

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INFORMATIONAL JUSTICE AND AFFECTIVE COMMITMENT: THE MEDIATING EFFECT OF TRANSACTIONAL LEADERSHIP

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Article history

Received date : 5-12-2024

Revised date : 6-12-2024

Accepted date : 29-1-2025

Published date : 20-2-2025

To cite this document:

Ghazali, J., Wahab, S., Khalid, N. A., Jafni, N. H., & Mohd Saderi, S. (2025). The relationship between informational justice and affective commitment: The Mediating effect of transactional leadership. *Journal of Islamic, Social, Economics and Development (JISED)*, 10 (70), 12 - 23.

Abstract: *This study examines the connection between informational justice, affective commitment, and transactional leadership at Maktab Rendah Sains MARA, focusing on how transactional leadership serves as a mediating variable. Informational justice pertains to the quality, transparency, and adequacy of information leaders share, essential for enhancing organizational outcomes. The research highlights issues like inconsistent communication and lack of feedback that undermine organizational effectiveness and commitment. The study uses a quantitative approach to test a conceptual framework with data collected from an online questionnaire involving 463 MRSM leaders. A stratified random sample of 210 respondents from diverse job positions was analyzed. The results indicate that transactional leadership partially mediates the relationship between informational justice and affective commitment, suggesting that effective transactional leadership can strengthen the positive impact of perceived fairness in information sharing on emotional attachment to the organization. This highlights the importance of communication strategies leaders use to commit to MRSM. Leaders can foster trust by prioritizing clear and transparent communication, increasing*

employee engagement and loyalty. The findings emphasize integrating strong leadership practices with effective communication to nurture a supportive and committed MRSM educational environment.

Keywords: *Informational Justice, Transactional Leadership, Affective Commitment, Leadership, Organizational Justice, MRSM*

Introduction

Maktab Rendah Sains MARA (MRSM) is an educational institution under the Education and Secondary Division of MARA tasked with developing Bumiputra (Lee, 2023) students' potential in science and technology (Mohamad, 2017). “*MARA Gateway to Holistic Education 2021-2025*” emphasizes the role of effective school leadership in achieving educational outcomes (Majlis Amanah Rakyat MARA, 2021). This underscores the importance of identifying optimal leadership strategies, particularly in managing organizational justice and fostering commitment (Faridah Darus et al., 2021).

Informational justice is a component of organizational justice that addresses the adequacy, consistency, and quality of leaders' communication (Greenberg, 1993; Malla & Malla, 2023). When leaders provide timely and transparent information, they foster trust and commitment (Lee et al., 2022), enabling better alignment with organizational goals (Tinay et al., 2024). Within MRSM, ensuring effective communication and equitable dissemination of information is essential for maintaining leaders' morale and achieving the institution's objectives. This study explores the dynamics between informational justice, affective commitment, and transactional leadership as a mediating variable.

Literature Review

Colquitt identified the components of organizational justice as procedural, distributive, interpersonal, and informational justice (Yalçın & Yalcin, 2022; Salam, 2020). Informational justice is essential for creating perceptions of fairness in organizations, especially when sharing information and ensuring transparency. (Greenberg, 1993; Malla & Malla, 2023).

Informational justice focuses on how leaders share information about decisions and actions made in the organization (Wahba, 2023). Leaders explain the reasons for the rules and how outcomes are determined and provide relevant information about the organization (Boateng & Hsieh, 2019; Kerse, 2020; Thomas & Kamran, 2021). It also includes how much leaders supply team members with the necessary information and explanations (Eisenberger et al., 2020; Ozkan, 2022).

Moreover, poor communication practices undermine the organization's performance and commitment (Hughes, 2024; Smollan, 2024). Leaders' communication significantly impacts organizational outcomes, especially when information is lacking or inconsistent. This can reduce team members' trust and morale (Purwanto, 2020; Nik Husaimie et al., 2021).

