

TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP, WORK ETHIC, AND SCHOOL CLIMATE AS PREDICTORS OF TEACHER WORK COMMITMENT: A PATH ANALYSIS OF PUBLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS IN BELAWANG, INDONESIA

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Abstract

Teacher work commitment is central to school functioning because it reflects teachers' willingness to sustain professional effort and contribute to organizational goals. This study examined the direct and indirect relationships among principals' transformational leadership, teachers' work ethic, school climate, and teacher work commitment in public elementary schools in Belawang District, Barito Kuala Regency, Indonesia. A quantitative explanatory, cross-sectional survey design was used. The population comprised 118 teachers, of whom 88 were selected through proportional random sampling. Data were collected using five-point Likert-scale questionnaires and analyzed using descriptive statistics, assumption testing, multiple regression, and path analysis. The findings show that transformational leadership was rated very high, whereas work ethic, school climate, and teacher work commitment were rated high. In the path model, transformational leadership was positively associated with teacher work commitment ($\beta = .176$), work ethic was positively associated with teacher work commitment ($\beta = .169$), and school climate showed the strongest direct association with teacher work commitment ($\beta = .641$). Transformational leadership was also positively associated with school climate ($\beta = .567$), while work ethic showed a positive association with school climate ($\beta = .893$). The reported indirect effects of transformational leadership and work ethic on teacher work commitment through school climate were .363 and .572, respectively. The final regression model explained 82.9% of the variance in teacher work commitment. These findings indicate that leadership and individual work orientation operate within a school-level relational context. Because the design is cross-sectional, the reported paths should be interpreted as statistical associations and indirect effects rather than definitive causal effects.

Keywords: transformational leadership, work ethic, school climate, teacher work commitment, path analysis, elementary education

Abstrak

Komitmen kerja guru memegang peranan penting dalam berfungsinya sekolah karena mencerminkan kesediaan guru untuk terus melakukan upaya profesional dan berkontribusi terhadap tujuan organisasi. Penelitian ini mengkaji hubungan langsung dan tidak langsung antara kepemimpinan transformasional kepala sekolah, etos kerja guru, iklim sekolah, dan komitmen kerja guru di sekolah dasar negeri di Kecamatan Belawang, Kabupaten Barito Kuala, Indonesia. Desain penelitian yang digunakan adalah survei eksplanatori kuantitatif dengan pendekatan cross-sectional. Populasi

penelitian terdiri dari 118 guru, di mana 88 di antaranya dipilih melalui pengambilan sampel acak proporsional. Data dikumpulkan menggunakan kuesioner skala Likert lima poin dan dianalisis dengan statistik deskriptif, pengujian asumsi, regresi berganda, serta analisis jalur. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kepemimpinan transformasional dinilai sangat tinggi, sedangkan etos kerja, iklim sekolah, dan komitmen kerja guru dinilai tinggi. Dalam model jalur, kepemimpinan transformasional berhubungan positif dengan komitmen kerja guru ($\beta = .176$), etos kerja berhubungan positif dengan komitmen kerja guru ($\beta = .169$), dan iklim sekolah menunjukkan hubungan langsung terkuat dengan komitmen kerja guru ($\beta = .641$). Kepemimpinan transformasional juga berkorelasi positif dengan iklim sekolah ($\beta = 0,567$), sementara etos kerja menunjukkan hubungan positif dengan iklim sekolah ($\beta = 0,893$). Efek tidak langsung yang dilaporkan dari kepemimpinan transformasional dan etos kerja terhadap komitmen kerja guru melalui iklim sekolah masing-masing sebesar 0,363 dan 0,572. Model regresi akhir menjelaskan 82,9% varians dalam komitmen kerja guru. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa kepemimpinan dan orientasi kerja individu beroperasi dalam konteks relasional tingkat sekolah. Karena desain penelitian ini bersifat cross-sectional, jalur yang dilaporkan sebaiknya ditafsirkan sebagai hubungan statistik dan efek tidak langsung, bukan sebagai efek kausal yang pasti.

