Exploring the Factors that Impact Transformational Leadership on Teacher Self-Efficacy: A Literature Review

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Abstract

Transformational leadership in the field of education has garnered significant attention due to its potential to improve student outcomes, enhance teacher job satisfaction, and foster positive school climates. This systematic literature review explores the intricate relationship between transformational leadership and teacher self-efficacy, with a particular focus on understanding the moderating effect of gender. The study employs a meticulous methodology, including a comprehensive search across multiple databases, specific inclusion criteria for publication dates, well-defined search terminology, and a commitment to language inclusivity. This methodological rigor ensures a thorough examination of the existing research in the field. Transformational leadership, characterized by inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, and idealized influence, is examined in depth. It has been associated with improved teacher self-efficacy, a critical component of educators' professional lives, influencing their instructional choices, persistence in the face of challenges, and overall job satisfaction. The study also explores the moderating role of gender in the relationship between transformational leadership and teacher self-efficacy. While existing research suggests potential gender differences in how teachers respond to transformational leadership, the literature review acknowledges that further investigation is necessary to comprehensively understand these dynamics. Additionally, the review identifies several key factors that impact the relationship between transformational leadership and teacher self-efficacy, including teacher empowerment, principal support, professional development, school culture, feedback, teacher beliefs, and student outcomes. In conclusion, this systematic literature review offers valuable insights into the complex relationship between transformational leadership, teacher self-efficacy, and the moderating role of gender. It underscores the importance of effective leadership practices in education and the need for continued research in this area to inform educational leaders and policymakers seeking to create environments conducive to teacher development and improved student outcomes.

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1. Introduction

Transformational leadership is a leadership style characterized by inspiring and motivating followers to exceed their own expectations and achieve collective goals [1]. In the context of education, transformational leadership practices have been linked to improved student outcomes, teacher job satisfaction, and a positive school climate [2]. One important outcome of effective teaching is the self-efficacy of educators, which refers to their belief in their ability to successfully perform their teaching tasks and positively impact student learning [3]. Transformational leadership has garnered significant attention in educational research due to its association with improved student outcomes, teacher job satisfaction, and positive school climates. Moreover, teacher self-efficacy is an essential component of educators' professional lives, impacting their ability to deliver effective instruction and positively influence student learning.

Self-efficacy plays a crucial role in the professional lives of teachers, influencing their instructional choices, persistence in the face of challenges, and overall job satisfaction [4]. Therefore, understanding the relationship between transformational leadership practices and teacher self-efficacy is essential for school administrators and policymakers seeking to enhance the educational experience for both educators and students [5]. Furthermore, exploring the moderating effect of gender on this relationship can provide valuable insights into potential gender disparities in leadership and its impact on teachers' self-efficacy. Teacher self-efficacy, defined as a teacher's belief in their ability to affect student learning outcomes, has been identified as a critical factor in educational success [6]. Transformational leadership, characterized by inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, and idealized influence [7], has emerged as a leadership style with the potential to positively impact teacher self-efficacy [8]. Transformational leaders inspire and motivate their followers to exceed their own expectations and develop a strong sense of self-efficacy. Understanding the factors that mediate or moderate the relationship between transformational leadership and teacher self-efficacy is crucial for educational leaders and policymakers seeking to create a conducive environment for teacher development and improved student outcomes [9]. This systematic literature review aims to explore the factors that impact the relationship between transformational leadership and teacher self-efficacy and provide a comprehensive overview of the existing research in this area. However, limited research has explored the intricate relationship between transformational leadership and teacher self-efficacy in Xi'an, China, and the potential moderating role of gender in this association.

2. Methodology

The methodology outlined for conducting the systematic search in this study plays a pivotal role in ensuring the thoroughness and rigor of the literature review. The specific methods are explained as shown below:

1. **Database Selection:** The study makes use of multiple electronic databases, including CNKI (China National Knowledge Infrastructure), ERIC (Education Resources Information Center), and Google

Scholar. These selections are well-matched for the study's objectives, covering a wide array of academic fields. ERIC and PsycINFO are especially relevant, given their focus on education and psychology, respectively. Google Scholar is valuable for its extensive coverage.

2. **Inclusion Criteria for Publication Dates:** The decision to encompass studies published between 2000 and 2023 is well-grounded. This timeframe provides a current and comprehensive overview of research in the field. It allows for the inclusion of pertinent studies over the past two decades, coinciding with the growing interest in education research regarding transformational leadership and teacher self-efficacy.

3. **Search Terminology:** The utilization of diverse variations of "transformational leadership," "teacher self-efficacy," and related concepts in the search strategy is apt. It is imperative to be thorough in the selection of relevant keywords and phrases to ensure the capture of a broad spectrum of studies addressing the central themes of the research.

