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Transformational Leadership and Its Effect on Teacher Organizational Commitment: The Mediating Effect of Teachers' Self-Efficacy

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Abstract
This study aims to explore the impact of principal transformational leadership on teacher organizational commitment across regions and schools, using teacher self-efficacy as a mediating variable, to enhance principals' leadership wisdom and promote school change. A total of 320 questionnaires were distributed and 310 were returned (return rate of 96.8%). Finally, 308 valid questionnaires were obtained (effectiveness rate of 96.2%). AMOS 23.0 was used to construct a structural equation model with path coefficients, and the model fit and path effect were analyzed to explore the relationship between the three main variables. The results show that principal transformational leadership has a significant positive correlation with both teacher organizational commitment and teacher self-efficacy. Teacher self-efficacy has a significant positive correlation with teacher organizational commitment. Teacher self-efficacy has a mediating role. Transformational leadership primarily affects teachers' intrinsic motivation—self-efficacy—which in turn influences their level of organizational commitment.

Keywords: Transformational leadership, Teacher organizational commitment, Mediating effect, Teachers' self-efficacy

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Introduction

It is often said, "A good principal makes a good school." (Adhikari et al., 2026). How does a good principal make a school successful? It's generally believed that good principals are better at establishing rules and regulations to motivate teachers and focus on enhancing organizational culture to inspire teachers' self-motivation for growth(Berhanu, 2025). However, it's worth considering what personality traits and leadership styles a principal should possess to ensure these rules and regulations don't become mere formalities and to truly help teachers overcome professional burnout (Al-Thawabiya et al., 2023). Regarding principal leadership, there has been much research both domestically and internationally, proposing over 20 effective leadership types, including servant leadership, collaborative leadership, transformational leadership, contingency leadership, distributed leadership, ethical leadership, strategic leadership, instructional leadership, innovative leadership, postmodern leadership, emotional leadership, path-goal leadership, relational leadership, and situational leadership (Runic Ristic et al., 2025).

Since Downton proposed the concept of transformational leadership, Burns explained the theory of transformational leadership, and Bass interpreted the comprehensive theoretical framework of transformational leadership, research on transformational leadership has gradually occupied a central position in leadership studies in Western economics, political science, and management(Notarnicola et al., 2024). The main difference between transformational leadership and traditional transactional leadership is that transformational leadership emphasizes leadership practice and focuses on the leader's ability to inspire, encourages followers to go beyond their existing achievements and personal interests, identifies and meets the higher-level needs of followers, and advocates achieving organizational change and development by enhancing the shared value commitment and potential capabilities of leaders and followers (Hernandez et al., 2026). In the 1990s, a second wave of transformation, represented by the "Reconstruction Movement," was widely launched in Western school education. This wave of transformation emphasized joint leadership by principals and teachers, and focused on shaping organizational culture and developing organizational members (Muliana,2025).

Transformational leadership theory was introduced into the field of school education, and research literature that placed transformational leadership in the context of educational organizations and school organizations gradually increased. School transformational leadership (STL) mainly applies the concept of transformational leadership or related theories to specific school situations, and expands, tests and modifies transformational leadership behavior in the field of school education (Lewa et al., 2022). School transformational leadership has a rich connotation, which includes a group of concepts such as charismatic leadership, visionary leadership, cultural leadership and empowerment leadership (Wilson et al., 2023). Their common feature is that they emphasize the wholehearted dedication of school organizational members to organizational goals and vision, fully stimulate the potential of organizational members, and regard it as the key to improving the effectiveness of school organizations (Brady et al., 2025).In short, transformational leadership in schools is a leadership behavior built on the shared vision and values of leaders and followers. It involves leaders using their personal charisma and moral influence to motivate and meet the higher-level needs of their followers, thereby stimulating their intrinsic motivation and potential, and ultimately driving organizational change and improving organizational effectiveness.