Kata kunci: kepemimpinan transformasional, etos kerja, iklim sekolah, komitmen kerja guru, analisis jalur, pendidikan dasar

INTRODUCTION

Teacher commitment is an important organizational resource in schools because teachers' sustained identification with their work and school affects how consistently they participate in instructional, collaborative, and improvement activities. Classic organizational commitment theory conceptualizes commitment as a multidimensional psychological state involving affective attachment, perceived costs of leaving, and normative obligation (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Subsequent meta-analytic evidence shows that commitment is distinguishable from job satisfaction and other work attitudes and is associated with important organizational outcomes (Meyer et al., 2002). Earlier measurement work likewise established organizational commitment as a construct that can be assessed systematically through employees' identification with and involvement in an organization (Mowday et al., 1979). In school settings, commitment has been linked to teachers' willingness to contribute beyond minimum role requirements and to school improvement processes (Firestone & Rosenblum, 1988).

Leadership is one contextual factor that may shape teachers' commitment. Transformational leadership emphasizes vision, inspiration, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, and the mobilization of followers around shared goals. The Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire tradition operationalizes transformational leadership through theoretically distinct but related dimensions (Avolio et al., 1999), while empirical and meta-analytic research has documented positive relationships between transformational leadership and follower performance and work attitudes (Bass et al., 2003; Judge & Piccolo, 2004; Wang et al., 2011). In educational organizations, transformational leadership is particularly relevant because principals influence

organizational direction, professional learning, collaboration, and teachers' working conditions rather than merely supervising administrative compliance (Leithwood et al., 2008; Leithwood et al., 2017). Evidence from primary-school settings in Tanzania, for example, found relationships between transformational leadership, teachers' job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and organizational citizenship behavior (Nguni et al., 2006). Similar positive associations have been reported in Malaysia and Ethiopia (Selamat et al., 2013; Metaferia et al., 2023). A recent systematic review also indicates that the transformational-leadership/teacher-commitment relationship has been observed across educational contexts, although mediating mechanisms and contextual differences remain insufficiently examined (Xin et al., 2025).

A second factor is teachers' work ethic. Work ethic refers to a relatively enduring orientation toward work that emphasizes diligence, responsibility, moral standards, the centrality of work, and disciplined use of time. Evidence from elementary teachers has shown that specific work-ethic dimensions are associated with job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Ahn & Lee, 2008). Indonesian evidence similarly suggests that work ethic and work commitment are related to teacher performance and that organizational climate can form part of the broader explanatory structure (Asikin et al., 2023). However, work ethic should not be treated as an isolated individual attribute. Teachers work in social and organizational environments in which leadership, collegial relations, decision-making opportunities, innovation, and perceived support can strengthen or weaken the translation of individual work orientations into organizational commitment.

This organizational environment is captured in the construct of school climate. School climate concerns the quality and character of school life, including interpersonal relationships, norms, organizational structures, and teaching and learning practices (Cohen et al., 2009). Research with teachers has connected school climate with self-efficacy and job satisfaction (Aldridge & Fraser, 2016), while broader evidence shows that working conditions, leadership, collegial relations, and school context are associated with teachers' work-related attitudes (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011; Toropova et al., 2021). A recent international study of primary teachers found that dimensions of the school educational environment, including instructional innovation, decision-making, and cooperation, were related to teacher commitment (Al-Zu'bi et al., 2024). In Malaysia, school organizational climate was also moderately associated with primary teachers' commitment (Mohamad Zain & Shaffiee, 2023).

The theoretical and empirical literature therefore supports a model in which transformational leadership and work ethic are associated not only with teacher commitment directly but also with school climate, which may provide an organizational pathway through which these factors are translated into stronger commitment. Leadership practices can improve organizational conditions and teacher motivation (Thoonen et al., 2011), while school leadership research emphasizes the importance of organizational and relational pathways through which principals influence school functioning (Leithwood et

al., 2017). Recent meta-analytic evidence likewise reports a positive association between transformational leadership and teachers' organizational commitment (Sun et al., 2025).

