Transformational Leadership Of Administrators And Its Impact On The Effectiveness Of Schools In The Wang Chao District Tak Province Thailand

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Abstract
This study investigates the impact of transformational leadership by school administrators on school effectiveness in Wang Chao District, Tak Province, Thailand. In semi-rural Thai schools, challenges related to digital transformation, policy decentralization, and diverse learner needs have made leadership effectiveness crucial for organizational performance and sustainability. A quantitative research design was used, collecting data from 343 administrators, teachers, and educational personnel across 13 public schools under the Office of the Tak Primary Educational Service Area 1. Standardized questionnaires measured transformational leadership behaviors idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration and school effectiveness, including academic achievement, organizational development, problem-solving capacity, and teacher engagement. Descriptive statistics, Pearson product–moment correlation, and regression analysis were applied. Results show that administrators demonstrated high levels of transformational leadership across all dimensions. Transformational leadership was strongly and positively correlated with overall school effectiveness (r = .857, p < .05). Among the leadership dimensions, individualized consideration was the most significant predictor of school effectiveness, surpassing idealized influence, inspirational motivation, and intellectual stimulation. This finding emphasizes the importance of empathy, fairness, recognition, and personalized support in improving institutional performance. The prominence of individualized consideration reflects the Thai sociocultural context, where collectivism, social harmony, and mutual respect shape perceptions of effective leadership. This study provides culturally grounded empirical evidence on transformational leadership in rural Thai schools. The findings suggest that leadership development and policy initiatives should prioritize relational and human-centered competencies alongside strategic and instructional leadership to enhance school effectiveness in similar educational contexts.
Keywords: Transformational Leadership, School Effectiveness, Educational Administration, Leadership Development, Thailand

INTRODUCTION

Education in the twenty-first century faces profound shifts driven by information and communication technologies (ICT), globalization, and demands for equitable, high-quality learning. Schools now function in dynamic networks requiring adaptability, innovation, and ongoing learning. Leaders must foster critical thinking, digital skills, and resilience to equip students for an unpredictable world. Beyond resources and policies, effective leadership steers schools through change. School leadership profoundly influences effectiveness, shaping teaching quality, climate, and student results. Administrators today act as visionaries

who build commitment, professional growth, and collaborative cultures. Strong leadership boosts teacher motivation and innovation, especially amid reforms (Day et al., 2016). In turbulent times, it cultivates trust and empowerment for resilience. Transformational leadership stands out in research for boosting school performance. Bass and Riggio (2006) define it through idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. Leaders inspire visions, model integrity, spark creativity, and support followers personally. In schools, this empowers teachers, drives innovation, and aligns efforts with missions.

Studies from 2020-2025 affirm its benefits across contexts. Transformational leaders enhance teacher motivation, commitment, instruction, and achievement (Lihua, 2022). They build collaborative cultures and adaptive responses to change. During COVID-19, they ensured continuity, tech integration, and morale (Wilson Heenan et al., 2023). These effects hold in resource-limited settings. Yet, transformational leadership varies by context. Developed nations offer training and support; developing areas face tech gaps, limited development, and bureaucracy. Thailand's district schools exemplify this, with uneven resources and competencies hindering leadership (Hallinger, 2011). Localized studies are essential. Wang Chao District, Tak Province Thailand's lower north serves as a key case. Its 13 primary schools under Tak Primary Educational Service Area 1 blend urban and rural needs. Despite national pushes for instruction, digital tools, and inclusion, challenges persist: student scores lag national averages by 15-20% in math and Thai language (Office of the Basic Education Commission [OBEC], 2024); teacher assignments mismatch expertise in 40% of cases; monitoring lacks uniformity. Administrators struggle with planning, motivation, and data use (Yutim & Khawnman, 2024). Post-2023 floods exacerbated infrastructure issues, testing leadership resilience. This study targets these realities. Objectives are threefold. First, assess administrators' transformational behaviors vision-sharing, learning stimulation, teacher support in Wang Chao's 13 schools via surveys and interviews (n=52 administrators, 260 teachers). Second, measure effectiveness across instruction (e.g., lesson observation scores), outcomes (e.g., O-NET results), engagement (e.g., turnover rates <10%), climate (e.g., trust indices), and resources (e.g., ICT utilization >70%). Third, analyze leadership-effectiveness links, exploring mediators like digital readiness and culture amid constraints.

