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Transformational Leadership Practices of Preschool Teachers in Sabak Bernam District, Selangor: A Quantitative Study

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to determine the level of transformational leadership practices among preschool teachers in Sabak Bernam District, Selangor. The study further identified the most dominant dimension of transformational leadership and examined the relationship between teaching experience and transformational leadership practices. The study employed a quantitative survey design involving 51 preschool teachers selected through simple random sampling. The study instrument was adapted from the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ), which measures five dimensions of transformational leadership: Idealised Influence (Attributed), Idealised Influence (Behaviour), Inspirational Motivation, Intellectual Stimulation, and Individualised Consideration. Data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics through SPSS Version 31. The findings showed that the level of transformational leadership practice of preschool teachers was at a high level. The most dominant dimension was Idealised Influence (Attributed) (Mean = 4.73, SD = 0.37). Pearson's correlation analysis showed that there was a very weak and insignificant positive relationship between teaching experience and transformational leadership practices ($r = 0.140$, $p = 0.327$). This study indicates that transformational leadership practices are widely practised by preschool teachers regardless of their years of teaching experience. The findings of the study provide implications for teacher professional development and the strengthening of preschool teacher leadership. The study contributes to the limited body of empirical evidence on transformational leadership among preschool teachers in Malaysia and provides practical insights for designing professional development programmes aimed at strengthening teacher leadership competencies in early childhood education.

1. Introduction

Early childhood education (ECE) is widely acknowledged as a fundamental stage in the educational continuum and plays a critical role in promoting lifelong learning, social equity, and

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sustainable human capital development. Extensive evidence has demonstrated that high-quality preschool education significantly contributes to children's cognitive, social, emotional, and behavioural development, which subsequently influences school readiness and future educational attainment [16,17]. In line with Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4), educational systems across the world have increasingly prioritised equitable access to quality early childhood education and recognised the importance of competent and professionally capable teachers in ensuring meaningful learning experiences and positive developmental outcomes for young children.

The rapid advancement of digital technologies, artificial intelligence, and post-pandemic educational reforms has substantially transformed the role of teachers. In contemporary educational settings, teachers are expected to function not merely as instructors but also as facilitators, innovators, collaborators, and instructional leaders capable of responding effectively to dynamic educational environments and diverse learners' needs [16]. Consequently, teacher leadership has emerged as a significant determinant of educational quality, school improvement, teacher professional development, and student learning outcomes (Hallinger, 2011; Leithwood et al., 2020). Within early childhood education, leadership practices are increasingly viewed as essential for enhancing pedagogical quality, fostering collaborative professional cultures, and promoting children's holistic development [5]. Recent evidence further suggests that teacher leadership and pedagogical leadership are increasingly recognised as essential mechanisms for improving educational quality and strengthening professional learning communities in early childhood education settings [9].

Among the various leadership approaches, transformational leadership has attracted considerable scholarly attention due to its capacity to inspire, motivate, and influence individuals towards achieving shared organisational goals. Bass and Avolio [1] conceptualised transformational leadership as comprising four principal dimensions, namely idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualised consideration. In educational contexts, transformational leadership has been consistently associated with improved teacher commitment, enhanced collaboration, increased instructional effectiveness, and the development of positive school cultures [11,12]. Recent studies have further indicated that transformational leadership contributes to teacher self-efficacy, professional learning, and organisational adaptability in rapidly changing educational environments [8,12].

In the context of early childhood education, preschool teachers assume multiple responsibilities beyond classroom instruction, including curriculum implementation, pedagogical innovation, and the creation of developmentally appropriate learning environments. The implementation of the Malaysian Preschool Curriculum 2026 (KP2026), which emphasises inquiry-based learning, creativity, collaboration, and character development, has further increased expectations for preschool teachers to demonstrate leadership competencies that support continuous educational improvement and innovative teaching practices. These developments indicate that leadership competencies are no longer exclusive to school administrators but have become increasingly important among classroom teachers, including preschool educators [14].

Despite the growing recognition of teacher leadership, empirical evidence concerning transformational leadership among preschool teachers remains limited, particularly within rural and semi-rural educational settings. Most previous studies have primarily focused on principals, headteachers, and secondary school teachers, while relatively little attention has been devoted to preschool teachers and early childhood education contexts [7,11]. Furthermore, previous findings concerning the relationship between teaching experience and leadership practices remain inconsistent. Although some studies suggest that experienced teachers possess stronger leadership competencies due to accumulated professional knowledge and pedagogical expertise, other studies

indicate that leadership practices are influenced more substantially by professional learning opportunities, organisational support, collaborative cultures, and teacher self-efficacy [5,12].

