

Constructing the Scale of Transcendent Leadership for Junior High School Principals

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Abstract

In the rapidly changing global organizational environment of today's world, the theory of transcendent leadership has been highly inspiring. Although it has emerged for over a decade, there is currently no related scale available for academic use. Especially in recent years, junior high school principals have faced changing educational environments both within and outside the school, requiring them to possess transcendent leadership thinking and actions. Constructing the scale of transcendent leadership for junior high school principals would be beneficial for the academic research and development of principal leadership studies. Based on this premise, the present study constructs the scale of transcendent leadership by exploring junior high school principals' role positioning and actual practices in school leadership, drawing from the theory of transcendent leadership. The scale has revised through 5 expert reviews and used in a formal questionnaire survey with Taiwanese junior high school teachers as the research participants. A total of 1,580 valid questionnaires were collected. The results of this study establish a questionnaire consisting of 36 items for the junior high school principals' transcendent leadership scale, which can be categorized into four major dimensions and 12 sub-dimensions: 1. "Leadership of Self": character manifestation, self-awareness and regulation, self-spiritual growth. 2. "Leadership of Others ": service orientation, motivating care, fostering spiritual growth. 3. "Leadership of Organization": shared school governance, shaping organizational vision and culture, transcending limitations. 4. "Leadership of Community": establishing community network relations, managing social responsibility, inclusive development.

Keywords: Junior High School Principal, Transcendent Leadership, Scale

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Introduction

In regard to emerging leadership theories such as transcendent leadership, most studies remain confined to theoretical discussions (Cardona, 2000; Crossan & Mazutis, 2008; Crossan, Vera, & Nanjad, 2008; Gardiner & Walker, 2009; Gardiner, 2006). There is a significant dearth of empirical research, necessitating a concerted effort to strengthen the empirical research in this area. Currently, only a few empirical studies exist. For instance, Esmailpour and Nikookar (2017) posit that transcendent leadership can inspire employees to achieve the highest level of work quality, thereby enhancing productivity. Their research, involving a questionnaire survey of 189 employees, reveals that transcendent leadership significantly and positively affects employees' well-being and organizational productivity. Tehubijuluw (2014) examines how transcendent leaders contribute to employees' job satisfaction and utilize it as a mediating variable to assist organizations in achieving business objectives and fostering employee development within the organization. The findings indicate that transcendent leadership enhances organizational performance through the intermediary of increased employee job satisfaction. In the realm of education, Lavery (2012) explores the applicability of the transcendent leadership model to Catholic school principals. The study approaches transcendent leadership from a dual perspective of service and spirituality, infusing the notion of service into all actions of transcendent leaders, particularly their unwavering attention to the needs of partners. Given the limited attention and research dedicated to this emerging leadership concept within the education sector, this study aims to investigate the patterns and applications of transcendent leadership within an educational environment, driven by the primary motivation to fill this research gap.

One of the roles of a principal is to foster a positive working atmosphere within the school and establish educational interactive relationships with school personnel, including teachers. The interplay between teacher behavior and principal behavior serves to establish a conducive school climate for educational activities, thereby facilitating effective educational interactions. Conversely, during unfavorable atmospheres within the school, efforts are directed towards improving the motivation of school staff in order to earnestly pursue the achievement of educational objectives (Bredeson & Johansson, 2000). Consequently, individuals assuming leadership roles within the school shape the organizational climate and cultivate members' commitment to the organization, thereby enhancing the comprehensive competitiveness of human resources. This stands as a crucial issue in advancing school administration in the new century.

Transcendent Leadership

Transcendent leadership differs from traditional leadership in that traditional leadership analysis primarily focuses on individuals and dyadic relationships. Traditional leadership theories predominantly regard leadership within the domain of organizational behavior and adopt a micro-level orientation, while transcendent leadership takes a macro-level approach (Waldman, Javidan, & Varella, 2004). Consequently, transcendent leaders perceive the organization as a closely interconnected whole, capable of translating the vision of organizational development initiatives into benefits for all members of the organization (Kishore & Nair, 2013). Transcendent leadership integrates past definitions of relevant leadership concepts, combining experiential evidence with spiritual dimensions, to become a personalized developmental style for leaders (Drucker, 2005; Snook, Nohria, & Khurana, 2012; Doh, 2011; Campbell, 2007). Specifically, it entails the following facets: 1. Leadership as an Ability: Leadership is a capacity to influence and skillfully guide professional team