Theoretically, it advances Bass and Riggio's (2006) model with Thai district evidence, addressing gaps in non-Western contexts (Hallinger, 2011). Practically, it pinpoints levers e.g., training boosting individualized consideration by 25% in pilots to align with Thailand's 2025-2026 Education Policy, prioritizing digital competence and inclusive management (Thai Government Gazette, 2024). Findings could cut performance gaps by informing OBEC interventions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Transformational leadership has emerged as one of the most influential frameworks for understanding effective school administration in the twenty-first century. As education systems are increasingly confronted with interconnected pressures stemming from globalization, digital transformation, demographic shifts, and rising societal expectations, school leaders are expected to move beyond routine managerial tasks toward practices that inspire shared vision, professional commitment, and sustainable improvement. Transformational leadership, often defined as a leader's capacity to motivate, intellectually stimulate, and support followers to achieve outcomes beyond conventional expectations, has therefore been widely employed to examine educational systems undergoing rapid reform (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Crocco, Rose Hoefling, Cseh, & Field, 2023). Crucially, this

model conceptualizes leadership not merely as an administrative function, but as a moral and relational process that seeks to align institutional objectives with the development of human potential.

Dimensions of transformational leadership. The seminal work of Bass and Riggio (2006) identifies four core dimensions of transformational leadership idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. Together, these dimensions provide a structured lens for analysing leadership practices in schools and have been empirically examined across a variety of cultural settings, including Asian educational systems. Idealized influence refers to leaders' capacity to act as ethical role models who gain trust and respect through integrity, fairness, and consistency. In school settings, administrators who demonstrate moral leadership and transparency in their decisions tend to foster psychological safety and institutional legitimacy. Research from Asian contexts suggests that ethical conduct and perceived leader integrity significantly shape teachers' organizational commitment and willingness to engage in reform, especially in high power distance societies where moral authority underpins leadership acceptance (Brown, M. E., & Treviño, L. K. 2006; Lihua, 2022). Inspirational motivation highlights the importance of articulating a clear and compelling vision that cultivates collective purpose and optimism. Evidence from Southeast Asian schools indicates that leaders who present change as meaningful, socially beneficial, and achievable are better able to sustain teacher motivation during periods of uncertainty. During the COVID-19 pandemic, for instance, principals who communicated hope, clarity, and a sense of direction were more successful in maintaining collaboration and morale despite severe instructional disruption (Wilson Heenan et al., 2023). In such cases, inspirational motivation operates both as a strategic tool for alignment and as an emotional resource that helps staff reframe challenges as opportunities for growth.

Intellectual stimulation involves encouraging critical inquiry, innovation, and reflective practice in teaching and school management. This dimension is central to promoting pedagogical improvement and the effective use of digital technologies, yet its enactment in Asian contexts demands cultural sensitivity. Studies suggest that in collectivist and high-power distance cultures, open questioning of authority may be interpreted as disrespectful unless leaders intentionally cultivate psychologically safe environments and explicitly frame critique as part of shared learning (Sangthong, T., & Wangthanomsak, M. 2023). In Thailand, intellectual stimulation appears most effective when introduced as collaborative inquiry and collective problem-solving rather than as individual critique directed at specific teachers (Chuenpoungthum & Phutiariyawat, 2024). Individualized consideration draws attention to leaders' efforts to support individual teachers through mentoring, professional development, and emotional care. Research across the Asia-Pacific region consistently finds that leaders who exhibit relational attentiveness and genuine concern for staff well-being help to strengthen teacher retention, job satisfaction, and the overall school climate (Crocco et al., 2023). In collectivist societies, individualized consideration often manifests through subtle acts of support and relational harmony rather than highly visible differentiation, pointing to the importance of reading and responding to cultural expectations around hierarchy, seniority, and group cohesion.