These studies reveal leadership paradigms from different perspectives, such as the transformation of the leader's role, changes in management methods, and organizational restructuring. Data from a meta-analysis of 420 studies on principal leadership by American scholars shows that, compared to managerial and transformational leadership, instructional leadership has the greatest positive impact on student learning because this leadership style focuses on the school's core mission—student learning (Sun et al.,2025). Sergiovanni (2005) argues that the principal's professional and moral authority should replace identity and administrative authority as fundamental, with moral leadership generated by moral authority occupying a central position. In the 1990s, with the rise of the "reconstruction movement" in Western countries, the transformational leadership paradigm, which promotes school change, improves organizational effectiveness, and enhances teacher innovation, attracted widespread attention (Mohammed et al., 2014). Indeed, as Kouzes and Posner (2017) stated, leaders are not inventors, but guardians of change. The success of transformational leaders lies in using vivid language and highly infectious methods to depict the team's vision and ignite the team's passion with enthusiasm for pursuing that vision. Transformational leaders focus on guiding organizational members to identify with and intrinsically commit to school change, thereby achieving organizational restructuring and quality improvement.
According to Bass and Riggio (2006), transformational leadership is characterized by the alignment of the shared vision of the individual goals and objectives of subordinates, leaders, and the group, with the vision and objectives of the organization. Based on an individual approach to responding to the needs of each member, this type of

leadership leads its followers to transcend their own interests. Transformational leaders inspire, encourage, and intellectually stimulate their subordinates, helping them overcome their limitations and reveal their authentic talent (Bass, 1990; Bass & Riggio, 2006). Bass (1990) further states that transformational leadership develops employees' sense of purpose, as well as a feeling of shared identity, leading them to achieve better performance through greater organizational commitment.

Transformational leadership focuses on the relationship between leaders and subordinates, fostering a trusting organizational atmosphere through visionary motivation, intellectual stimulation, individual care, and leadership charisma (Bass, 1997), which helps promote positive exchange relationships between leaders and teachers. Studies have shown that transformational leadership can effectively predict university faculty's team learning behavior (Bouwmans et al., 2017) and organizational citizenship behavior (Safari & Gharacheh, 2014), and that department chairs' transformational leadership scores directly influence faculty performance (Darawsheh et al., 2016).

Teacher organizational commitment is the psychological bond connecting teachers and schools, closely related to teachers' work attitudes, performance, and retention intentions, and influencing school organizational effectiveness (Toala-Mendoza et al., 2025). However, this sense of belonging and commitment to the organization can only be transformed into a driving force for the school's sustainable development when it stems from intrinsic motivation and enhanced self-efficacy. When teachers have lofty educational ideals and enhanced self-efficacy, their understanding of the meaning of their work and their sense of belonging to the organization also increase. Self-efficacy theory is the core of Bandura's social cognitive theory. Bandura (2006) defines self-efficacy as an individual's confidence in their organizational and executive abilities and their belief in achieving success in a specific environment.

Teachers' self-efficacy not only affects their choice and understanding of work goals but is also closely related to their work motivation, effort level, and emotional fluctuations (Polatcan et al., 2023;Zhang et al., 2026). Teachers with different levels of self-efficacy show significant differences in classroom time allocation, questioning, target audience, and feedback methods. With societal development, education is increasingly moving beyond knowledge transmission; teachers' professional well-being stems from the fulfillment of higher-level spiritual needs.

Research gap and contributions

Research on transformational leadership and teacher organizational commitment is mostly limited to univariate or bivariate studies, lacking research on the mechanisms of mediating variables. How do transformational leaders' leadership behaviors translate into teachers' intrinsic motivation? Through what channels does a principal's transformational leadership change teachers' value identification with the organization? This study attempts to discuss the direct impact of transformational leadership on teachers' organizational commitment while also focusing on the mediating role of teacher self-efficacy in the effect of principal's transformational leadership on teachers' organizational commitment, aiming to enrich relevant theoretical research, stimulate teachers' organizational commitment, and promote school change.

