

Educational Administrators' Leadership Styles and Teachers' Organizational Commitment: Inputs for a Work Engagement Program

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Abstract

In this paper, the author aimed to explore the relationship between authoritative, democratic, and laissez-faire leadership styles of administrators at Lingnan Normal University in Guangdong Province, China, and examine the impact of educational administrators' leadership styles on teachers' organizational commitment in tertiary education.

Keywords

Leadership Style, Organizational Commitment, College Teachers, Work Engagement Programs, Educational Administrators

1. Issues and Background

1.1. Introduction

Education has evolved with time and has now become unpredictable. In the twenty-first century, education has shifted from being seen as society's greatest equalizer to a battleground for a range of social issues (Duncan, 2023). School systems need to be led by leaders who are capable of dealing with the unique challenges that may arise to ensure development and bring about positive change.

One of the hottest research topics in the field of educational leadership is the study of leadership in educational institutions. Any institution needs capable leaders to flourish. Jim Kouzes and Barry Posner, co-authors of *The Leadership Challenge* (Kouzes & Posner, 2017), claim that leadership is an identifiable collection of behavioral skills, not just personality traits. With this in mind, the researchers argue that leadership is a crucial management role that helps organizations allocate resources, increase efficiency and achieve goals. Effective leaders

are able to set a consistent direction, motivate and guide organizational members, and help the organization accomplish its mission (Crevani, 2015; Crevani & Endrissate, 2016). Organizations can encourage cooperation, create a good work environment and develop loyal employees by recognizing the factors that influence commitment (Syed et al., 2015).

1.2. Background of the Study

China has a long and rich history of education, with more than two thousand years of organized educational management and leadership. The educational leadership and management system has evolved and adapted to changes in society, government, economy and culture, thus forming a unique educational management system with Chinese characteristics (Shi, 2008). Under the guiding principle of “hierarchical management and division of responsibilities”, the State Council and local people’s governments at all levels are responsible for directing and managing education.

According to Pascal Coppens’ 2021 blog post, “What We Can Learn from China’s Leadership Model”, many see China’s highly pragmatic leadership style as authoritarian, bureaucratic, and concerned with short-term gains. Many Westerners who have worked in Chinese companies believe that China’s “big bosses” make all the important decisions, that hierarchy is very important, and that Chinese employees are not team players. Authoritative leaders emphasize the leader’s power and control over his or her followers. Authoritative leaders have a fatherly position and their power is consolidated. They use top-down communication and resist delegation. They use manipulative tactics with unclear motives and are bent on presenting a strong image. Followers feel fear and awe as a result of these behaviors (Du et al., 2020). The concept of effective leadership behavior relies heavily on the leader’s ability to solve challenging social problems that arise in the workplace. Good leaders are able to control their emotions when engaging with others and are highly aware of their own emotions and those of their coworkers. Due to the intricacies of the difficulties faced by today’s leaders in the professional arena, self-awareness has evolved as an important component of their approach to work.

Therefore, this researcher believes that educational leaders with this kind of expertise have a great competitive advantage. The researcher also believes that although there have been some studies on leadership style and organizational commitment in the West, there is a gap in similar studies in China. Since levels of leadership style and organizational commitment vary across cultures, there is room for further understanding of these factors in the Chinese context. In order to reveal the facts and draw new conclusions, the researcher will use his university as a sample to analyze this phenomenon.

1.3. Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study is to assess the leadership styles of administrators and

the organizational commitment of teachers at Lingnan Normal University in Guangdong Province, China, in order to provide recommendations for a work engagement program. It will specifically look for answers to the following questions. First, what is the situation of the interviewed teachers in terms of age, gender, and rank? How do the teacher respondents rate the leadership styles of their administrators according to the authoritative, democratic, and laissez-faire leadership variables? What is the level of organizational commitment of the teacher respondents in the domains of affective commitment, sustained commitment, and normative commitment? Is there a significant difference in the level of organizational commitment of the interviewed teachers when their situation is used as a factor? Is there a significant relationship between administrators' leadership styles and teachers' organizational commitment? What options can be drawn from the findings of the study?

1.4. Significance of the Study

The organizational commitment of teachers is very important in a school. Given that dedicated teachers are a school's greatest resource, this study will sensitize administrators to the importance of developing an effective teacher investment process. This study will broaden teachers' perspectives on how administrators' leadership styles affect their commitment to the organization. This study will help to make individuals more objective and realistic in managing their expectations and frustrations, so that they understand how leadership styles within the organization affect their loyalty to the school. Through effective implementation of HRM practices, the school was able to develop a more comprehensive understanding of what its HR leadership entailed. Such an approach fostered high levels of organizational loyalty and also went a long way toward meeting teachers' expectations of HRM practices. This provides a clear indicator for teachers and highlights the important role they play in their schools. The implications of this study may contribute to future research on the relationship between leadership style and organizational commitment. Some of the recommendations based on the findings of this study may point future researchers to specific measures or directions, especially in making recommendations for work engagement programs.

1.5. Scope and Definition of the Study

This study explored the relationship between administrators' leadership styles and teachers' organizational commitment at Lingnan Normal University (LNU) in Guangdong Province, China. Participants were selected based on the criteria of full-time faculty members who have worked at Lingnan Normal University (LNU) for at least three years, regardless of their age, gender, or rank. A total of 636 (131 professors, 275 associate professors, and 230 Ph.D.) faculty members are currently classified as full-time faculty.