Transformational leadership and school effectiveness. School effectiveness is now widely understood as a multidimensional construct that encompasses student achievement, instructional quality, organizational adaptability, teacher collaboration, and the capacity for continuous improvement. Effective schools tend to display coherent leadership, positive learning environments, and robust professional learning cultures (Carmo, 2025). A substantial body of research links transformational leadership to these outcomes through its influence on teacher motivation, organizational trust, and willingness to innovate in

classroom practice. Studies in East and Southeast Asia show that when school leaders invest in teacher development, promote a shared vision, and encourage collaboration, teachers demonstrate higher engagement and instructional commitment, which in turn mediates improvements in student learning (Lihua, 2022; Wilson Heenan et al., 2023). Transformational leadership also contributes to organizational learning by embedding reflective practice and adaptability within school culture, a capability that is increasingly essential in rapidly changing educational environments (Sun et al., 2024).

Cultural influences in the Thai context. The application of transformational leadership in Thailand must be interpreted in light of cultural values and social norms that shape patterns of interaction in schools. Thai society is commonly described as strongly collectivist, relatively high in power distance, and guided by the culturally embedded notion of kreng jai, which emphasizes deference, interpersonal sensitivity, and avoidance of open confrontation (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010). Collectivism can strengthen transformational leadership when principals frame goals in terms of shared benefit and collective success, thereby reinforcing a sense of joint responsibility for school outcomes. At the same time, high power distance may limit teachers' readiness to question decisions or engage in frank dialogue with administrators, which can constrain the depth of intellectual stimulation and shared decision-making. Kreng jai further complicates leadership dynamics: while it supports harmony and cooperative relationships, it can suppress honest feedback and innovative ideas if teachers fear causing discomfort or appearing disrespectful. Empirical work in Thai districts suggests that transformational leadership is most effective when leaders combine clear authority with humility, moral consistency, and gradual change processes that respect existing relationships and local expectations (Yutim & Khawnman, 2024).

Corruption, religion, and ethical leadership. Educational leadership in developing and middle-income contexts must also grapple with issues of corruption and ethical governance. Administrative favoritism, opaque budgeting, and informal practices can erode trust and weaken school effectiveness. While transformational leadership emphasizes idealized influence and moral example, scholars caution that charismatic authority can sometimes obscure unethical behavior if not balanced by formal accountability and transparent procedures (Brown, M. E., & Treviño, L. K., 2006). Religion, particularly Buddhism, plays a prominent role in shaping leadership expectations in Thai schools. Buddhist principles such as compassion, moderation, and moral discipline underpin community expectations that administrators serve as ethical role models for students and staff. These values can deepen trust and cohesion, but they may also reduce willingness to scrutinize leaders' decisions, reinforcing the need to integrate ethical leadership principles with clear governance mechanisms and external oversight.

Limitations of transformational leadership and alternative frameworks. Despite its contributions, transformational leadership is not a universally effective model. Critics argue that it is inherently leader-centric and risks reinforcing dependence on charismatic individuals rather than cultivating distributed leadership and collective professional agency. In hierarchical cultures, transformational leadership may unintentionally limit professional autonomy and critical engagement if teachers become overly reliant on the principal's vision and direction. Furthermore, the persuasive and emotionally charged nature of inspirational motivation carries the risk of manipulation when leaders place personal or political interests above institutional welfare (Tourish, 2013). Given these limitations, alternative leadership frameworks merit careful consideration in the Thai context. Servant leadership, which emphasizes humility, service to followers, and attention to their well-being, aligns closely with Buddhist and collectivist values and may counterbalance leader-centric tendencies (Greenleaf, 1977). Ethical leadership focuses on transparency, fairness, and accountability,

offering explicit safeguards against corruption, though it may provide less guidance on how to mobilize inspirational vision and deep cultural change (Brown, M. E., & Treviño, L. K., 2006). Paternalistic leadership, common in many Asian societies, combines strong authority with benevolence and moral guidance; while it can foster loyalty and a sense of protection, it may also inhibit innovation and critical thinking if applied rigidly or without opportunities for teacher voice (Farh & Cheng, 2000).

Accordingly, this study adopts transformational leadership as its primary framework while recognizing the need for cultural adaptation and theoretical integration. By situating transformational leadership within the socio-cultural realities of Thai schools particularly in the Wang Chao District this research aims to provide a contextually grounded understanding of how administrators influence school effectiveness and to inform leadership development that is both conceptually robust and culturally congruent.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a predominantly quantitative research design, complemented by selected qualitative elements, to examine the relationship between transformational leadership practices of school administrators and school effectiveness in the Wang Chao District, Tak Province. The methodological framework was structured to support systematic data collection, reduce potential response bias, and enable robust statistical analysis while remaining sensitive to the organizational and cultural realities of Thai primary education.

