

# The Impact of McGregor's Theory X/Y on the Level of Job Satisfaction of Teachers and Principals

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## Abstract

The school performances and staff wellbeing are centered on the efficacy of a principal. The various leadership styles and managerial mindsets of the members of an organization has impacted the overall outcome. Therefore, the purpose of this paper was to investigate the impact of McGregor's theory X/Y mindset on the level of job satisfaction of the school teachers (n=140), vice principal (n=5) and principal (n=5) in Bhutanese schools. The results indicated that the participants were mostly theory Y oriented and it was positively related to job satisfaction. In addition, the experiences and level of education has insignificant impact on the theory X/Y mindset which calls for deliberated leaderships programs and extensive appraisals to change the managerial beliefs of the individuals.

**Keywords:** Management Theory, Leadership, Job Satisfaction.

## Introduction

The school connectedness depends on the quality and character of the school leader. School connectedness is the student's beliefs that their learning and wellbeing is wholeheartedly taken care by the school staff, teachers and administrators (Marsh & Cumming, 2021). The teacher performances and the quality of services to the learners depends on the trust they have on their principal. The trust is the confidence of the teachers that the principal acts on his promises and in the best interest of school as an organization (Balyer, 2017). Ultimately, the school performances and the wellbeing of entire school members depend on the beliefs, efficacy and the leadership theories being used by the principals.

There are two kinds of teachers. First type of teachers are those who irresistibly waits for weekends to come and second kind of teachers are those who are worried how to end the weekends so that they can go back to school. In some cases, there are mixture of both. These types of attitudes or belief system is called Theory X and Theory Y adopted by McGregor in 1960s (Kopelman et al., 2009). The culture and performance of school depends on the type of teachers. The leadership style and theories should match the organizational structure and the types of school staff to elevate the overall performance of the school. The gap between the school leader and teachers can cause an underperforming school.

Therefore, this study explored the impact of McGregor's Theory X/Y on the level of job satisfaction of the participants. McGregor's theory X/Y was used for present study as "it continues to be seen as relevant to issues related to leadership and organizational development" (Kopelman, Prottas & Falk, 2010, p. 131).

## Literature

The theory X and theory Y was coined by McGregor in an article dated 1957 followed by a book in 1960 both entitled “the human side of enterprise” (Kopelman et al., 2010) and will be referred as Theory X/Y for this study. This theory describes two different models of leadership applied by managers to motivate their subordinates.

### Theory X

It is based on the pessimistic assumption that “average employee dislikes work and avoids it if possible, lacks responsibility, has little ambition and seeks security above all he has little or no ambition, shies away from work or responsibilities, and is individual-goal oriented” (Aithal& Kumar, 2016, p. 804). In schools, principals presupposes that the teachers are less intelligent, work solely to fulfill the mandates of teacher performance appraisal, lazy, untrustworthy, lack of ambition and focuses on syllabus coverage. The three assumptions of theory x are: (a) workers are naturally lazy and try to avoid work whenever possible; (b) subordinates are inherently irresponsible and, thus, it is necessary to closely monitor work behavior and (c) most of the workers have little to contribute rationally to the operation of the school as a social enterprise (Lawter, Kopelman&Prottas, 2015). McGregor in 1960s believed that theory X is inclined more towards the basic human needs like pay and other benefits as extrinsic rewards. Working just for pay and benefits are observed to dislike and avoid works naturally. Therefore, they should be controlled, monitored and directed by using stick and carrot motivational approach to keep them working (Touma, 2021).

### Theory Y

Theory Y is a participative style of management with a belief that people will exercise self-direction and self-control in achieving the organizational goals and objectives (Hattangadi, 2015). In a school setting, it can be assumed that teachers are internally motivated, possess positive attitude towards teaching, promotes professional learning community and be a life-long learner. Everyone in the organization is recognized for their innate potential and a principal guide and help them realize their potential to attain to the highest and the desirable outcomes in their

lives. Unlike the Theory X, the presence of principal in the school makes little or no difference to the performances of the teacher as their work is their motivation and needs no supervision. McGregor (1960) proclaimed that theory Y is more positive view of human nature: (a) every worker finds work enjoyable, experiences high motivation and fulfillment; (b) subordinates are responsible, capable of self-direction and self-control; and (c) workers can make important intellectual contributions to the work they perform (Lawter et al., 2015).