Using the Qualtrics calculator, the ideal sample is 132 with a 99% confidence

level and a 10% margin of error. Data sources were determined from the results of the Leadership Style and Organizational Commitment Questionnaire.

2. Review of Related Literature

2.1. Literature Review of Leadership Styles

2.1.1. Authoritative

Although existing research suggests a negative relationship between authoritative leadership and job outcomes, authoritative leadership styles tend to be prominent in emerging markets. Organizational researchers should be very interested in the factors that determine the success of authoritative leadership (Harms et al., 2018). Therefore, Chen et al. (2014) conducted a study on situations where authoritative leadership has a less negative or even positive impact on performance outcomes. They argued that specific environmental factors may be responsible for the persistence of authoritative leadership. In addition, the outcomes of this leadership style need to interact with other possible influences (e.g. social norms).

Wang and Guan (2018) further suggest that the relationship between authoritative leadership and performance may be influenced by the environmental influences that authoritative leadership exerts on individuals. According to Bayyurt and Klç (2017), leaders' authoritarian or democratic views can strongly influence organizational commitment of organizational members. In addition, Altan and Özpehlivan (2019) found that authoritative and participative leadership behaviors have a strong impact on organizational commitment. Based on teachers' perspectives, Inandı et al. (2020) examined the relationship between school administrators' leadership styles and change resistance and organizational dissent, and whether administrators' leadership styles predicted change resistance and organizational dissent. According to the findings, there was no relationship between authoritative leadership and the sub-dimensions of organizational dissent.

2.1.2. Democratic Style

According to Jakhar (2017), democratic leadership style is one in which all members of the organization are actively involved in decision-making. In relation to this, Cherry (2017) defines democratic leadership as a style that encourages team members to actively participate in decision-making and freely exchange opinions. In this style, everyone has the opportunity to express their views and the leader does not restrict speaking. İnandı and Giliç's (2021) study found significant gender differences in leadership styles and organizational cynicism. They found that perceptions of authoritative and democratic leadership styles differed by gender, with female teachers perceiving principals as more authoritative, while male teachers perceived principals as more democratic.

Wei and Vasudevan (2022) found no significant correlation between authoritarian, paternalistic, authoritarian and laissez-faire leadership styles and business performance in China. In contrast, democratic leadership was significantly and

positively correlated with firm success, especially in the Chinese manufacturing industry. This suggests that democratic leadership, as part of the path-goal leadership style, is strongly associated with firm performance in the Chinese manufacturing industry. [Viernes et al. \(2018\)](#) showed that managers in different subject areas exhibit different leadership styles, with democratic leadership leading the way to prominence. [Tsang et al. \(2014\)](#) examined the preferred leadership styles of secondary school mathematics teachers in Brunei Darussalam, and found that leadership style was correlated with education level, age, gender and years of teaching experience. Most of the mathematics teachers preferred democratic leadership. The study showed that democratic leadership contributes to successful teaching and learning, therefore, Brunei mathematics teachers may be more focused on effective classroom teaching. There was no significant relationship between secondary school mathematics teachers' gender and their leadership style.

2.1.3. Laissez-Faire Style

According to [Lewin et al. \(1939\)](#), laissez-faire leadership style usually does not require leader involvement, but employees can maximize the use of laissez-faire leadership style to make the best choices and get the job done in the most convenient way. Team or individual decision-making is completely free. This style encourages employees to express themselves in difficult tasks and promotes personal growth. Laissez-faire leadership style is derived from the French phrase "let it be". Employee involvement is essential in management and leadership styles. The laissez-faire style is seen as the other end of the democratic spectrum. Laissez-faire leaders give decision-making power to their members and provide them with learning opportunities. In addition, this style supports innovation and autonomous decision-making, and promotes creativity ([Amanchukwu et al., 2015](#)). [Thanh and van Quang \(2022\)](#) examined the correlation between three leadership styles (i.e. transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire) and employee engagement and performance in the public sector in Vietnam, as well as the correlation between leadership styles and demographic variables and employee engagement. The relationship between leadership styles and The study found that women are more likely than men to be in stable and sustainable jobs, and the older they are, the more engaged they are. The results of the study suggest that employees appreciate all three different leadership styles, and therefore, executives in the Vietnamese public sector should adopt these styles in order to enhance employee engagement.

A study by [Iqbal et al. \(2021\)](#) explored the impact of authoritative and laissez-faire leadership styles and the moderating role of the personality trait conscientiousness in workplace flourishing. The results of the study indicated that the correlation between authoritative and laissez-faire leadership styles had a positive impact on employee job enjoyment. On the contrary, employee conscientiousness exerts a positive moderating effect in the relationship between authoritative leadership and job satisfaction, while the moderating effect on the rela-

relationship between laissez-faire leadership and job satisfaction is shown as a negative effect.

2.2. Literature Review of Organizational Commitment

2.2.1. Affective Commitment

Emotional commitment is a key factor in organizational commitment as it directly affects the long-term success of the organization. Employees who are emotionally committed and engaged are likely to have a high performance work system, which can be assessed in terms of organizational productivity, sales, revenue, and employee retention intentions (Keles & Findikli, 2016).