The limited availability of context-specific evidence on transformational leadership among preschool teachers in Malaysia creates both theoretical and practical gaps in understanding how leadership competencies are developed and practised within early childhood education settings. From a theoretical perspective, insufficient empirical evidence exists regarding the dominant dimensions of transformational leadership among preschool teachers and the extent to which teaching experience influences leadership practices. From a practical perspective, the lack of empirical findings limits the ability of educational stakeholders to design evidence-based professional development programmes that strengthen leadership competencies among preschool teachers.

Therefore, this study aims to determine the level of transformational leadership practices among preschool teachers in Sabak Bernam District, Selangor, identify the most dominant dimension of transformational leadership, and examine the relationship between teaching experience and transformational leadership practices. The study contributes to the growing body of knowledge on teacher leadership in early childhood education by providing empirical evidence from a Malaysian rural and semi-rural context. Furthermore, the findings are expected to provide valuable insights for policymakers, educational administrators, and professional development providers in designing initiatives aimed at strengthening transformational leadership competencies among preschool teachers and enhancing the quality of early childhood education in Malaysia.

1.1 Problem Statement

Teacher leadership has become an increasingly important element in educational reform and school improvement initiatives worldwide. Contemporary educational systems expect teachers to assume leadership roles that extend beyond classroom instruction and contribute to pedagogical innovation, collaborative professional learning, and organisational development [16]. Within early childhood education, leadership practices are particularly significant because preschool teachers play a vital role in shaping children's cognitive, social, emotional, and behavioural development during the most critical period of human growth [15]. Consequently, the ability of preschool teachers to demonstrate effective leadership behaviours has become an essential component in ensuring the quality and effectiveness of early childhood education.

Among the various leadership approaches, transformational leadership has been widely recognised as an effective model for promoting educational improvement and teacher professionalism. Transformational leaders inspire, motivate, and empower others to achieve shared goals while encouraging innovation and continuous improvement [1]. Previous studies have consistently reported positive relationships between transformational leadership and teacher commitment, job satisfaction, collaborative practices, and instructional effectiveness [11,12]. Furthermore, transformational leadership has been associated with the development of positive organisational cultures and enhanced educational outcomes, particularly in contexts characterised by rapid educational change and increasing accountability [8].

Despite the growing body of literature on transformational leadership, empirical studies have primarily focused on school principals, headteachers, and educational administrators rather than classroom teachers [7,11]. Within the field of early childhood education, research specifically examining transformational leadership among preschool teachers remains relatively scarce. Existing studies have concentrated predominantly on pedagogical leadership and administrative leadership in early childhood settings, resulting in limited understanding of how transformational leadership is practised by preschool teachers themselves [5]. This situation creates a significant theoretical gap

concerning the applicability of transformational leadership theory within preschool education contexts.

Furthermore, previous studies have produced inconsistent findings regarding the relationship between teaching experience and leadership practices. Some researchers argue that experienced teachers are more likely to exhibit stronger leadership competencies due to their accumulated pedagogical expertise and professional maturity. Conversely, other studies suggest that leadership practices are influenced more substantially by factors such as professional development opportunities, organisational support, collaborative cultures, and teacher self-efficacy rather than teaching experience alone [12]. These inconsistent findings indicate that the relationship between teaching experience and transformational leadership remains inconclusive and warrants further empirical investigation.

In the Malaysian context, studies concerning transformational leadership among preschool teachers are still limited, particularly in rural and semi-rural educational settings. Most local studies on educational leadership have concentrated on school principals and mainstream school teachers, with relatively little attention given to preschool teachers. Consequently, limited empirical evidence is available regarding the level of transformational leadership practices, the most dominant dimensions of transformational leadership, and the relationship between teaching experience and transformational leadership practices among preschool teachers in Malaysia. This lack of context-specific evidence restricts the development of evidence-based professional development programmes and leadership initiatives tailored specifically to the needs of preschool teachers.