Despite this literature, three gaps remain relevant to the Indonesian public elementary-school context. First, many studies examine transformational leadership and teacher commitment without explicitly modeling school climate as an intervening variable. Second, studies of work ethic frequently treat it as a direct predictor of performance or commitment rather than examining whether its association with commitment is transmitted through school climate. Third, evidence from small administrative districts in Indonesia remains limited. The present study addresses these gaps by examining a path model involving four variables: transformational leadership (X1), work ethic (X2), school climate (Z), and teacher work commitment (Y). The model is consistent with the broader literature but is tested within the specific context of public elementary schools in Belawang District.

The study aims to estimate the direct relationships of transformational leadership and work ethic with school climate and teacher work commitment, the direct relationship between school climate and teacher work commitment, and the indirect relationships of transformational leadership and work ethic with teacher work commitment through school climate.

H1. Transformational leadership is positively associated with teacher work commitment.

H2. Work ethic is positively associated with teacher work commitment.

H3. School climate is positively associated with teacher work commitment.

H4. Transformational leadership is positively associated with school climate.

H5. Work ethic is positively associated with school climate.

H6. Transformational leadership has a positive indirect association with teacher work commitment through school climate.

H7. Work ethic has a positive indirect association with teacher work commitment through school climate.

METHOD

Research Design and Setting

The study used a quantitative explanatory design with a cross-sectional survey approach. Quantitative survey designs are appropriate when the objective is to estimate relationships among predefined variables using standardized measures (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The study was conducted in public elementary schools in Belawang District, Barito Kuala Regency, South Kalimantan, Indonesia. The unit of analysis was the individual teacher.

Population and Sampling

The population consisted of 118 teachers distributed across 16 public elementary schools. A sample of 88 teachers (74.6% of the population) was selected using proportional

random sampling. The allocation reproduced from the source manuscript is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Population and proportional random-sampling allocation.

SCHOOL	POPULATION	SAMPLE	SAMPLING PROPORTION
SD NEGERI SUKARAMAI	7	5	71.4%
SD NEGERI BAMBANGIN	7	5	71.4%
SD NEGERI PARIMATA 1	8	6	75.0%
SD NEGERI PARIMATA 2	7	5	71.4%
SD NEGERI BELAWANG 1	5	4	80.0%
SD NEGERI BELAWANG 2	9	7	77.8%
SD NEGERI BINAAN BARU	7	5	71.4%
SD NEGERI SUNGAI SALUANG	8	6	75.0%
SD NEGERI SUNGAI SALUANG PASAR	8	6	75.0%
SD NEGERI KARANG DUKUH	7	5	71.4%
SD NEGERI KARANG BUAH	9	7	77.8%
SD NEGERI MURUNG KERAMAT 1	7	5	71.4%

SD NEGERI MURUNG KERAMAT 2	8	6	75.0%
SD NEGERI SAMUDA	7	5	71.4%
SD NEGERI RANGGA SURYA	7	5	71.4%
SD NEGERI PATIH SELERA	7	5	71.4%
TOTAL	118	88	74.6%

Measures and Data Collection

Data were collected using structured questionnaires with five response categories on a Likert-type scale. The source manuscript operationalizes transformational leadership, work ethic, school climate, and teacher work commitment as the four principal constructs. The transformational-leadership framework is consistent with the established literature on idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Avolio et al., 1999). Work ethic was treated as an individual work orientation emphasizing diligence, responsibility, and positive attitudes toward work, consistent with prior teacher research (Ahn & Lee, 2008). School climate was treated as the perceived quality of interpersonal, organizational, and instructional conditions in the school (Cohen et al., 2009). Teacher work commitment was conceptualized as teachers' psychological attachment and obligation to their organization and professional responsibilities (Meyer & Allen, 1991; Mowday et al., 1979).

The source manuscript does not provide sufficient information on the item-development process, instrument adaptation, content validation, construct validation, or reliability coefficients. Accordingly, no reliability coefficient is invented in this revision. For journal submission, the authors should insert the original validity and reliability results from the instrument-testing output, including the number of retained items and the reliability coefficient for each construct.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the four constructs. Assumption checks included normality, linearity, heteroskedasticity, and multicollinearity. Path analysis was then used to estimate the direct paths from transformational leadership and work ethic to school climate and teacher work commitment, the path from school climate to teacher work commitment, and the corresponding indirect paths. Path analysis is appropriate for estimating a system of observed-variable relationships, provided that the model is theoretically specified and the assumptions are examined (Kline, 2016).

