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An Investigation on the Relationship Between Team-Oriented Transformational Leadership and In-role Performance in K12 Training Schools: A Moderated Mediation Model

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Abstract

This research investigates the effect of team-oriented transformational leadership on the in-role performance of teachers in K12 training schools in Sichuan Province, China, within a moderated mediation framework. The research highlights the mediating role of team atmosphere and the influence of Guanxi practice as a moderating factor. The findings indicate that team-oriented transformational leadership positively influences in-role performance by enhancing a supportive team atmosphere characterized by trust, respect, and collaboration. However, high levels of Guanxi practice can diminish these positive effects by prioritizing personal relationships over merit-based achievements, thus undermining team cohesion and performance. The study highlights the importance of fostering a positive team atmosphere and carefully managing Guanxi practices to maximize the benefits of transformational leadership in educational settings. These insights provide important insights for school leaders and policymakers to enhance the effectiveness of K12 training schools amidst evolving educational policies and competitive landscapes.

Keywords: Team-oriented transformational leadership; Team atmosphere; In-role performance; GUANXI practice; Transformational leadership theory; Social exchange theory

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Introduction

In China, there is an old saying that poverty makes a change, and knowledge changes destiny. Therefore, the parents of most families in Sichuan Province hope that their children can gain more knowledge and skills through study to change their fate. In China, the number of students participating in the national college entrance examination (gaokao) exceeds 10 million yearly. In order to gain admission to better universities, many high school students often undergo training to achieve higher scores in the gaokao (Lin, 2022). This trend is not limited to university admissions but applies to high school and even middle school selections. As a result, there is a strong demand in the K12 training market. According to surveys, Kindergarten students accounted for 12.7%, primary school students accounted for

21.9%, middle school students accounted for 36.8%, and high school students accounted for 57.8% participated in K12 after-school training courses. Therefore, K12 training is a massive market in China (Gao, 2020).

After more than 10 years of rapid development of K12 education, in July 2021, the Chinese government promulgated the "double reduction" policy, that is, the policy aimed at alleviating the load of homework and extracurricular activities for students in the mandatory education phase (Wu, 2024). In this context, the performance of K12 training schools is particularly important. For training schools, teachers' in-role performance is directly related to teaching quality and students' learning effect, thus affecting the overall reputation and market competitiveness of schools (Jiang & Wang, 2021). Good in-role performance can attract the trust of more students and parents, increasing the student source and income of the school. In addition, it can enhance the school's reputation and help the training school stand out in the market competition (Zhang et al., 2023). In other words, if the training school's performance is not at a high level, it will lead to the loss of students, affecting the school's source of students and income. More importantly, once the school's reputation is damaged, it will further weaken its market competitiveness (Lou, 2020). The above adverse effects will also lead to the loss of teachers, further aggravate the instability of teaching quality, and then make the operation of training schools fall into a vicious circle.

The research on the impact of transformational leadership on in-role performance found that transformational leadership can improve employee performance by improving employee satisfaction and organizational commitment (Chen et al., 2022). Other studies have found that transformational leadership can improve team performance by encouraging teamwork and innovation (Wu, 2024). However, these studies are somewhat broad about transformational leadership and fail to discuss the difference between the role of transformational leadership on a team and an individual. Therefore, additional research is required in this field (Xu et al., 2021). Zhao's research divides transformational leadership into team-oriented level and individual-oriented levels of transformational leadership through a dichotomy (Zhao et al., 2024). Breaking down transformational leadership into smaller units helps researchers understand transformational leadership and the consequences of different types of transformational leadership in organizational management (Zhang et al., 2023). The focus of this study is to discuss the impact of team-oriented transformational leadership on in-role performance and propose a moderated mediation model to deeply understand the impact mechanism of team-oriented transformational leadership on in-role performance. Specifically, by studying the mediating role of team atmosphere in the impact of team-oriented transformational leadership on in-role performance, this study helps people understand the influencing mechanism between the two. In addition, this study will also study the moderating effect of relationship practice on team-oriented transformational leadership on in-role performance, combined with the mediating effect of a team atmosphere, to help people understand how team-oriented transformational leadership affects in-role performance through work atmosphere under different relationship practice conditions

RQ1: Does team-oriented transformational leadership have an impact on In-role performance?

RQ2: Does team atmosphere mediate the relationship between team-oriented transformational leadership and In-role performance?

RQ3: Can GUANXI practice moderate the relationship between team-oriented transformational leadership and team atmosphere?

RQ4: To what extent do GUANXI practices affect the relationship between team-oriented transformational leadership, team atmosphere, and In-role performance?

Literature Review

Transformational Leadership Theory is a leadership style focused on inspiring and motivating followers to reach their maximum potential, often leading to significant organizational changes. This theory was initially introduced by James MacGregor Burns in 1978 and later expanded upon by Bernard Bass. Leaders with Transformational leadership focus on four key components: charismatic influence, motivational inspiration, intellectual stimulation, and personalized consideration (Sharif et al., 2021). Idealized influence involves leaders acting as role models, earning admiration and respect from their followers. Inspirational motivation pertains to leaders conveying a compelling and inspiring vision to their followers. (Lütfi Sürücü et al., 2022).

Intellectual stimulation entails encouraging followers to embrace creativity and innovation and question their beliefs and values, as well as those of the leader and the organization. Individualized consideration recognizes each follower's unique needs and provides personalized support and encouragement (Y. Li et al., 2024; Tingfeng et al., 2022; A. Yao et al., 2024). Social Exchange Theory (SET), developed by George Homans in the 1960s, suggests that social behavior results from an exchange process designed to maximize benefits and minimize costs. The theory proposes that relationships are formed and maintained based on the benefits and drawbacks associated with them. In an organizational context, SET explains how the relationship between leaders and employees can influence behavior and performance (Gashema, 2020). SET is grounded in the principle of reciprocity, where the actions of one party are reciprocated by the other. For example, when leaders show support and provide resources, employees feel obliged to reciprocate with loyalty and higher performance (Mohammadi et al., 2017, 2021; G. Yao et al., 2024). Trust, commitment, and mutual obligations are key elements in this exchange process, which can significantly impact organizational outcomes (Fan et al., 2022).

