Discussion**

The purpose of this study is whether transformational leadership affects teachers' task performance and psychological capital differently and whether transformational leadership is correlated with task performance as well as psychological capital. Based on these hypotheses, we found that transformational leadership and its dimensions are significantly and positively correlated with task performance, which means that when administrators are more humanistic and caring, teachers produce more work efficacy in their work. The more caring the administrators show in their daily work, the more work motivation the teachers show and the relative growth of task performance they create.

In terms of psychological capital, transformational leadership showed a significant positive correlation with both psychological capital and its dimensions. Transformational leadership promotes teachers to generate positive psychological energy, hope and enthusiasm for their work. At the same time, transformational leadership can also contribute to the effective improvement of teachers' task performance by increasing their psychological capital.

### **Limitations and future direction of the study**

There are some shortcomings in this paper. Firstly, the sample of this paper involves fewer industries, which will have some impact on the breadth of the research results; Secondly, because the questionnaire in this paper was not distributed on site, this may make the respondents not fully understand the questionnaire, which will more or less affect the research of this paper. And the survey form is somewhat single, in the future research can be added to the interview and other methods, can be more in-depth analysis of the problem. Again, this paper does not control the personal information of the respondents when verifying the mediating role of teachers' psychological capital, which is a limitation of this paper.

Finally, the scales in this paper are all adopted from mature scales at home and abroad, especially the Transformational Leadership Scale is translated with mature scales from abroad, and it is still debatable whether the scale is completely suitable for the research of this thesis due to the fact that there may be some differences in cultural and social environments.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, in Chinese higher education institutions, transformational leadership have effect on task performance and psychological capital. For instance, the positive correlation between the transformational leadership and task performance, so that, the more transformational leadership style the managers use, the higher task performance the teachers can created. Meanwhile, the positive correlation between the transformational leadership and psychological capital, the higher level transformational leadership the managers have, will enhance teachers have more psychological capital. Moreover, through improve lecturers' psychological capital, it's can influence the effect of transformational leadership on task performance. All in all, the transformational leadership have positive effect on task performance and psychological capital of teachers

The empirical analysis confirms that transformational leadership and its dimensions in higher education have a significant positive impact on teachers' tasks. This suggests that transformational leadership, a leadership style characterized by value addition and human development, is conducive to motivating teachers to work, stimulating their motivation and creating value. The results of the structural equation analysis show that the positive influence of transformational leadership on teachers' task performance is partly realized through teachers' psychological capital, which verifies the partial mediating role of teachers' psychological capital in it.

As a positive psychological state of teachers, psychological capital helps them to face problems at work moderately, and get rid of avoidance and negative coping in difficult situations, turn crisis into opportunity, and turn pressure into motivation, so as to promote the promotion of teachers' job satisfaction. By examining the mediating role of teachers'

psychological capital as an internal psychological resource, the mechanism of the effect of principals' transformational leadership on teachers' job satisfaction was further clarified.

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