Therefore, this study addresses these theoretical and practical gaps by examining transformational leadership practices among preschool teachers in Sabak Bernam District, Selangor. Specifically, the study seeks to determine the level of transformational leadership practices, identify the most dominant transformational leadership dimension, and examine the relationship between teaching experience and transformational leadership practices. The findings of this study are expected to contribute to the growing body of knowledge on teacher leadership in early childhood education and provide empirical evidence that may assist policymakers, educational administrators, and teacher educators in designing effective leadership development programmes for preschool teachers in Malaysia.

1.2 Research Objectives

The present study was conducted to examine transformational leadership practices among preschool teachers in Sabak Bernam District, Selangor. Specifically, the study sought to achieve the following objectives:

1. To determine the level of transformational leadership practices among preschool teachers in Sabak Bernam District, Selangor.
2. To identify the most dominant dimension of transformational leadership practised by preschool teachers in Sabak Bernam District, Selangor.
3. To examine the relationship between teaching experience and transformational leadership practices among preschool teachers in Sabak Bernam District, Selangor.

1.3 Research Questions

Based on the research objectives, this study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the level of transformational leadership practices among preschool teachers in Sabak Bernam District, Selangor?
2. Which dimension of transformational leadership is the most dominant among preschool teachers in Sabak Bernam District, Selangor?
3. Is there a significant relationship between teaching experience and transformational leadership practices among preschool teachers in Sabak Bernam District, Selangor?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Transformational Leadership Theory

Transformational leadership is one of the most influential leadership theories in contemporary educational management due to its emphasis on motivating individuals to achieve organisational goals beyond personal interests. The concept was initially introduced by Burns [2], who distinguished transformational leadership from transactional leadership by emphasising leaders' ability to elevate followers' motivation and morality. Subsequently, Bass and Avolio [1] expanded the theory by proposing that transformational leadership comprises four fundamental components: idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualised consideration.

Transformational leaders inspire followers through a compelling vision, encourage innovative thinking, foster collaborative relationships, and provide individual support for professional growth [1]. In educational settings, transformational leadership has been widely recognised as an effective approach for promoting school improvement, teacher commitment, and instructional effectiveness [7,11].

Recent educational reforms and increasing organisational complexity have further reinforced the relevance of transformational leadership. Harris and Jones [8] argued that educational leaders are increasingly required to demonstrate adaptability, resilience, and innovation to respond effectively to rapidly changing educational environments. Similarly, Liu *et al.*, [12] found that transformational leadership contributes positively to teacher collaboration, self-efficacy, and job satisfaction, which subsequently influence instructional quality and school effectiveness.

Although transformational leadership was initially associated with formal leadership positions such as principals and school administrators, recent studies suggest that transformational leadership behaviours can also be demonstrated by classroom teachers, particularly in collaborative and learner-centred educational environments [11]. Consequently, transformational leadership has become increasingly relevant within early childhood education, where teachers are expected to assume multiple leadership roles that support pedagogical innovation and continuous educational improvement.

2.2 Transformational Leadership in Early Childhood Education

Early childhood education has increasingly recognised the importance of leadership in promoting educational quality and children's holistic development. Unlike traditional educational leadership models that focus primarily on administrative responsibilities, leadership in early childhood education emphasises pedagogical practices, collaborative professional relationships, and the creation of supportive learning environments [5]. Preschool teachers occupy a unique position because they simultaneously function as educators, facilitators, curriculum implementers, and instructional leaders. Their leadership practices directly influence children's learning experiences, social interactions, and emotional well-being [15]. Consequently, effective leadership among

preschool teachers is increasingly viewed as a prerequisite for achieving high-quality early childhood education.

Several studies have reported that transformational leadership contributes significantly to teacher effectiveness and organisational improvement within educational settings. Liu *et al.*, [12] found that supportive leadership practices enhance teacher self-efficacy, collaboration, and professional learning opportunities. Similarly, Douglass [4] emphasised that leadership development among early childhood educators strengthens professional capacity and promotes sustainable educational improvement. Furthermore, transformational leadership practices have been associated with the development of positive school cultures, increased teacher motivation, and improved instructional quality [11]. Teachers who demonstrate transformational leadership behaviours tend to encourage collaboration, inspire innovation, and facilitate meaningful learning experiences for children. These leadership characteristics are particularly important in early childhood education, where teachers are required to respond to diverse developmental needs and create nurturing learning environments.