In-Role Performance

In-role performance refers to fulfilling fundamental tasks and obligations that an employee is expected to fulfill as part of their job role. This concept is critical for understanding employee productivity and effectiveness within an organization. Employees who feel emotionally attached to and encouraged by their supervisors are likelier to demonstrate higher performance levels in their designated roles, highlighting the importance of leadership and supervisory support in enhancing employee performance (Choi et al., 2020). The proposed model of work role performance suggests that interdependence and uncertainty within the work context play crucial roles in determining the degree to which work roles are integrated into a larger social system and whether they develop through adaptive and proactive behavior (Maden-Eyiusta & Alparslan, 2022). This model underscores the complexity of in-role performance, suggesting that it is influenced by both the workplace setting and employees' actions.

Ethical leadership has been shown to positively impact employee in-role performance through the intermediary impacts of organizational identification, service atmosphere, and ethical environment (Pham et al., 2020). Leaders who exhibit ethical conduct and create a supportive climate can improve employee performance by cultivating a sense of belonging and alignment with organizational values. Ethical leadership also influences group in-role performance through the mediating roles of group conscientiousness and group voice within nursing teams (Chen & Haga, 2022). This emphasizes the significance of ethical leadership in promoting a collaborative and conscientious team environment that enhances overall performance. Human Resource

Management (HRM) practices can encourage higher levels of in-role and extra-role performance if seen as indicators of support and procedural justice (Wijaya et al., 2021). The perception of support and fairness can enhance employees' commitment and performance, highlighting the importance of effective HRM practices. Employees who perceive high chances to shape their job roles will likely exhibit increased job customization behavior, resulting in increased work engagement and enhanced performance (Xu et al., 2021). This finding underscores the importance of job design and opportunities for employees to shape their work roles.

Team-Oriented Transformational Leadership

Team-oriented transformational leadership is an approach that focuses on inspiring and motivating team members to achieve shared goals. Leaders practicing this style serve as role models, articulate a clear vision, encourage innovation, and attend to individual team members' needs. This approach fosters a collaborative environment where team members are motivated to exceed their performance levels (Shang, 2023).

Team-oriented transformational leadership significantly enhances the team atmosphere by promoting trust, collaboration, and open communication among team members. Leaders who exhibit transformational behaviors foster an environment of mutual respect and support, strengthening team cohesion and morale. For instance, transformational leadership has positively impacted motivation and team performance by creating a supportive and inclusive atmosphere, particularly evident during the COVID-19 pandemic (Busse & Lohmann, 2023). Another study highlighted that transformational leadership in project management enhanced team performance by creating a supportive environment where employees felt respected and proactive (Jabbour & Achi, 2023). Team-oriented transformational leadership positively impacts in-role performance by motivating team members to engage deeply with their tasks and responsibilities. This leadership style encourages employees to exceed their performance by creating a motivating and supportive environment (Jie et al., 2023; Song et al., 2023; Sun et al., 2024). A study by Zhao et al. (2023) found that transformational leadership significantly enhanced team performance through improved leader-follower congruence. Additionally, research in the IT sector demonstrated that transformational leadership significantly boosted team performance and overall organizational productivity (Jaroliya & Gyanchandani, 2021). In the context of public service organizations, transformational leadership enhanced in-role performance by promoting strong leader-member relationships and fostering innovation (Yusuf et al., 2023). Therefore, this research puts forward the hypothesis:

H1: There is a significant relationship between Team-oriented transformational leadership and In-role performance in Teachers of K12 Training School in Sichuan Province, China

H2: There is a significant relationship between Team-oriented transformational leadership and Team atmosphere in Teachers of K12 Training School in Sichuan Province, China

Team Atmosphere

Team atmosphere refers to the overall mood, tone, and quality of interactions within a team. It encompasses the emotional and social dynamics that influence team members' feelings and behavior in a group setting. A positive team atmosphere is characterized by mutual respect, trust, collaboration, and open communication. This environment fosters a sense of

belonging and shared purpose, enhancing individual and collective motivation, job satisfaction, and performance (Wang, 2023).

The impact of team atmosphere on in-role performance is significant, as a positive team atmosphere can enhance individual motivation, commitment, and effectiveness. A study by Arhipova et al. (2023) demonstrated that a positive team atmosphere, characterized by corporate cohesion and eco-culture, significantly improves service staff performance. The research highlighted that a supportive and collaborative environment is crucial for achieving high in-role performance (Chen et al., 2024; Pan et al., 2023; Qi et al., 2023). Additionally, Kovaleva and Filippchenkova (2020) found that a favorable socio-psychological climate within a team, shaped by effective leadership, positively influences both formal and informal relationships, leading to improved performance. This study emphasizes the crucial role of leaders in establishing a positive team atmosphere that drives individual productivity.

Team atmosphere is a crucial mediating variable that links team-oriented transformational leadership with in-role performance. This dynamic suggests that the influence of transformational leadership on in-role performance is significantly enhanced when a positive team atmosphere is present. Empirical research supports this mediating role. For instance, Noruliyanto, Ratnawati, and Rokhman (2024) found that team atmosphere mediates the relationship between transformational leadership and in-role performance in the Bappeda organization in Malang District, Indonesia. Their study demonstrated that a conducive team atmosphere, characterized by mutual respect and support, enhances the effectiveness of transformational leadership, thereby improving employee performance.