members towards specific directions, such as making proactive decisions that enable them to feel capable and accomplished. The transcendent leadership concept provides a holistic perspective and motivation, understanding members' talents and styles, allowing everyone to collectively strive towards a common goal and mutually inspire each other to enhance team success. 2. Genuine Leadership Adaptation: Authentic leaders can adapt the transcendent leadership framework in alignment with their own leadership style, thereby encouraging others to leverage their experiences and ideas and contribute to the work or organization. 3. Key Aspects of Transcendent Leadership: Transcendent leadership involves three critical aspects: (1) Cultivating a transcendent mindset that involves listening to members' voices and empowering and enhancing one's own abilities to set standards beyond personal limits, i.e., transcending status quo; (2) Knowing when to lead and guide the team, and when to step back and allow others to take the lead, granting them opportunities for innovative performance and brilliance; (3) Enhancing social relationship skills in transcendent leadership to harmoniously influence other organizational members, elevating collective efforts towards a shared mission.

Within the three dimensions of leadership of self, leadership of others, and leadership of organization, leaders who excel in just one dimension cannot bring about sustained performance benefits to the organization. For instance, even if adept at leading teams and instilling motivation, commitment, and loyalty in members, leaders still need to exhibit organizational leadership. In the current dynamic environment, effective leadership necessitates aligning leadership actions with the organization's overall strategy and possessing robust self-leadership capabilities to navigate challenging trade-offs in complex decision-making. Leaders lacking self-leadership abilities, lacking strong self-awareness, and lacking moral or character advantages would struggle to confront inevitable tough choices (Crossan & Mazutis, 2008). Therefore, the true essence of transcendent leadership lies in fully harnessing leadership effectiveness across all these dimensions. In addition to the aforementioned three leadership dimensions, Boney (2008), when discussing innovative leadership in modern times, also endorses the transcendent leadership concept put forth by Crossan and colleagues. Boney believes that besides leadership of self, leadership of others, and leadership of organization, leadership of community should also be incorporated. This theory suggests that contemporary leaders must transcend the balance between these dimensional demands to achieve long-term sustainable performance. This approach, leveraging findings from the social sciences, aptly addresses the gap in leadership of community.