Population and sample. The population consisted of 350 educational personnel school administrators, teachers, and support staff from 13 public primary schools under the Office of the Tak Primary Educational Service Area 1 during the 2024 academic year (Yutim & Khawnman, 2024). A final sample of 343 respondents was obtained through a multi-stage sampling process. In the first stage, quota sampling was used to secure proportional representation from each school, ensuring that both small and large schools were adequately reflected. In the second stage, purposive sampling was applied to select participants who were directly involved in administrative leadership or core instructional activities, thereby increasing the relevance and depth of responses regarding leadership practices and institutional effectiveness.

Research instruments. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire divided into three sections. Section 1 captured demographic information, including gender, age, years of professional experience, position, and educational background. Section 2 measured transformational leadership behaviors using a five-point Likert scale aligned with the four dimensions proposed by Bass and Riggio (2006), idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. Section 3 assessed school effectiveness across several dimensions' student learning outcomes, teacher engagement, instructional quality, organizational climate, and resource utilization reflecting contemporary models of effective schooling (Carmo, 2025). The combination of these sections allowed the study to link specific leadership behaviors to multiple indicators of school effectiveness in the Wang Chao context.

Instrument development and validation. The questionnaire was developed through a multi-step process to ensure validity and reliability. First, an extensive review of national and international literature on transformational leadership and school effectiveness was conducted to identify key constructs and indicators. Second, items were drafted to reflect these constructs in language appropriate for Thai primary school personnel. Third, three experts in educational leadership reviewed the instrument for content validity, clarity, and cultural appropriateness. Their feedback informed revisions to item wording and structure.

Fourth, Item Objective Congruence (IOC) was calculated, and all retained items met or exceeded the acceptable threshold of 0.50, indicating satisfactory alignment between items and intended constructs. Fifth, the revised instrument was pilot-tested with 30 educational personnel from schools outside the study sample to identify any remaining ambiguities. Finally, reliability analysis using Cronbach's alpha produced a coefficient of 0.875 for the full instrument, exceeding the commonly recommended standard of 0.70 and demonstrating strong internal consistency (Cronbach, 1970).

Data collection and bias mitigation. Data collection was conducted during regular school operations, with support from school administrators who facilitated access while not being present during questionnaire completion. To mitigate social desirability bias frequently observed in leadership and organizational research several safeguards were put in place. Participation was strictly voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all respondents. Questionnaires contained no identifying information, and participants were assured that data would be reported in aggregate form only. Neutral and behavior-focused wording was used throughout the instrument to avoid signaling "desirable" responses. These procedures align with recommended practices for minimizing common method and response biases in survey research (Podsakoff et al., 2003).

Statistical and analytical procedures. Quantitative data were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations were used to summarize respondent characteristics and overall levels of perceived transformational leadership and school effectiveness. Interpretive criteria followed established guidelines for educational research, including conventional cut-offs for mean score interpretation (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970). Pearson product–moment correlation coefficients were computed to examine the strength and direction of relationships between transformational leadership dimensions and indicators of school effectiveness. Simple and multiple regression analyses were then employed to assess the predictive power of overall transformational leadership and its sub-dimensions, while exploratory mediation analyses examined whether teacher motivation and school climate functioned as intervening variables. These analytical procedures were selected to align with the study's objective of identifying both direct and indirect pathways through which leadership practices may influence school outcomes in Wang Chao District.

Qualitative supplement and limitations. To complement the survey findings, semi-structured interviews were conducted with a purposive subsample of administrators and teachers representing different school sizes and community contexts. Interview questions focused on perceptions of leadership, organizational culture, and specific challenges associated with implementing transformational practices in semi-rural schools. These qualitative insights were used to interpret statistical patterns and to illustrate how leadership behaviors were experienced in everyday school life.

While the study's design and procedures support strong internal validity within the selected district, external validity is limited to semi-rural Thai contexts with similar administrative structures and cultural characteristics. Future research could strengthen generalizability by employing longitudinal designs, larger multi-provincial samples, and comparative analyses across regions or school levels.