Affective commitment refers to the emotional connection (Khan et al., 2023) between leaders and their organizations, motivating them to remain engaged and contribute significantly (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Meyer & Allen, 2004; Kim & Beehr, 2020). Moreover, this bond enables

leaders to foster positive emotions and develop relationships. It is aligned with their values and the organization's mission, marked by emotional attachment (Khan et al., 2023) and a feeling of belonging (Adams et al., 2019).

Furthermore, affective commitment needs to embrace the organization's vision, motivate others, and work collaboratively toward common goals (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Meyer & Allen, 2004; Kim & Beehr, 2020). Additionally, elements that promote this commitment include challenging tasks, well-defined role expectations, mutual respect, strong connections with colleagues, and constructive feedback (Lee et al., 2022). Affective commitment means a leader's ongoing effort to align their goals with the organization's objectives, fostering engagement and influence.

Transactional leadership involves clear expectations, rewards for meeting goals, and structured management, effectively supporting informational justice through strong communication (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Hariyati et al., 2023; Ha & Moon, 2023). Leaders who apply transactional leadership styles can promote fairness by clearly stating expectations and providing consistent feedback (Ha & Moon, 2023; Ly, 2024).

Leaders prioritizing a supportive environment help create a culture where everyone feels valued. This inclusive approach boosts morale, motivation, and performance, as Nur Syarima Shafiee et al. (2021) noted. When leaders genuinely care for their team members' well-being, they build trust and a sense of belonging. This, in turn, increases engagement and commitment from leaders, enabling the organization to achieve its goals more effectively and sustainably. This study explores the relationship between informational justice and affective commitment, emphasizing the crucial role of effective communication in fostering emotional attachment to the organization (Khan et al., 2023). Moreover, it underscores how leaders can address justice-related issues by bridging communication gaps, ensuring transparency, and enhancing organizational commitment. Specifically, this research examines how transactional leadership mediates the relationship between informational justice and affective commitment. Furthermore, it aims to answer the important question of how transactional leadership influences the effectiveness of informational justice in promoting affective commitment within MRSM.

Research Objective

This research focuses on how transactional leadership mediates the connection between informational justice and affective commitment among MRSM leaders. The objectives are to investigate this relationship and examine the mediating effect of transactional leadership on it.

Significance of Research

Informational justice increases commitment by fostering a fair environment. This, in turn, is expected to enhance overall organizational performance, leading to greater efficiency, increased productivity, and better outcomes. (Burhan et al., 2024). These research findings enhance knowledge of informational justice, affective commitment, and transactional leadership at Maktab Rendah Sains MARA (MRSM).

This research examines the role of MRSM leaders in promoting informational justice, emphasizing the need for fair communication and transparency in the organization. It also

explores how transactional leadership affects the link between informational justice and commitment. The findings suggest that transactional leadership can enhance the positive impact of justice, thereby increasing team members' commitment and the organization.

This research aims to enhance the MRSMS "Gateway to Holistic Education 2021-2025" framework by examining how effective transactional leadership can promote informational justice and commitment. It will help MRSMS to design leadership development programs and policies that foster fairness and engagement, focusing on transparent decision-making and inclusive leadership practices. The goal is for MRSMS leaders to grasp the significance of informational justice and commitment, with transactional leadership as a mediator to improve performance.

Research Hypothesis

The hypothesis being tested are:

1. Informational justice positively affects transactional leadership and affective commitment.
2. Transactional leadership mediates the relationship between informational justice and affective commitment.

Research Design

The study used a quantitative approach to explore the relationship between informational justice, transactional leadership, and affective commitment among MRSMS leaders. Data was collected through an online questionnaire to increase accessibility and participation from leaders across fifty-seven MRSMS schools. The respondents included principals, vice principals, and heads of departments at various levels.

