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### **Principals' Transformational Leadership Practices and Teacher Job Satisfaction in TS25 Schools: A Current Survey of the Coronavirus Pandemic**

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*Received: October 13, 2021 ▪ Reviewed: November 18, 2021*

*▪ Accepted: December 27, 2021 ▪ Published: January 28, 2022*

**Abstract:**

The coronavirus epidemic has caused irregular changes in Malaysia's education system, affecting teachers' work satisfaction. Therefore, as the school leader, the principal must be diligent in implementing the proper leadership style. This study was conducted to survey the level of transformational leadership practices of principals and teacher job satisfaction in TS25 schools in Kuching, Sarawak, during the Covid-19 pandemic. For this quantitative survey, 252 respondents were selected through a random sampling method among 728 teachers. The questionnaire of this study was constructed and modified based on the Burns and Bass Transformational Leadership Theory Model and Maslow's Hierarchical Needs Theory, which have been tested for their validity and reliability. The Cronbach's alpha value of the questionnaire was 0.820. The study data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The study indicated that principals' transformational leadership practices were extremely high (mean = 4.252, s. d = 0.470), while teachers' job satisfaction was also very high (mean = 4.186, s. d = 0.395). This study found that there was a significant and robust positive relationship between transformational leadership and teacher job satisfaction [ $r(252) = 0.705, p < .01$ ]. The outcomes of this study can assist the principals involved with the School Transformation Program 2015-2025 (TS25) to enhance their leadership style so that teachers' job satisfaction can be improved in the future. The implications of this study will assist the stakeholders in ensuring the TS25 Program runs smoothly in the future. The coronavirus epidemic has caused irregular changes in Malaysia's education system, affecting teachers' work satisfaction. In conclusion, the transformational leadership style positively impacted teacher job satisfaction during the coronavirus pandemic.

**Keywords:** transformational leadership, teacher job satisfaction, pandemic.

## TS25 学校校长的变革型领导实践和教师工作满意度：当前对冠状病毒大流行的调查

### 摘要：

冠状病毒的流行导致马来西亚教育体系发生不规律的变化，影响了教师的工作满意度。因此，校长作为学校领导，必须勤于落实正确的领导作风。本研究旨在调查新冠肺炎大流行期间砂拉越古晋 TS25 学校校长的变革型领导实践水平和教师工作满意度。在本次定量调查中，通过随机抽样方法从 728 名教师中抽取了 252 名受访者。本研究的问卷是在伯恩斯和巴斯变革型领导理论模型和马斯洛层次需求理论的基础上构建和修改的，并对其有效性和可靠性进行了检验。问卷的克隆巴赫的阿尔法值为 0.820。使用描述性和推论性统计分析研究数据。研究表明，校长的变革型领导实践非常高（平均值 = 4.252，标准差 = 0.470），而教师的工作满意度也非常高（平均值 = 4.186，标准差 = 0.395）。本研究发现，变革型领导与教师工作满意度之间存在显著且稳健的正相关关系 [ $r(252) = 0.705, p < .01$ ]。这项研究的结果可以帮助参与 2015-2025 年学校转型计划(TS25)的校长提升他们的领导风格，从而在未来提高教师的工作满意度。这项研究的意义将有助于利益相关者确保 TS25 计划在未来顺利运行。冠状病毒的流行导致马来西亚教育体系发生不规律的变化，影响了教师的工作满意度。总之，变革型领导风格在冠状病毒大流行期间对教师的工作满意度产生了积极影响。

**关键词：**变革型领导、教师工作满意度、流行病。

### 1. Introduction

The coronavirus pandemic has made all parties, including teachers and students, adapt to new norms, especially related to online learning and teaching processes (Aziz et al., 2020). A school leader must continually prepare to face the various issues and challenges that arise in the world's ever-changing situation (Drucker, 2017). During the Movement Control Order (PKP) period, risk management strategy is a critical component that every organization needs to know and understand (Yasin et al., 2021). The uncertain situation of this pandemic requires the wisdom of principals in adapting their leadership styles so that the school system can function efficiently.

School leaders play an essential role in setting the direction of the school organization and supporting students' academic fields (Ujil & Andin, 2017). The leadership style of a school is important because successful leaders will be able to guarantee school excellence. According to Fajar and Alias (2020), successful schools need wise leaders for carrying out their duties effectively. Awang (2016) emphasized that if an organization fails to adjust to a change, it would become stagnant in its progress and finally fail.