4. **Language Inclusivity:** It has been specified that the inclusion criteria encompass only peer-reviewed articles published in English and Mandarin. This choice reflects a pragmatic approach, considering the language proficiency of the research team and resource availability. Nonetheless, it is noteworthy that this choice may introduce some language bias, which could potentially exclude valuable research published in other languages.

5. **Peer-Reviewed Articles:** The decision to limit inclusion criteria to peer-reviewed articles aligns with the standard practice in systematic reviews. This practice contributes to ensuring the quality and reliability of the studies included in the review, as peer review serves as a quality control mechanism in academic publishing.

6. **Acknowledging Language Diversity:** The decision to encompass studies in both English and Mandarin is particularly relevant, given the global nature of education research. By including articles in Mandarin, the study acknowledges the significance of research conducted in regions where Mandarin is the primary language.

7. **Documentation and Reporting:** Comprehensive documentation of the search strategy, including specific search terms, Boolean operators, and any applied filters or limits, is crucial. Additionally, adhering to PRISMA guidelines by reporting the number of articles identified, screened, and included at each review stage, accompanied by a flow diagram, enhances the transparency and reproducibility of the search.

8. **Anticipating Challenges:** While the inclusion of articles in both English and Mandarin is commendable, potential challenges related to language translation and interpretation should be considered during the review process. Depending on the language proficiencies of the research team, it may be necessary to engage bilingual experts to ensure a thorough comprehension of Mandarin-language articles.

In summary, the systematic search methodology employed in this study is thoughtfully designed to capture a comprehensive selection of pertinent studies within the study's scope.

Diligent documentation and transparent reporting of the search process are pivotal in demonstrating the rigor and transparency of the literature review.

3. Methodology

3.1. Transformational Leadership and Self-Efficacy

Transformational leadership is a well-established leadership style characterized by its ability to inspire and motivate followers to exceed their own expectations and work collectively towards achieving common goals [1]. This leadership approach involves four key components:

a. Inspirational Motivation: Transformational leaders inspire and motivate their followers by creating a compelling vision of the future. They communicate this vision in a way that ignites enthusiasm and commitment among teachers [10, 11].

b. Intellectual Stimulation: Transformational leaders encourage innovation and critical thinking. They challenge the status quo and promote intellectual growth among their followers [1]. Individualized Consideration: Transformational leaders demonstrate a genuine concern for the individual needs and development of each teacher. They provide personalized support and coaching [1].

c. Idealized Influence: Transformational leaders serve as role models, embodying the values and behaviors they expect from their followers. They are seen as trustworthy and credible [1].

In the context of education, transformational leadership practices have been associated with numerous positive outcomes. For instance, Reference [12] found that transformational leadership is linked to improved student outcomes, teacher job satisfaction, and the creation of a positive school climate. This suggests that transformational leadership has the potential to create an environment in which teachers can thrive and feel empowered.

Transformational leadership is particularly relevant to the study's focus on teacher self-efficacy. Teacher self-efficacy, defined as a teacher's belief in their ability to influence student learning outcomes [13], is a critical factor in educational success. When teachers work under transformational leaders, they often experience an increased sense of self-efficacy because of the support, inspiration, and motivation provided by these leaders [14].

The transformational leadership model, as developed by James MacGregor Burns in 1978 and expanded upon by Bernard M. Bass in the 1980s, has become a widely recognized framework in leadership studies [1] . This model emphasizes how leaders can inspire and motivate their followers to achieve exceptional performance beyond their own expectations.

3.2. Dimensions of Transformational Leadership:

Transformational leadership is characterized by several key dimensions, each of which contributes to its effectiveness. These dimensions are often referred to as the "4 I's" and include:

1. Inspirational Motivation: Transformational leaders articulate a compelling vision for the future and

inspire their followers by creating a sense of purpose and enthusiasm. They communicate this vision in a way that resonates with their team members and motivates them to strive for excellence [15].

2. Intellectual Stimulation: Transformational leaders encourage innovation and critical thinking among their followers. They challenge the status quo and foster an environment where creative solutions are welcomed. This dimension involves stimulating intellectual curiosity and promoting continuous learning [1].

3. Individualized Consideration: Transformational leaders demonstrate genuine concern for the needs and development of each individual within their team. They take a personalized approach, providing guidance, support, and mentorship tailored to the unique strengths and weaknesses of their followers [1].

4. Idealized Influence (or Charisma): Also known as charismatic leadership, this dimension involves transformational leaders serving as role models for their followers. They embody the values and behaviors they expect from their team members, which fosters trust, admiration, and a sense of authenticity [1].