In the healthcare sector, a study by Lai et al. (2020) highlighted that work engagement mediates the positive correlation between transformational leadership and In-role performance among nurses. This indicates that a supportive team atmosphere, which fosters engagement, is pivotal for transformational leadership to translate into improved in-role performance. Similarly, in educational settings, Schoch et al. (2021) found that support from colleagues within the team mediated the connection between transformational leadership and the satisfaction levels of teachers with the need for relatedness. This satisfaction, which reflects a positive team atmosphere, subsequently enhanced their performance, underscoring the importance of a supportive team environment in educational institutions. Their findings emphasize that a positive team atmosphere, which promotes teamwork and collaboration, is essential for transformational leadership to boost in-role performance effectively.

These studies collectively illustrate that a positive team atmosphere enhances the direct effects of transformational leadership on performance and acts as a critical intermediary that facilitates the translation of leadership behaviors into tangible performance outcomes. Therefore, fostering a supportive and collaborative team atmosphere is crucial for organizations aiming to maximize the advantages of transformational leadership on in-role performance. Therefore, this research proposes the hypothesis:

H3: There is a significant relationship between Team atmosphere and In-role performance in Teachers of K12 Training School in Sichuan Province, China

H4: Team Atmosphere has a mediating effect between Team-Oriented Transformational Leadership and in-role Performance in Teachers of K12 Training School in Sichuan Province, China

Guanxi practice

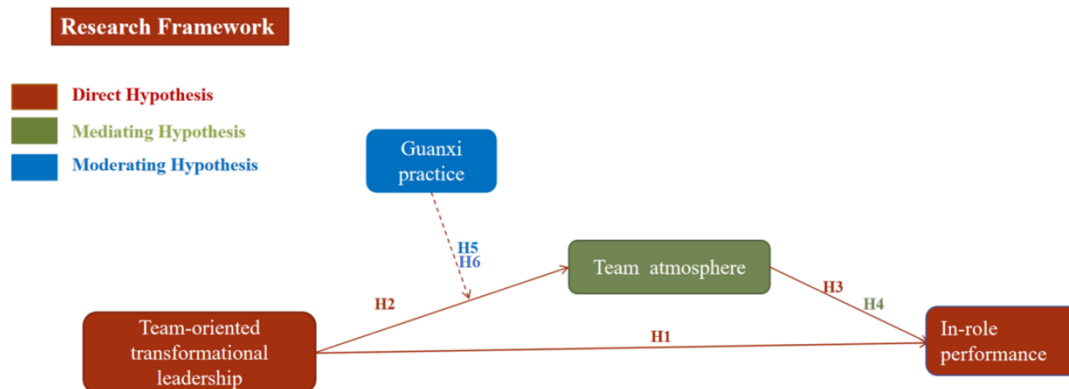
Guanxi practice, deeply rooted in Chinese cultural and social norms, can act as a mediating variable that negatively regulates the relationship between team-oriented transformational leadership and team atmosphere, thereby affecting in-role performance. Guanxi, which refers to the network of personal connections and relationships, can sometimes undermine the formal structures and equitable practices promoted by transformational leadership. Guanxi practices can prioritize personal relationships over merit-based decision-making, leading to favoritism and nepotism. This undermines transformational leadership's egalitarian and motivational aspects, which aim to inspire all team members equally and foster a positive team atmosphere. When Guanxi practices dominate, they can create a sense of unfairness and demotivation among team members excluded from the favored network, negatively impacting the overall team atmosphere and in-role performance. Research by Zhang and Hon (2023) indicates that Guanxi orientation and organizational Guanxi behavior significantly influences personal Guanxi behavior towards supervisors, impacting job satisfaction, job stress, and turnover intention among hotel employees. This shows how Guanxi can skew the perceived fairness and supportiveness within a team, which are crucial components of a positive team atmosphere.

Moreover, Liu and Zhai (2023) found that workplace Guanxi positively affects knowledge sharing among university academics, with team-member exchange and job satisfaction mediating factors. However, suppose Guanxi practices favor certain individuals over others. In that case, it can lead to an uneven distribution of opportunities and support, thus negatively affecting the overall team climate and the performance of those not included in the Guanxi network. In a broader organizational context, Guanxi can lead to conflicts with the principles of transformational leadership. A study by Xu et al. (2020) indicates that transformational leadership positively impacts team performance through collective and relational identification. However, when Guanxi practices interfere, they can diminish the collective spirit and relational identification fostered by transformational leadership, leading to a less cohesive team atmosphere and reduced in-role performance. In conclusion, while Guanxi practices can offer certain advantages in terms of networking and relationship-building, their potential to create disparities and favoritism can negatively moderate the relationship between team-oriented transformational leadership and team atmosphere, ultimately affecting in-role performance. Therefore, this research proposes the hypothesis:

H5: Guanxi Practice moderates between Team-Oriented Transformational Leadership and Team Atmosphere.

H6: The higher the level of Guanxi Practice, the weaker the positive mediating effect of Team Atmosphere on the relationship between Team-Oriented Transformational Leadership and In-role performance.

Figure 1: Research Framework



Methodology

Research Design and Sampling

This study is an empirical study using quantitative research methods, simple random sampling, and sample data collection (Joseph F. et al., 2021; Mohammadi, 2019). The samples for this study are from 8406 training schools in Sichuan, China (Official website of Sichuan Provincial Department of Education, January 22, 2020), and they must be teachers of the training schools. Since this study discusses the relationship among transformational leadership, Team Atmosphere and employees' in-role performance in Sichuan Training schools in China, the objects of the collection must be the teachers at Sichuan training schools in China to fill out the other report questionnaire, which must include their leaders or managers.