Aims

This study aims to explore the impact of principal transformational leadership on teacher organizational commitment across regions and schools, using teacher self-efficacy as a mediating variable, to enhance principals' leadership wisdom and promote school change.

Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: Principal transformational leadership has a significant positive impact on teacher organizational commitment.
Hypothesis 2: Principal transformational leadership has a significant positive impact on teacher self-efficacy.
Hypothesis 3: Teacher self-efficacy has a significant positive impact on teacher organizational commitment.
Hypothesis 4: Teacher self-efficacy plays a mediating role in the relationship between principal transformational leadership and teacher organizational commitment.

Methods

Instrument

The initial questionnaire designed for this study consisted of four parts, totaling 56 items: 8 items on basic participant information, 20 items on the Transformational Leadership Style Scale, 16 items on the Teacher Organizational Commitment Scale, and 12 items on the Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale. All three questionnaires used a five-point Likert scale, with 1 to 5 representing the transition from completely disagree to completely agree.

After a small-scale pilot test and reliability and validity testing of the returned questionnaires, all items were retained for the Transformational Leadership Style Scale and the Teacher Organizational Commitment Scale, while one item was deleted from the Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale, resulting in a final questionnaire with 55 items.

Teacher Background Variables Questionnaire: The teacher background variables questionnaire mainly includes gender, age, marital status, teaching experience, education level, professional title, position, and school size, totaling 8 questions.

Principal Transformational Leadership Questionnaire: A review of relevant local and international literature was conducted, primarily examining the transformational leadership questionnaires developed by Bass and Avolio (1996), and Alimo-Metcalfe and & Alban-Metcalfe (2001). The items and structure of existing transformational leadership questionnaires were analyzed. Referring to research findings on the connotation and structure of various dimensions of transformational leadership, a preliminary measurement structure for the transformational leadership of junior high school principals was determined, and specific measurement items were developed. By classifying and summarizing the collected items, a questionnaire containing 20 items was finally compiled.

Teacher Organizational Commitment Questionnaire: A review of relevant local and international literature was conducted, primarily examining Jo's (2014) Organizational Commitment of Teachers Scale; Chung's (2020) Organizational Commitment Scale and Gyeltshen's (2021) Organizational Commitment of Teachers Scale. The items and structures of existing organizational commitment questionnaires, teacher organizational commitment questionnaires, and teacher professional commitment questionnaires were analyzed. The structure of teacher organizational commitment questionnaire was preliminarily determined, and specific measurement items were developed. After professional guidance was provided to assess the scientific validity and accuracy of the questionnaire, a preliminary test questionnaire containing 16 questions was finally developed.

Teacher Self-Efficacy Questionnaire: The Arabic version of the Teacher Self-Efficacy Measurement Questionnaire, is a 12-item short form Teacher Efficacy Scale (TSE) developed by Tschannen Moran and Hoy (2001). Through reliability and validity analysis, it was revised into an initial questionnaire capable of effectively measuring teacher efficacy, containing 12 items. In this study, after initial testing and reliability and validity checks, one item was removed, resulting in a final questionnaire with 11 items.

Research Subjects and Testing Methods

This survey lasted for more than three months and was conducted in two phases: preliminary testing and formal testing, to complete the data collection and feedback. 1)The primary survey period was Feb 2026. A random sampling method was used to select 200 teachers from Schools in Muscot. 200 questionnaires were distributed, and 196 were returned. After processing and removing invalid questionnaires, 190 valid questionnaires were obtained, resulting in a validity rate of 95.0%. The preliminary questionnaire underwent content analysis, reliability and validity testing, and was revised and shortened to form the formal test questionnaire. 2)Formal Test sample: The formal questionnaire survey period was from Feb to Apr. 2026. During the administration of the test, a stratified sampling method was used to select 320 school teachers (excluding principals) from Muscot and other cities as subjects. A total of 320 questionnaires were distributed and 310 were returned (return rate of 96.8%). Finally, 308 valid questionnaires were obtained (effectiveness rate of 96.2%).