RESEARCH RESULTS

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents. The demographic analysis revealed a predominantly female sample (n = 202, 58.90%), with male respondents representing 41.10%. The age distribution was concentrated in the 31-40-year range (n = 159, 46.40%), suggesting that the majority comprised mid-career professionals. In terms of educational

attainment, most participants held a master's degree (n = 215, 62.70%), indicating a highly qualified professional group. Regarding occupational roles, teachers made up the largest proportion (n = 276, 80.50%), followed by school administrators and educational support staff. When considering length of service, half of the respondents (n = 172, 50.10%) reported six to ten years of professional experience, reflecting the presence of seasoned educators in the sample.

Transformational Leadership of School Administrators. Among school administrators under the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration, the overall level of transformational leadership was rated as high ($\bar{x}$ = 4.17, SD = 0.46). All four core dimensions idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration showed consistently strong mean scores, highlighting a notable presence of transformational leadership behaviors across the administrative cohort. (1) Idealized Influence: Achieved the highest mean ($\bar{x}$ = 4.23, SD = 0.47), with item analysis indicating notable strengths in enhancing colleagues' pride and confidence ($\bar{x}$ = 4.27, SD = 0.71) and earning respect from subordinates ($\bar{x}$ = 4.25, SD = 0.70). Commitment and self-sacrifice for the organization, while still robust, recorded a slightly lower mean ($\bar{x}$ = 4.19, SD = 0.68). (2) Inspirational Motivation: Maintained a high level ($\bar{x}$ = 4.13, SD = 0.52), with top performance in encouraging accountability ($\bar{x}$ = 4.23, SD = 0.70) and promoting teamwork ($\bar{x}$ = 4.15, SD = 0.75); the lowest aspect concerned consistency in morale-boosting systems ($\bar{x}$ = 4.01, SD = 0.69). (3) Intellectual Stimulation: Also rated high ($\bar{x}$ = 4.14, SD = 0.55), driven by promoting collaborative problem solving ($\bar{x}$ = 4.20, SD = 0.75) and openness to creative expression ($\bar{x}$ = 4.15, SD = 0.73). Systematic problem-solving received relatively lower, yet still strong, ratings ($\bar{x}$ = 4.10, SD = 0.70). 4) Individualized Consideration: Scored highly overall ($\bar{x}$ = 4.16, SD = 0.49), especially in treating staff fairly ($\bar{x}$ = 4.30, SD = 0.68) and providing recognition ($\bar{x}$ = 4.29, SD = 0.68). Mentoring for personal development, while positive, was slightly less emphasized ($\bar{x}$ = 3.98, SD = 0.68).

School Effectiveness. School effectiveness was also evaluated as high ($\bar{x}$ = 3.66, SD = 0.53) across all assessed dimensions, (1) Student Academic Achievement: ($\bar{x}$ = 3.65, SD = 0.59), with top indicators in adaptability and pursuit of higher education. (2) Development of Positive Student Attitudes: ($\bar{x}$ = 3.62, SD = 0.60), with students' societal role modeling and enthusiasm for learning rated most favorably. (3) Organizational Advancement and Progress: ($\bar{x}$ = 3.68, SD = 0.62), underscored by provision of learning resources and encouragement of community involvement. (4) Problem-Solving Capacity: ($\bar{x}$ = 3.69, SD = 0.60), highlighted by effective monitoring systems and sustained support for at-risk students.

Relationship Between Transformational Leadership and School Effectiveness. Pearson's correlation analysis revealed a strong, statistically significant positive association between transformational leadership and overall school effectiveness (r = .857, p < .05). Each individual dimension of transformational leadership correlated positively and significantly with school effectiveness, Idealized Influence: r = .684, Inspirational Motivation: r = .507, Intellectual Stimulation: r = .589, Individualized Consideration: r = .692. Individualized consideration and idealized influence demonstrated the strongest correlations with effectiveness.

Predictive Power of Transformational Leadership Dimensions. A regression analysis identified individualized consideration (β = .344) as the strongest positive predictor of school effectiveness, followed by inspirational motivation (β = .130), idealized influence (β = .084), and intellectual stimulation (β = .049). These findings underscore that

administrators' personal support, attention, and mentoring have the most substantial impact on institutional success in the Wang Chao District.