The respondents must meet the following requirements: 1. The training school is in Sichuan Province; 2. The survey objects are teachers at the training school; 3. They must have a direct superior. 4. The completion of the self-assessment questionnaire should be forwarded to the manager or supervisor of the respondent. Since this study involves self-evaluation and other evaluation parts, the research process is slightly more complicated than the questionnaire, which only includes self-evaluation. To ensure the questionnaire's effectiveness, the interviewee needs to forward the questionnaire to his superior supervisor after completing the self-evaluation part, and the supervisor should complete the remaining parts of the other evaluation items, which can effectively achieve one-to-one correspondence. To prevent employees' answers from being viewed by supervisors, it designed the "Questionnaire Star" software to set up a hidden function of the self-evaluation part to eliminate employees' concerns: in case the leaders see the answer content, the relationship with the leaders will be affected, and at the same time, the authenticity of the questionnaire content can be satisfied.

In order to eliminate common method variance as much as possible, in the process of questionnaire collection, researchers surveyed in three stages. The first stage was to conduct the first questionnaire survey in Nanchong City, Sichuan Province, in May 2023 because most principals of training schools were familiar with them and willing to help, which could reduce the difficulty of collection. In the second stage, in October 2023, the contact information of 212 principals from the WeChat group of training principals of the Sichuan Provincial Civil Affairs Office and sent messages one by one to explain the intention to them after obtaining the consent of principals from 55 training schools in various cities in Sichuan Province, 20 of them for the second stage of the questionnaire. The third phase was

conducted in December 2023 and culminated with a questionnaire sent to the remaining 35 training schools. The data was collected in seven months.

Measurement Scale

This study used a 7-point Likert scale to collect quantitative data. From strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7). Seven questions were used to collect basic demographic information, while the remaining 42 questions pertained to the five variables examined here. Previous research has established validity and reliability of these scales (Cronbach's alpha > 0.8).

Team-Oriented Transformational Leadership

Carless et al. (2000) introduced a concise, practical, and equally valid tool to measure transformational leadership called the Global Team-oriented Transformational Leadership scale (GTL). This instrument is based on the seven behaviors of transformational leadership previously defined by the authors and mentioned earlier (van Beveren et al., 2017). The GTL consists of seven items, each corresponding to one behavior, and assesses the frequency of transformational leadership behaviors demonstrated by the leader. The internal consistency of the GTL, as estimated by Cronbach's alpha ($\alpha = .93$), indicates a reliability level significantly higher than the .70 cut-off point suggested by Nunnally (1978). This scale measures the overall effectiveness of transformational leadership within a team or organization. It is a more concise measure than the MLQ and focuses on the core aspects of transformational leadership that can be applied to a team setting.

Measurement of Team Atmosphere

The collective perception of organizational or team standards and rules by team members not only reflects their awareness of the internal environment but also signifies the characteristics and principles governing the operation of the organization or team, which is measurable (Rentsch, 1990). Team Atmosphere is measured using the abbreviated version of the Team Atmosphere Inventory (TCI) with 14 items, as revised by Kivimaki and Elovainio (1999). This scale incorporates the fundamental aspects of Team Atmosphere measurement proposed by Anderson and West (1998) and aligns closely with the essence of Team Atmosphere, demonstrating good reliability and validity. Avoiding the prolixity of the original TCI scale alleviates the response burden on participating survey respondents (Table 3.2).

Measurement of Guanxi Practice

Guanxi Practices refer to the manager's utilization of interpersonal Guanxi as the foundation for formulating decisions in human resource management (Chen et al., 2004). This entails making decisions on promotions, rewards, task assignments, and performance evaluations based on the Guanxi's with subordinates (Y. Li et al., 2024; Wanqi et al., 2024; Yong et al., 2024). The scale employed in this study adopts the 5-item scale developed by Chen et al. (2004). This single-dimensional Guanxi Practices scale is currently the most frequently utilized measurement tool in empirical research on Guanxi Practices (e.g., Chen et al., 2011; Zhang et al., 2015), with a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.92 in their study (Table 3.3).

Measurement of in-role performance

in-role performance, particularly in-role performance, is a crucial element of organizational effectiveness, as it represents the core duties and responsibilities an employee must fulfill within their job role. This study selects role-in-role performance to measure teachers' in-role

performance. In the in-role performance scale selected by Williams and Williams for the 7 items of Anderson (1991), Cronbach's α in his study was 0.91.

Data Analysis and Result

Demographic

A total of 402 questionnaires were submitted in this study. As the questionnaire Star tool was used to answer the questions, it could not be submitted without completing the questionnaires, so there were no missing values. After data cleaning and screening, only 402 questionnaires met the criteria for inclusion in the sample. The following is the information related to demography, including the ratio of male to female teachers in the training school, educational background, working years, and the city where they worked.

Descriptive analysis

The descriptive statistics for the study variables are presented in the table below, which includes the minimum, maximum, mean, standard error, and standard deviation values for the variables utilized in this research. As previously noted, the questionnaire employed in this study was structured using a 7-point Likert scale, with values ranging from 1 to 7.

Table 4.2 Descriptive statistics

	Minimum	Maximum	mean	Standard error	Standard deviation	variance
TL	1.142	6.857	4.911	0.06	1.219	1.488
TA	1.857	6.857	4.702	0.059	1.195	1.429
IRP	2	7	5.15	0.059	1.188	1.413
GX	1.2	7	4.788	0.063	1.263	1.597

Assessment of measurement model

Assessing a reflective measurement model also involves thinking about its convergent validity. All items' factor loadings must be greater than 0.5, and no items' loadings must come from other structures, for this to be the case (J. Hair et al., 2021b). All 42 items were kept in the analysis since their factor loadings exceeded 0.5. Composite reliability scores for this study's measurement model exceeded 0.8, indicating high levels of agreement across all variables. In addition, the AVE values for all constructions exceeded the cutoff value of 0.50, indicating that the measurement model is trustworthy (J. Hair et al., 2021b).

