A STUDY OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TEACHERS' PERCEPTION TOWARDS THE PRINCIPAL'S TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP STYLE AND TEACHER RETENTION AT BAOJI JINTAI SENIOR MIDDLE SCHOOL, SHAANXI PROVINCE, CHINA

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Abstract: This study mainly aimed to determine the relationship between teachers' perception of the principal's transformational leadership style and teacher retention by investigating the 193 full-time teachers in the academic year of 2019 (September) – 2020 (January) at the target school. The Multifactor Transformational Leadership Questionnaire (MTLQ) and teacher retention questionnaire based on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs was applied to do the survey. Data were analyzed by Mean and Standard Deviation and the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient. This study demonstrated a positive significant relationship between teachers' perception of the principal's transformational leadership style and teacher retention at Baoji Jintai Senior Middle School, Shaanxi Province, China.

Keywords: Teachers' Perception; Principal's Transformational Leadership Style; Teacher Retention

Introduction
Because of the rapid rate of change today, it has become more accessible for people to change their jobs than ever before. Once the job is not satisfactory enough, people would also intentionally change. As for an organization, this challenge raises a thorny question about how to satisfy their employees and retain them. Teachers are the most valuable assets for schools, as they connect to the development of school and students' academic targets. Teachers still frequently change schools in the past two decades (Carson, 2015). According to Johnson, Berg, and Donaldson's report in 2005, approximately 450,000 teachers' voluntary resignation, which meant one-sixth of all teachers in

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America. Teacher retention has been a core issue for schools or educational institutions.

Many factors lead to teachers' leaving, such as higher working pressure, lower salary, fewer promotion opportunities, bad colleague relations, etc. There is a close relationship between principals and teachers' retention (Peronto, 2013). Principal leadership plays quite a distinct role in schools. In order to make the school successful, the school principal should be cognitive of how their leadership styles affect solidarity and eliminate differences in the school environment. The communication between the principal and the faculty and staff enables the school to benefit from adjusting the academic curriculum to improve the teacher's valuable satisfaction and students' achievement.

The transformational leadership style is one of the most popular styles in existing research (Thrash, 2012). Within the education field, transformational leaders inspire teachers to achieve academic goals and support them to develop their capacity. Because the transformational leaders have specific behavior patterns, these behaviors would meet or fail to meet teachers' needs, ultimately influencing teachers' decisions about staying. If the principal's leadership style meets teachers' needs, teachers may feel high job satisfaction and choose to stay at last. While if teachers feel their principal's behaviors give them more pressure or discomfort, or the principal's leadership style makes the school management unreasonable, they may choose to leave.

Baoji Jintai Senior Middle School was established in August 2007 and successfully became a provincial demonstration high school in 2015. From the informal interview with the administrator (2019), the researcher heard that the school principal always emphasized the school vision and mission to encourage teachers at weekly meetings. And he was interested in how to combine innovation and teaching. He believed that teachers should continue to explore teaching approaches to adapt to the changes in society. However, that made some teachers dissatisfied with their job. They thought the principal had given them more work pressure and increased the workload. For instance, some teachers have to be responsible for school management tasks and subjects, but the salary is basic. Therefore, how to make the sustainable academic development of the school and how to appeal to and retain more teachers for the future are worth discussing deeply. Under this circumstance, the researcher tried to study the principal's transformational leadership style and teacher retention.

Research Objectives
Three research objectives were developed:

1. To identify the level of teachers' perception towards the principal's transformational leadership style at Baoji Jintai Senior Middle School, Shaanxi Province, China.
2. To identify the level of teachers' perception towards teacher retention at Baoji Jintai Senior Middle School, Shaanxi Province, China.
3. To determine the relationship between teachers' perception towards the principal's transformational leadership style and teacher retention at Baoji Jintai Senior Middle School, Shaanxi Province, China.

Literature Review

Transformational Leadership Theory

Transformational leadership is a kind of leadership style by Burn (1978). Leaders adopting transformational leadership can help employees contribute to future development, realize their corporate responsibilities to complete tasks, and help employees find their needs at a higher level. Bass (1985) advanced this theory. He improved the original theory of Burns to be accountable and stated how it would affect employees' motivation and performance.