The results converge on the conclusion that transformational leadership especially its human-centered dimensions plays a pivotal role in promoting high school effectiveness. This underscores the importance of cultivating individualized support and visionary influence among school administrators to foster continual growth and achievement within Thailand's educational context.

Table 1: Correlation and Regression Coefficients of Transformational Leadership Dimensions Predicting School Effectiveness.

Transformational Leadership Dimension	r	β (Standardized)	p
Idealized Influence (Charisma)	.684	.084	<.05
Inspirational Motivation	.507	.130	<.05
Intellectual Stimulation	.589	.049	<.05
Individualized Consideration	.692	.344	<.05
Overall Transformational Leadership	**.857**	**-**	**<.05**

Note. r = Pearson's correlation coefficient. β = standardized regression coefficient. All values are significant at $p < .05$.

Table 2: ANOVA Summary for Regression Analysis of Transformational Leadership Predicting School Effectiveness.

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p
Regression	105.42	4	26.36	145.28	<.05
Residual	58.21	338	0.17		
Total	163.63	342			

Note. SS = sum of squares; df = degrees of freedom; MS = mean square; F = F-ratio. The regression model was statistically significant at $p < .05$, indicating that transformational leadership dimensions significantly predicted school effectiveness.

Table 3: Model Summary of Regression Analysis of Transformational Leadership Predicting School Effectiveness.

Model	R	R²	Adjusted R²	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.857	.734	.731	0.41

Note. R = multiple correlation coefficient; R^2 = coefficient of determination. The model indicates that transformational leadership explains approximately 73.4% of the variance in school effectiveness ($p < .05$).

CONCLUSION & DISCUSSION

This study provides empirical evidence that transformational leadership plays a decisive role in shaping school effectiveness in the Wang Chao District of Tak Province, a predominantly rural area situated within Thailand's complex educational and administrative landscape. The results indicate that school administrators in this district demonstrate high levels of transformational leadership across all four dimensions idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration with idealized influence and individualized consideration emerging as particularly prominent.

These patterns highlight the importance of ethical conduct, relational trust, and personalized support in sustaining effective educational organizations in semi-rural Thai contexts.

Transformational leadership and school effectiveness in rural Thai contexts. The strong and statistically significant correlation between transformational leadership and school effectiveness ($r = .857$, $p < .05$) confirms that leadership practices grounded in vision, moral integrity, and human-centered engagement are foundational to both academic and organizational success. Regression analysis further showed that individualized consideration was the most powerful predictor of school effectiveness, exceeding the explanatory power of inspirational motivation, idealized influence, and intellectual stimulation. This result is particularly meaningful within the Thai sociocultural context, where collectivism, interpersonal harmony, and sensitivity to hierarchy shape how teachers interpret and respond to leadership. In rural Thai schools, administrators frequently occupy multiple roles as formal managers, community figures, and moral anchors within close-knit local networks. Leadership effectiveness therefore depends less on assertive, highly visible innovation and more on empathy, fairness, and day-to-day relational attentiveness. This is consistent with prior work suggesting that in collectivist and high power-distance societies, leadership legitimacy derives from moral credibility and care for subordinates rather than formal authority alone (Hallinger, 2011; Bush & Glover, 2014). The prominence of individualized consideration in this study reinforces the notion that transformational leadership in Thailand is most effective when expressed through humble, relational, and context-sensitive behaviors rather than through overtly heroic or confrontational styles.

Comparative insights from Asian and Southeast Asian literature. The findings align closely with broader Asian and Southeast Asian scholarship on leadership. Research from across the region demonstrates that transformational leadership contributes to organizational learning, teacher motivation, and institutional resilience when it is adapted to local cultural norms and institutional constraints (Sun et al., 2024). In the Thai context, Promchart and Potipiroon (2020) report that transformational leadership reduces teachers' turnover intentions by promoting a sense of psychological safety, fairness, and job satisfaction, underscoring the importance of relational and ethical dimensions in shaping teacher engagement. Within the present study, intellectual stimulation emerged as the least predictive dimension of school effectiveness. This does not imply that innovation or critical inquiry is unimportant; rather, it suggests that such practices may be constrained by structural and cultural conditions, including limited resources, workload pressures, and norms discouraging open critique. Evidence from other ASEAN systems shows that teachers often priorities relational security and institutional support over pedagogical risk-taking, particularly when accountability pressures are high and support mechanisms are weak (Harris, A., & Jones, M. 2010). In Thailand, cultural values such as kreng jai emphasizing deference and concern for others' feelings may further temper teachers' willingness to challenge established practices, especially when hierarchical expectations remain strong.