The School Transformation Program 2015-2025 (TS25) is one of the Ministry of Education Malaysia's (MOE) measures to outline the vision of the education system and the aspirations of students that can meet the need of the country in the future. This TS25 program, which has five main pillars, is in line with the Malaysian Education Development Plan (PPPM) 2013-2025, which ensures that high-performing leaders are placed in every school. The TS25 program places five main pillars for producing superior human capital,

including encouraging active students' involvement and producing competent and highly motivated teachers. However, the spread of the Covid-19 epidemic, which triggered the pandemic, has affected the smooth implementation of this program.

According to Noh and Wahab (2017), a leader can interpret a problem and have a variety of plan options to meet the expectations of their subordinates more efficiently after thinking and acting through various leadership orientations. Principals, especially in TS25 schools, need to increase the level of leadership consistently and in line with the ever-changing changes in the world of education around the world (Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia, 2018). The Covid-19 pandemic has caused the world of education around the world to undergo drastic changes in which various new structures and methods have been applied for Home-Based Learning to succeed (Susan & Marie, 2021). This has led to new norms in the working situation, namely working from home, including educational institutions such as schools. Such a situation is one of the aspects that can be considered to harm the well-being of teachers, both personally and professionally (Regina et al., 2021). Teacher job satisfaction should be seen in general well-being, quality of life, or stress in the workplace. Ismail et al. (2016) stated that teachers' workload no longer includes academic tasks only but also involves non-academic tasks.

Teachers worldwide are experiencing many changes in their teaching processes due to the spread of the Covid-19 epidemic (Reimers & Schleicher, 2020). According to Mustafa et al. (2021), the implementation of teaching and learning during a pandemic is

challenging in terms of lecturers' knowledge, materials, facilities, and professional development. It impacts the teaching quality, thus affecting their job satisfaction. This situation also happens to teachers. Teachers' performance during this less optimal condition requires cooperation between teachers and all members of the school organization, including principals. Principals have a role in ensuring the development of teachers' professionalism is continuous in order to be able to meet the needs and requirements of current education (Savitri & Sudarsyah, 2021).

Job satisfaction is one of the critical components in a person's life, whether motivated or not to perform the job. Teacher motivation is related to job satisfaction in the school organization. A successful organization is where employees are highly motivated and have high efficiency in ensuring organizational objectives are achieved. School organizational efficiency is related to teachers' job satisfaction and willingness to act following organizational goals. Leadership character is essential in dealing with a significant crisis faced, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic (Yasin et al., 2021).

Ghani and Radzi (2018) stated that students' achievement in school is dependent on the leadership practices of high-potential principals as aspired in PPPM 2013-2025. The contribution of principals as leaders is expected to influence all those involved in the educational process, especially teachers. The synergy of principal leadership supported by good teacher performance can result in a balanced learning process with the continuity of students' learning from home. One of the collaborative efforts undertaken as an initiative is to implement transformational leadership that is expected to improve the quality of schools, especially during the Covid-19 (Savitri & Sudarsyah, 2021).

According to Huat and Ibrahim (2018), a teacher will faithfully serve while creating a dedicated and high-performing work culture if they experience high job satisfaction. Therefore, teacher job satisfaction is related to the success of a school (Yuan & Alias, 2021). Therefore, this study was conducted to identify the level of transformational leadership practices of principals and its relationship with the level of job satisfaction of teachers in TS25 schools in Kuching, Sarawak, during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The objectives of this study are:

- To identify the level of transformational leadership practices of principals in TS25 secondary schools during the Covid-19 pandemic in Kuching, Sarawak;
- To identify the level of job satisfaction of teachers in TS25 secondary schools during the Covid-19 pandemic in Kuching, Sarawak;
- To identify the relationship between principals' level of transformational leadership and teacher job satisfaction in TS25 schools during the Covid-19 pandemic in Kuching, Sarawak.

Figure 1 shows the conceptual framework for this study. Principal transformational leadership practices

will be studied through teachers' perceptions based on idealized influence, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, and individualized consideration. The increase or decrease in teacher job satisfaction is dependent on the input of the principal's transformational leadership dimension, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic.