### Theory X/Y

Many studies conducted on Theory X/Y indicate that “there is no such one best organizational approach; rather, the best approach depends on the nature of the work and the organizational structure” (Hattangadi, 2015, p. 21). Besides, there is less systematic research on Theory X/Y and very few studies are being conducted to test the theory (Bojadziew et al., 2016, Gurbuz, Sahin&Koksal, 2014; Kopelman et al., 20012; Shahin, 2012, Thomas &Bostrom, 2008). Conversely, McGregor’s (1960) Theory X/Y on managerial assumptions are “worthwhile basis from which to examine several important individual outcomes” (Gurbuz et al., 2014, p. 1900), “organizational development firms continue to use assessment tools based on Theory X/Y” (Kopelman et al., 2012, p. 451) and scholars have continued to discuss and debate on theorizing it (Sahin, 2012, p. 159).

Kopelman et al. (2012) states that McGregor’s (1960) theorizing reflects the six ideas, viz, (1) managers unknowingly makes assumptions about their employees; (2) a pessimistic view (Theory X) and more optimistic view (Theory Y) are two broad categories of managerial assumptions; (3) the pertinent three component dimensions of these assumptions are (a) people are inherently lazy versus industrious, (b) possess limited versus more important capacity for useful contribution and (c) being untrustworthy versus being responsible; (4) types of managerial assumptions results in predictable managerial behaviors; (5) employees motivation and work behavior is influenced by managerial practices; and (6) there is misperception of cause and effect due to the unknown self-fulfilling nature of manager’s assumptive world.

The theory X/Y managerial assumptions have a greater influence on the satisfaction of the subordinates. Gurbuz et al. (2014) asserted that theory Y managerial assumptions were “significantly and positively related to followers’ satisfaction with the leader, affective commitment and organizational citizenship behaviors” (p.1898). It was also observed that the theory X had negative relationship with leaders and no significant relationship with affective commitment and organizational citizenship behaviors. At an organization level, Arslan and Staub (2013) concluded that the theory Y leadership behavior have a positive influence on the overall performances.

In relation to the theory X/Y to the quality of relationship between the leader and the subordinate, Sahin (2012) found that theory Y is significantly and positively associated with the collegial bond between the leader and the subordinates. It strongly influences the subordinates’ commitment towards the organization as theory Y management style leads to strong exchange relationship. Lawter et al. (2015) substantiated the views held by some leaders that “employees have unlimited potential for high performance if managed correctly” (p.96). The manager’s attitude and behavior towards the employees affects the performances at individual or group levels.

On the other hand, a great leader is not a great manager or vice versa and a combination of effective leadership and management counts for organizational success (Bojadziev et al., 2016). Similarly, the Theory X or Theory Y depends on the employees’ industrious nature, capability and trustworthiness (Kopelman et al., 2012). Though theory X is deemed to be a pessimistic assumption, it still remains vital as “mandates, controls, and command as these actions were significantly and directly related to improved outcomes... as well as improvements in trust and cooperation” (Thomas & Bostrom, 2008, p.8).

The current study investigated the impact of Theory X/Y managerial assumptions of the teachers and principals of Bhutan on their job satisfaction. There is scarce of study on impact of Theory X/Y managerial assumptions in the educational domain and this study is the first of its kind in Bhutan.

## Research Question

Central Question: How does the Theory X/Y managerial assumption affects the level of job satisfaction of teachers and principals in Bhutanese schools?

## Guiding Questions

1. Which managerial assumptions, theory X or theory Y, inclination do teachers and principals possess?
2. How theory X/Y managerial assumptions impacts the job satisfaction of teachers and principals?
3. Amongst the three components of the dimension of managerial assumptions, which component contributes in promoting job satisfaction of teachers and principals?

## Methods

### Research Instrument

The quantitative research was conducted using a survey questionnaire consisting three parts. Part A gathered the demographic information of the participants, part B consisted 24 items with five-point Likert scale designed by Kopelman et al. (2012) to assess the theory X/Y managerial assumptions and part C consisted eight items with five-point Likert scale designed to evaluate the job satisfaction of the participants by Farinde-Wu and Fitchett (2018). Part B items were based on the three component dimensions of X/Y managerial assumptions: “whether people are industrious or lazy; whether people are capable or incapable of useful/creative accomplishments; and whether individuals are trustworthy or untrustworthy” (Kopelman et al., 2012, p. 456). Eight items (four for X theory mindset and four for Y theory mindset) were employed under each dimension. Under part C, four positive statement and four negative statement which were reverse scored to determine the job satisfaction of the participants was used.

## Sampling and Procedure

Google form was used to design online questionnaire. The exponential non-discriminative snowballing sampling was used as this sampling technique enjoys the “possibility for the researchers

to comprise people in the survey that they would not have known locating members of a specific population” (Etikan, Alkassim, & Abubakar, 2016, p. 6). Google Form link was shared with few teachers and principals and they shared it with other teachers and principals whom they know on volunteer basis.