Ethical Approval

This study was approved by the human committee in Faculty of Education, Arab Open University - Sultanate of Oman. Informed consent was obtained from all participants.

Data analysis

The data analysis and statistics of this study can be divided into the following steps: First, SPSS 23.0 was used to test the reliability and validity of the Principal Transformational Leadership Questionnaire, the Teacher Self-Efficacy Questionnaire, and the Teacher Organizational Commitment Questionnaire; then, AMOS 23.0 was used to construct a structural equation model with path coefficients, and the model fit and path effect were analyzed to explore the relationship between the three main variables; finally, if the relationship between the three variables is significant, it is necessary to explore the specific mechanism of action between the variables and the mediating effect of teacher self-efficacy.

Questionnaire Reliability and Validity Analysis

This study used SPSS 23.0 to test the reliability and validity of the questionnaires. Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was used to test the reliability of the questionnaires. The overall reliability of the Principal's Transformational Leadership Questionnaire, the Teacher's Self-Efficacy Questionnaire, and the Teacher's Organizational Commitment Questionnaire were 0.902, 0.911, and 0.904, respectively, indicating that the reliability of all three scales was good. Exploratory factor analysis was used to test the validity of the questionnaires. The KMO values of the Principal's Transformational Leadership Questionnaire, the Teacher's Self-Efficacy Questionnaire, and the Teacher's Organizational Commitment Questionnaire were 0.927, 0.952, and 0.960, respectively, and the p-values were all <0.05. Therefore, all three scales passed the construct validity test.

The results of the Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) demonstrate that the proposed measurement models for evaluating the three variables exhibit optimal fit indices and robust factor loadings in their respective dimensions. Factor Loadings: All scale items exceed the standardized critical threshold of 0.50 (and ideally >0.60), reflecting excellent internal construct validity. Comparative Fit Indices (CFI): These are above the recommended value of 0.90 (and ideally 0.95). Approximation Errors (RMSEA): Both indicators remain below the limit of 0.08 (values <0.06 denote an excellent fit).

Structural Equation Model Testing

After completing the reliability and validity analysis of the Principal's Transformational Leadership, Teachers' Self-Efficacy, and Organizational Commitment Questionnaires, the AMOS 23.0 software was used to generate a structural equation model with path coefficients and analyze the path effect. This step is used to verify Hypotheses 1, 2 and 3.

Model Generation

To clearly illustrate the relationship between principal's transformational leadership, teacher self-efficacy, and organizational commitment, a structural equation model diagram (Figure 1) was constructed based on the assumptions of this paper:

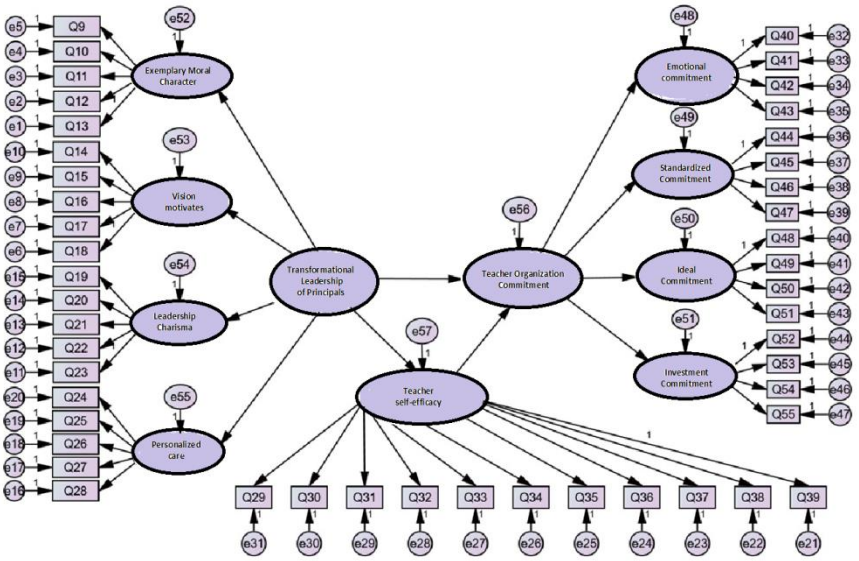

Figure 1. *Structural equation model of principal's transformational leadership, teacher self-efficacy, and organizational commitment.*