Table 4.3 Measurement Model and Reliability and Validity Analysis

Variable	indicator	Outer loading	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
(TL)	TL1	0.759	0.842	0.848	0.888	0.613
	TL2	0.76				
	TL3	0.744				
	TL4	0.777				
	TL5	0.742				
	TL6	0.762				
	TL7	0.744				
(TA)	TA1	0.731	0.84	0.84	0.886	0.609
	TA2	0.714				
	TA3	0.691				
	TA4	0.73				
	TA5	0.715				
	TA6	0.745				
	TA7	0.722				
	TA8	0.712				
	TA9	0.695				
	TA10	0.709				
	TA11	0.725				
	TA12	0.714				
	TA13	0.739				
	TA14	0.708				
(GX)	GX1	0.772	0.928	0.928	0.937	0.516
	GX2	0.765				
	GX3	0.776				
	GX4	0.806				
	GX5	0.794				
(IRP)	IRP1	0.78	0.875	0.875	0.903	0.571
	IRP2	0.785				
	IRP3	0.788				
	IRP4	0.77				
	IRP5	0.779				

Discriminant Validity

Table 4.4 shows the HTMT values between the variables, with no value exceeding 0.9 or even 0.85 (Hair et al., 2020). This also shows the existence of discriminant validity between the variables.

Table 4.4 Heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT) - Matrix

	GX	IRP	TA	TL	GX x TL
GX					
IRP	0.179				
TA	0.168	0.434			
TL	0.153	0.429	0.186		
GX x TL	0.039	0.057	0.165	0.042	

Assessment of Structural Model

Collinearity statistics (VIF)

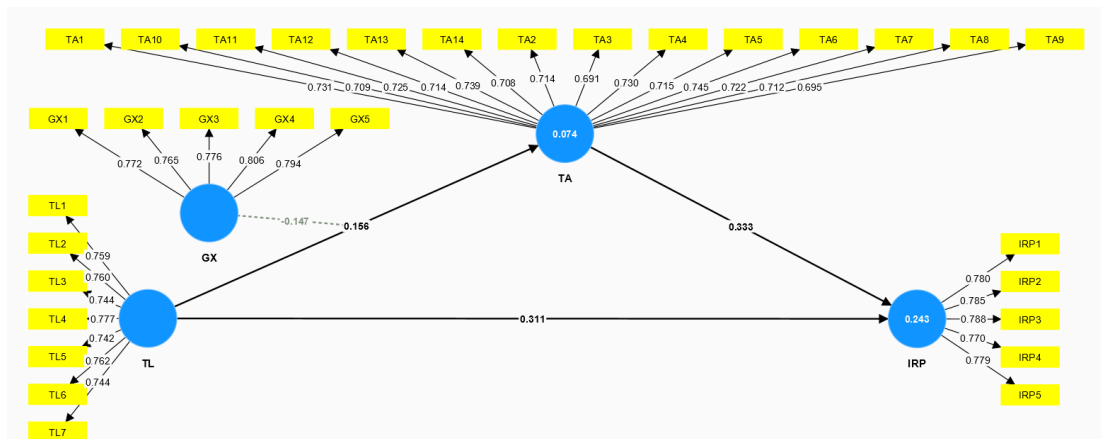
Each item of the prediction construct was evaluated, and the VIF value for each indicator was determined to be less than 5 (Purwanto & Sudargini, 2019)

Table 4.5 Inner model

	GX	IRP	TA	TL	GX x TL
GX			1.019		
IRP					
TA		1.03			
TL		1.03	1.018		
GX x TL			1.002		

Most researchers use the p-value to determine the significance of a coefficient. The p-value shows the probability of incorrectly rejecting a true null hypothesis (Andrade, 2019). A p-value of less than 0.05 is usually required to confirm that the relationship being studied is statistically significant. In addition, confidence intervals for bootstrap methods help in testing if a path coefficient significantly differs from zero. Bootstrap confidence intervals are calculated based on standard errors obtained through bootstrapping and indicate the range within which the true population parameters are expected to lie, assuming a specified confidence level (Hair et al., 2021). The statistical significance of path coefficients was evaluated using bootstrapping techniques, which involved generating 10,000 subsamples and conducting a two-tailed test described by Hair et al. (2021). The resulting path coefficients and their corresponding significance levels (p-values) are shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Structural model of two-tail test results showing the relationships' strength and significance.



The P-values and T-values for each path coefficient in the structural model are listed in Table 4.6. The route coefficients provide standardized estimates of the hypothesized links between constructs. According to our findings, there is a positive and statistically significant link between TL and IRP, with a path coefficient of 0.311 ($T=6.18$, $P<.05$). Path coefficient analysis shows a positive and statistically significant association between TL and TA (0.156, $T=3.051$, $P<.05$). A positive and statistically significant link exists between TA and IRP, as measured by a path coefficient of 0.333 ($T=7.037$, $P<.05$). As a moderating variable, GX has a negative path coefficient between TL and TA, with a path coefficient of -0.156 ($T=3.325$, $P<.05$), indicating that GX is negative and significantly moderates TL and TA. Table 4.6 presents the results detailing the P-values and T-values for each path coefficient within the structural model. These path coefficients represent standardized estimates of the hypothesized relationships between the constructs. The T-values are assessed against the critical threshold of 1.96 at a significance level of 5% to determine whether a path coefficient is significant (Hair et al., 2021).

