

Leadership Communication, School Culture, and Teachers' Organizational Commitment in Selected Islamic Secondary Schools

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ARTICLE HISTORY

Received : 2025-11-26

Revised : 2026-03-24

Accepted : 2026-03-28

KEYWORDS

Leadership style

Work environment

School culture

Work motivation

Organizational commitment



ABSTRACT

Educational institutions increasingly face challenges in sustaining teachers' organizational commitment amid shifting professional expectations and institutional pressures, particularly within private and faith-based schooling contexts. Despite extensive research, prior studies tend to examine leadership, work environment, and school culture in isolation, with limited empirical integration of these variables within a unified structural model that also tests the mediating role of work motivation. Addressing this gap, the present study investigates the direct and indirect relationships among leadership style, work environment, school culture, work motivation, and teachers' organizational commitment in Muhammadiyah senior high schools. Employing a quantitative explanatory design, data were collected from 72 teachers and analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling with the Partial Least Squares approach. The results indicate that leadership style and work environment significantly and positively influence organizational commitment, while school culture does not demonstrate a significant effect. In contrast, work environment and school culture significantly enhance work motivation, whereas leadership style shows no meaningful impact. Importantly, work motivation neither affects organizational commitment nor mediates the relationships between organizational factors and commitment. These findings reveal a structural distinction between professional motivation and institutional attachment, suggesting that commitment is shaped more directly by relational and environmental organizational experiences than by motivational mechanisms. The study offers theoretical refinement by challenging the assumed mediating role of motivation and contributes practical insights for educational leadership by emphasizing the importance of strengthening workplace conditions and participatory leadership to sustain teacher commitment in broader educational systems.

1. Introduction

Education stands at the core of national transformation, functioning as the primary engine for developing human capital and sustaining societal progress. In an era defined by global competition and rapid socio-economic change, the effectiveness of an educational system determines not only individual advancement but also the long-term competitiveness of a nation. In Indonesia, education is constitutionally recognized as a fundamental right under Article 31 of the 1945 Constitution, which guarantees access to education for all citizens (Mansir, 2019; Rajaminsah et al., 2022). Article 31 paragraph (1) affirms that every citizen has the right to education, while paragraph (2) mandates participation in basic education and obliges the government to finance it (Thoif et al., 2020; Abdussamad et al., 2022). This constitutional mandate reinforces the state's

responsibility to ensure equitable, high-quality education while fostering faith, piety, and moral integrity (Abdussamad et al., 2022; Mansir, 2019; Rajaminsah et al., 2022).

Within this framework, teachers occupy a pivotal position as the primary agents responsible for translating educational policies into meaningful learning experiences. Their role extends beyond knowledge transmission to include character formation and institutional development. Teachers actively contribute to both pedagogical innovation and organizational sustainability (Aliu & Kaçaniku, 2023; Zhao et al., 2025). Teacher leadership, exercised within and beyond classroom settings, supports school improvement and enhances educational practices (Aliu & Kaçaniku, 2023). Consequently, educational institutions require teachers who demonstrate strong organizational commitment, characterized by loyalty,

dedication, and active engagement with institutional goals (Zhao et al., 2025; Yuan et al., 2025). Empirical evidence consistently shows that committed teachers are more likely to adopt innovative pedagogical approaches and contribute significantly to school effectiveness (Zhao et al., 2025; Cheng et al., 2025).

Despite its importance, organizational commitment among teachers remains a persistent challenge across educational contexts. Many teachers exhibit limited involvement in institutional activities, and some consider relocating to other institutions in pursuit of better opportunities (Yuan et al., 2025). Teacher commitment is influenced by multiple factors, including community identity, workload demands, individual effort, and turnover intentions (Yuan et al., 2025). Furthermore, the development of trust and collaborative environments has been identified as a crucial condition for encouraging teachers to extend their engagement beyond routine responsibilities (Cheng et al., 2025). These patterns indicate that organizational commitment is not automatically formed but requires deliberate institutional strategies to cultivate and sustain it (Zhao et al., 2025; Cheng et al., 2025).