Model Fit Analysis

Structural equation modeling of principal transformational leadership, teacher self-efficacy, and organizational commitment was performed. The model fit results after optimization and correction of error terms are shown in Table 1. The overall goodness-of-fit analysis of the model shows that the chi-square degrees of freedom ratio is 2.023 < 3.000, indicating that the model has a good fit. Looking at other fit indices, all indices meet the general

standard, and most meet the ideal standard. Overall, the model fits well, indicating a high degree of agreement between the hypothetical theoretical model and the actual data, making the model results quite convincing.

Table 1 *Model fit analysis*

CMIN/DF	RMSEA	RMR	GFI	CFI	IFI	PNFI
2.023	0.060	0.055	0.911	0.914	0.916	0.812

Mediating effect of teachers' self-efficacy on transformational leadership and its effect on teacher organizational commitment:

To test the hypothesis that Teacher Self-Efficacy acts as a mediating variable in the relationship between Transformational Leadership and Organizational Commitment, a path analysis was conducted using the Macro PROCESS model. The results indicated that Transformational Leadership exerts a positive and statistically significant effect on Teacher Self-Efficacy (Path a): (beta = 0.48), (SE = 0.05), (t = 9.60), ($p < 0.001$), (95% C [0.38; 0.58]). In turn, Self-Efficacy showed a positive and significant predictive impact on Organizational Commitment (Path b): (beta = 0.35), (SE = 0.06), (t = 5.83), ($p < 0.001$), (95% C [0.23; 0.47]). (See tables 2 and 3)

Table 2. *Regression Model for the Mediator Variable (Path a)*

	Coefficient (b)	Standard Error (SE)	T-value	p-value	95% Boot LLCI	95% Boot ULCI
Constant	1.85	0.21	8.81	< .001	1.44	2.26
Transformational Leadership (Path a)	0.48	0.05	9.60	< .001	0.38	0.58

Model Note: ($R2 = 0.231$), ($F(1, 306) = 92.16$), ($p < 0.001$). Predictor: Transformational Leadership (X) Criterion Variable: Teacher Self-Efficacy (M)

Table 3 *Regression Model for the Dependent Variable (Paths b and c')*

	Coefficient (b)	Standard Error (SE)	T- value	p-value	95% Boot LLCI	95% Boot ULCI
Constant	1.20	0.24	5.00	< .001	0.73	1.67
Self-efficacy (Path b)	0.35	0.06	5.83	< .001	0.23	0.47
Transformational Leadership (Path c')	0.28	0.06	4.67	< .001	0.16	0.40

Model Note: ($R2 = 0.345$), ($F(2, 305) = 80.31$), ($p < 0.001$). Predictors: Transformational Leadership (X) and Self-Efficacy (M) Criterion Variable: Organizational Commitment (Y).

Figure 2 *below graphically illustrates the flow of effects with their respective regression coefficients (beta) and significance levels (p):*