The sample included 210 participants from a population of 463. Stratified random sampling ensured diverse representation across leadership positions. The questionnaire covered demographics, informational justice, transactional leadership, and affective commitment. Items on informational justice were adapted from Colquitt (2001), while transactional leadership used the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) (Avolio, 1999). The revised TCM Employee Commitment Survey was utilized with permission from Dr. Natalie Allen (2004).

Pearson correlation analysis was applied to determine the strength and direction of the relationships between the variables. Cronbach's alpha assesses internal consistency, with values above 0.70 considered reliable (Adeniran, 2019). This comprehensive approach ensured that the data collected were valid and reliable, clearly reflecting the MRSMS leadership demographic in Malaysia.

Data Collection

With permission, we used Google Forms to send the survey to leaders from 57 MRSMSs online. We also emailed the link, and we collected responses for two weeks. After the deadline, the form was closed to prevent additional responses. This method efficiently and cost-effectively gathered data from our target group.

Data Analysis

The sample's demographic characteristics are based on gender, job position, and administrative experience. The sample consisted of 210 respondents, of which 126 (60.0%) were male and 84 (40.0%) were female. Regarding job positions, 26 respondents (12.4%) were principals, 78 (37.1%) were vice principals, and 106 (50.5%) were heads of departments, illustrating a balanced representation across different leadership positions.

Regarding administrative experience, the majority of the respondents, 134 (63.8%), reported having ten years or less experience. A further 74 respondents (35.2%) indicated having between 11 and 20 years of experience, while only two (1.0%) reported having more than 21 years of administrative experience. These demographics provide a comprehensive overview of the diversity in gender, job roles, and administrative tenure within the sample, offering a robust foundation for subsequent analyses.

A One-Way ANOVA analysis examines differences in levels of leadership roles toward affective commitment for principals, vice principals, and heads of departments. The mean difference in affective commitment between principals and heads of departments was 0.434, with a statistically significant result ($p < 0.05$). Similarly, the mean difference between vice principals and heads of departments was 0.280, which was statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). These results indicate that principals and vice principals exhibit significantly higher levels of affective commitment than heads of departments, suggesting that this leadership is associated with emotional engagement and organization.

This study conducted a Pearson correlation analysis of informational justice, transactional leadership, and affective commitment. The results show that informational justice and transactional leadership ($r = 0.596$, $p < 0.01$), informational justice and affective commitment ($r = 0.308$, $p < 0.05$), and transactional leadership and affective commitment ($r = 0.308$, $p < 0.05$) were significantly positively correlated. The correlation provides the conditions for subsequent mediation effect testing.

Mediation Analysis

Table 1: Simple Regression Analysis with Informational Justice as a Predictor of Affective Commitment in Step 1

Predictor	R	R ²	F	SE	β	t	p
Constant					3.960	8.537	0.000
Informational Justice	0.305	0.093	21.364	0.617	0.344	4.622	0.000

The first step of the mediation analysis examined the effect of informational justice on affective commitment. The results revealed a statistically significant positive relationship between informational justice and affective commitment. The model summary reported an $R = 0.305$ and an $R^2 = 0.093$, indicating that informational justice explains 9.3% of the variance in affective commitment. The standard error of the estimate was 0.617, reflecting the typical deviation of observed values from the regression line.

The ANOVA results validated the statistical significance of the regression model, $F(1, 208) = 21.364$, $p < 0.05$. An analysis of the regression coefficients revealed that the unstandardized coefficient for informational justice was 0.344, indicating that for every one-unit increase in

informational justice, affective commitment increases by 0.344 units. These results satisfy Baron and Kenny's (1986) first condition of mediation analysis.

Table 2: Simple Regression Analysis with Informational Justice as a Predictor of Transactional Leadership in Step 2

Predictor	R	R ²	F	SE	β	t	p
Constant					1.975	5.519	0.000
Informational Justice	0.619	0.383	128.944	0.476	0.653	11.355	0.000

The second step of the mediation analysis examined the effect of informational justice on transactional leadership as a mediator. The results revealed a statistically significant and positive relationship. The model summary reported an $R = 0.619$ and an $R^2 = 0.383$, indicating that informational justice explains 38.3% of the variance in transactional leadership.