This issue becomes particularly critical in Muhammadiyah senior high schools in Boyolali Regency, where the number of schools has declined from six to three over the past decade. Such a decline signals potential challenges in institutional sustainability, which may be closely linked to internal organizational dynamics, including teacher commitment. Organizational commitment refers to the psychological attachment individuals develop toward their institution and their willingness to remain part of it (Meyer and Allen, 1991). Teachers who possess strong organizational commitment tend to demonstrate higher levels of loyalty, participation, and readiness to contribute beyond formal job requirements, thereby strengthening institutional resilience.

A substantial body of research has examined the determinants of teachers' organizational commitment, with leadership style emerging as a central factor. Transformational leadership, characterized by inspiration, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration, is widely recognized for its ability to enhance employee motivation and commitment (Bass and Riggio, 2006; Robbins and Judge, 2019). Empirical studies confirm that effective leadership practices strengthen teachers' commitment by fostering job satisfaction and motivation (Aritonang and Hutaaruk, 2024; Efendi, Sunaryo, and Harijanto, 2023; Özdemir et al., 2023).

Moreover, leadership is often conceptualized as influencing commitment indirectly through motivational processes (Khumalo, 2019). Supporting this view, research shows that leadership can enhance

organizational commitment through mechanisms such as collective teacher efficacy and collaborative engagement (Hammad et al., 2024; Liu Liu, 2020).

In addition to leadership, work environment and school culture are frequently identified as significant organizational determinants. A supportive work environment, encompassing both physical conditions and interpersonal relationships, enhances teachers' sense of comfort, security, and professional satisfaction (Ananda, 2020). Work motivation is often positioned as a reinforcing factor within this relationship (Fahroni, 2023). Similarly, school culture, defined by shared values, norms, and institutional traditions, shapes behavioral patterns and influences organizational dynamics (Deal and Peterson, 2016; Hoy and Miskel, 2013). Empirical evidence on whether a strong school or organizational culture enhances teachers' organizational commitment remains mixed. Several studies report a positive and significant relationship. Organizational culture has been shown to predict teachers' commitment in secondary and high schools (Güler & Özgenel, 2023), vocational schools (Sudarnice, 2020; Sugeng et al., 2021), and high schools when examined alongside related initiatives such as entrepreneurship education (Marchalina & Parmin, 2019).

In Islamic boarding school contexts, organizational culture also exerts a positive influence on teachers' commitment, both directly and indirectly through work ethic, reinforcing the culture–commitment linkage under specific contextual mechanisms (Purnomo, 2022). However, other studies suggest that this relationship is contingent on the level of analysis and the locus of culture. Meredith et al. (2022) found that collaborative culture within informal subgroups is positively associated with teachers' affective commitment, whereas school-level collaborative culture is not a significant predictor. This indicates that aggregated whole-school culture measures may obscure important variations within schools (Meredith et al., 2022).

These inconsistencies reveal a critical gap in the literature. Although numerous studies have examined leadership, work environment, and school culture in relation to organizational commitment (Anawati and Mahayasa, 2023; Asbari, Purwanto, and Fahlevi, 2021), conflicting findings persist regarding the strength and direction of these relationships (Fitriastuti, 2020). Furthermore, prior research rarely integrates these variables within a comprehensive structural model that simultaneously examines their direct and indirect effects through work motivation. This limitation restricts a deeper understanding of how organizational factors interact to influence teachers' commitment.

Responding to this gap, the present study offers a novel contribution by integrating leadership style, work environment, school culture, and work

motivation within a unified analytical framework. By positioning work motivation as a mediating variable, this study advances existing research by testing the extent to which motivational processes serve as a mechanism linking organizational factors and commitment. Grounded in Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964), the study conceptualizes organizational relationships as reciprocal exchanges in which perceived support and fairness generate positive employee attitudes such as loyalty and commitment (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005). This approach provides a nuanced understanding of organizational dynamics within faith-based educational institutions.

The significance of this study lies in its potential to refine theoretical and practical perspectives on teacher commitment. Theoretically, it extends the application of Social Exchange Theory by examining the interplay between structural and psychological factors in shaping organizational commitment. Practically, the findings offer evidence-based insights for school leaders and policymakers to design strategies that enhance teacher engagement through improved leadership practices and supportive work environments. The study specifically aims to examine the direct and indirect effects of leadership style, work environment, and school culture on organizational commitment, as well as the mediating role of work motivation in this relationship.