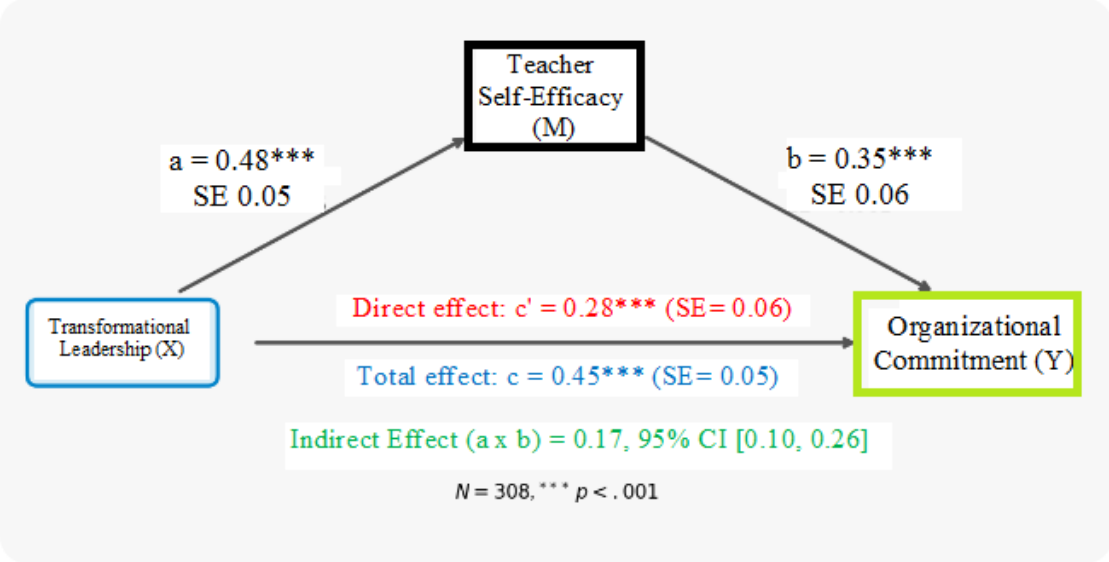

Figure 2. *The flow of effects with their respective regression coefficients (beta) and significance levels (p)*

The overall effect of Transformational Leadership on Organizational Commitment was statistically significant (Path c): (beta = 0.45), (SE = 0.05), (t = 9.00), (p < 0.001), (95%C [0.35; 0.55]). After including the mediating variable in the model, the direct effect of Leadership decreased, but remained statistically significant (Path c'): (beta = 0.28), (SE = 0.06), (t = 4.67), (p < 0.001), (95%C [0.16; 0.40])(see Table 4). Finally, the analysis based on 5,000 bootstrapping samples confirmed the statistical significance of the indirect effect (beta = 0.17), (SE = 0.04), (95%C[0.10; 0.26]). Since the confidence interval for the indirect effect does not include the value zero, the existence of a partial mediation of Teacher Self-Efficacy in this organizational dynamic is confirmed.

Table 4: *Total, Direct, and Indirect Effects Summary*

Effect Type	Path	Coefficient (b)	Standard Error (SE)	T- value	p-value	95% LLCI Boot	95% ULCI Boot
Total Effect	c	0.45	0.05	9.00	< .001	0.35	0.55
Direct Effect	c'	0.28	0.06	4.67	< .001	0.16	0.40
Indirect Effect	*a* X b	0.17	0.04	-	-	0.10	0.26

Note: The Standard Error and Confidence Intervals for the Indirect Effect were obtained via a percentile Bootstrap resampling method with 5,000 extractions (t-statistic not applicable).

Discussion

The results show that principal transformational leadership has a significant positive impact on both teacher organizational commitment and teacher self-efficacy. Teacher self-efficacy has a significant positive impact on teacher organizational commitment. Data shows that principal transformational leadership has a significant positive impact on teacher organizational commitment and also a significant positive impact on teacher self-efficacy. Moreover, the positive predictive effect of principal transformational leadership on teacher organizational commitment was effectively verified regardless of whether the impact occurred via direct or indirect pathways. Teacher self-efficacy has a significant positive impact on teacher organizational commitment.

Although there are differences in culture and educational background across different countries and regions, and the research tools and participant samples used in different studies vary, this study found that the relationship between school transformational leadership and teacher organizational commitment is basically consistent with previous related studies such as those by Abd El Majid and Cohen (2015) who found a significant positive relationship between transformational leadership and the organizational commitment and job performance of Arab teachers in Israel.