Table 4.6 Size and significance of the path coefficients

Path	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values
GX → TA	0.135	0.143	0.052	2.588	0.01
TA → IRP	0.333	0.337	0.047	7.037	0
TL → IRP	0.311	0.312	0.05	6.18	0
TL → TA	0.156	0.159	0.051	3.051	0.002
GX x TL → TA	-0.147	-0.144	0.044	3.325	0.001

Model's Explanatory Power

Chin (1998) recommended providing guidelines for interpreting R^2 values for endogenous latent variables: 0.67 is substantial, 0.33 is moderate, and 0.19 is weak. Table 4.7 shows the explained variance of the variables in the model; $R^2=0.243$ for IRP indicates a moderate direct effect of other variables on IRP (Table 4.7).

Table 4.7 Explained variance (R^2)

	R-square	R-square adjusted
IRP	0.243	0.239

The effect size (f^2) measures the magnitude of the relationship between variables at the structural level as follows: values of 0.02(low), 0.15(medium), and 0.35(substantial) the effects of predictor variables, correspondingly. (Lorah, 2018; Selya et al., 2012). f^2 effect size shows the extent to which external latent variables contribute to the R^2 values of endogenous latent variables (Jürkenbeck et al., 2019). Table 4.8 shows the effect size (f^2) of each variable.

Table 4.8 Effect size (f^2)

	GX	IRP	TA	TL	GX x TL
GX			0.019		
IRP					
TA		0.142			
TL		0.124	0.026		
GX x TL			0.031		

Model's Predictive Power

Shmueli et al. (2019) suggested using the Q^2 predict value to evaluate the predictive power of PLS-SEM analysis, where values exceeding 0 indicate that the model surpasses the threshold benchmark. In Table 4.9, all Q^2 predict values exceed zero, indicating that PLS-SEM has predictive power exceeding the naive benchmark for all indicators. The study compared PLS-SEM_RMSE with LM_RMSE, as the errors were highly symmetric. The model had a high predictive power for all IRP indicators as their errors were smaller than LM_RMSE.

Table 4.9 PLSpredict Summary

Variable	Q^2 predict	PLS-SEM_RMSE	PLS-SEM_MAE	LM_RMSE	LM_MAE
IRP1	0.086	1.459	1.187	1.491	1.209
IRP2	0.096	1.401	1.14	1.415	1.144
IRP3	0.069	1.515	1.265	1.551	1.292
IRP4	0.082	1.432	1.176	1.46	1.196
IRP5	0.081	1.495	1.256	1.499	1.249

4.9 Mediating effect

Table 4.10 shows the t-values, p-values, and path coefficients for the interaction terms of Guanxi Practices (GXP) with Team-Oriented Transformational Leadership (TTL), and these interaction terms to Team Atmosphere (TA). This indicates that there is a mediating effect of (TA) between the IV (TL) and the DV (IRP), and it is partially mediated (Table 4.10).

Table 4.10 Mediating effect path coefficients

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values
TL -> TA -> IRP	0.052	0.054	0.019	2.762	0.006

Moderating effect

Table 4.11 shows that the interaction term of Guanxi Practices (GX) with Team-Oriented Transformational Leadership (TL) has a significant effect on Team Atmosphere (TA) ($P < .05$, $T > 1.96$, $f^2 > .02$), and there is a negative effect.

Table 4.11 Moderating effect path coefficients

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values
GX x TL -> TA	-0.147	-0.144	0.044	3.325	0.001
GX x TL -> TA -> IRP	-0.049	-0.048	0.016	2.997	0.003

Findings and Discussion

Team-oriented transformational leadership significantly enhances teachers' In-role performance by fostering a supportive and collaborative environment. This leadership style is essential in educational settings, promoting a shared vision, mutual goals, and a team-oriented approach that positively impacts performance and productivity (Wang, 2023). Principals adopting this style engage teachers collaboratively in school missions, increasing motivation and reducing turnover intentions. This results in improved educational outcomes and reduced staff attrition (Yuliastuti et al., 2023).

Research shows that integrated leadership profiles aligned with team-oriented transformational principles increase teachers' self-efficacy and commitment, creating a conducive working environment (Christin et al., 2023). Additionally, transformational leadership reduces teacher stress, enhances job satisfaction, and improves the educational atmosphere, key indicators of positive In-role performance (Poubel et al., 2022).

Team-oriented transformational leadership enhances the team atmosphere within schools by promoting collaboration, mutual respect, and a shared vision. Leaders adopting this style are visionaries who inspire their teams, recognizing individual strengths and harnessing them for the collective good, increasing group cohesion and morale (Santoso, 2022). This leadership fosters open communication, trust, and a setting where teachers feel appreciated and empowered, resulting in an engaged and enthusiastic team atmosphere (Ranta et al., 2023).

Empirical studies highlight the impact of transformational leadership on team atmosphere (Q. Li et al., 2024; Liu et al., 2024; Sun et al., 2022). Transformational leaders focusing on charisma, vision, and individualized support significantly improve team dynamics, fostering a collaborative and productive environment (Yuliastuti et al., 2023). Similarly, team-oriented leadership characterized by open communication and shared responsibility enhances team cohesion and effectiveness in educational settings (Vogel, 2022).

Team-oriented transformational leadership positively impacts in-role performance by motivating team members to exceed their usual performance levels and engage deeply with their tasks. This leadership style fosters a workplace where employees feel appreciated and supported, enhancing their commitment and productivity (Zhao et al., 2023). In K12 schools, transformational leadership improves teachers' innovative behaviors and goal achievement, boosting their performance (Mao et al., 2020). Research in public service organizations shows that transformational leadership, mediated by trust, enhances In-role performance and employee satisfaction (Yusuf et al., 2023).