Adnan et al. (2018) found that affective commitment was positively related to employee performance in a multinational company in Pakistan, especially employees' willingness to work for the company or commit to the organization for a long period of time. Lin et al. (2021) studied psychiatrists in Shanghai and found that affective commitment was positively related to sense of calling but negatively related to job stress. Strengthening callings and reducing stress were essential for psychiatrists to establish closer ties. A study by Kaur and Mittal (2020) explored the relationship between job meaning, affective commitment, and employee engagement. The results showed that job meaningfulness was crucial in increasing employee engagement and affective commitment played a mediating role in this. Sinaga et al. (2021) examined the correlation between affective commitment and employee innovative behavior. The study found that the higher the affective commitment, the more significant the employee innovative behavior, consistent with key workplace behaviors. These findings highlight the positive impact of affective commitment in organizational performance, employee engagement, and innovative behavior.

2.2.2. Continuing Commitment

Continuing commitment implies that employees want to continue working for the organization, recognizing that leaving the organization will cost time, money, and effort (Revuelto-Taboada et al., 2021). Lee (2016) argued that middle school teachers' organizational commitment and scores on various dimensions were statistically unaffected by gender, but there were significant differences in teaching age. In addition, Wang et al. (2022) analyzed that emotional exhaustion mediates the relationship between sustained commitment and quiet behavior, and that the indirect effect is especially significant among older employees. According to Khan et al. (2016), sustained commitment is closely related to employees' job satisfaction and is associated with organizational cynicism. According to the findings of this study, the effect of organizational cynicism and sustained commitment on employees' job satisfaction is undeniable.

2.2.3. Normative Commitment

Normative commitment refers to how strongly an employee believes that they should stay with the company. Employees with normative commitment believe

that they should stay with the company and that leaving the organization would be devastating and they feel guilty about the idea of leaving (Van der Werf, 2020). The reasons for this guilt are varied, but are usually related to the employee's concern that leaving will create a knowledge and skill gap and cause more stress for coworkers, an emotion that may affect employee performance (Van der Werf, 2020).

According to Yilmaz and Kılıç-Çakmak (2012), teachers' job satisfaction and organizational commitment are important factors in promoting teaching and learning. Dedicated and job-satisfied teachers are more likely to encourage children to learn in the classroom. The results of the study showed that teachers' job satisfaction was negatively related to continuance commitment, while there was a significant relationship between it and normative commitment. There was no significant difference between teachers' perceptions of job satisfaction and organizational commitment across gender. Men are to some extent superior to women in affective commitment and continuance commitment; while women outperform men in normative commitment and job satisfaction. Ong and Yue (2018) investigated the relationship between organizational culture and managerial performance using commitment as a moderator in an institution in China and found that organizational culture had a significant effect on employee commitment. Conversely, commitment improved managerial performance.

Dong's (2019) study explored the relationship between Long-Term Orientation (LTO) of organizational commitment and age. The findings suggest that employees may have different levels of LTO with equal normative commitment. This may be due to the fact that normative commitment is based on a sense of social responsibility instilled during childhood. Long-term orientation was related to affective commitment but not to normative commitment. Contrary to expectations, age negatively affected the relationship between long-term orientation and affective commitment. Younger long-term orientation employees showed higher affective commitment compared to senior long-term orientation employees.

2.3. Study on the Relationship between Leadership Style and Organizational Commitment

Sarwar et al. (2022) found that most of the university presidents tended to have high democratic, medium level of laissez-faire and lower level of authoritarian leadership styles. In the variables of gender, location, degree, professional qualification, subject of teaching and teaching experience, 68% of the respondents were males and 32% were females and majority of the respondents were male teachers residing in urban areas and holding a bachelor's degree. Teaching requires professional quantification and they completed their Bachelor's degree in education to meet the criteria. The study emphasized the importance of the significant relationship between the leadership style of university presidents and teacher effectiveness and suggested that presidents should adapt their leadership style to the needs of educators. The study by Long et al. (2016) aimed to explore

the relationship between leadership style and affective organizational commitment and the types of leadership styles that contribute most to affective organizational commitment. It was found that leadership styles were strongly related to affective organizational commitment. There was a significant and strong positive correlation between transformational leadership style and affective organizational commitment, while there was a significant but moderate positive correlation between transactional leadership style and affective organizational commitment.

Huang and Huang (2020) investigated the relationship between transformational leadership and organizational commitment and the intervening role of job satisfaction on the said relationship. The results of the study indicated that subordinates are more sensitive to organizational goals and values when leaders give them important and difficult tasks, while at the same time leading by example and inspiring and encouraging enthusiasm and optimism in their subordinates. In addition, when leaders help employees see problems from different perspectives and solve them skillfully, employees feel appreciated, respected, trusted, and attentive to their personal development needs.

2.4. Theoretical Framework

This study is based on the concepts of leadership styles and organizational commitment. Psychologist Kurt Lewin in 1939 examined three main leadership styles and their respective effects on team members. These styles, which include autocratic (dictatorial), democratic (participative), and laissez-faire (empowering), are used to indicate the degree to which a leader influences the decision-making process and the degree to which he or she is involved in the team. The theoretical basis of this study—the Three-Component Model (TCM) is a well-known theory in the field of organizational commitment. The TCM is the first model of commitment containing three components, each associated with a different psychological state, first proposed by Meyer and Allen in 1991. This perspective proposes three basic elements that make up organizational commitment: affective, continuance, and normative commitment.