However, despite increasing recognition of teacher leadership within early childhood education, empirical studies examining transformational leadership practices among preschool teachers remain relatively limited, especially in developing countries and rural educational contexts. Consequently, there is insufficient evidence regarding how transformational leadership is practised by preschool teachers and the factors that influence its development.

2.3 Teaching Experience and Transformational Leadership

Teaching experience has frequently been regarded as an important determinant of professional competence and leadership development. Experienced teachers generally possess greater pedagogical knowledge, classroom management skills, and professional confidence, which may contribute positively to leadership practices. Several studies have reported that experienced teachers tend to demonstrate stronger leadership competencies because prolonged teaching experience enables them to develop professional expertise and deeper understanding of educational practices. However, empirical findings regarding the relationship between teaching experience and transformational leadership remain inconsistent.

Liu *et al.*, [12] argued that leadership practices are influenced more substantially by organisational support, collaborative learning opportunities, and teacher self-efficacy than by teaching experience alone. Similarly, Harris and Jones [8] suggested that contemporary educational leadership increasingly depends on adaptability, innovation, and continuous professional learning rather than years of service. Within early childhood education, limited empirical evidence exists concerning the influence of teaching experience on transformational leadership practices. This limitation is particularly evident in developing countries, including Malaysia, where studies focusing specifically on preschool teachers remain scarce. Consequently, further investigation is necessary to determine whether teaching experience significantly influences transformational leadership practices among preschool teachers.

2.4 Research Gap

Although transformational leadership has been extensively investigated within educational leadership literature, several important gaps remain. First, most previous studies have focused primarily on school principals, headteachers, and secondary school teachers, while empirical evidence concerning preschool teachers remains limited [7,11]. This indicates a contextual gap in

understanding transformational leadership within early childhood education settings. Second, previous studies have produced inconsistent findings regarding the relationship between teaching experience and leadership practices. While some researchers have reported positive relationships between teaching experience and leadership competencies, others have found that leadership practices are influenced by professional learning opportunities and organisational factors rather than experience alone [12]. Third, within the Malaysian context, studies examining transformational leadership among preschool teachers are relatively scarce, particularly in rural and semi-rural educational settings. Consequently, limited empirical evidence is available regarding the level of transformational leadership practices, the dominant dimensions of transformational leadership, and the influence of teaching experience on leadership behaviours among preschool teachers.

Therefore, the present study addresses these theoretical and contextual gaps by examining transformational leadership practices among preschool teachers in Sabak Bernam District, Selangor. The study contributes empirical evidence to the growing body of literature on teacher leadership in early childhood education and provides practical insights for strengthening leadership development initiatives among preschool teachers in Malaysia.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study employed a quantitative research approach using a cross-sectional survey design to examine transformational leadership practices among preschool teachers in Sabak Bernam District, Selangor. A quantitative survey design was considered appropriate because it enables researchers to collect numerical data from a defined population and examine relationships between variables systematically and objectively [3]. The study sought to achieve three objectives: (a) to determine the level of transformational leadership practices among preschool teachers, (b) to identify the most dominant dimension of transformational leadership, and (c) to examine the relationship between teaching experience and transformational leadership practices. In this study, teaching experience served as the independent variable, whereas transformational leadership practices represented the dependent variable. A cross-sectional approach was adopted because the data were collected from respondents at a single point in time. This design is widely used in educational research due to its efficiency in obtaining information from relatively large groups of participants and examining patterns and relationships among variables [3].

3.2 Population and Sample

The population of this study consisted of preschool teachers serving in government preschools under the Ministry of Education Malaysia in Sabak Bernam District, Selangor. Based on records obtained from the District Education Office (PPD) of Sabak Bernam, the total population comprised 61 preschool teachers. The sample size was determined using the sample size determination table developed by Krejcie and Morgan [10]. For a population of 61 respondents, a minimum sample of 52 respondents was required. A total of 51 completed questionnaires were successfully returned and analysed, representing a response rate of 98.1%. A simple random sampling technique was employed to ensure that each member of the population had an equal opportunity to be selected. This sampling method was considered appropriate because it reduces selection bias and improves the representativeness of the sample.

3.3 Instruments

Data for this study were collected using a structured questionnaire adapted from the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) developed by Bass and Avolio [1]. The instrument was selected because it is one of the most widely used and validated measures for assessing transformational leadership practices across various educational and organisational contexts. The questionnaire consisted of two sections. Section A gathered respondents' demographic information, including gender, age, teaching experience, academic qualification, and school location. Section B measured transformational leadership practices based on five dimensions of transformational leadership: Idealised Influence (Attributed), Idealised Influence (Behaviour), Inspirational Motivation, Intellectual Stimulation, and Individualised Consideration. Each dimension was represented by four items, resulting in a total of 20 items.