Transformational leadership has the following features. Firstly, transformational leadership meant that leaders tended to consider individual needs and concerns of each specific subordinate's motivation and inspiration (Wang, 2011). Secondly, it exceeded the inducement of exchange, and employees were greatly encouraged to focus on their interests and pay more attention to organizations' goals, tasks, and development prospects. Thirdly, this kind of leadership focused on the goals in the long run, which emphasized the development vision, encouraged employees to play the innovative ability, and changed and adjusted the entire organizational system to create a good atmosphere for the realization of the expected goals (Gumusluoglu & Ilsev, 2009). In addition, for leaders, the growth of employees was not their only responsibility; they also needed to improve their level constantly. At last, leaders with this leadership style could strongly influence the whole organization, and employees could find fun and value in working under their leadership.

People who got a higher reputation in transformational leadership were given higher evaluations like honesty, responsibility, love, etc. (Maclin, 2018). Moreover, transformative school principals were found to have the following characteristics: professional in-school staff development; willingness to provide support with innovative ideas to hone their teachers' talents and abilities; training teachers to be responsible for their actions; emphasizing the importance of teamwork; mastering inspiring; far-sighted; becoming a good

role in the school and focusing on "doing the right thing for the right reasons" (Hauserman & Stick, 2013).

Bass and Avolio (1993) stated that transformational leaders were characterized by four different components, including Idealized Influence (II), Inspirational Motivation (IM), Individualized Consideration (IC), and Intellectual Stimulation (IS).

Idealized Influence (II) meant leadership could inspire followers and build trust between leaders and followers. And followers in this situation deeply would respect their leader as they were regarded as an ideal role models to provide support and guidance (Chu & Lai, 2011). They would believe their leaders were able to overcome any obstacles at work. It was known that Idealized Influence Attributes (IIa) and Idealized Influence Behavior (IIb) were two parts of this dimension. Idealized influence attributes mainly refer to the perception of subordinates towards their leaders. And idealized influence behavior mostly referred to subordinates' observation of their leaders, including leaders talking about their most critical behavioral values and beliefs, their understanding of goals, and whether leaders would consider the moral and ethical consequences of decision-making.

Inspirational Motivation (IM) represents clear and attractive motivation of leaders to employees (Judge & Bono, 2000). Leaders encouraged subordinates to set goals consistent with the organization by utilizing past personal achievements, communication skills, and the power of role models.

Individualized Consideration (IC) mainly emphasizes employees' work and personal development (Bass, 1985). Transformational leaders realized that not everyone had equal abilities, experience, and needs simultaneously (Bass & Avolio, 1993). In terms of Li and Shi (2008), considering the differences between Chinese and Western cultures, compared to Western countries' emphasis on privacy, in China, leaders tended to care more about employee's families, and life was allowed and hoped for, which could strengthen each other's relationship and trust.

Intellectual Stimulation (IS) refers to how leaders can motivate followers to think and solve problems from multiple perspectives and aspects, also known as critical thinking and creativity. That was precisely consistent with 21st-century skills (critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication). Intellectual stimulation requires leaders to think in various ways and needs them to inspire their employees to analyze and solve problems in fresh ways (Hughes, 2014).

Teacher Retention based on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory
Abraham Maslow 1943 stated his hierarchy of needs theory as a theory of human motivation, which establishes five needs stages in the shape of a pyramid. If the school principal could meet teachers' initial needs firstly, then the school can retain teachers, and at the same time, teachers perhaps tend to work for a more extended period. That is to say; this theory is used to measure the teachers' perceptions of their needs whether to are satisfied. If the school could fulfill teachers' needs, they would stay at work. While if teachers are dissatisfied with their needs, they will choose to resign. Therefore, it is significant for the school principal should be cognizant of which needs are vital for teachers to reduce their turnover intention and how to satisfy them. Maslow explained these five needs stages for human beings from low-level to high-level: physiological needs, safety needs, love, and belonging needs, esteem needs, and self-actualization needs.

Physiological needs were the lowest and most basic demands of human beings, including food, water, nutrition, rest, sex, and other contents. If teachers could not eat or drink and had no time to rest, they would leave this school without hesitation.

Safety needs mainly refer to social order and security, peace, physique, law, medical treatment, education, and other aspects. People generally tend to have tenure and secure jobs desire enough saving accounts and various insurances (Benson & Dundis, 2003). Furthermore, in modern society, in addition to ensuring the stability of the country, money security and financial stability have also become the greatest guarantee for every person confronting daily life and any crisis like COVID-19 in 2020.