A positive team atmosphere significantly enhances in-role performance by fostering collaboration, trust, and support among team members. This environment encourages mutual learning and the sharing of innovative teaching strategies, leading to improved student outcomes (Khan et al., 2022). A strong team atmosphere also mitigates isolation and stress, providing a supportive network that enhances teacher resilience and sustainability (Arhipova et al., 2023). Schools cultivating a robust team culture boost teacher morale and overall educational performance (González-Romá & Gamero, 2012).

Research solidifies the understanding that a supportive team atmosphere enhances the impact of team-oriented transformational leadership on In-role performance. A conducive organizational climate leverages transformational leadership benefits, enhancing individual and team performance (Ahmad et al., 2023). Transformational leadership's effectiveness depends on team dynamics and motivational climate (Udin, 2023). A conducive organizational climate is crucial for transformational leadership to improve employee performance effectively (Arifiani, 2023).

Guanxi practices significantly moderate the relationship between team-oriented transformational leadership and team atmosphere, diminishing the positive mediating effects on In-role performance. High levels of Guanxi can shift focus towards personal relationships, undermining meritocratic achievements and team-oriented efforts (Ali et al., 2020). This dynamic highlights the complex role of cultural practices in leadership efficacy and team dynamics, challenging the conventional effectiveness of transformational leadership (Wang et al., 2023).

Grasping these subtleties is essential for leaders in culturally diverse teams, ensuring leadership strategies adapt to account for Guanxi's profound effects (Jiang & Chen, 2021). While Guanxi can enhance relational ties and trust, it may also undermine leadership effectiveness by prioritizing personal relationships over team objectives (Luan et al., 2019). Leaders must navigate these cultural nuances to leverage Guanxi benefits while mitigating drawbacks to maximize team performance.

Implications of the Study

This article fills an important gap by focusing on the intersection of transformational leadership and Chinese cultural practices in education, offering tailored insights into effective leadership in China's schools, thereby enhancing the practical implications for educational leaders in similar cultural contexts. Ultimately, research on employee performance in the training industry has profound implications for individuals, the industry, and society. Unveiling the relationships between team-oriented and Individual-Oriented Transformational Leadership and subordinates' Work Performance: Previous research, from various theoretical perspectives, has demonstrated the significant associations between transformational leadership and various outcome variables related to organizations, teams, and individual subordinates (K. Khan & Gul, 2022). However, limited studies have delved into the multi-level aspects of transformational leadership behaviors. Scholars have primarily treated transformational leadership as a holistic concept, neglecting the distinctions between team-oriented and Individual-Oriented Transformational Leadership until Kark and Shamir (2002) introduced this differentiation. Subsequent empirical studies have examined the existence and feasibility of transformational leadership behaviors at both individual and team levels (Schriesheim et al., 2009; Wu et al., 2010; Wang & Howell, 2012; Tse et al., 2014; Li et al., 2014). Despite evidence supporting the differentiation of transformational leadership into individual-oriented and team-oriented levels, limited research has explored how these different levels of transformational leadership relate to subordinates' Work

Performance in the Chinese organizational context. Therefore, this study introduces a "level analysis" into the leadership behavior domain, theoretically explaining the correlation between individual-oriented and Team-Oriented Transformational Leadership and subordinates' Work Performance by reviewing their implications, effects, and the factors influencing Work Performance. In Chinese society, "Guanxi-oriented" practices have profound implications for organizational, group, and individual behaviors (Zhang, Long, Wu, 2015).

Research indicates that, compared to the state of relationships, Guanxi Practices (Guanxi HRM practices) have a more significant impact on employee attitudes and behaviors (Chen et al., 2011; Chen et al., 2004; Zhang et al., 2015). As organizational Guanxi Practices are a relatively new variable, scholarly investigations into the outcome variables of Guanxi Practices remain somewhat limited. Most studies on Guanxi Practices concentrate on their effects on employee attitudes and behaviors. In Chinese society, "Guanxi-oriented" practices have profound implications for organizational, group, and individual behaviors (Zhang, Long, Wu, 2015). Research indicates that, compared to the state of relationships, Guanxi Practices (Guanxi HRM practices) have a more significant impact on employee attitudes and behaviors (Chen et al., 2011; Chen et al., 2004; Zhang et al., 2015). As organizational Guanxi Practices are a relatively new variable, scholarly investigations into the outcome variables of Guanxi Practices remain somewhat limited. Most studies on Guanxi Practices concentrate on their effects on employee attitudes and behaviors.

Limitations and Future Study Recommendations

The particularity of Sichuan region: Given that Sichuan Province and other provinces are different in terms of population size, income status and education level, each region has different educational challenges and resources. The limitations of this study may overlook subtle leadership needs in different educational Settings, and future studies can further expand the sample size to better verify the direct impact of transformational leadership on In-role performance. Although this study strictly followed the paradigm of quantitative research and interpreted the study's findings, there are still some limitations. These limitations are also possible directions for future research in this area. Firstly, this study utilized a survey questionnaire design. A cross-sectional approach was employed, collecting data at a specific time to test the hypothesis. Future research may consider longitudinal studies to demonstrate the causal relationship between Transformational Leadership and in-role performance more effectively. Also, the population of this study was. Teachers at disciplinary training schools in Sichuan Province, China, thus leading to the conclusion that the results of this study may not be generalizable to other cultural contexts and regions. It is suggested that this study can be replicated in future studies in different regional and cultural contexts. Other firms of different sizes could also be the subject of future studies to control for firm size as a variable that may affect the study results.