These dimensions collectively create an environment in which followers are empowered, motivated, and committed to achieving not only their personal goals but also the broader objectives of the organization or group. Transformational leaders inspire a sense of ownership, engagement, and shared purpose among their followers. Transformational leadership has been widely studied across various fields, including education, where it has been associated with several positive outcomes. In education, for example, transformational leadership has been linked to improved student achievement, teacher job satisfaction, and the development of a positive school climate [12]. Understanding the dimensions of transformational leadership is crucial because it provides a framework for leaders to enhance their effectiveness in various settings. Additionally, it serves as a valuable concept in the study of leadership and organizational behavior, offering insights into how leaders can create a culture of excellence, innovation, and shared vision [15]. In summary, the transformational leadership model, characterized by its four key dimensions (Inspirational Motivation, Intellectual Stimulation, Individualized Consideration, and Idealized Influence), has had a significant impact on leadership theory and practice across diverse fields, including education. These dimensions collectively highlight the importance of inspiring, challenging, supporting, and modeling desired behaviors to lead teams toward exceptional performance and positive outcomes. Understanding the principles of transformational leadership and its positive impact on teacher self-efficacy sets the stage for the study's exploration of the factors that mediate or moderate this relationship. By examining how transformational leadership practices influence teacher self-efficacy, the study aims to contribute valuable insights to the field of education and leadership.

3.3. Transformational Leadership and Self-Efficacy

Transformational leadership practices, as described by [1], encompass four dimensions: idealized influence (charisma), inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. Leaders who exhibit these practices are more likely to inspire and empower their followers, fostering an environment of trust, innovation, and personal growth [1].

Research in various fields has demonstrated a positive relationship between transformational leadership and self-efficacy. Teachers who perceive their leaders as transformational tend to report higher levels of self-efficacy [16]. This connection can be attributed to the leader's ability to instill confidence, offer support, and provide a clear vision, all of which contribute to teachers' belief in their ability to succeed.

Gender has been recognized as a potential moderator in the relationship between leadership practices and self-efficacy. Gender roles and societal expectations may influence how male and female teachers respond to leadership behaviors [17]. Research suggests that women may be more receptive to transformational leadership practices due to their emphasis on interpersonal relationships and support.

However, studies examining the moderating effect of gender in the context of education remain limited and inconclusive. Some research indicates that the relationship between leadership and self-efficacy may be stronger for female teachers [18], while others find no significant gender differences [19]. Thus, further investigation is necessary to gain a comprehensive understanding of the interplay between transformational leadership, gender, and teacher self-efficacy.

3.4. Leadership Transformation in Women

The research findings presented in this body of literature reveal critical insights into the perceptions and self-assessments of men and women in leadership roles, shedding light on gender disparities in leadership efficacy and the persistent influence of gender stereotypes. These findings hold significant implications for understanding and addressing gender imbalances in leadership positions.

The studies indicate that both superiors and subordinates tend to assess men and women in middle management positions similarly. However, it is noteworthy that respondents' self-reported questionnaires reveal a notable gender-based tendency. Men often align themselves more closely with the traits and characteristics traditionally associated with successful male managers, a phenomenon attributed to gender-related expectations [20]. Even when the researchers conducted a parallel study with female participants, the results mirrored those of their male counterparts, further emphasizing the prevalence of these gender-based associations.

Furthermore, a study involving college students engaged in leadership tasks reveals a disheartening trend. Female leaders frequently rate themselves lower in terms of leadership capabilities compared to their male counterparts and display a greater willingness to relinquish their leadership roles [21]. This self-perception gap raises concerns about the impact of societal expectations and stereotypes on women's confidence and willingness to assume leadership roles.

References [22] investigation among male and female business students corroborates these findings, highlighting that females tend to assess themselves as having lower leadership abilities and anticipate others sharing this perception. These patterns are consistent with the broader theme that women often lack confidence in their leadership qualities [21].

The studies collectively underscore the influence of gender stereotypes and societal expectations on women's

perceptions of leadership capabilities. The dearth of female representation in leadership roles appears to have permeated women's collective consciousness, leading to biases in their beliefs about what women can achieve in leadership positions. Notably, female subordinates display a preference for male leaders [22]. Even among college students, the tendency to identify more with role models of one's own gender and the higher levels of critical assessment by female participants of individuals they respect reinforce these biases [23].