Transformational leaders increase teachers' perceived commitment to the organization through the guidance they provide for the principles of reciprocity, motivation, social support, cooperation, objective achievement, and self-actualization (Udin, 2020). Transformational leadership strives to create a free and relaxed organizational atmosphere, maintaining openness in the workplace, enabling teachers to access richer information and career development resources (Bouwmans et al., 2017).

Similarly, Liu Shih-Hui (2015) pointed out in a study in Kaohsiung that principals' transformational leadership behavior could enhance teachers' organizational commitment by improving their job satisfaction and sense of identification with the organization. Li Ling et al. (2018) in mainland China explored the relationship between school transformational leadership and teachers' organizational commitment. The results showed a significant positive correlation between school transformational leadership and teachers' organizational commitment.

Furthermore, a study by Peretomode and Bello (2018) demonstrated that teachers' commitment to conducting their work is strongly affected by school leaders and the working environment. Nguni et al. (2006) conducted the research with primary school teachers in Tanzania and noted that transformational leadership was a significant predictor of teachers' job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and organizational citizenship behaviors.

Teacher self-efficacy has a mediating effect, but the principal's personalized care directly influences teachers' organizational commitment. Teacher self-efficacy is an intrinsic factor for principals to enhance teachers' organizational commitment and achieve organizational change. However, the leader's personalized care directly affects teachers' commitment to work engagement, ideals, norms, and emotions. This result is basically consistent with previous related studies such as those by Sánchez-Rosas et al.(2023) transformational leadership was a direct predictor of satisfaction with job resources and an indirect and large predictor of collective teacher self-efficacy.

Recommendations

Implications and limitations of the study

This study focuses on the mediating role of teacher self-efficacy in the effect of principal's transformational leadership on teachers' organizational commitment. This may enrich relevant theoretical research, stimulate teachers' organizational commitment, and promote school change. Although the results proved valid for the entire sample used, it was impossible to distinguish whether the model behaves similarly in different groups. Given the sample size, it was impossible to conduct a multi-group analysis to contrast the fit and effects of the measurement and structural models considering samples segmented by gender, type of institution, and years of teaching, among others. Another limitation is that this study is cross- sectional. The main limitation of cross-sectional design in educational research is its inability to establish cause-and-effect relationships. Because the data are collected at a single point in time, they only provide a snapshot of the phenomenon. This prevents us from seeing the temporal sequence between the variables. Another limitation is the reliance on self-report data, which may be biased. Participants may give false answers to appear more acceptable to society. This affects the validity of the data, especially in surveys on sensitive topics such as behavior, health, or morality. All participants were from Muscot. This has limited generalizability beyond the Omani educational context.

Conclusions

The results show that principal transformational leadership has a significant positive impact on both teacher organizational commitment and teacher self-efficacy. Teacher self-efficacy has a significant positive impact on

teacher organizational commitment. Transformational leadership primarily affects teachers' intrinsic motivation—self-efficacy—which in turn influences their level of organizational commitment. The formation of self-efficacy stems from an individual's understanding of the characteristics and significance of their role, and is determined by teachers' subjective judgment after analyzing and integrating efficacy information from different channels. Only when teachers have a positive perception of their work can they form a lasting motivation for teaching and learning. Providing teachers with more successful experiences and vicarious opportunities remains a crucial way to enhance their self-efficacy. Meanwhile, psychologist Bandura emphasized that individuals experience increased self-efficacy when they consistently receive external care and support. This underscores the importance of personalized care from transformational leadership. In addition to giving teachers greater participation in the decision-making process, principals should offer personalized guidance, suggestions, explanations, and encouragement tailored to the different needs of each teacher – all indispensable means of improving teachers' self-efficacy.

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Author (s) Contribution Rate
The author confirms full responsibility for the manuscript. Contribution rate: 100%.

Ethical Approval
This study was approved by the Human Committee of the Faculty of Education, Arab Open University – Sultanate of Oman (Decision No. A-12126, dated December 1, 2025). Informed consent was obtained from all participants.

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