The ANOVA results supported the statistical significance of the regression model, $F(1,208) = 128.944$, $p < 0.05$. The regression coefficient for informational justice was 0.653, indicating that a one-unit increase in informational justice leads to a 0.653-unit increase in transactional leadership. These findings satisfy the second condition of mediation analysis.

Table 3: Simple Regression Analysis with Transactional Leadership as a Predictor of Affective Commitment in Step 3

Predictor	R	R ²	F	SE	β	t	p
Constant					4.041	9.502	0.000
Transactional Leadership	0.319	0.102	23.556	0.614	0.341	4.853	0.000

The third step of the mediation analysis examined the effect of transactional leadership on affective commitment. The results revealed a statistically significant and positive relationship. The model summary reported an R -value of 0.319 and an R^2 -value of 0.102, indicating that Transactional Leadership explains 10.2% of the variance in Affective Commitment. The ANOVA results validated the statistical significance of the model, $F(1,208) = 23.556$, $p < 0.05$. The regression coefficient for transactional leadership was 0.341, indicating a 0.341-unit increase in affective commitment for every one-unit increase in transactional leadership. These results satisfy the third condition of mediation analysis.

Table 4: Multiple Regression Analysis with Informational Justice and Transactional Leadership as Predictors of Affective Commitment in Step 4

Predictor	R	R ²	F	SE	β	t	p
Constant	0.347	0.121	14.192	0.609	3.515	7.169	0.000
Informational Justice					0.197	2.107	0.036
Transactional Leadership					0.226	2.541	0.012

The fourth step of the mediation analysis examined the combined effects of informational justice and transactional leadership on affective commitment. The results revealed that transactional leadership remained a statistically significant predictor of affective commitment, while the effect of informational justice was reduced but remained significant.

The model summary reported an $R = 0.347$ and an $R^2 = 0.121$, indicating that informational justice and transactional leadership explain 12.1% of the variance in affective commitment. The ANOVA results validated the model, $F(2,207) = 14.192$, $p < 0.05$. The regression coefficient for informational justice decreased from 0.344 in step 1 to 0.197, partially mediated by transactional leadership.

The mediation analysis demonstrates that transactional leadership partially mediates the relationship between informational justice and affective commitment. Informational justice predicts transactional leadership and affective commitment, while transactional leadership further explains affective commitment. Leadership practices mediate the relationship between justice and commitment.

Discussion

The study examined how informational justice affects affective commitment among MRSM leaders, with transactional leadership acting as a mediator. MRSM leaders at different levels often use transactional leadership styles (Buang, 2024) to enhance commitment (Mohd Yusoff & Abdullah, 2022) and motivate their team members (Bakker et al., 2023; Sariono et al., 2024). The data shows a gender imbalance among MRSM leaders, between males and females (60%:40%). Job positions are distributed, indicating strong mid-level representation. Most leaders have ten years or less of administrative experience (63.8%), pointing to a younger leadership group that may require additional support. Only 1% have over 21 years of experience, which could impact MRSM strategic planning.

Demographic factors significantly influence leadership and perceptions. Leaders in their early careers tend to favor transformational leadership, while those with more experience often prefer transactional styles. This indicates a need for targeted leadership development programs and gender-inclusive policies to boost female leadership involvement and tackle distinct challenges at various levels of the hierarchy. (Budiarti et al., 2022).

The mechanisms through which informational justice influences affective commitment can be understood through trust (Pathardikar et al., 2022) and clarity and transparency communication. This trust, in turn, enhances their emotional attachment and commitment to the organization.