2.5. Overview

The vast majority of people have worked with different leaders over the course of their careers. A leader's style may have different effects in different situations, allowing employees to excel or flounder. Understanding a person's natural leadership style helps to adapt to different situations, change one's behavior, and avoid inappropriate tactics.

Lewin's framework of leadership styles is one of the ways to understand and enhance leadership skills. In this study, the researcher explores the three basic leadership styles identified by Lewin and discusses how these frameworks can be applied to more effective leadership. Lewin argues that individuals from different cultural backgrounds may respond to these leadership philosophies in dif-

ferent ways.

Teachers are influenced by a variety of factors in their decision to stay in school, such as job preferences, goal congruence, and accountability. How can administrators encourage teachers to become actively engaged in the school organization while avoiding damage to their lives, self-esteem, and professional satisfaction? In this study, the researchers explored three basic types of commitment and how the Three-Component Model (TCM) can help administrators actively and effectively increase teachers' commitment and loyalty, gain a greater sense of inspiration and engagement, and at the same time improve their well-being and career satisfaction.

As shown in **Figure 1**, the researchers found profiles of the teachers interviewed in terms of gender, age, and years of experience.

Teachers assessed their administrators' leadership styles based on three styles: authoritative, democratic, and laissez-faire. The teachers interviewed assessed their level of organizational commitment based on their perceptions in terms of affective, sustained, and normative commitment. Teachers' assessments of their organizational commitment were compared with their personal data to find significant differences. The results analyzed the significant relationship between administrators' leadership styles and teachers' organizational commitment. These findings provide guidance for the researcher to make recommendations for work engagement programs.

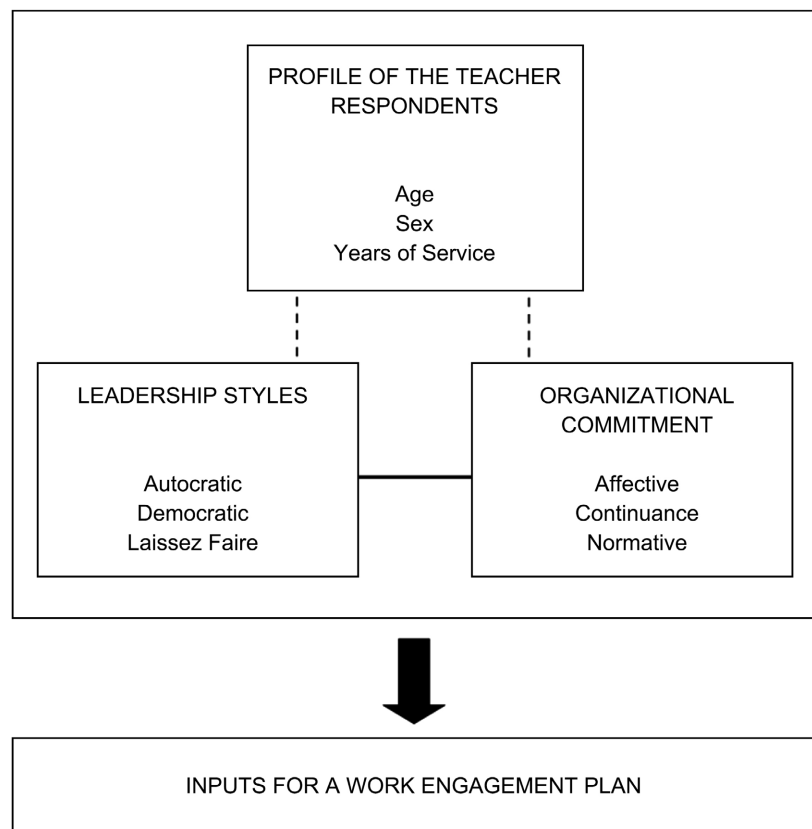


Figure 1. Conceptual framework.

3. Results, Analysis and Interpretation

This paper has organized all the data collected in terms of age, gender, level and education of the respondents. Based on the statement of the problem, its results and analysis have been clearly stated. In addition, the researcher's own interpretations and analysis have been articulated. From the statistical results, it was observed that there were more teachers in the age group of 31 - 40 years (41.4%) and 41 - 50 years (38.6%). This indicates that majority of the teachers belonged to the young and middle-aged. Females were in majority (52.1%), 65.7% were lecturers and 60% were masters.

3.1. Teachers Interviewed Rated the Leadership Style of Their Administrators in Terms of Authoritative Leadership, Democratic Leadership and Laissez-Faire Leadership

From the perspective of authoritative leadership, teachers interviewed agreed that administrators use rewards and sanctions to motivate teachers to achieve organizational goals, with the highest rating of 2.81, which was interpreted as "obvious". However, teachers felt that the statement that administrators feel that "most teachers are lazy" was unfair. The composite mean of 2.39 indicates that the democratic leadership style of the administrators was not perceived to be evident by the teachers surveyed. According to [Shen et al. \(2019\)](#), authoritative leadership may be detrimental to employee performance improvement because peers of authoritarian leaders are more likely to have less trust in their supervisors. In addition, [Wang and Guan \(2018\)](#) argued that the relationship between authoritative leadership and performance may be influenced by the context in which the authoritative leader influences the individual.