The indirect effects were calculated from the product of the relevant path coefficients and evaluated using the indirect-effect test reported in the source analysis. Contemporary mediation literature emphasizes that indirect effects should be evaluated directly rather than relying only on a sequence of separate significance tests (MacKinnon et al., 2002; Preacher & Hayes, 2008). Because the data are cross-sectional and observational, the terms 'indirect effect' and 'path' are used descriptively; they do not establish temporal or causal mediation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Respondent Characteristics

Among the 88 respondents, 64 (72.73%) were women and 24 (27.27%) were men. Eighty-six respondents (97.73%) held a bachelor's degree and two (2.27%) held a two-year diploma. Regarding tenure, 39 teachers (44.32%) had worked for fewer than 10 years, 35 (39.77%) for 10–20 years, 12 (13.64%) for 21–30 years, and 2 (2.27%) for more than 30 years.

Table 2. Respondent characteristics (N = 88).

CHARACTERISTIC	CATEGORY	N	%
GENDER	Women	64	72.73
GENDER	Men	24	27.27
EDUCATION	Bachelor's degree	86	97.73
EDUCATION	Two-year diploma	2	2.27
TENURE	<10 years	39	44.32
TENURE	10–20 years	35	39.77
TENURE	21–30 years	12	13.64
TENURE	>30 years	2	2.27

Descriptive Statistics and Assumption Tests

The reported means were 137.10 for transformational leadership (SD = 6.623), 127.22 for work ethic (SD = 6.398), 76.32 for school climate (SD = 3.891), and 72.06 for teacher work commitment (SD = 3.599). In the original classification, transformational leadership was categorized as very high, whereas work ethic, school climate, and teacher work commitment were categorized as high.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics and reported Kolmogorov–Smirnov significance values.

VARIABLE	MEAN	SD	K–S P
TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP	137.10	6.623	.200

WORK ETHIC	127.22	6.398	.065
SCHOOL CLIMATE	76.32	3.891	.052
TEACHER WORK COMMITMENT	72.06	3.599	.057

All four reported Kolmogorov–Smirnov significance values exceeded .05, indicating no evidence against normality under the criterion used in the source analysis. The linearity tests reported $p < .001$ for all five modeled relationships. The residual scatterplot was interpreted in the source manuscript as showing no systematic heteroskedastic pattern. For multicollinearity, the reported tolerance values were .570 for transformational leadership, .171 for work ethic, and .203 for school climate, with VIF values of 1.753, 5.850, and 4.930, respectively. These values are below the conventional $VIF < 10$ criterion used in the original analysis, although the work-ethic VIF indicates that collinearity should still be monitored in future analyses.

Path Analysis

The final regression model predicting teacher work commitment from transformational leadership, work ethic, and school climate yielded $R = .911$, $R^2 = .829$, adjusted $R^2 = .823$, and a standard error of estimate of 1.513. Thus, the three predictors jointly accounted for 82.9% of the observed variance in teacher work commitment in this sample.

Table 4. Direct path coefficients reported in the source analysis.

PATH	B	REPORTED T	P	INTERPRETATION
TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP → COMMITMENT	.176	$t = 2.942$	.004	Positive, statistically significant
WORK ETHIC → COMMITMENT	.169	t reported as 1.951*	.025	Positive, statistically significant as reported
SCHOOL CLIMATE → COMMITMENT	.641	$t = 6.402$	<.001	Positive, statistically significant
TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP → CLIMATE	.567	$t = 6.383$	<.001	Positive, statistically significant
WORK ETHIC → CLIMATE	.893	$t = 18.355$	<.001	Positive, statistically significant

*The source manuscript reports $t = 1.951$ and $p = .025$ for the work-ethic → commitment path while also comparing the t value with a two-tailed critical value of 1.987. Because these values are internally inconsistent, the t value should be verified against the original

SPSS output before submission. The present manuscript does not alter the reported p value.

Indirect Effects

Table 5. Indirect effects through school climate.