Method

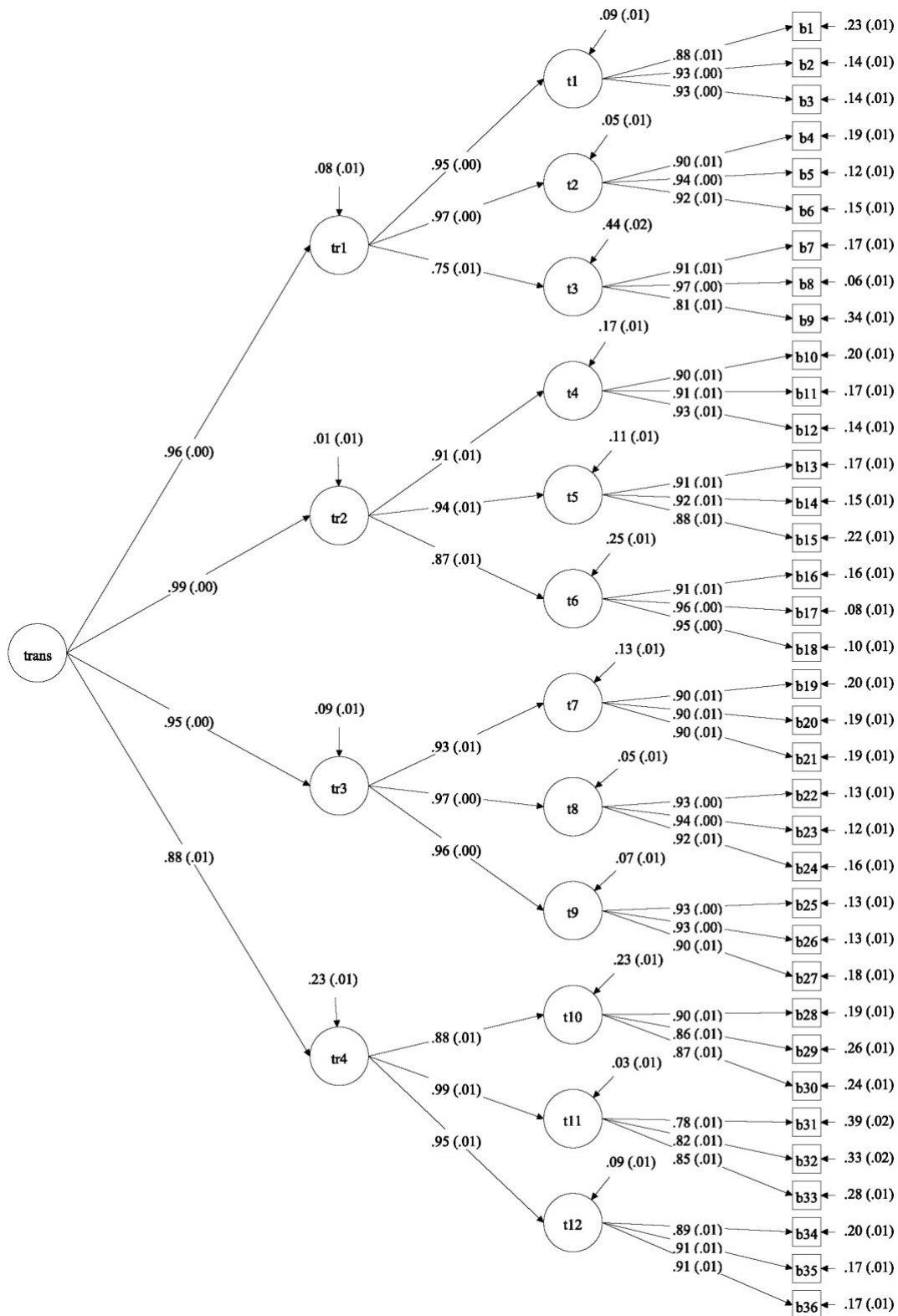
The measurement scale for principal transcendent leadership employed in this study was developed through a synthesis of relevant literature. The scale encompasses four major dimensions and twelve sub-dimensions: "Leadership of Self" (character manifestation, self-awareness and regulation, self-spiritual growth), "Leadership of Others" (service orientation, motivating care, fostering spiritual growth), "Leadership of Organization" (shared school governance, shaping organizational vision and culture, transcending limitations), and "Leadership of Community" (establishing community network relations, managing social responsibility, inclusive development). Following the development of the self-constructed scale, a panel of five experts reviewed and revised it, resulting in a final set of 36 formal questionnaire items, as provided in Appendix 1. Subsequently, a survey was conducted targeting Taiwanese junior high school teachers in 2020, yielding a total of 1,580 valid responses.

Results

The measurement scale for principal transcendent leadership in this study is divided into four major dimensions and twelve sub-dimensions. It employs a 6-point Likert scoring system, where higher scores indicate a higher level of alignment. The α coefficients after questionnaire analysis ranged from .85 to .96, with an overall scale coefficient of .99, indicating good reliability. To confirm the appropriateness of the scale items, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was employed to establish the construct validity of the scale. The CFA results yielded $\chi^2/df = 8.31$, CFI = .94, TLI = .93, RMSEA = .06, SRMR = .05, demonstrating a good fit between the data and the model.

Regarding the latent variable model, principal transcendent leadership falls under a three-order CFA model. To test the normality assumption of the data for each observed indicator, skewness and kurtosis of each observed indicator were examined in this study. The results indicated that all observed indicators met the criteria for skewness values less than 3.0 and kurtosis values less than 10.0 (Kline, 2011), suggesting that the data adhered to the assumption of normal distribution. Subsequently, the intercorrelations among the observed indicators were examined. The results revealed that the correlation coefficients between observed indicators ranged from .20 to .92 and all reached a significant level of .001. This signifies that there exists a certain degree of correlation among the observed indicators, warranting further examination of the model fit.

The CFA was conducted using the maximum likelihood (ML) method, and the standardized parameter estimates are presented in Figure 1. The analysis results indicated that the measurement errors for the observed indicators were all positive values, with no negative error variances observed. Furthermore, all error variances were significant at the .001 level. The standardized parameter estimates for all factor loadings ranged from .66 to .99, predominantly meeting the standard criteria. The standard errors for the estimated parameters ranged from .00 to .02, aligning with the criterion of "no large standard errors" (Byrne, 2001; Hair et al., 2010). The analysis outcomes demonstrated a satisfactory overall fit for the higher-order CFA model.