The data in [Table 1](#) is from the online questionnaire "Educational Administrators' Leadership Styles and Teachers' Organizational Commitment: Inputs for a Work Engagement Program", which I administered to the faculty of Lingnan Teachers' University, Lingnan, China, from April 6 to April 8, 2023. A total of 140 questionnaires were distributed, with an ideal sample of 132, a confidence level of 99%, and a margin of error of 10%.

Table 1. Summary of the teacher respondents' assessment of their administrators' leadership style.

Leadership Styles	Mean	SD	Qualitative Description	Interpretation	Ranking
Autocratic Leadership	2.39	0.72	Disagree	Not Quite Evident	3
Democratic Leadership	2.98	0.68	Agree	Highly Evident	1
Laissez Faire Leadership	2.79	0.63	Agree	Highly Evident	2
Over-all Mean	2.72	0.52	Agree	Highly Evident	

Legend: 3.51 - 4.00: Strongly Agree/Very Highly Evident; 2.51 - 3.50: Agree/Highly Evident; 1.51 - 2.50: Disagree/Not Quite Evident; 1.00 - 1.50: Strongly Disagree/Not Evident.

From the perspective of democratic leadership, the teachers interviewed believed that their administrators believed that teachers had the basic competencies and trusted them to perform well when tasked with them, which received the highest rating of 3.12 and was considered “obvious”. Although teachers also perceived that their administrators were committed to helping them take on the responsibility of completing their work, they gave the lowest rating of 2.69, which was also interpreted as “obvious”, and the composite mean of 2.98 suggests that the democratic leadership style of the administrators was evident in the opinion of the teachers interviewed. [Bellibas and Liu’s \(2017\)](#) study showed that although principals in China want to adopt more democratic leadership, they still use their power to enhance education. They realized the importance of education in achieving the extraordinary and revolutionary goal of providing this kind of schooling for all children. However, [Wei and Vasudevan’s \(2022\)](#) study showed that democratic leadership, as part of the path-goal leadership style, was significantly associated with business performance in Chinese manufacturing firms. Meanwhile, statistics show that only democratic leadership has a significant positive correlation with business success in the Chinese manufacturing industry.

From a laissez-faire leadership perspective, teachers surveyed rated their administrators at the highest level of 3.01, indicating that it was “obvious”. Teacher respondents believe that administrators want to give teachers complete freedom to solve problems on their own. However, the lowest rating was not so obvious as the teachers surveyed did not agree with the administrators’ belief that leaders do not intervene in teachers’ work. The composite mean was 2.79, whereby the teachers interviewed believed that administrators favored laissez-faire in their leadership style. According to [Amanchukwu et al. \(2015\)](#), laissez-faire leadership leaves decision-making in the hands of the members and provides excellent learning opportunities for the participants. In addition, this style also supports innovation and creativity, as well as the freedom to make decisions without permission. [Iqbal et al. \(2021\)](#) showed that authoritative and laissez-faire leadership styles have a positive impact on employee job satisfaction, where the personality trait conscientiousness plays a thriving moderating role.

In the opinion of the teachers interviewed, the most pronounced leadership style among administrators was democratic (2.98), followed by laissez-faire (2.79), while the least pronounced was authoritative (2.39). [Tsang et al. \(2014\)](#) argued that democratic leadership contributes to successful teaching and learning. They examined the factors contributing to the diversity of teachers’ leadership styles, and most Brunei math teachers tended to adopt democratic leadership styles. [Thanh and van Quang \(2022\)](#) explored the correlation between three leadership styles and employee engagement and performance in the public sector in Vietnam. The results of the study showed that employees not only appreciated the leader but also the three different leadership styles adopted by the leader. Therefore, the adoption of transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership

styles by executives in their departments all increase employee engagement.

3.2. Level of Organizational Commitment of the Interviewed Teachers

From the point of view of affective commitment, most of the teachers interviewed showed a high level of willingness to continue working for their organizations, with the highest rating of 2.98, which was interpreted as “very obvious”. However, they did not share a strong sense of belonging to the organization, with the lowest rating of “not too obvious”. The combined mean of 2.83 indicates that the emotional commitment of the respondent teachers to the organization is evident.

According to [Adnan et al. \(2018\)](#), affective commitment has a positive impact on individual performance. In particular, the results of the study indicate that most employees are willing to work in the company for a long time or are committed to the organization. In addition, [Sinaga et al.'s \(2021\)](#) study stated that the more affective commitment, the better the performance of the organization's employees in terms of work behaviors, and also emphasized that affective commitment is consistently linked to key workplace behaviors.

In terms of sustained commitment, the teachers interviewed agreed that it would be difficult to leave their positions in the organization now, even if they had the desire to do so, a view that received the highest rating of 2.77 and was interpreted as “obvious”. Similarly, they agreed that they had limited options when considering leaving the organization, a view that received the lowest rating of 2.54, also interpreted as “obvious”. The combined mean of 2.63 indicates that the respondent teachers' continued commitment to the organization is evident. [Khan et al. \(2016\)](#) found that continued commitment is closely related to employee job satisfaction and that organizational cynicism affects employee job satisfaction. In addition, [Shahid and Azhar \(2013\)](#) argued that sustained commitment is a significant predictor of a company's organizational success.