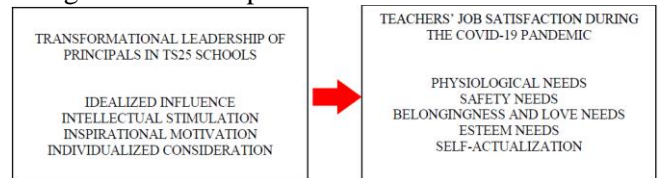


Figure 1. Conceptual framework

Note: The conceptual framework of the study was adapted and constructed based on the Burns (1978) and Bass (1985) transformational leadership theory with Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Maslow & Lewis, 1987)

### 1.1. The Burns and Bass Transformational Leadership Theory Model

The Burns (1978) and Bass (1985) Transformational Leadership Theory is leadership styles that resulted from Trait's leadership theory. Trait leadership theory states that individuals have certain traits that qualify them as leaders. This theory was introduced by James MacGregor Burns in 1978 and later refined by Bernard M. Bass in 1985. Burns (1978) defines transformational leadership as a style of leadership in which a leader mobilizes, inspires, and elevates followers' positions. Bass (1985) argues that transformational leadership involves proactive farsightedness that involves planning the future direction in which the leader predicts the opportunities and challenges that the organization will face.

Burns (1978) stated that transformational leadership prioritizes the attitude of mutual help between the head and subordinates to ensure that motivation and morale are always at an optimal level. In addition, leaders influence followers' focus on the importance of the task, transcending the organization's interests over themselves and elevating their enthusiasm and desire to a higher level (Bass, 1985).

The Transformational Leadership Model of Burns (1978) and Bass (1985) contains four dimensions: individualized consideration, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, and idealized influence. The description of each dimension of transformational leadership practice in this study is as follows:

#### 1.1.1. Dimensions of Individualized Consideration

Principals who practice this dimension are leaders who always pay attention to their subordinates individually with complete fairness and justice and can meet the needs of teachers and act as advisors to teachers by being open and willing to accept the views of teachers in a decision taken.

#### 1.1.2. Dimensions of Intellectual Stimulus

Principals as leaders can encourage teachers to reason during any challenges faced. Teachers are also encouraged to think from different angles to encourage

new thinking to shape them to be always ready for future challenges.

### 1.1.3. Dimensions of Inspirational Motivation

In this dimension, principals can demonstrate good understanding and skills in their psychology in any situation. Furthermore, this situation can encourage teachers to always feel motivated, enthusiastic, and highly committed to the school.

### 1.1.4. Dimension of Idealized Influence

The charisma of an ideal influential principal is evident through their confidence and charisma that is evident through their every action. They are always positive and highly confident in one's behavior. Furthermore, ideal influential principals will place the interests of subordinates above their interests (Almahasneh et al., 2022).

The Burns (1978) and Bass (1985) transformational leadership and instructional leadership can be distinguished through Maslow's Theory (Teharaja & Hamid, 2021). All motivational theories, including Maslow's theory, agree that a leader who strives to understand human behavior and apply high motivation to their employees will be able to achieve organizational success. The skill of identifying what and how to motivate employees is a bonus to leaders where this situation can indirectly increase job satisfaction among employees.

## 1.2. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Locke (1976) defines job satisfaction as a positive feeling or sense of satisfaction from the emotional aspect of one's job evaluation or work experience. Organizational goals are achieved when one or more employees' needs can be met simultaneously during the process of implementing those goals. Motivation and job satisfaction have a specific relationship that aims, on the one hand, to meet a person's need to feel that it offers significant employment to the organization and, on the other hand, to help leaders realize this need and motivate that person (Reppa, 2008).

According to Lowenberg & Conrad (1998), Mullins (2007) in Kouni et al. (2018), job satisfaction and motivation, being different concepts, are closely related and can be included in the same theoretical context. Therefore, motivation is associated with job performance and satisfaction. Therefore, it is essential for management executives to know what motivates and activates employees to perform tasks optimally (Nicoleta & Badshah, 2016).