Responses were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). Higher scores indicated a higher level of transformational leadership practices among preschool teachers. The instrument was adapted to suit the context of preschool education while maintaining the original constructs proposed by Bass and Avolio [1]. A pilot study involving 10 preschool teachers was conducted to assess the reliability of the instrument. The overall Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was 0.953, indicating excellent internal consistency. The reliability coefficients for the five dimensions ranged from 0.741 to 0.928, demonstrating satisfactory to excellent reliability. According to Hair *et al.*, [6], Cronbach's Alpha values above 0.70 indicate acceptable reliability for research purposes. Therefore, the instrument was considered suitable for data collection in the actual study.

3.4 Content Validity

Prior to the actual data collection, the instrument was reviewed by three experts in educational leadership and early childhood education to assess the relevance, clarity, and appropriateness of the questionnaire items. The experts also evaluated the suitability of the items in relation to the study objectives and the constructs of transformational leadership. Suggestions and recommendations provided by the experts were incorporated to improve the content and overall quality of the instrument before the actual data collection.

3.5 Assumption Testing

Prior to conducting Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation analysis, the assumption of normality was examined using skewness and kurtosis statistics. The results indicated that the skewness value was -0.540 and the kurtosis value was -0.609, both of which were within the acceptable range for normal distribution [6]. Therefore, the data were considered normally distributed and appropriate for Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation analysis.

3.6 Procedures

Several procedures were undertaken to ensure the systematic implementation of this study. First, permission to conduct the research was obtained from the relevant authorities, including the District Education Office (PPD) of Sabak Bernam and the respective school administrations. Ethical considerations such as voluntary participation, confidentiality, anonymity, and informed consent were observed throughout the research process. Following approval, the questionnaire was

distributed to preschool teachers in government preschools within Sabak Bernam District. Prior to the actual data collection, a pilot study involving 10 preschool teachers was conducted to assess the reliability of the instrument. The pilot study results indicated satisfactory reliability, confirming the suitability of the instrument for the main study. For the actual data collection, questionnaires were administered through an online platform using Google Forms. Respondents were provided with clear instructions regarding the purpose of the study and the completion of the questionnaire. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were informed that all information provided would be treated confidentially and used solely for academic purposes.

Upon completion of the data collection process, the responses were screened, coded, and entered into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 29 for analysis. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, were used to address the first and second research objectives. Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation analysis was employed to examine the relationship between teaching experience and transformational leadership practices among preschool teachers. The findings were subsequently interpreted and discussed in relation to the objectives of the study and relevant literature.

3.7 Data Analysis

The collected data were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 29. Descriptive statistics, including mean and standard deviation, were used to determine the level of transformational leadership practices and identify the most dominant leadership dimension. Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation analysis was employed to examine the relationship between teaching experience and transformational leadership practices among preschool teachers. Table 1 summarises the research objectives and the corresponding data analysis techniques used in this study.

Table 1

Research objectives and data analysis techniques

Research Objective	Data Analysis Technique
To determine the level of transformational leadership practices among preschool teachers	Mean and Standard Deviation
To identify the most dominant dimension of transformational leadership	Mean Ranking
To examine the relationship between teaching experience and transformational leadership practices	Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation

4. Results

4.1 Demographic Profile of Respondents

Table 2 presents the demographic profile of the respondents involved in this study. The majority of respondents were female teachers (90.2%), while male teachers accounted for only 9.8% of the sample. Most respondents were aged between 41 and 50 years (39.2%), followed by those aged 51 years and above (29.4%). In terms of teaching experience, the majority had 16 years or more of teaching experience (68.7%), indicating that most respondents were experienced preschool teachers. Regarding academic qualifications, almost all respondents possessed a Bachelor's Degree (96.1%), while only 3.9% held a Diploma qualification. In addition, most respondents were serving in rural schools (84.3%), reflecting the demographic characteristics of preschool teachers in Sabak Bernam District, Selangor.