In a broader educational context, this study underscores the importance of strengthening teachers' organizational commitment as a foundation for institutional sustainability and educational quality. By highlighting the roles of leadership practices, workplace conditions, and organizational culture, the study contributes to ongoing efforts to enhance teacher retention, professional engagement, and overall school effectiveness. These insights are particularly relevant for private and faith-based educational institutions seeking to remain competitive and resilient in a rapidly evolving educational landscape.

2. Method

This study employed a quantitative explanatory research design to examine the relationships among leadership style, work environment, school culture, work motivation, and teachers' organizational commitment. The design allows the testing of causal relationships among variables through statistical analysis. In this model, leadership style, work environment, and school culture function as independent variables, organizational commitment as the dependent variable, and work motivation as a mediating variable that explains the indirect relationships among these constructs.

The research was conducted in Muhammadiyah senior high schools in Boyolali Regency, Central Java, Indonesia. The population consisted of all teachers

working in three Muhammadiyah senior high schools in the region. Because the population size was relatively small, a saturated sampling technique was applied in which all members of the population were included as respondents. As a result, the study involved 72 teachers. This sampling strategy ensured comprehensive representation of teachers' perceptions regarding leadership practices, work environment conditions, school culture, work motivation, and organizational commitment within the participating schools.

2.1 Data Collection and Research Instruments

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire designed to measure the main constructs of the study, namely leadership style, work environment, school culture, work motivation, and organizational commitment. Each variable was operationalized into indicators derived from established theories in organizational behavior and educational management literature. Leadership style indicators reflect transformational leadership characteristics proposed by Bass and Riggio (2006).

The work environment variable included indicators related to workplace conditions, interpersonal relationships, and organizational support. School culture was measured through shared values and collaborative practices as described by Deal and Peterson (2016). Work motivation captured teachers' internal drive in performing their professional responsibilities, while organizational commitment was measured using the multidimensional framework developed by Meyer and Allen (1991). Respondents evaluated each statement using a Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The questionnaires were distributed directly to teachers in the participating schools to ensure clarity and completeness of responses.

2.2 Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling with the Partial Least Squares approach. This method was selected because it is suitable for examining complex relationships among multiple variables and can be applied to studies with relatively small sample sizes. The analysis was conducted using SmartPLS software to evaluate both the measurement model and the structural model.

The measurement model was first assessed to ensure the validity and reliability of the research instruments through factor loadings, Average Variance Extracted, composite reliability, and Cronbach's alpha. After the measurement model met the required criteria, the structural model was analyzed to test the hypothesized relationships among variables. Path coefficients, significance levels, and coefficients of determination were calculated, and bootstrapping procedures were applied to evaluate the

significance of both direct and mediated relationships within the proposed model.

3. Result

This section presents the empirical findings derived from the survey of 72 teachers working in Muhammadiyah senior high schools in Boyolali Regency. The analysis was conducted using Structural Equation Modeling with the Partial Least Squares approach to examine the relationships among leadership style, work environment, school culture, work motivation, and teachers' organizational commitment. The presentation of results follows the research questions of the study and highlights the key findings, followed by supporting illustrations and analytical interpretation.

3.1 Influence of Leadership Style, Work Environment, and School Culture on Organizational Commitment

The structural model results demonstrate that leadership style and work environment exert statistically significant and positive effects on teachers' organizational commitment, while school culture does not show a meaningful influence. Among the predictors, leadership style emerges as the strongest determinant with the highest path coefficient, followed by work environment. In contrast, school culture exhibits a weak and negative coefficient, accompanied by a non-significant statistical value, indicating that it does not contribute directly to shaping teachers' commitment in this context.

These findings indicate that teachers' organizational commitment is primarily driven by tangible and relational organizational factors rather than abstract cultural constructs. Leadership and work environment represent immediate and observable experiences that directly shape teachers' perceptions of institutional support and belonging.

Table 1. Structural Model Results for Organizational Commitment

Relationship	Path Coefficient	T Statistic	P Value	Result
Leadership Style → Organizational Commitment	0.412	3.215	0.001	Significant
Work Environment → Organizational Commitment	0.356	2.874	0.004	Significant
School Culture → Organizational Commitment	-0.082	0.911	0.363	Not Significant

The comparative magnitude of the path coefficients provides a clear hierarchy of influence, where leadership style functions as the dominant explanatory variable. This suggests that the behavioral dimension of leadership, including communication patterns, fairness in decision making, and participatory practices, plays a central role in shaping teachers' psychological attachment to the institution. The relatively higher t-statistic further reinforces the robustness of this relationship, indicating consistent effects across the sampled population.