Love and belonging needs suggest that organizations increase employee job satisfaction by satisfying interpersonal needs (Hancox, Quested, Ntoumanis & Duda, 2017). Organizations provide employees with opportunities for cooperation and communication to enhance the connection between followers and develop their relations and friendship, positively affecting employees' job satisfaction and maintaining the long-term stability and cohesion of the organization (Hancox et al., 2017).
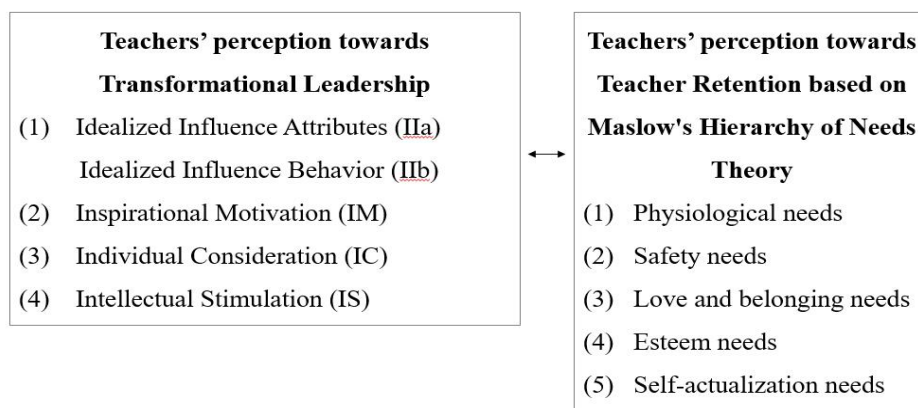
Maslow divided esteem needs into two categories: one was internal respect called personal self-esteem, which mainly showed that people wanted to be able to achieve their goals and achieve their achievements in all aspects; and the other one was external respect, which included the desire for attention, reputation, status, rights, recognition, and respect from other people besides themselves. A respectful physical workplace was of great positive significance

to both leaders and employees. Employees who felt respected would be more satisfied with their work and express gratitude and loyalty to their organization.

Self-actualization needs were defined as what a person should be and wants to be, concentrating on personal internal growth. Along with satisfying other needs, people were internally driven to improve their creativity, intelligence, potential and achieve their development (Couture, Desrosiers & Leclerc, 2007).

Conceptual Framework

This study aimed to determine the relationship between the teachers' perceptions of the principal's transformational leadership style and teacher retention. This study's teachers' perceptions of the principal's transformational leadership style were based on four components of transformational leadership theory (Bass, 1985). Five components measured teacher retention in Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory (Maslow, 1943). Figure 1 is the illustration of the conceptual framework of this study.

Teachers' perception towards Transformational Leadership		Teachers' perception towards Teacher Retention based on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory
(1) Idealized Influence Attributes (IIa) Idealized Influence Behavior (IIb)	↔	(1) Physiological needs
(2) Inspirational Motivation (IM)		(2) Safety needs
(3) Individual Consideration (IC)		(3) Love and belonging needs
(4) Intellectual Stimulation (IS)		(4) Esteem needs
		(5) Self-actualization needs

Figure 1: *Conceptual Framework of This Study*

Research Methodology

To collect data to examine the potential relationship between the principal's transformational leadership style and teacher retention, the population of this study consisted of 193 full-time teachers from the academic year of 2019 (September) – to 2020 (January) at a selected school. This study included all of them as participants.

The questionnaire of this study consisted of two parts. The first part used the Multifactor Transformational Leadership Questionnaire (MTLQ), which was previously adapted from the standard instrument, the Multifactor Leadership

Questionnaire (MLQ), to assess leadership behaviors by Avolio and Bass. The questionnaire had a total of 20 items divided into five dimensions which were idealized influence attributes (IIa), idealized influence behaviors (IIb), inspirational motivation (IM), individualized consideration (IC), and intellectual stimulation (IS). A 5-point Likert-type scale was adopted, with 1 to 5 representing the agreement index from never to always. The Cronbach's Alpha value of this questionnaire about the principal's transformational leadership style was .958 in this study.

The second part was a teacher retention questionnaire based on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs with 26 items into five dimensions: physiological needs, safety needs, love, and belonging needs, esteem needs, and self-actualization needs. It also used a 5-point Likert-type scale with 1 to 5 representing the agreement level from very dissatisfied to very satisfied. The Cronbach's Alpha value of this questionnaire about teacher retention was .970 in this study.