According to Yahya and Omar (2019), Maslow's Theory is a branch of humanistic theory capable of meeting human physical and emotional needs. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory is one of the motivational theories of the type of content theory that is often used to interpret the level of employee job satisfaction (Kouni et al., 2018). Moreover, Maslow's Theory is often manipulated to increase organizational

productivity and performance (Hoffman, 1988).

Maslow's theory of needs consists of five levels of human needs: physiological needs, security needs, social needs, self-esteem needs, and self-desire needs. According to Maslow (1954), the lowest foundation in the hierarchy must be met first before one strives to achieve the needs at the next level. In Maslow's (Maslow & Lewis, 1987) opinion, the priority of these needs is inconsistent and often changes depending on the situation.

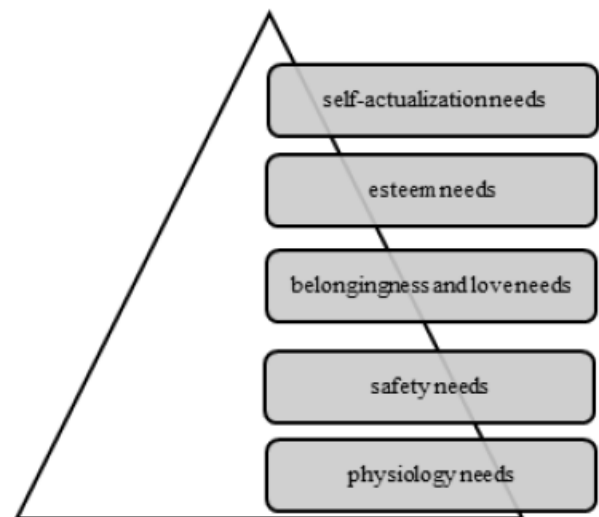


Figure 2. Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Maslow & Lewis, 1987)

Figure 2 shows Maslow's (Maslow & Lewis, 1987) hierarchical theory components. Physiological needs are the basic human needs for life. All human beings need air, water, food, shelter, working time, and rest time. If one of these basic needs cannot be met, it is unlikely that human beings will think of the needs at the next level.

Deficiencies in these most basic needs will influence negative attitudes and behaviors (Masri et al., 2018). After the basic level can be met, human needs will shift to the security needs level. This stage is a level of protection that guarantees well-being, job stability, care of the surrounding community, law, and freedom from external and internal threats. Humans need a safe environment so that daily life and activities, including work, are always in a secure condition. Next is the stage of social need, where human beings need relationships with other human beings. Humans need love and cannot be alone, let alone if they are in a threatening situation, for example, during a pandemic. Humans also need excellent and friendly relationships among human beings, especially with colleagues and also the boss, to ensure that work motivation is not affected and, in turn, work satisfaction is not disrupted (Lasiny et al., 2021). For example, in this study context, the social needs of teachers can be met through the collaboration of colleagues in the implementation of home-based learning.

The next stage is the level of self-esteem needs. Human beings are human beings who need strength, ability, expertise, and success. The desire to be

respected, admired, and appreciated is a natural part of a human being. The authority of teachers in performing their duties in these challenging times deserves praise and recognition from the principal. Such praise and recognition can generate high motivation and satisfied perceptions among teachers. The highest level in Maslow's Hierarchical Theory is the level of self-desire needs. Before reaching this stage, the requirements of the previous stage must be met first. Teachers expect career advancement and professional development in school organizations after knowing their strengths and weaknesses. The spirit to constantly improve themselves also increases if teachers' job satisfaction is high.

If we examine in depth, all of Maslow's levels of need are closely related to a teacher's job satisfaction. Thus, Maslow's theory can be applied in education to determine the level of job satisfaction of teachers. Ozguner and Ozguner (2014) argue that job satisfaction is achieved when Maslow's motivational needs can be met by meeting the highest-level need, the need for self-desire. Intrinsic rewards such as prestigious awards from the principal and social praise by gaining a good name prove that the motivational needs of a teacher have been fulfilled.

At the level of self-esteem needs, motivational needs can be met with intrinsic and extrinsic rewards. Meanwhile, from the level of social needs to physiology, the reward of meeting the needs of motivation is purely extrinsic. The basic needs of employees start from the assurance of safety in the workplace, followed by intensive remuneration, co-worker relationships, promotion opportunities, and, subsequently, harmony in employees' lives (Stum, 2001). Employee commitment is closely related to their sense of security, especially in terms of psychology and the workplace environment.