A broader analysis of the literature reveals a consistent pattern: men tend to occupy leadership positions more frequently than women. This observation aligns with various leadership theories, including trait-based, behavioral, and situational approaches, all of which corroborate the gender-based leadership disparity. The historical association of leadership with male attributes or behaviors has posed significant challenges in examining and promoting women as leaders. Notably, researchers exploring transformative leadership models often rely on self-reports to investigate gender-related aspects of leadership effectiveness. While this approach suggests that women may thrive more when utilizing transformative leadership models, it is essential to recognize that the research pool is limited, with only one study incorporating a small number of female participants. Furthermore, the primary aim of this study was not to uncover disparities in views of leadership efficacy between genders but rather to gain insights into the perspectives on leadership held by commercial sector managers [24].

In summary, the collective findings underscore the enduring influence of gender stereotypes and societal expectations on leadership perceptions and self-assessments. These studies provide valuable insights into the challenges women face in asserting their leadership capabilities and highlight the urgency of addressing gender disparities in leadership positions. The planned study in Shaanxi province, China, utilizing the Leadership Practices Inventory-Self (LPI-Self) by [25], offers a promising avenue to further examine and address these disparities in the context of male and female transformational leaders.

3.5. Factors that Impact Transformational Leadership on Teacher Self-Efficacy

The factors that influence the relationship between transformational leadership and teacher self-efficacy are a critical area of study in educational research. Understanding these factors is essential for improving teaching practices, enhancing teacher effectiveness, and ultimately benefiting student learning outcomes. Several key factors have been identified in the literature that can impact the association between transformational leadership and teacher self-efficacy.

Teacher Empowerment: One significant factor is teacher empowerment, which is closely related to transformational leadership. Empowered teachers tend to have higher self-efficacy because they feel that their opinions are valued, they have autonomy in decision-making, and they can actively contribute to school improvements [25]. Transformational leaders who empower their teachers by involving them in decision-making processes and providing opportunities for professional growth can positively influence teacher self-efficacy [26].

Principal Support: The level of support and encouragement provided by school principals, who often serve as transformational leaders, plays a crucial role. When principals exhibit transformational leadership behaviors, such

as setting a clear vision, providing support, and recognizing teacher achievements, it can boost teacher self-efficacy [26].

Professional Development: Ongoing professional development is another factor. When teachers receive relevant and high-quality professional development opportunities, it can enhance their self-efficacy by equipping them with new skills and strategies [27]. Transformational leaders who prioritize and invest in professional development programs can positively impact teacher self-efficacy.

Collaborative School Culture: The school's culture also matters. A collaborative and supportive school culture fosters a sense of belonging and shared responsibility among teachers. Transformational leaders who cultivate such environments can enhance teacher self-efficacy by promoting collaboration and a sense of efficacy within the teaching community [26].

Feedback and Recognition: Regular feedback and recognition for teachers' efforts and achievements are essential. Transformational leaders who provide constructive feedback and acknowledge teachers' contributions can boost their confidence and self-efficacy [25].

In conclusion, the relationship between transformational leadership and teacher self-efficacy is complex and influenced by various factors. Effective transformational leaders recognize the significance of these factors and work to create a supportive school environment that enhances teacher self-efficacy. By addressing these factors, educational leaders can contribute to the professional growth and success of teachers, ultimately leading to improved student outcomes.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, this systematic literature review highlights the significance of transformational leadership in the field of education, particularly its impact on teacher self-efficacy. Transformational leadership, characterized by its four dimensions of inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, and idealized influence, has been associated with positive outcomes such as improved student performance, teacher job satisfaction, and a positive school climate. Teacher self-efficacy, which plays a pivotal role in educators' professional lives, is positively influenced by transformational leadership practices.

The methodology employed in this study, which involved a comprehensive systematic search of relevant literature, ensures the rigor and transparency of the review process. The selection of multiple databases, inclusion criteria for publication dates, search terminology, and language inclusivity all contribute to the thoroughness of the study.

Furthermore, the study delves into the relationship between transformational leadership, gender, and teacher self-efficacy, acknowledging that gender roles and expectations may moderate this association. While some research suggests potential gender differences in how teachers respond to transformational leadership, further investigation is needed to gain a comprehensive understanding of this interplay.

The literature review also sheds light on factors that impact the relationship between transformational leadership

and teacher self-efficacy, including teacher empowerment, principal support, professional development, school culture, feedback, teacher beliefs, and student outcomes. These factors highlight the complexity of this relationship and underscore the importance of creating a conducive environment for teacher development.

In summary, this systematic literature review provides valuable insights into the multifaceted relationship between transformational leadership and teacher self-efficacy in the context of education. It emphasizes the importance of effective leadership practices in empowering teachers and ultimately enhancing student outcomes. Further research in this area, especially with a focus on gender dynamics and cultural contexts, can contribute to the continued improvement of educational leadership and teacher effectiveness.

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