Findings
Research Objective One
Table 1 shows the mean and standard deviation of teachers' perception of the principal's transformational leadership style. The overall mean was at the "High level" (3.65 on a scale of 3.51-4.50), and the standard deviation was 1.20. Inspirational motivation had the highest mean score of 3.95 with a standard deviation of 1.13, and individualized consideration had the lowest score of 2.76 with a standard deviation of .70. In addition, except individualized consideration was at the moderate level, the other four dimensions were all at the high level.

Table 1. *Mean and Standard Deviation of the Level of Teachers' Perception towards the Principal's Transformational Leadership Style (N=193)*

The Principal's Transformational Leadership Style	Mean	S.D.	Interpretation
Idealized Influence Attributes	3.79	1.18	High
Idealized Influence Behavior	3.89	1.09	High
Inspirational Motivation	3.95	1.13	High
Individualized Consideration	2.76	.70	Moderate
Intellectual Stimulation	3.66	1.15	High
Overall	3.65	1.20	High

Research Objective Two
Table 2 shows the whole mean and standard deviation of teachers' perception of teacher retention based on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory. The overall mean was at the "High level" (3.55 in the range of 3.51-4.50), and the standard deviation was 1.04. Except for safety needs and love and belonging needs, the other three dimensions were at the same level as a whole. Self-actualization needs had the highest mean score of 3.83, with a standard deviation of .93. Safety needs had the lowest mean score, 3.21 in the range of 2.51-3.50 with the interpretation of "Moderate level," and the standard deviation was 1.00.

Table 2. *Mean and Standard Deviation of the Level of Teachers' Perception towards Teacher Retention based on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory (N=193)*

Teacher Retention based on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs	Mean	S.D.	Interpretation
Physiological needs	3.55	1.14	High
Safety needs	3.21	1.00	Moderate
Love and belonging needs	3.40	1.08	Moderate
Esteem needs	3.71	.93	High
Self-actualization needs	3.83	.93	High
Overall	3.55	1.04	High

Research Objective Three
Table 3 shows the relationship between teachers' perception of the principal's transformational leadership style and teacher retention. The result demonstrated that r was .441, and Sig. (2-tailed) was .000, which was less than .05. That is to say, at the level of .05 (even .01), the relationship between teachers' perception of the principal's transformational leadership style and teacher retention was positive. Because r was .441 in the range of .300-.500, it meant that there was a weak positive relationship between the two variables. To sum up, the research hypothesis was accepted, which meant there was a significant relationship between teachers' perception of the principal's transformational leadership style and teacher retention at Baoji Jintai Senior Middle School, Shaanxi Province, China.

Table 3. *Pearson Product-moment Coefficient of Correlation between the Overall Teachers' Perception towards the Principal's Transformational Leadership Style and Teacher Retention*

Pearson Correlation test		Teacher retention	Conclusion
Principal's transformational leadership style	Pearson Correlation	.441**	There is a significant relationship.
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 4 shows the relationship between teachers' perception of the five dimensions of the principal's transformational leadership style and teacher retention. The result illustrated the sig in terms of Pearson Product-moment Coefficient of Correlation. (2-tailed) idealized influence attributes, idealized influence behavior, inspirational motivation, individualized consideration, intellectual stimulation, and teacher retention were all .000, which were all less than .05 (even .01), and r were separately .434, .416, .407, .323, and .423. There was a significant relationship between teachers' perception of each dimension of the principal's transformational leadership style and teacher retention at the selected school. Furthermore, idealized influence attributes were the most significantly related (.434), and individualized consideration was the least (.323).

Table 4. *Pearson Product-moment Coefficient of Correlation between Teachers' Perception towards Each Dimension of the Principal's Transformational Leadership Style and Teacher Retention*

Principal's transformational leadership style		Teacher retention
Idealized influence attributes	Pearson Correlation	.434**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
Idealized influence behavior	Pearson Correlation	.416**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
Inspirational motivation	Pearson Correlation	.407**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
Individualized consideration	Pearson Correlation	.323**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
Intellectual stimulation	Pearson Correlation	.423**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Conclusion and Discussion

Teachers' Perception towards the Principal's Transformational Leadership Style

The total mean of teachers' perception of the principal's transformational leadership style at the target school was 3.65 on a scale of 3.51-4.50 as the high level, which means teachers put a high premium on the principal's management. The principal support was the main indicator determining teachers' job satisfaction and could predict whether they would continue to work (Williams 2018).