Rahman and Othman (2020), in their study on 474 outstanding central trainers of the Malaysian Armed Forces, found that transformational leadership style influences employee job satisfaction and their commitment to the organization. Meanwhile, the study of Kartini et al. (2017) on the influence of transformational leadership, organizational climate, and teacher work motivation in Pondok Modern Tazakka, Indonesia, found a positive relationship between transformational leadership and teacher work motivation.

Helfitriani and Wahab (2020) studied the transformational leadership practices of principals and teacher work discipline in vocational secondary schools in Aceh, Indonesia. The study found that the level of transformational leadership practice of principals and teachers' work discipline is high. However, the correlation analysis results showed a weak significant positive relationship between transformational leadership practices and teacher work discipline. Dimensions of individual judgment and ideal influence were dominant predictors of changes in teacher work discipline in Aceh vocational secondary schools.

A study by Vijian and Wahab (2020) in Tamil national type schools (SJKT) in the Kajang zone found that principals' transformational leadership and teachers' job satisfaction were at a moderately high level. The study of Yusoff et al. (2020) in Kelantan proved that transformational leadership in conducive schools could increase teacher job satisfaction. The same is the case in Iran, where Sayadi's (2016) study on the implications of transformational leadership on teachers' job satisfaction found that internal and external motivation influences teachers' job satisfaction.

## 2. Method

### 2.1. Research Design

The design of this study is in the form of a quantitative survey involving descriptive and inferential statistics. This design was chosen to understand the actual situation of principals' transformational leadership practices and the job satisfaction of TS25 school teachers during the occurrence of the Covid-19 pandemic.

### 2.2. Sample

The study population is teachers from eight TS25 secondary schools (Cohort 5) in the TS25 program in Kuching, Sarawak, comprising 728 people. A simple random sampling method was chosen for the sample selection of this study. According to Krejci and Morgan (1970), the required sample is 252 people. This sampling method is applied so that each teacher can be the study sample and improve the reliability and validity of the test.

### 2.3. Instrument Development

This survey study uses a questionnaire in Google Forms as a research instrument. The questionnaire instrument of this study was constructed based on the Burns (1978) and Bass (1985) Transformational Leadership Theory and Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow & Lewis, 1987). The instrument of this study consists of Parts A, B, and C. Part A is the demographics of teachers, such as gender, age, and length of service. Section B measures principals' transformational leadership practices from four dimensions: individual judgment, intellectual stimulation, inspiring motivation, and ideal influence containing 16 items. Part C examines the level of job satisfaction of teachers, which contains 20 items based on six dimensions, namely the dimensions of physiological needs, safety needs, social needs, self-esteem needs, and self-desire needs. Items in Sections B and C use the five-point Likert scale from the level of strongly disagree to the level of strongly agree.

The researchers obtained the validity of the content of the questionnaire items from experts after constructing the questionnaire to be suitable for this study. A pilot study was conducted in one of the secondary schools involved in the School Transformation Program 2025 (TS25) but was not

involved in the actual study. According to Ary et al. (2010), the value ( $\alpha = 0.71-0.99$ ) is an acceptable reliability value in a study. Furthermore, the reliability test found that Cronbach's alpha value was 0.820. Thus, this research instrument has high reliability and can be used in actual research.

#### 2.4. Data Analysis

Analysis in the form of frequency and percentage was used to describe the profiles of the respondents from demographic aspects that include gender, age, and teaching experience. Descriptive analysis methods involving percentage values, mean and standard deviation were used to identify the level of transformational leadership practices of principals and teacher job satisfaction. For identifying the relationship between transformational leadership practices and teachers' job satisfaction levels, inferential statistics, namely the Pearson correlation test, was administered. Before that, a normality test was implemented to determine the shape and normality of the data concerning skewness and kurtosis values. This step is critical to determine whether the data of this study are of normal form or not. The normality test on 252 respondents' data found that the data is normally distributed. Thus, the Pearson correlation test was performed to look at the relationship between the level

of transformational leadership practice of principals and teachers' job satisfaction during the Covid-19 pandemic.