INDIRECT PATH	CALCULATION	INDIRECT EFFECT	REPORTED TEST	DECISION
TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP → CLIMATE → COMMITMENT	$.567 \times .641$	.363	4.480	Significant as reported
WORK ETHIC → CLIMATE → COMMITMENT	$.893 \times .641$	.572	6.065	Significant as reported

The product of the path coefficients reproduces the reported indirect effects: $.567 \times .641 = .363$ and $.893 \times .641 = .572$ after rounding. Both indirect-effect test statistics exceeded the reported critical value of 1.987, leading the original analysis to classify both indirect paths as statistically significant.

DISCUSSION

Transformational Leadership and Teacher Work Commitment

The positive path from transformational leadership to teacher work commitment ($\beta = .176$, $p = .004$) is consistent with a broad body of leadership research. Transformational leadership provides a mechanism through which principals articulate shared direction, recognize teachers’ contributions, stimulate professional thinking, and provide individualized support. Such practices can strengthen teachers’ identification with school goals and their willingness to sustain organizational effort. Meta-analytic evidence indicates that transformational leadership has meaningful relationships with work-related criteria (Judge & Piccolo, 2004; Wang et al., 2011), while school-leadership research emphasizes that effective principals influence organizational conditions and professional capacity (Leithwood et al., 2008; Leithwood et al., 2017). The present finding also accords with empirical studies in primary and secondary education showing positive relationships between transformational leadership and teacher commitment (Nguni et al., 2006; Selamat et al., 2013; Metaferia et al., 2023).

Work Ethic and Teacher Work Commitment

Work ethic also showed a positive direct path to teacher work commitment ($\beta = .169$, $p = .025$ as reported). The coefficient was smaller than the direct coefficients for school climate and transformational leadership, but it remained statistically significant in the reported analysis. This pattern is consistent with the proposition that teachers' diligence, responsibility, moral orientation, and centrality of work can contribute to stronger attachment to organizational goals. Ahn and Lee (2008) found that several work-ethic dimensions among elementary teachers were positively related to organizational commitment. Indonesian evidence from elementary and junior-secondary contexts similarly indicates that work ethic is associated with teacher work outcomes and commitment-related constructs (Werna et al., 2023; Asikin et al., 2023).

School Climate and Teacher Work Commitment

School climate had the strongest direct path to teacher work commitment ($\beta = .641$, $p < .001$). This result is theoretically plausible because commitment is formed within a social organization rather than solely within the individual. A school climate characterized by supportive relationships, cooperation, fair participation, and favorable instructional conditions can provide teachers with social and organizational resources that make sustained commitment more feasible. School-climate scholarship defines climate as a multidimensional property of school life encompassing relationships, norms, teaching and learning, and organizational structures (Cohen et al., 2009). Research has linked teachers' perceptions of climate with self-efficacy and job satisfaction (Aldridge & Fraser, 2016), while broader evidence indicates that working conditions and school context are important for teachers' work-related attitudes (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011; Toropova et al., 2021). Recent primary-school evidence also identifies instructional innovation, decision-making, and cooperation as climate dimensions associated with teacher commitment (Al-Zu'bi et al., 2024).

Transformational Leadership and School Climate

Transformational leadership was positively associated with school climate ($\beta = .567$, $p < .001$). This relationship suggests that principals' leadership behaviors may be reflected in the organizational conditions perceived by teachers. Leadership research emphasizes that school leaders contribute to school improvement partly by shaping organizational processes, professional relationships, and the conditions in which teachers work (Leithwood et al., 2008; Thoonen et al., 2011). Thus, the role of the principal extends beyond direct supervision: leadership can become part of the social architecture through which teachers experience collaboration, support, professional autonomy, and shared purpose. The finding is also consistent with the international literature connecting leadership practices with organizational conditions and teacher motivation (Thoonen et al., 2011).

Work Ethic and School Climate

The path from work ethic to school climate was positive and large in the source model ($\beta = .893$, $p < .001$). This coefficient should be interpreted carefully because the magnitude

is high and the predictors also show a non-trivial degree of collinearity ($VIF = 5.850$ for work ethic). Substantively, the result may indicate that teachers' everyday patterns of diligence, responsibility, cooperation, and service are reflected in how they collectively experience the school environment. Nevertheless, a cross-sectional design cannot establish whether individual work ethic shapes climate, whether a positive climate strengthens teachers' work orientations, or whether both are influenced by unmeasured organizational factors. The reciprocal interpretation is particularly relevant because school climate is a collective phenomenon rather than a purely individual attribute (Cohen et al., 2009).

