

# Relationship between Transformational and Transactional Leadership Styles and Commitment to Change: The Case of Higher Education in Malaysia

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## ABSTRACT

This paper hypothesized that the leadership styles of supervisors was anchored on four types of commitment to change of the subordinates. Transactional and transformational were conceptualized as 4- and 3-dimensional constructs, respectively. The research uses a sample of 19 public universities located in Malaysia. Findings suggested that individualized consideration, idealized influence, and inspirational motivation were found to have positive relationship with personal goals arousal and context belief dimensions of commitment to change. Contingent reward and passive management by exception were found to be positively related to capacity belief and personal goals arousal dimensions of commitment to change. Implications of the findings, potential limitations of the study, and directions for future research were further discussed.

## INTRODUCTION

Many forward-thinking organizations are striving to create a positive organizational climate in order to keep those good employees through various human resource management initiatives (Chew & Chan, 2008). Extensive research is available in the organizational behaviour literature investigating the process of leadership styles and organizational commitment to change. However, the two constructs—leadership styles and organizational commitment to change seem to have been examined almost independently. This is particularly true in the Malaysian context. Some researchers have speculated that supervisory behaviour may have an impact upon subordinates' perceptions of supervisory power.

According to Elangovan and Xie (2000), organizations nowadays are made up of multifunctional teams moving along a horizontal structure where it is vital to fully understand the employees' perceptions of supervisors' power. Subordinates have been given considerable autonomy to set goals and evaluate output, which used to be the traditional role of supervisors. However, organizations have reengineered themselves to be more efficient and therefore no longer practice the traditional corporate hierarchy, thus pushing more decision making to lower-level management. These new workplace