### 3. Results

#### 3.1. Respondents' Profiles

A total of 197 out of 252 (78.2%) respondents were female teachers, while male teachers were only 55 people (21.8%). This shows that most teachers from the eight schools are female teachers. The majority of the respondents were aged 41-50, 43.3% (109 people). This was followed by those aged 51 and above, 68 people (26.9%). Respondents aged 31-40 are at the second-lowest level, 63 people (25.0%). Respondents aged 30 and below are the lowest group of 12 people (4.8%) only.

The teaching experience of the study respondents showed that a total of 35 people (13.8%) had teaching experience under 10 years. This indicates that only a small number of study respondents have little teaching experience. One hundred nine respondents (43.3%) had teaching experience of 11 to 20 years. It was found that 108 respondents (42.9%) have teaching experience of 21 years and above. This situation gives the impression that most teachers in TS25 schools are teachers who have much experience in the field of education.

Table 1. Mean scores and levels of principals' transformational leadership practices

Dimension	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	Interpretation
Individualized Consideration	4.093	0.502	High
Intellectual Stimulation	4.233	0.521	Very High
Inspirational Motivation	4.300	0.543	Very High
Idealized Influence	4.382	0.514	Very High
Overall	4.252	0.472	Very High

Overall, the transformational leadership practices of principals from eight TS25 secondary schools in Kuching, Sarawak from the perception of teachers were at a very high level (mean = 4.252; s.d = 0.514). The four dimensions in transformational leadership practice are at a high level. In this case, TS25 secondary school principals most often practice the ideal dimension of influence (mean = 4.382; s.d = 0.514). This was followed by the dimension of inspiring motivation (mean = 4,300; s.d = 0.543) and the dimension of intellectual stimulation (mean = 4.233; s.d = 0.521). The individual consideration dimension ranked lowest with mean = 4.093 with standard deviation = 0.502.

#### 3.2. Teacher Job Satisfaction Level

Overall, it was found that the level of job satisfaction of teachers in TS25 schools was at a high level (mean = 4.186; s.d = 0.395). The mean value for the level of teacher satisfaction from the aspect of physiological needs is the highest among the five

aspects in Maslow's hierarchy of needs. The physiological needs dimension was at a very high level (mean = 4.366; s.d = 0.532). Meanwhile, the level of job satisfaction of teachers in terms of safety requirements contributed to the lowest mean value (mean = 3.848; s.d = 0.603) despite being at a high level. The level of job satisfaction of teachers in terms of social needs and self-esteem needs is also at a high level, with mean values = 4.201 (s.d = 0.507) and 4.178 (s.d = 0.464), respectively. The dimension of the need to achieve self-desire is at a very high level, with a mean value of 4.337 and a standard deviation of 0.438. Based on these findings, it can be seen that the level of physiological needs, which is the first stage in Maslow's theory, greatly influences the level of job satisfaction of teachers as a whole. Table 2 shows the mean score values and standard deviations for the dimensions to measure the level of teacher job satisfaction based on Maslow's Hierarchical Needs Theory.

Table 2. Mean scores and levels of teacher job satisfaction

Dimension	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	Interpretation
Physiological Needs	4.366	0.532	Very High
Safety Needs	3.848	0.602	High

Continuation of Table 2			
Love and Belonging Needs	4.201	0.507	High
Esteem Needs	4.178	0.464	High
Self-actualization Needs	4.337	0.438	Very High
Overall	4.186	0.395	High

### 3.3. The Relationship between Principals' Transformational Leadership Practices and Teachers' Job Satisfaction Levels during the Covid-19 Pandemic in Kuching, Sarawak

For identifying the relationship between the two variables, the Pearson correlation test was administered, and the findings are shown in Table 3. It was found that the value of the Pearson correlation coefficient,  $r = 0.710$  with a significant value,  $p < 0.01$ . This suggests that the correlation between principals' transformational leadership and teachers' job satisfaction in TS25 schools is intense. Since the significance level is less than 0.01, the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) is rejected. This proves a strong and significant positive relationship between principals' transformational leadership practices and the job satisfaction of teachers from the TS25 school in Kuching, Sarawak.