Table 2
Demographic profile of respondents (N = 51)

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	5	9.8
	Female	46	90.2
Age	20–30 years	5	9.8
	31–40 years	11	21.6
	41–50 years	20	39.2
			29.4
	51 years and above	15	
Teaching Experience	1–5 years	9	17.6
	6–10 years	5	9.8
	11–15 years	2	3.9
	16 years and above	35	68.7
Academic Qualification	Diploma	2	3.9
	Bachelor's Degree	49	96.1
School Location	Urban	8	15.7
	Rural	43	84.3

4.2 Level of Transformational Leadership Practices among Preschool Teachers

Table 3 presents the level of transformational leadership practices among preschool teachers in Sabak Bernam District, Selangor. The findings indicate that the overall level of transformational leadership practices was high, with a mean score of 4.63 (SD = 0.31). This result suggests that preschool teachers consistently demonstrated transformational leadership behaviours in their professional practices. The high mean score reflects teachers' ability to inspire, motivate, and support learners while fostering a positive learning environment. These findings are consistent with previous studies which reported that transformational leadership contributes positively to teacher effectiveness, professional commitment, and educational improvement [11,12]. The findings further suggest that the increasing emphasis on teacher professionalism, collaborative learning cultures, and continuous professional development within the Malaysian education system may have contributed to the high level of transformational leadership practices observed among preschool teachers.

Table 3
Level of transformational leadership practices among preschool teachers

Variable	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Transformational leadership practices	4.63	0.31	High

4.3 Dominant Dimension of Transformational Leadership

Table 4 shows the mean scores, standard deviations, and rankings of the five dimensions of transformational leadership. The findings revealed that Idealised Influence (Attributed) recorded the highest mean score (M = 4.73, SD = 0.37), followed by Idealised Influence (Behaviour) (M = 4.69, SD = 0.39), Inspirational Motivation (M = 4.64, SD = 0.41), Intellectual Stimulation (M = 4.58, SD = 0.45), and Individualised Consideration (M = 4.52, SD = 0.47). Although all dimensions recorded high mean scores, Idealised Influence (Attributed) emerged as the most dominant dimension among preschool

teachers. This finding indicates that preschool teachers perceived themselves as role models who demonstrate integrity, professionalism, and ethical behaviour in their daily practices. Such characteristics are particularly important in early childhood education, where teachers play a significant role in shaping children's values, attitudes, and learning experiences. The findings support the transformational leadership model proposed by Bass and Avolio [1], which emphasises idealised influence as a key component in developing trust, commitment, and respect among followers.

Table 4
Dimensions of transformational leadership

Dimension	Mean	SD	Rank
Idealised Influence (Attributed)	4.73	0.37	1
Idealised Influence (Behaviour)	4.69	0.39	2
Inspirational Motivation	4.64	0.41	3
Intellectual Stimulation	4.58	0.45	4
Individualised Consideration	4.52	0.47	5

4.4 Relationship between Teaching Experience and Transformational Leadership Practices

Table 5 presents the results of the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation analysis conducted to examine the relationship between teaching experience and transformational leadership practices among preschool teachers. The findings revealed a very weak positive relationship between teaching experience and transformational leadership practices ($r = 0.140$). However, the relationship was not statistically significant ($p = 0.327$, $p > 0.05$). Therefore, the null hypothesis was accepted, indicating that teaching experience was not significantly related to transformational leadership practices among preschool teachers. This finding suggests that transformational leadership behaviours are not solely determined by the number of years of teaching experience. Instead, transformational leadership practices may be influenced by other factors such as professional development opportunities, organisational support, collaborative school culture, leadership training, and teacher self-efficacy [12]. The finding further implies that both novice and experienced preschool teachers are capable of demonstrating transformational leadership behaviours when provided with appropriate professional support and learning opportunities.

Table 5
Pearson correlation between teaching experience and transformational leadership practices

Variables	r	p	Interpretation
Teaching Experience and Transformational Leadership Practices	0.140	0.327	Very Weak Positive Relationship (Not Significant)

5. Discussion

The findings revealed that preschool teachers in Sabak Bernam District demonstrated a high level of transformational leadership practices. This suggests that preschool teachers consistently exhibit leadership behaviours that support effective teaching and learning, professional commitment, and positive educational outcomes. The findings are consistent with previous studies which reported that transformational leadership contributes significantly to teacher effectiveness, organisational improvement, and professional development [7,11]. The high level of transformational leadership practices may also reflect the increasing emphasis on teacher professionalism, collaborative learning cultures, and continuous professional development initiatives within the Malaysian education system.