Another limitation of this research is that the study design was not conducted for demographic characteristics. The education level, income, and other demographic factors of employees may influence the results of this study, which focuses on transformational leadership and employee performance. Numerous prior studies have demonstrated that material variables such as compensation, benefits, work system, and other leadership style types influence employee performance, and the findings of this study failed to exclude the influence of these variables. This study is quantitative, and there are contradictions between some of the findings and previous research findings. The present study provides some explanations for these contradictions, but these explanations need more evidence to be

verified. Future researchers are encouraged to adopt qualitative or mixed methods approaches to provide a more thorough validation or interpretation of the findings presented here. Additionally, this study relied on employee self-reported data, using a 7-point Likert scale to gauge subjective perceptions. Such self-reports may introduce bias. Therefore, future studies should consider using more objective data collection methods, such as observational techniques, to minimize the potential biases inherent in self-reported questionnaires.

Conclusion

The study centers on implementing transformational leadership within subject training schools in Sichuan Province, China, considering the unique cultural and educational landscape shaped by the recent double-reduction policy, significantly influencing educational leadership and teacher performance. The study explores how team-oriented transformational leadership can enhance teacher performance while adapting to local cultural nuances and policy changes, using quantitative approaches like surveys and interviews to gather data from stakeholders in Sichuan's educational sector. Key findings indicate that team-oriented transformational leadership improves team cohesion, leading to enhanced teacher performance and educational outcomes, with team atmosphere mediating the relationship between leadership and outcomes. Transformational leadership also helps institutions navigate challenges posed by the double-reduction policy, maintaining high-performance standards. A survey of 462 teachers in Sichuan's subject training schools resulted in 402 valid responses, analyzed using structural equation modeling via SmartPLS 4.1, confirming all measurement criteria and supporting all hypotheses. The study extends existing leadership theories to a non-Western context, bridging theoretical gaps by examining team-oriented leadership impacts and offering insights on cultural adaptation, improving educational leadership, and leveraging Guanxi practices. Practical contributions include enhancing leadership effectiveness, improving educational outcomes, and developing local talent, which is crucial for sustaining economic growth and technological advancement, thus providing meaningful insights into educational leaders to improve their approaches and practices.

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Appendix

Table 3.1 *The question list of Team-Oriented Transformational Leadership*

NO.	Items
1	The department head/manager communicates a clear and positive vision of the future.
2	The department head/manager treats staff as individuals, supports and encourages their development.
3	The department head/manager gives encouragement and recognition to staff.
4	The department head/manager fosters trust, involvement and cooperation among team members.
5	The department head/manager encourages thinking about problems in new ways and questions assumptions.
6	The department head/manager is clear about his/her values and practices which he/she preaches.
7	The department head/manager instils pride and respect in others and inspires me by being highly competent.

Table 3. 2: *The question list of Measuring Team Atmosphere.*

NO.	Items
1	In our department, colleagues trust each other
2	I am willing to share information with my colleagues in the department and I am sure they will do the same
3	I believe that everyone in our department acted with good intentions
4	I believe that the information shared by everyone in our department is true
5	In our department, different opinions of colleagues are taken seriously
6	In our department, there is a consensus that participation in discussions improves the quality of decision making
7	We encourage different opinions within our department
8	Members of our department have different opinions and are able to argue (openly)

- 9 Members of our department have a strong emotional attachment to their department
- 10 Members of our department have a strong sense of belonging to our department
- 11 Members of our department regard the department's difficulties as their own
- 12 In our department, everyone agrees with the goals of the department and is willing to work for their realization
- 13 Our department has a strong ability to adapt to external changes
- 14 Members of our department have a strong sense of dependence on our department

Table 3.3: The question list of Guanxi Practices.

NO.	Items
1	In our department, many employees come to work in the department through relationships
2	In our department, many employees get promoted through Guanxi
3	In our department, supervisors usually decide how to allocate rewards based on the relationship between subordinates and themselves
4	In our department, supervisors usually decide how to assign tasks based on the relationship between their subordinates and them
5	In our department, performance evaluation is influenced by relationships

Table 3.4: The question list of in-role performance.

NO.	Items
1	This colleague can always complete the task assigned by the unit satisfactorily
2	The colleague performed his duties
3	This colleague always does the work that needs to be done with quality and quantity
4	The work of the colleague is generally up to appraisal standards
5	This colleague always does a good job within the scope of the performance review

Table 4.1 : Demographic

Demographic Characteristics	Demographic characteristics	sub-Frequency (N=402)	Percentage(%)
Gender	Male	179	44.5
	Female	223	55.5
Occupation	Training institute teachers	402	100

Education	High school/technical secondary school	28	7
	Junior college	61	15.2
	Undergraduate course	172	42.8
	Master degree or above	141	35.1
Age	Age 20 and under	11	2.7
	21-25 years old	58	14.4
	26-30 years old	91	22.6
	31-35 years old	86	21.4
	36-40 years old	63	15.7
	41-45 years old	52	12.9
	Over 45 years old	41	10.2
Years	Less than 3 years	99	24.6
	3-4 years	108	26.9
	5 to 6 years	124	30.8
	More than 6 years	71	17.7
Staffs	1-10 people	79	19.7
	10-49 people	90	22.4
	50-249 people	141	35.1
	More than 250 people	92	22.9
City	Chengdu City	28	7
	Zigong City	19	4.7
	Panzhihua City	23	5.7
	Luzhou City	17	4.2
	Deyang City	16	4
	Mianyang City	16	4
	Guangyuan City	21	5.2
	Suining City	18	4.5
	Neijiang City	16	4
	Leshan City	21	5.2
	Nanchong City	9	2.2
	Meishan City	23	5.7
	Yibin City	14	3.5
	Guang 'an City	20	5
	Dazhou City	17	4.2
	Ya 'an City	21	5.2
	Bazhong City	31	7.7
	Ziyang City	15	3.7
	Aba Tibetan and Qiang Autonomous Prefecture	22	5.5
	Garze Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture	15	3.7
	Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture	20	5

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