From the perspective of normative commitment, the teachers interviewed contributed a lot to the organization with the highest rating of 2.70, which was interpreted as “obvious”. On the other hand, the respondent teachers did not agree that they would feel guilty about leaving the organization now, or that leaving would be good for them and that it would be right to leave, with the lowest ratings of 2.36 for each of these perspectives, interpreted as not very obvious. The combined mean of 2.53 indicates that teachers' normative commitment to the organization is evident.

In conclusion, the results of the study indicate that affective commitment is the most obvious organizational commitment among the teachers interviewed, while normative commitment is the least obvious. According to [Keles and Fındıklı \(2016\)](#), affective commitment is a key factor in organizational commitment because it directly affects the long-term success of the organization. Emotionally committed and engaged individuals are likely to have a high performing work system when it comes to organizational effectiveness and employee retention in-

tentions.

3.3. Significant Differences in the Level of Organizational Commitment of the Respondent Teachers

The results of the study showed that the respondent teachers' ratings of their organizational commitment levels in terms of affective, continuance and normative commitment remained consistent irrespective of their age. The overall results showed that the effect of age of the respondent teachers on their level of organizational commitment was not significant with a statistically calculated F-value of 0.47 and a level of significance of 0.70. The study by [Dong \(2019\)](#) found that age has a negative effect on the relationship between long-term orientation and affective commitment. Younger long-term oriented employees showed higher affective commitment compared to senior long-term oriented employees. When gender was used as a factor, there was no significant difference in the respondent teachers' ratings of the level of organizational commitment, with a calculated t-value of -0.79 and a significance level of 0.43. According to [Sloan et al. \(2017\)](#), females in similar jobs tend to show stronger organizational commitment than males. However, [Kokubun and Yasui \(2020\)](#) emphasized that women are not as committed to their careers as men due to family responsibilities. In addition, [Delle-Vedove et al.'s \(2014\)](#) study showed that males were more committed to their companies than females. Regardless of the rank of the teachers interviewed, they rated their level of organizational commitment similarly in terms of affective, sustained, and normative commitment. There is no significant difference in the assessment of organizational commitment level of the respondent teachers in terms of their level of education as a factor with a calculated F value of 4.70 and a significance level of 0.11. This indicates that irrespective of the level of education of the respondent teachers, they assessed the level of organizational commitment similarly in terms of affective commitment, continuance commitment and normative commitment. Educational attainment covered different levels from intermediate to doctoral, and data collection covered a diverse range from top management to frontline managers.

The predominance of female teachers in tertiary education is influenced by a number of factors. Lingnan Normal University, as a teacher-training university, specializes in areas that attract more female teachers, and the policies of the Chinese government and universities that encourage gender equality are also a factor. Traditional attitudes in specific regions and cultures encourage women to pursue a career in education. With modernization and universal access to education, women's access to tertiary education has increased. The flexible hours and stability of educational work and the balance with family life also attract more women to choose tertiary education teaching positions. Women have advantages in the educational environment, and society is gradually recognizing the important role of women in education and encouraging more women to pursue a career in education. The popularity of female teachers and the high number of female students have contributed to the increase in the number of female teachers.

Chinese society seeks a stable income for women, and expectations of family roles also influence women's choices in teaching. The combination of these factors has made the predominance of female teachers in tertiary education a common phenomenon.

3.4. Relationship between the Administrators' Leadership Styles and Teachers' Organizational Commitment

As shown in **Table 2**, authoritative leadership style is moderately positively correlated with teachers' continuance commitment, while it is lowly positively correlated with affective and normative commitment. Similarly, democratic leadership style was positively correlated to some extent with teachers' affective commitment, continuance commitment and normative commitment. Laissez-faire leadership style was moderately positively correlated with teachers' level of organizational commitment in terms of affective and normative commitment, while it was highly positively correlated with sustained commitment. Overall, the results of the study indicate that administrators' leadership style affects teachers' level of organizational commitment.

Table 2. Relationship between the administrators' leadership style and teachers' organizational commitment.

Leadership Styles	Organizational Commitment	Computed r	Sig.	Decision on Ho	Interpretation
Autocratic Leadership	Affective	0.15	0.00	Rejected	Significant
	Continuance	0.32	0.00	Rejected	Significant
	Normative	0.28	0.00	Rejected	Significant
	Average	0.33	0.00	Rejected	Significant
Democratic Leadership	Affective	0.44	0.00	Rejected	Significant
	Continuance	0.45	0.00	Rejected	Significant
	Normative	0.38	0.00	Rejected	Significant
	Average	0.44	0.00	Rejected	Significant
Laissez Faire Leadership	Affective	0.34	0.00	Rejected	Significant
	Continuance	0.50	0.00	Rejected	Significant
	Normative	0.33	0.00	Rejected	Significant
	Average	0.50	0.00	Rejected	Significant
Over-all Leadership Style	Over-all Organizational Commitment	0.49	0.00	Rejected	Significant

The data in **Table 2** is from the online questionnaire “Educational Administrators’ Leadership Styles and Teachers’ Organizational Commitment: Inputs for a Work Engagement Program”, which I administered to the faculty of Lingnan Teachers’ University, Lingnan, China, from April 6 to April 8, 2023. A total of 140 questionnaires were distributed, with an ideal sample of 132, a confidence level of 99%, and a margin of error of 10%.