A strong positive correlation shows that when people perceive high levels of informational justice, they are more likely to adopt a transactional leadership style. This suggests that leaders who emphasize fairness in communication are more effective with this leadership approach. Additionally, there is a moderate positive correlation between informational justice and affective commitment (Zarish et al., 2020; Adewoyin, 2022), indicating that fairness strengthens emotional ties to the organization. It fosters a strong desire to remain with the organization, enhancing affective commitment (Ridaryanto, 2020). However, it cannot be overlooked as it enhances the overall perception of fairness within the organization (Poon, 2012).

Significant relationships between transactional leadership and affective commitment (Pradana et al., 2021) imply that clear expectations (Alai & Abdullah, 2024) and performance rewards strengthen these emotional ties. These findings support the link between fairness perceptions

and leadership, highlighting the potential mediating role of leadership in justice and commitment. They show that integrating justice and oriented training into leadership development could enhance organizational commitment and engagement (Borde et al., 2024). The analysis reveals a precise foremost predictor (Hussain & Nisar, 2023) between informational justice and affective commitment, with informational justice explaining 9.3% of the variance in commitment. This supports the idea that transparent communication boosts emotional attachment to organizations (Colquitt et al., 2001; Pradana et al., 2021). There is also a strong positive correlation between informational justice and transactional leadership, underscoring the importance of fairness. Furthermore, transactional leadership correlates positively with affective commitment (Pg. Mohd Yassin et al., 2023).

Informational justice and transactional leadership account for 12.1% of the variance in affective commitment. Here, informational justice's effect is reduced to $\beta = 0.197$ ($p = 0.036$), which indicates that transactional leadership partially mediates this relationship. The findings highlight that informational justice directly and indirectly impacts commitment through leadership practices (Qandeel & Kuráth, 2023).

The study shows that justice-oriented leadership practices increase employee commitment by influencing leadership. Specifically, informational justice affects transactional leadership, enhancing affective commitment (Khaola & Musiiwa, 2021). As a result, upskilling leaders to focus on informational justice by promoting open communication and equitable information sharing can enhance leadership effectiveness and the organization's commitment. (Burhan et al., 2024).

MRSM should incorporate fairness into their practices to maximize these benefits (Lee, 2023). The findings also indicate that transactional leadership partially mediates informational justice and affective commitment (Khaola & Rambe, 2020), highlighting the need for strong leadership to foster emotional ties within the organization (Almeida et al., 2022). By integrating informational justice into their leadership approaches, organizations can develop a more committed workforce and theoretically and practically enhance leadership development (Borde et al., 2024).

Conclusions

This research explored how transactional leadership affects the connection between informational justice and affective commitment among MRSM leaders. Findings show that fair communication boosts affective commitment and enhances transactional leadership by improving clarity and accountability among leaders.

Transactional leadership significantly influences affective commitment (Puni et al., 2021; Kilag et al., 2024), as clear leadership fosters emotional engagement (Schaufeli, 2021). The study shows that it partially mediates the relationship between informational justice and affective commitment, enhancing our understanding of how justice and leadership affect organizational commitment (Purwanto, 2020).

MRSM should enhance leadership development programs for mid-level and senior leaders, focusing on informational justice and transactional leadership. Implementing policies that

promote fairness and transparency in communication can boost organizational commitment and improve effectiveness (Ly, 2024).

The insights provided are tailored for MRSM leaders and may not apply universally. Future research should explore other leadership styles, like transformational leadership, to understand their impact on justice and commitment. By promoting fairness and effective leadership, educational leaders can enhance workforce commitment, leading to a more productive environment and tremendous organizational success (Almeida et al., 2022).

Acknowledgments

I want to thank Zurina, Nurul Huda, Ahmad Fahmi, and Nurul Husna for their unwavering support, patience, and sacrifices. I also appreciate my advisors, Associate Professor Dr. Samsudin Wahab and Dr. Nor Aminin Khalid, for their invaluable guidance and expertise throughout this academic journey.

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