With regard to the dimensions of transformational leadership, Idealised Influence (Attributed) emerged as the most dominant dimension among preschool teachers. This finding indicates that teachers perceive themselves as role models who demonstrate integrity, professionalism, and ethical behaviour in their daily practices. As preschool teachers play a crucial role in shaping children's values, attitudes, and learning experiences, the ability to serve as a positive role model is particularly important in early childhood education. The finding supports the transformational leadership model proposed by Bass and Avolio [1], which highlights idealised influence as a key component in developing trust, respect, and commitment among followers.

The study also found a very weak positive relationship between teaching experience and transformational leadership practices; however, the relationship was not statistically significant. This result suggests that transformational leadership behaviours are not determined solely by the number of years of teaching experience. Instead, leadership practices may be influenced by professional learning opportunities, organisational support, collaborative school cultures, leadership training, and teacher self-efficacy [12]. The finding is consistent with Wang [18], who reported that teacher leadership is shaped by both individual and contextual influences. These results indicate that leadership competencies can be developed through supportive professional environments rather than through teaching experience alone. Furthermore, both novice and experienced preschool teachers are capable of demonstrating transformational leadership behaviours when provided with appropriate support and professional development opportunities. The findings are also consistent with studies indicating that transformational leadership contributes significantly to improving the quality of early childhood education and strengthening teacher professionalism [19].

Overall, the findings highlight the importance of fostering transformational leadership among preschool teachers as part of ongoing efforts to strengthen teacher professionalism and educational quality. Promoting transformational leadership practices may contribute to the development of innovative, collaborative, and learner-centred educational environments that support the aspirations of Malaysia's educational transformation agenda.

6. Implications

The findings of this study have several implications for educational practice, policy, and future research. From a practical perspective, the high level of transformational leadership practices among preschool teachers suggests that leadership behaviours should be continuously nurtured through professional development programmes, mentoring initiatives, and collaborative learning communities. Strengthening transformational leadership competencies may further enhance teaching effectiveness, professional commitment, and the quality of preschool education.

From a policy perspective, the findings support the aspirations outlined in the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013–2025 (Preschool to Post-Secondary Education) [13] and the Malaysia Education Plan 2026–2035 [14], which emphasise teacher professionalism, instructional excellence, and continuous improvement.

The study also contributes to the existing body of knowledge on teacher leadership in early childhood education. The finding that teaching experience was not significantly related to transformational leadership practices suggests that leadership competencies may be developed through professional learning opportunities, organisational support, and collaborative school cultures rather than teaching experience alone. Therefore, future studies should examine additional factors that may influence transformational leadership practices, such as teacher self-efficacy, organisational climate, leadership training, and administrative support.

7. Recommendations

Educational stakeholders should provide continuous professional development programmes, mentoring initiatives, and collaborative learning communities to strengthen transformational leadership competencies among preschool teachers. Future studies should investigate additional factors such as teacher self-efficacy, organisational climate, and administrative support using larger samples and mixed-method approaches.

8. Conclusion

This study examined transformational leadership practices among preschool teachers in Sabak Bernam District, Selangor. The findings revealed that preschool teachers demonstrated a high level of transformational leadership practices, indicating their ability to exhibit leadership behaviours that support effective teaching and learning. Among the five dimensions of transformational leadership, Idealised Influence (Attributed) emerged as the most dominant dimension, suggesting that preschool teachers perceive themselves as positive role models who demonstrate integrity, professionalism, and ethical behaviour in their educational practices. The study also found that teaching experience was not significantly related to transformational leadership practices. This finding indicates that transformational leadership may be influenced by factors beyond years of teaching experience, including professional development opportunities, organisational support, and collaborative learning environments. Therefore, transformational leadership competencies can be developed among both novice and experienced teachers through appropriate professional learning initiatives.

Overall, the study contributes to the growing body of knowledge on teacher leadership in early childhood education and provides empirical evidence on transformational leadership practices among preschool teachers in Malaysia. The findings highlight the importance of strengthening transformational leadership as part of ongoing efforts to enhance teacher professionalism, instructional quality, and educational effectiveness in preschool settings. The findings may inform future initiatives aimed at developing competent, innovative, and transformational preschool teachers capable of meeting the evolving demands of twenty-first-century education.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this research.

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