In this study, the principal's transformational leadership style consisted of five elements identified by Bass (1985). The data showed that the highest score was inspirational motivation and the lowest one was individualized consideration. Especially, only individualized consideration was at a moderate level. The result was similar to previous studies (Duque, 2015). That is, an inspirational principal could connect with teachers emotionally to stimulate individual motivation to push for an extraordinary performance level. Linn and Vinitwatanakhun (2018) believed that transformational leaders' behavior could directly affect employees' cognition of their roles, tasks, and targets.

On the contrary, individualized consideration got a lower mean value simultaneously in some studies. Ideally, leaders who establish personalized considerations need to learn and listen to each employee's specific needs and coach them to promote themselves. While nevertheless, in fact, the principal and school cannot take much time to support teachers' individual development through abundant training courses.

Furthermore, this study's question with the highest mean value score about teachers' perception of the principal's transformational leadership style was about the importance of the collective mission in the idealized influence behavior section. That was consistent with China's collectivist culture. A collectivist organization preferred a tight framework in which individuals could expect members to have deep trust in exchange for undoubted loyalty (Yamagishi & Watabe, 1998). Therefore, in China, many leaders would emphasize the importance of collectivism.

Teachers' Perception towards Teacher Retention

Teachers' perception towards teacher retention based on Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory at the selected school was also high, with a total mean value of 3.55. The highest score was about self-actualization needs, and the lowest was about safety needs.

Teachers took neutral views on the salary, health insurance, sick day by day and worried about losing their job at the selected school within safety needs. Previous studies firmly declared that low income was closely related to the high turnover rate. On the one hand, although money was not the critical reason for teachers' choice to work, this was the main factor in their decision to stay or leave (Goodlad, 1984). On the other hand, if the teacher accepted this job, it indicated that they had accepted the school's salary level, so even low income was likely not to be a factor in future turnover (Ingersoll, 2001). It could also be said that the reasons for teachers' resignation were comprehensive, not just because of low salary.

Self-actualization needs revealed the highest mean value within these five hierarchical needs. That means teachers at this school had a strong cognition that they had a strong sense of responsibility towards their students, and the academic development support was encouraged by school administrators. As teachers, their academic development was the most concern in a specific field. Whether schools could meet the professional development of teachers determined teachers' perception of the school and their own decisions.

One interesting finding in this study was teachers' perception towards teacher retention based on Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory was not arranged in hierarchical order. Ranking from the highest to the lowest, teachers were satisfied with self-actualization needs and esteem needs, neutralized love and belonging needs and safety needs; and satisfied with the foundational physiological needs. This finding was similar to the study of Zhao and Ye (2016). That is to say, teachers at the selected school actually could meet the higher needs despite not being satisfied with lower needs, which did not follow what Maslow stated that people must fulfill lower needs before pursuing higher levels (Wahba & Bridwell, 1976). The reason was complicated. First, the theory assumed all employees were alike and all situations were alike. While in fact, people and people and everyone's conditions were not the same, which led to people's needs and motivations being distinct (Graham & Messner, 1998). As to teachers working at the selected school, safety needs such as salary and health insurance were factors that could not be ignored when they would make a decision. Secondly, Maslow did not consider more cultural issues like individualism and collectivism (Bouzenita & Boulanouar, 2016).

The Relationship between the Principal's Leadership Style and Teacher Retention
The statistical results were consistent with what the researcher expected; that is to say, there was a positive relationship between the two variables.

According to Bazile's research (2019), the principal's support could make novice teachers feel more accepted and respected, reducing friction between teachers and principals about teacher retention and increasing mutual understanding. Weberg (2009) proposed that transformative leaders could improve employee satisfaction by meeting their needs and inspiring them to increase retention rates.

Brown (2019) believed that to retain the employees to become long-run workers, the organizations like schools needed to take some effective strategies to retain teachers for more contributions. Finding approaches to meet teachers' needs, affirming their contributions to the school, providing them professional development like training, seminars, etc., and cognizing the importance of leaders' behavior and attitudes would make teachers more satisfied and loyal and enhance internal cohesion among them.

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