Policy alignment and institutional governance. The results are also congruent with recent Thai education policy directions that stress instructional leadership, ethical governance, and innovation management for the period 2025-2026 (Thai Government Gazette, 2024). In a partially decentralized environment, school administrators are expected to interpret and implement national mandates while responding to local needs, often under conditions of constrained funding and uneven infrastructure. The multidimensional and relational nature of transformational leadership appears well suited to this task: administrators who combine clear vision with empathy and participatory decision-making are better positioned to mobilize teachers, engage communities, and

sustain reform efforts over time. At the same time, the study underscores that reliance on individual leaders even those perceived as highly ethical and inspirational must be balanced by robust governance structures. Concerns related to transparency, accountability, and informal power dynamics remain salient in many developing education systems, including Thailand. While idealized influence can reinforce ethical leadership, it can also mask problematic practices if formal checks and shared accountability are weak (Brown, M. E., & Treviño, L. K., 2006). For political science and public administration audiences, these findings highlight the interconnectedness of leadership style, institutional integrity, and public trust in education.

Theoretical implications and cultural adaptation. Theoretically, the study refines transformational leadership theory by demonstrating that its dimensions do not exert uniform effects across cultural and organizational contexts. Bass and Riggio's (2006) framework remain a valuable analytical anchor, but the evidence from Wang Chao indicates that individualized consideration may assume greater importance than intellectual stimulation in settings where relational norms and hierarchical structures constrain open critique. This supports emerging scholarship on humble and relational leadership, which emphasizes listening, empowerment, and capacity-building as central sources of influence (Owens & Hekman, 2012). The relatively lower impact of intellectual stimulation suggests that innovation-oriented leadership may need to be sequenced behind trust-building in rural and high power-distance environments. Where psychological safety is not yet firmly established, calls for experimentation and change can be experienced as risky or destabilizing, limiting their practical impact. By highlighting these contextual contingencies, the study contributes to a more nuanced and globally relevant understanding of transformational leadership, emphasizing cultural adaptation rather than universal prescription.

Practical implications for leadership development and policy. Several practical implications arise from the findings for leadership development and policy in rural Thailand and comparable settings. First, leadership preparation programmed should explicitly priorities relational competencies empathy, mentoring, ethical communication, and conflict sensitivity alongside technical and administrative skills. Scenario-based learning, peer coaching, and reflection on ethical dilemmas can support administrators in translating individualized consideration into daily practice. Second, schools would benefit from institutionalizing participatory governance structures, such as professional learning communities and inclusive committees, to distribute leadership and encourage teacher voice in decision-making. Third, policy frameworks and resource allocations should support culture-building activities teacher recognition, collaborative planning time, and community engagement rather than focusing exclusively on compliance indicators and test scores. Fourth, leadership evaluation systems might incorporate indicators of transformational leadership, including fairness, empowerment, and motivational capacity, drawing on multi-source feedback to reduce bias and enhance developmental value. Finally, strengthening school community partnerships in rural districts like Wang Chao can reinforce administrators' moral authority while anchoring leadership practices in locally shared priorities and values.

Limitations and directions for future research. The study's conclusions must be interpreted in light of several limitations. The cross-sectional design restricts the ability to infer long-term causal effects of transformational leadership on school effectiveness. The sample is confined to public primary schools in one rural district, limiting the generalizability of findings to urban settings, secondary schools, or other regions. Future research would benefit from longitudinal designs tracing leadership practices and outcomes over time, as well as comparative studies across provinces and school levels. Mixed-method

approaches incorporating classroom observations, student perspectives, and more extensive qualitative data could also deepen understanding of how leadership is enacted and experienced in everyday practice.

Further investigation into mediating and moderating variables such as teacher motivation, organizational climate, community involvement, and digital readiness would clarify the pathways through which transformational leadership influences effectiveness. As Thailand advances its digital education agenda, attention to digital leadership, distributed leadership, and equity-focused practices will be increasingly important for both research and policy.

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