Note: "trans": principal transcendent leadership, "tr1": leadership of self, "tr2": leadership of others, "tr3": leadership of organization, "tr4": leadership of community, "t1": character manifestation, "t2": self-awareness and regulation, "t3": self-spiritual growth, "t4": service orientation, "t5": motivating care, "t6": fostering spiritual growth, "t7": shared school governance, "t8": shaping organizational vision and culture, "t9": transcending limitations, "t10": establishing community network relations, "t11": managing social responsibility, "t12": inclusive development.

Figure 1: The standardized parameter estimates for the three-order CFA of principal transcendent leadership

The questionnaire survey employed a 6-point scale, categorized into five intervals for analysis: high score ranging from 5.01 to 6.00, upper-middle score ranging from 4.01 to 5.00, middle score ranging from 3.01 to 4.00, lower-middle score ranging from 2.01 to 3.00, and low score ranging from 1.00 to 2.00. The analysis results of the descriptive statistics and difference testing for junior high and elementary school principals' transcendent leadership are presented in Table 1. Overall mean analysis from Table 1 reveals that the average score for principal transcendent leadership ($M = 4.81$) is at the upper-middle level. To ascertain whether there are differences in the current status performances among the dimensions under the research variables, a repeated measured ANOVA was conducted for difference testing. The results indicated a significant mean difference ($F = 150.49$, $p < .001$); post hoc comparisons showed that the highest scores were observed in "motivating care" ($M = 4.97$), "establishing community network relations" ($M = 4.96$), "service orientation" ($M = 4.95$), and "character manifestation" ($M = 4.93$), with "motivating care" significantly higher than "character manifestation." The second-highest group included "self-awareness and regulation" ($M = 4.85$), "shared school governance" ($M = 4.84$), and "shaping organizational vision and culture" ($M = 4.82$), with "self-awareness and regulation" significantly higher than "shaping organizational vision and culture." The third-highest group consisted of "transcending limitations" ($M = 4.79$) and "self-spiritual growth" ($M = 4.77$). The fourth-highest group comprised "inclusive development" ($M = 4.67$) and "managing social responsibility" ($M = 4.66$). The lowest score was attributed to "fostering spiritual growth" ($M = 4.53$).

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics and Difference Testing of Principal Transcendent Leadership

Variable		M	SD
overall average		4.81	0.77
Leadership of Self	1. character manifestation	4.93	0.84
	2. self-awareness and regulation	4.85	0.87
	3. self-spiritual growth	4.77	0.83
Leadership of Others	4. service orientation	4.95	0.90
	5. motivating care	4.97	0.87
	6. fostering spiritual growth	4.53	0.98
Leadership of Organization	7. shared school governance	4.84	0.87
	8. shaping organizational vision and culture	4.82	0.92
	9. transcending limitations	4.79	0.93
Leadership of Community	10. establishing community network relations	4.96	0.83
	11. managing social responsibility	4.66	0.84
	12. inclusive development	4.67	0.89
<i>F</i>	150.49***		
Post Hoc Tests	5,10,4,1>2,7,8>9,3>12,11>6 5>1 2>8		

N=1,580 *** $p < .001$

Conclusion

The junior high school principals are able to exhibit transcendent leadership, with the aspect of setting a personal example in "leadership of self" showing the most pronounced performance. The research findings reveal that the average score for principal transcendent

leadership is at an upper-middle level. This indicates that current junior high school principals are largely capable of demonstrating the expected roles of transcendent leadership. They are able to effectively exhibit self-leadership efficacy through introspective reflection, lead school members through positive leadership activities and charisma, and achieve satisfactory leadership outcomes in interactions with community stakeholders. Moreover, among the four major dimensions of transcendent leadership, principals excel the most in the aspect of "leadership of self," while among the sub-dimensions, "motivating care," "establishing community network relations," "service orientation," and "character manifestation" exhibit the most commendable performances.

This study summarizes the relevant behaviors of junior high school principals in terms of transcendent leadership. In the aspect of leadership of self, they exhibit moral virtues such as compassion, selflessness, loyalty, humility, courtesy, humanitarianism, gratitude, courage, love, and faith. These virtues are transformed into tangible leadership practices to exert leadership effectiveness. Regarding leading others, principals emphasize the establishment of school partnerships, considering the well-being of faculty and staff. Through motivation, empowerment, and humane care, they encourage these individuals to strive for personal growth in order to achieve school development goals.