This study clearly indicates that the level of teachers’ organizational commitment at Lingnan Normal University is influenced by the leadership style of the administrators. Recent definitions of leadership emphasize that school administrators influence teachers in conscious ways to guide, shape, and facilitate internal interactions. Recently, many scholars have argued that leadership style plays an important role in shaping the way organizational members work. In order to achieve similar goals and improve organizational effectiveness, different leaders use different leadership styles to guide members within the organization.

Although school administrators in China claim to advocate democracy, they actually use positions of power to improve education. They realize the importance of education in helping students to know themselves, their identity, and their place in the world (Szeto, 2021). In implementing government policies, they need to maintain an authoritarian attitude and avoid too much interaction with teachers. In a related study, Cilek (2019) conducted a study on the effect of principals’ leadership behaviors on teachers’ organizational commitment in Türkiye. The results of the study showed through a random effects model that leadership has a very substantial positive effect on teachers’ organizational commitment. Supportive, democratic and transformational leadership styles have a greater impact on teachers’ organizational commitment than other leadership styles. Undoubtedly, organizational fairness, individual traits, and job well-being are all important factors in explaining teachers’ organizational commitment. It follows that organizational fairness usually explains organizational commitment.

4. Summary of Findings, Conclusion and Recommendations

4.1. Overview of Findings

This study assessed the relationship between the leadership styles of managers and teachers’ organizational commitment at Lingnan Normal University, Guangdong, with the aim of providing recommendations for work engagement programs. The survey revealed that most of the teachers interviewed were female, above 30 years of age, possessed a master’s degree, and had always held the title of lecturer.

4.1.1. Leadership Styles of Educational Administrators

The teachers interviewed assessed the leadership styles of leaders from three perspectives: authoritative, democratic and laissez-faire. The study revealed that the teachers interviewed believed that the leaders were not significant in authoritative leadership, which may imply that the educational administrators did not

adopt a strong authoritative leadership. This is because authoritative leadership is detrimental to teachers' organizational commitment because peers of authoritative leaders are more likely to have less trust in their supervisors. On the other hand, leaders were highly visible in the democratic type of leadership, which indicated that leaders possessed the ability and commitment to do their jobs responsibly. In addition, laissez-faire leadership style is also very evident in leaders, which suggests that leaders encourage innovation and autonomous decision-making.

4.1.2. Level of Organizational Commitment of the Interviewed Teachers

The interviewed teachers assessed their organizational commitment based on affective commitment, continuance commitment and normative commitment. Respondent teachers perceived a very significant level of organizational commitment in terms of affective commitment, which indicates their emotional bond with the organization as reflected in their participation in workplace activities that achieve the main goals of the organization. Their level of organizational commitment was highly significant in terms of sustained commitment, which indicated a willingness to continue to work in or commit to the organization, realizing that leaving the company required an investment of time, money, and energy. In the simplest assessment, ongoing commitment is based on the individual's understanding of the costs involved in leaving the organization. It is also a key indicator of organizational performance. The level of organizational commitment in terms of normative commitment is also very evident, showing that they have a sense of responsibility and obligation to work for the organization, which usually depends on the benefits and salary provided by the organization, and are, therefore, morally obligated to contribute to the organization.

4.1.3. Significant Difference in Organizational Commitment Levels of Respondent Teachers When Their Personal Circumstances Are Factored in

The results of the study showed that there was no significant difference in the evaluation of the level of organizational commitment of the teachers interviewed, using age, gender, rank and education as factors. Whether they were young or old, male or female, of different ranks, or with different levels of education, they rated their level of organizational commitment similarly in terms of affective, sustained, and normative commitment.

4.1.4. Relationship between Managers' Leadership Style and Teachers' Organizational Commitment

This study concluded that the level of organizational commitment in Lingnan Teachers' University is influenced by the leadership style of managers. It is evident that a leader's leadership style can have a significant impact on the way organizational members operate. Some choose a democratic, relationship- or people-centered approach to achieve similar organizational commitment, while others embrace an authoritative, production-centered approach or a less regulated laissez-faire.

4.1.5. Proposed Inputs to the Work Participation Plan

This study proposes a work engagement plan. The plan is a strategy manual that outlines a series of actions, prioritized according to the beliefs of the educational institution, which is designed to increase teachers' work engagement and strengthen organizational commitment. The strategy includes both long-term recommendations to increase teacher engagement and short-term measures that can be put into practice immediately.

4.2. Conclusion

The findings of the survey report served as a catalyst for the researcher's subsequent conclusions. The number of teachers aged 41 - 50 and 31 - 40 was high, mainly female, with the position of lecturer, and most of them possessed a master's degree. Thus, a higher percentage of young and middle-aged teachers have achieved career advancement through academic advancement. Teachers interviewed generally felt that the democratic leadership style of administrators was most prominently displayed. In this environment, teachers are more willing to actively participate in decision-making and freely share issues, ideas, skills, etc.