Table 3. The relationship between principals' transformational leadership practices and teachers' job satisfaction level during the Covid-19 pandemic in Kuching, Sarawak

Teachers' Job Satisfaction			
Principals' Transformational Leadership	Correlation	1	.710**
	Sig (2-tailed)	252	.000
	N		252

\* Significant at 0.01 level

## 4. Discussion

Transformational leadership is closely related to changes in how an organization works that involve a two-way interaction between leaders and subordinates (Kamarudin & Saad, 2017). According to Silam et al. (2020), school leaders need to pay attention to teachers' work environment, stimulate the learning climate, determine the tone of the school, the levels of professionalism and morale of teachers, and concern for the future of students. All of this can be practiced through the practice of transformational leadership. As a result, teachers will serve better (Tai & Omar, 2016). Thus, to ensure the excellence of the 2025 school transformation program is achieved, the dimension of individual consideration needs to be further emphasized. This is because this dimension is one of the most effective components in predicting teacher job satisfaction (Ghanbari & Eskandari, 2013). Saleem (2015) also stressed that administrators, namely school leaders, need to be wise in considering the potential and ability of employees by practicing more prominent transformational behaviors while creating a motivating work environment to ensure teachers' job satisfaction.

The job satisfaction level of TS25 school teachers during the Covid-19 pandemic was at a high level. This study is in line with the study of Than and Vinitwatanakhun (2021) on job satisfaction, which is high, but contrary to the study of Vijian and Wahab

(2020), where the level of job satisfaction of teachers is at a moderately high level. Teacher job satisfaction should be assessed based on age because the levels of motivation, intelligence, and effectiveness of teachers in performing duties and responsibilities are influenced by age factors (Tawan et al., 2020) and other aspects such as general well-being, life quality, or workplace stress (Regina et al., 2021). The older the teacher, the greater the teacher's work experience. This is supported by Hongying (2007), who stated the existence of a U-shaped relationship between age and job satisfaction. At the beginning of a career, teachers' job satisfaction is high and reaches an excellent level but tends to decline over the years and increase at the end of their careers.

The findings of this study indicate that only the dimensions of security, social, and self-esteem needs were at high levels throughout the pandemic. According to Puertas Molero et al. (2019), professional well-being is influenced by a direct relationship with student attitudes, organizational factors, and personal factors. In addition, the characteristics of transformational leadership, such as focusing on academic mission, vision building, school goal setting, and encouraging the continuous development of professionalism (Dutta & Sahney, 2016), can meet teachers' job satisfaction. Teachers who have a high level of job satisfaction can contribute to a better-quality education (Yusoff et al., 2020).

It was found that the transformational leadership style of principals as school leaders was in line with the level of job satisfaction of teachers. This is supported by the study of Eliophotou Menon (2014), where teachers' perceptions of leader effectiveness and overall job satisfaction are significantly correlated with leader behavior. Transformational leadership is an essential and powerful tool for fostering group goals and evoking positive change in education. The study of Quin et al. (2015) proved that the success of high-performing schools is due to the leadership of leaders who practice transformational leadership. School leaders who practice transformational leadership are agents of change that generate the process of change in their organizations (Aziz et al., 2020). Changes in education are dynamic and unpredictable changes, especially in this pandemic situation. Therefore, these leadership practices need to be implemented comprehensively, especially during pandemics. This is to ensure that the level of job satisfaction of teachers can be increased to a very high level, especially in the endemic later.

This study can be used as a reference for principals on the effectiveness of transformational leadership practices in improving teacher job satisfaction, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic. Furthermore, this study can also contribute to empirical studies on the relationship between transformational leadership and

teacher job satisfaction in the context of the education system in Malaysia. In addition, directors and heads of departments from other education sectors can also practice transformational leadership in their respective organizations. This is because transformational leadership practice has been proven to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the organization.

## 5. Conclusion

The leadership style is essential because a successful leader can guarantee the excellence of a school (Ismail et al., 2016). Thus, leaders who are less skilled in organizational management will lead to job dissatisfaction among teachers. Principals from TS25 schools should be flexible and have the ability to shape leadership styles when faced with different situations. Leadership patterns and styles need adapting according to the school situation and its teachers' needs through dimensions in the practice of transformational leadership. Accordingly, it can be concluded that the transformational leadership practices of principals have a positive impact on the level of job satisfaction of teachers, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic. Therefore, transformational leadership must be practiced in every school because this leadership style can help strengthen Malaysian education to a better quality.

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