A total of 150 participants comprising 52 female and 98 male completed the questionnaire. There were 140 teachers, five vice principal and five principals. Majority of the participants were teaching in Middle Secondary Schools (n=85), followed by Higher Secondary School (n=31), Primary School (n=24)

and Lower Secondary School (n=10). The maximum participants were aged 35-39 years (n=43), followed by 30-34 years (n=35), 25-29 years (n=29), 40-44 years (n=28), 45-49 years (n=7), 50+ years (n=6) and 20-24 years (n=2). Moreover, 75 participants possessed a qualification of B.Ed or equivalent, 41 master’s degree, 27 Post Graduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) and 7 Primary Teaching Certificate (PTC). Majority of the participants were in service for 10-14 years (n=44), followed by 5-9 years (n=35), 15-19 years (n=30), 0-4 years (n=27) and 20+ years (n= 14).

**Results**

**Table 1: Descriptive statistic (X-Theory Y-Theory Job Satisfaction \* Sex & \* Designation)**

		X-Theory			Y-Theory		Job Satisfaction	
		n	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Sex	Female	52	2.4712	.62402	3.7837	.34822	3.3798	.58314
	Male	98	2.6811	.54953	3.6437	.42656	3.0472	.62629
Designation	Teachers	140	2.5810	.58105	3.7012	.40208	3.1545	.62484
	V. Principal	5	3.0833	.62915	3.4667	.61689	3.0250	.67546
	Principal	5	2.9000	.34561	3.6667	.24296	3.5250	.75726

Female participants were more Y oriented than male participants with respect to the 24-item X/Y attitude scale (m=3.78, SD=0.35 versus m=3.64, SD= 0.43, p<0.01). Both male and female were more theory Y oriented than theory X (total m=3.69, SD=0.41 versus m=2.61, SD=0.58, p<0.01).

In regard to the designation, teachers (m=3.70, SD=0.40) were more Y oriented, followed by principal (m=3.67, SD=0.24) and vice principal (m=3.47, SD= 0.62). However, in respect to the 8-item job satisfaction scale, principals (m=3.53, SD= 0.76) are more satisfied with their job, followed by teachers (m=3.15, SD= 0.62)and vice principal (m=3.03, SD=0.68).

The descriptive and correlations of individual level are presented in table 2. A Pearson correlation was conducted to examine the relationships between the job satisfaction and the three component dimensions of the managerial assumptions: lazy versus industrious, incapable versus capable, and trustworthy versus untrustworthy. Later the relationship between the job satisfaction and Theory

X/Y was discussed at a group level.

Job satisfaction was negatively related to lazy, r(148)= -.291, p<0.01; incapable, r(148)= -.229, p<0.01; and untrustworthy, r(148)=-.197, p<0.05. It was positively related to industrious, r(148)= .291, p<0.01; capable, r(148)= .281, p< 0.01 and trustworthy, r (148)= .094 which was insignificant. To confirm the findings, the correlation between the job satisfaction and Theory X/Y was conducted. The findings confirmed that theory X attitude is negatively related to job satisfaction with r(148)= -.256, p<0.01, and the theory Y attitude is positively related to job satisfaction with r(148)= .313, p<0.01. These findings indicated that the theory X attitudes can negatively contribute to the job satisfaction and theory Y attitude remains a positive factor to promote motivation and job satisfaction of the employee.

No significant relationship was observed between age groups, school levels and education levels of the participants and the Theory X/Y and the job satisfaction.

**Table 2: Descriptive Statistics and correlation**

	Mean	Std. Deviation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Sex	1.6533	.47750															
Years in Service	2.7933	1.22226	.175*														
Age	3.7333	1.35937	.198*	.859**													
School Level	2.8200	.94172	.024	.008	.046												
Qualification	2.6800	.92917	.278**	.201*	.203*	.363**											
Designation	1.1000	.39714	.184*	.333**	.373**	-.149	.105										
Lazy	2.7750	.70992	.154	.212	-.021	.044	.152	.074									
Industrious	3.3133	.59865	-.269**	.029	.095	-.009	-.174*	-.048	-.172*								
Incapable	2.3367	.69574	.076	-.158	-.119	-.048	-.037	.108	.442**	-.076							
Capable	4.0633	.58087	-.029	-.005	.039	.079	-.046	-.013	-.101	.249**	-.388**						
Untrustworthy	2.7133	.71910	.192*	-.016	.017	-.062	.090	.195*	.457**	-.123	.650**	-.335**					
Trustworthy	3.7000	.46161	-.049	.112	.075	.029	.005	-.073	-.116	.335**	-.235**	.397**	-.254**				
X-Theory	2.6083	.58303	.172*	-.099	-.049	-.026	.084	.153	.770**	-.150	.845**	-.333**	.855**	-.245**			
Y-Theory	3.6922	.40549	-.165*	.055	.094	.044	-.106	-.058	-.177*	.738**	-.312**	.751**	-.317**	.734**	-.326**		
Job Satisfaction	3.1625	.63006	-.252**	.001	.038	-.045	-.256**	.079	-.207*	.291**	-.229**	.281**	-.197*	.094	-.256**	.313**	