As an institution of tertiary education in China, Lingnan Normal University practices democratic leadership in a range of ways to promote a democratic process of broad participation, collaboration and decision-making. The University Council, a collective decision-making body comprising leaders, faculty and staff, meets regularly to discuss and decide on important university matters, such as budget allocation, teaching programs and development directions. Departments of the university also hold regular departmental meetings to discuss internal matters, providing opportunities for teachers and staff to deliberate and advise together. In addition, faculty representative meetings provide a platform for faculty representatives to gather opinions and suggestions, and convey the voice of the faculty community to the college leadership. Democratic leadership also focuses on student participation. Student representatives have the opportunity to participate in University Committee meetings and make suggestions on student affairs, such as the quality of teaching and learning, the curriculum, and the campus environment. Democratic leadership emphasizes openness and transparency in decision-making. University leaders regularly release information on decisions, including the background, reasons and impact of decisions, to all students and faculty members to ensure transparency, and then report back to the university leaders. University leaders also communicate regularly with faculty, staff and students, and listen to opinions and suggestions from all parties through symposiums, feedback collection and online platforms. In order to ensure a fair and transparent decision-making process, the university has established a series of systems and norms to clarify the decision-making process and modes of participation. This helps to encourage teamwork and shared decision-making. The university may adopt different practices in democratic leadership to encourage a plurality of opinions and suggestions. In conclusion, democratic leadership takes

many forms at Lingnan Normal University and its specific forms are influenced by the culture, leadership style and policies of the University.

The findings show that emotional commitment is the most obvious organizational commitment demonstrated by the teachers interviewed. This means that they demonstrate a high level of commitment to the school by actively participating in meetings and talks, providing insightful feedback and suggestions, etc. They took these steps because they wanted to make significant contributions to the organization. When age, gender, title and qualification of the teachers interviewed were used as a test to measure their organizational commitment, no significant differences emerged. Thus, the affective, persistent and normative assessment of the organizational commitment of the respondent teachers was largely independent of the selected characteristic factors.

This study found that the leadership styles of the administrators of Lingnan Normal University affect the level of organizational commitment. Thus, leaders' leadership styles have a significant impact on the manifestation of organizational members' commitment. To this end, a work engagement program was proposed, and administrators at Lingnan Normal University may adopt the researcher's program to enhance teachers' work engagement and develop specific tasks accordingly.

4.3. Recommendations

According to the literature review of this study, there is a close relationship between the leadership style of educational administrators and teachers' organizational commitment in increasingly competitive educational institutions.

In terms of leadership style, educational administrators should establish a supportive leadership style, cultivate an open communication and supportive atmosphere, encourage teachers to participate in decision-making and planning, and enhance their sense of involvement and responsibility in school affairs; care for teachers' needs and provide appropriate incentives to stimulate their intrinsic motivation and willingness to develop professionally, such as rewards and recognitions; and maintain open channels of communication to create a congenial maintaining open channels of communication to create a harmonious "cooperative" working relationship.

In terms of teachers' organizational commitment, educational administrators integrate organizational goals with teachers' personal goals, so that teachers recognize the importance of their work to the organization as a whole, and realize that the rise and fall of the organization are closely related to their personal development; provide more opportunities for training, further education, and advancement, so as to help teachers continually improve their own business qualities and enhance their loyalty to the organization; pay attention to teachers' job satisfaction and overall well-being; and avoid the exhaustion that comes with overwork; avoiding the exhaustion and sense of loss brought about by overwork, thus maintaining their commitment and work engagement.

With regard to the input of work engagement programs, educational administrators define clear work goals and plans to clarify teachers' tasks and responsibilities; provide necessary resources, such as equipment and educational materials, to help teachers better accomplish their work tasks; and encourage cooperation and communication among teachers to promote knowledge sharing and experience complementarity to improve work efficiency and quality.

Since the researcher looks at the teachers' environment and culture in Chinese educational institutions to explore the relationship between leadership styles and organizational culture, we should also eliminate harmful stereotypes and personal prejudices against different groups in the face of heterogeneous cultures outside of China, as people from different cultural backgrounds will bring new ways of thinking, new knowledge and different experiences. For example, as the educational environment continues to change, educational administrators need to be flexible and adaptive, adopting diverse leadership styles to better motivate teachers' organizational commitment and work engagement.

With the deepening reform of China's tertiary education and the rapid development of tertiary education, young teachers in tertiary education are faced with multiple challenges, such as teaching quality improvement, research pressure, career development options, and work-personal life balance. Teaching requires constant innovation of teaching methods and adaptation to different students' needs; in research, they have to cope with fierce competition and difficulties in time allocation; in career development, they need to weigh teaching, research, and administrative duties; and the balance between personal life and work is also one of the challenges. The need for interdisciplinary knowledge and integrative literacy makes it necessary for teachers to continually expand their areas of knowledge. At the same time, building good pedagogical relationships, adopting innovative teaching methods, and adapting to reforms in the field of education are also challenges. The lack of resources in terms of research funding, laboratory equipment and research opportunities that some young university teachers may face may also affect research development. Initiatives such as support, training, and improved evaluation systems can help them to better cope with these challenges, while changes in the education system and social environment can also affect their career paths.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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