School Climate as an Indirect Pathway

The reported indirect effect of transformational leadership through school climate was .363, while the indirect effect of work ethic through school climate was .572. These values indicate that the associations transmitted through school climate were statistically meaningful in the reported path model. The pattern is compatible with mediation logic: leadership and work orientation are connected with a school-level context, and that context is strongly connected with teacher commitment. Mediation research recommends examining the indirect effect itself rather than relying solely on separate tests of component paths (MacKinnon et al., 2002; Preacher & Hayes, 2008). Recent literature similarly emphasizes the importance of mediating and contextual mechanisms in understanding teacher commitment (Xin et al., 2025; Sun et al., 2025). However, the term 'mediation' should remain cautious here because all variables were measured at one time point. A longitudinal or multilevel design would be required to establish temporal ordering and a stronger causal interpretation.

Integrated Interpretation

Taken together, the results support an integrated interpretation in which teacher commitment is associated with both individual and organizational conditions. Transformational leadership provides direction and support; work ethic represents a teacher-level orientation toward work; and school climate captures the environment in which these orientations are enacted. The relatively strong school-climate coefficient suggests that organizational context deserves explicit attention in teacher-retention and school-improvement strategies. This interpretation is compatible with research showing that leadership, working conditions, professional relationships, and teacher attitudes are interconnected rather than isolated predictors (Leithwood et al., 2017; Eryilmaz et al., 2025). It also aligns with recent Indonesian evidence that combines leadership, climate, work ethic, and commitment in teacher-related models (Werna et al., 2023; Asikin et al., 2023).

Practical Implications

First, principal-development programs should emphasize transformational practices that are visible in everyday school management: communicating a shared direction, providing

individualized professional support, encouraging intellectual engagement, and recognizing teacher contributions.

Second, school-improvement plans should treat school climate as a strategic organizational outcome rather than a background condition. Collaboration, respectful communication, participatory decision-making, instructional innovation, and supportive professional relationships should be monitored systematically.

Third, strengthening teacher work ethic should go beyond exhortations about discipline. Professional development can connect responsibility and diligence with reflective teaching, innovation, collaborative problem solving, and service to students.

Fourth, education authorities should avoid interpreting high commitment scores solely as evidence of organizational effectiveness. Commitment should be examined together with instructional quality, professional learning, student outcomes, workload, and teacher well-being.

6. Limitations

The study is cross-sectional; therefore, the directionality implied by the path model cannot be interpreted as definitive causal ordering.

The sample is limited to 88 teachers in public elementary schools in one district. Generalization to other regions, school levels, or school sectors should therefore be cautious.

All principal variables were collected through teacher questionnaires, creating the possibility of common-method bias. Future studies should combine teacher reports with principal reports, observational indicators, or administrative data.

The source manuscript does not report psychometric evidence for the instruments. Reliability, validity, item-retention procedures, and evidence for construct distinctiveness should be added from the original instrument-development and SPSS records before journal submission.

The high path coefficient between work ethic and school climate ($\beta = .893$) and the work-ethic VIF of 5.850 warrant additional diagnostic analysis in a future study, preferably using confirmatory factor analysis and a multilevel or structural equation model.

CONCLUSION

This study found statistically significant positive paths among transformational leadership, work ethic, school climate, and teacher work commitment in the public elementary-school context of Belawang District. Transformational leadership and work ethic were positively associated with both school climate and teacher work commitment, while school climate showed the strongest direct association with teacher work commitment ($\beta = .641$). The reported indirect effects through school climate were .363 for transformational leadership and .572 for work ethic. The final regression model explained 82.9% of the variance in teacher work commitment. The central implication is

that teacher commitment should be understood as a product of interacting individual and organizational conditions rather than as an isolated personal attribute. Nevertheless, because the study is cross-sectional, the findings support an empirically observed path structure rather than definitive causal claims.

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