Note: n=150. Gender was coded as: 1 for female, 2 for male. Designation was coded as: 1 for teachers, 2 for Vice principals and 3 for principal. \*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). \*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

## Discussion

The present study examined the impact of Theory X/Y managerial assumption on the level of job satisfaction of teachers and principals in Bhutanese schools. The findings indicated that most of the school staff are theory Y oriented and it was positively related to the job satisfaction. The school staff believes that they are industrious, capable of contributing to achieve the organizational goals and are trustworthy. On the contrary, the three components of the dimensions of Theory X managerial assumptions viz. lazy, incapable and untrustworthy were negatively related to the job satisfaction. This finding was concurrent to the findings of Gurbuz et al. (2014) and it provides sufficient evidences that theory Y managerial assumptions which leads to participative or democratic school leader behaviours are more likely be more effective than theory X managerial assumptions which leads to autocratic school leaders.

The study also revealed a strong relationship between the Theory Y managerial assumption and the job satisfaction of teachers, vice principals and principals. This finding supports that theory Y managerial assumption can impact followers' satisfaction with the organization and its function (Gurbuz et al., 2014), influences affective commitment towards the goal of organization (Sahin,

2012) and can robust organizational performances (Arslan&Staub, 2013). Moreover, both at the individual and at the group level, it was concurrent to findings of Lawter et al. (2015) that “manager X/Y behavior fully mediates the relationships between manager X/Y attitudes and individual and group-level performance” (p.96). A strong job satisfaction of the school staff can positively contribute to the school connectedness. The study also found that vice principals were least satisfied with their job comparing to the teachers and principal. This finding calls for further examination on why vice principals are less oriented to the theory Y assumptions comparing to teachers and principals.

The study also found that age groups, education levels, levels of schools participants are currently teaching and seniority in service have no significant effect on job satisfaction and theory X/Y managerial assumptions. The absence of significant relationship confirms that change from Theory X to theory Y mindset is a difficult process and it “requires an extensive appraisal and intervening of the patterns of behavior in each style” (Sahin, 2012, p. 170) that would help to inculcate theory Y mindset. The age of an individual and number of years in service will not contribute in natural development of managerial beliefs. Therefore, providing/collecting feedback remains as an essential instrument to check the

accuracy of managerial self-perceptions and can increase self-awareness of individuals (Gurbuz et al., 2014) as McGregor(1966) asserted that “managerial attitudes reflect deep-seated beliefs” (as in Kopelman et al., 2008, p. 267). School as an organization should plan intensive education and skill development programs to develop theory Y managerial attitude by appreciating industriousness, capability and trustworthiness of entire teachers.

### Conclusion

The principal monitors and supervises performance of teachers using individual performances appraisal tools in most of the schools. The principal manage in a controlling and commanding fashion so that the school beliefs are brought to life by teacher behaviors (Kopelman et al., 2010). The schools in Bhutan conducts school level monitoring by the head of departments, academic head and principals periodically to keep teachers working towards the fulfillment of student learning. This practice is seen to be more of theory X approach as teachers lack attitudes towards reflective teaching prerequisite like open-mindedness, responsibility and wholeheartedness (Wangdi, 2016). And it is more of “traditional mechanistic structures with control-oriented culture” (Kopelman et al., 2010, p. 269). In modern school culture, “an organic structures with participative involvement-oriented cultures, empowered self-managed terms, and managers serving as coaches or facilitators (Kopelman et al., 2010, p. 269) can promote theory Y mindset maximizing contribution by teachers towards school development.

The findings from this study can inform principals that theory Y mindset can promote the job satisfaction of the teachers and can help them predict the effectiveness of their managerial styles. It confirms that theory Y mindset can cause democratic/participative leadership and theory X can cause autocratic/directive leadership (Sahin, 2012). Moreover, this paper call for detail study on why vice principals are least satisfied and what contributes towards their job satisfaction.

The present study should acknowledge the limitations for future researchers. The findings should be validated by large sample group and in-

depth qualitative surveys in order to generalize the finding from this study. This study couldn't study the relationship between theory X/Y managerial behavior and job satisfaction of teachers.

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