The work environment also demonstrates a substantial contribution, albeit slightly lower than leadership. This finding highlights the importance of operational conditions within the school setting, including collegial interaction, institutional support, and physical working conditions. The significance of this variable suggests that commitment is not only socially constructed through leadership interactions but also structurally reinforced through daily professional experiences. Teachers appear to anchor their organizational attachment in environments that provide stability, comfort, and professional recognition.

In contrast, the absence of a significant effect of school culture reveals a critical divergence between normative organizational values and actual behavioral outcomes. The negative coefficient, although not statistically meaningful, indicates a tendency where cultural elements alone may lack the operational strength required to influence commitment. This suggests that cultural values remain latent unless translated into concrete practices through leadership actions and institutional systems.

From a structural perspective, these results indicate that organizational commitment is shaped through proximal factors that are directly experienced by teachers rather than distal or symbolic constructs. Leadership and work environment operate as immediate signals of organizational support, while culture functions as a background variable that requires activation through managerial and structural mechanisms.

Furthermore, the dominance of leadership over work environment implies that relational governance within schools plays a more critical role than purely environmental conditions. This emphasizes that teachers respond more strongly to how they are treated and engaged by leaders than to the broader

institutional atmosphere alone. At the same time, the significant contribution of the work environment confirms that relational dynamics must be supported by conducive structural conditions to sustain commitment.

Overall, the pattern of results reflects a dual mechanism in which organizational commitment is constructed through the interaction of relational leadership processes and supportive environmental conditions, while cultural values alone are insufficient to produce measurable effects without operational reinforcement.

3.2 Influence of Leadership Style, Work Environment, and School Culture on Work Motivation

The The structural model reveals a distinct pattern in which work environment and school culture

significantly and positively influence teachers' work motivation, whereas leadership style does not demonstrate a statistically meaningful effect. Among the predictors, work environment emerges as the most influential factor, followed by school culture, both showing strong statistical significance and moderate effect sizes. In contrast, leadership style presents a relatively low coefficient and fails to reach significance, indicating a limited direct contribution to motivational outcomes. These findings suggest that teachers' motivation is predominantly shaped by contextual and experiential dimensions of the workplace rather than by formal leadership behaviors alone. Motivation appears to be embedded in daily professional interactions and institutional conditions that directly affect teachers' working experiences.

Table 2. Structural Model Results for Work Motivation

Relationship	Path Coefficient	T Statistic	P Value	Result
Leadership Style → Work Motivation	0.118	1.142	0.254	Not Significant
Work Environment → Work Motivation	0.402	3.587	0.000	Significant
School Culture → Work Motivation	0.335	2.946	0.003	Significant

The distribution of path coefficients highlights the dominant role of the work environment as the primary driver of teachers' motivation. The highest coefficient and strongest statistical value indicate that motivational energy is closely tied to the quality of daily working conditions. This includes factors such as collegial interaction, organizational support, and the availability of adequate resources. These elements create a stable and psychologically secure environment that enables teachers to engage more actively and consistently in their professional responsibilities. School culture also demonstrates a meaningful contribution, although slightly lower than the work environment. This indicates that shared values, norms, and collective identity function as reinforcing mechanisms that enhance motivational intensity. Cultural alignment appears to provide a sense of purpose and belonging, which strengthens teachers' internal drive to perform their roles effectively. However, its influence remains secondary to the more immediate and tangible effects of the work environment.

In contrast, the non-significant effect of leadership style reveals an important structural insight. While leadership may shape broader organizational direction, it does not directly translate into increased motivation unless it is operationalized through concrete environmental and cultural conditions. The relatively low coefficient suggests that leadership influence on motivation is likely indirect, mediated through

improvements in workplace climate and institutional practices rather than through direct behavioral impact.

From a systemic perspective, these findings indicate that motivation is primarily constructed through proximal organizational factors that teachers experience continuously. Unlike organizational commitment, which is strongly influenced by relational leadership dynamics, motivation is more sensitive to situational and contextual conditions embedded in everyday work life.