In terms of organizational leadership, principals foster a collective decision-making mindset and integrate entrepreneurial spirit into the school's vision and culture to inspire the entire faculty. Simultaneously, they possess a forward-looking perspective, adjusting the school's strategies and structures in response to changing external environments. Concerning community leadership, principals involve stakeholders such as parents and community members in the school's developmental environment, establishing strong relationships that collectively enhance educational quality. They also shoulder social responsibilities by guiding community growth and integrating local engagement to achieve sustainable development ideals. They balance school and community management strategies to foster harmonious development between the two.

Appendix

Appendix 1.

The Scale of Transcendent Leadership for Junior High School Principals

Dimension	Sub	Item
Leadership of Self	character manifestation	1. Principals demonstrate strong moral integrity, gaining widespread recognition and emulation from faculty and staff.
		2. Principals translate virtues such as compassion, selflessness, humility, and courage into concrete leadership actions that influence school development.
		3. Principals maintain consistency between words and actions throughout the school's developmental process, earning their reputation as trustworthy leaders.
	self-awareness and regulation	4. Principals engage in self-reflection and self-correction, recognizing and rectifying mistakes in their speech and behavior.
		5. Principals engage in frequent self-reflection and introspection, clarifying the core values of school development to make informed decisions.
		6. Principals possess the ability to adjust their leadership actions in alignment with school development goals.
	self-spiritual growth	7. Principals prioritize their own spiritual well-being.
		8. Principals strive to enhance their own spiritual well-being.
		9. Principals possess a rich spiritual life and are willing to sacrifice personal interests for higher school development goals.
Leadership of Others	service orientation	10. Principals are friendly and considerate towards faculty and staff, offering assistance during times of difficulty.
		11. Principals exhibit humility in serving faculty, staff, and students.
		12. Principals listen to faculty opinions and communicate with respect during interactions.
	motivating care	13. Principals encourage faculty to approach school development with hope and enthusiasm.
		14. Principals inspire faculty's identification with the school, motivating them to contribute beyond personal interests.
		15. Principals take pleasure in motivating and commending exemplary performance among faculty and staff.
	fostering spiritual growth	16. Principals show concern for the spiritual well-being of faculty and staff.
		17. Principals utilize various resources to support the spiritual growth of faculty and staff.
		18. Principals strive to improve the spiritual well-being of faculty and staff, fostering continuous self-improvement.
Leadership of Organization	shared school governance	19. Principals establish diverse communication channels, facilitating the sharing of school development information across the entire school community.
		20. Principals employ various meetings to enable faculty to collectively discuss and decide on the school's developmental direction.
		21. Principals respect the professional opinions of various school organizations and parent associations, incorporating these perspectives into collective school decisions.

	shaping organizational vision and culture	22. Principals shape the school's long-term vision and commit to achieving higher school development goals.
		23. Principals instill a belief in the school's vision among faculty and staff, driving their commitment to realizing school objectives.
		24. Principals create a culture of innovative development, leading the school community to challenge and achieve ambitious goals.
	transcending limitations	25. Principals adjust the school's organizational development strategies and goals based on external environmental changes and needs.
		26. Principals possess foresight, strong ambition, and perseverance, leading the school to continuous breakthroughs in development.
		27. Principals keenly detect potential challenges and crises within the school, respond with appropriate strategies, and guide the school through smoothly.
Leadership of Community	establishing community network relations	28. Principals establish positive relationships with parents and community members, fostering harmonious interaction between the school and its stakeholders.
		29. Principals regularly organize campus events to connect with parents and community members emotionally.
		30. Principals proactively promote school objectives through various means, seeking understanding and endorsement from parents and the community.
	managing social responsibility	31. Principals recognize the close relationship between the school and the community, considering the sentiments of parents and community members in decisions that affect community interests.
		32. Principals organize relevant lifelong learning courses, activities, or workshops to contribute to community development and progress.
		33. Principals share school hardware, software, and resources with the community as needed.
	inclusive development	34. Principals value opinions and suggestions from parents and community members, fostering community consensus and adjusting school objectives as necessary for harmonious development.
		35. Principals integrate community industries or characteristics to develop the school's educational features, enhancing education quality while promoting community development.
		36. Principals understand the developmental needs of the community and encourage parents and community members to participate in school management through various channels, achieving mutual development of the school and the community.

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