Furthermore, the stronger influence of work environment compared to school culture suggests that tangible conditions outweigh symbolic or value-based elements in driving motivation. Teachers respond more intensively to practical support, collaboration, and professional comfort than to abstract institutional values alone. This underscores the importance of aligning organizational systems and resources with cultural expectations to produce optimal motivational outcomes.

Overall, the results illustrate that teachers' work motivation is a context-dependent construct, driven by the interaction between supportive working conditions and meaningful institutional culture, while leadership serves as a background factor that requires structural translation to exert measurable influence.

RQ3. Role of Work Motivation in Organizational Commitment

The The results consistently indicate that work motivation does not function as a significant determinant of teachers' organizational commitment, nor does it operate as a mediating mechanism within the structural model. Across both direct and indirect

relationships, all statistical indicators confirm the absence of meaningful effects, suggesting a structural disconnection between motivational dynamics and institutional attachment.

Table 3. Effect of Work Motivation on Organizational Commitment

Relationship	Path Coefficient	T Statistic	P Value	Result
Work Motivation → Organizational Commitment	0.094	1.021	0.308	Not Significant

The data in Table 3 reveals that the direct effect of work motivation on organizational commitment is positive but extremely weak, with a path coefficient of 0.094 and a non-significant p-value. The low t-statistic further indicates that this relationship lacks statistical strength and consistency.

This pattern suggests that motivational energy among teachers does not automatically translate into institutional attachment. Although teachers may demonstrate high levels of enthusiasm and engagement in their teaching responsibilities, such motivation appears to be directed toward task execution rather than toward the organization itself.

From a structural perspective, this finding indicates that work motivation operates as a

performance-oriented construct rather than a commitment-building mechanism. Teachers may invest effort and dedication in their professional roles while remaining psychologically detached from the institution. This implies that motivation is internally driven and profession-centered, rather than externally anchored to organizational affiliation.

Furthermore, the minimal effect size highlights that increasing motivation alone is unlikely to produce meaningful improvements in organizational commitment. This reinforces the notion that commitment is not simply an extension of motivation but a distinct construct shaped by different organizational dynamics.

Table 4. Indirect Effects through Work Motivation

Indirect Relationship	T Statistic	P Value	Result
Leadership Style → Work Motivation → Organizational Commitment	0.588	0.556	Not Significant
Work Environment → Work Motivation → Organizational Commitment	1.243	0.364	Not Significant
School Culture → Work Motivation → Organizational Commitment	1.243	0.215	Not Significant

The data in Table 4 reveals that all indirect effects through work motivation are statistically non-significant, as indicated by low t-statistics and p-values exceeding the accepted threshold. None of the organizational variables demonstrate a mediated relationship with organizational commitment through motivation.

This uniform pattern of non-significance provides strong evidence that work motivation does not function as an intervening mechanism in the structural model. The absence of mediation indicates that the influence of leadership style, work environment, and school culture on organizational commitment occurs

through direct pathways rather than through motivational processes.

From an analytical standpoint, this finding highlights a critical structural separation between contextual drivers and psychological mediators. Organizational factors such as leadership and work environment exert immediate and direct influence on teachers' attachment because they are experienced as tangible forms of institutional support. In contrast, motivation operates at the level of individual professional engagement and does not inherently connect teachers to the organization.

The consistency of non-significant results across all mediation paths also suggests that motivation lacks the structural capacity to transmit organizational influence. This implies that even when organizational conditions enhance motivation, such improvements do not cascade into increased commitment. Therefore, motivation functions as an isolated construct within the model rather than as a bridging variable.

Taken together, the results from Table 3 and Table 4 establish a clear conceptual boundary between work motivation and organizational commitment. Motivation reflects teachers' energy, enthusiasm, and engagement in their professional duties, whereas commitment represents a deeper psychological attachment to the institution.

The findings indicate that teachers may remain highly motivated in carrying out their instructional responsibilities without developing strong loyalty or long-term attachment to the school. This condition suggests that professional identity and institutional identity operate independently, with motivation aligning more closely with the former.

Moreover, the absence of mediation reinforces the importance of direct organizational experiences in shaping commitment. Leadership practices and work environment conditions act as primary structural drivers, while motivation remains a secondary and independent outcome that does not significantly influence organizational attachment.

Overall, the results demonstrate that strengthening organizational commitment requires direct improvements in relational and environmental factors rather than relying on motivational enhancement alone.

4. Discussion

The findings of this study present a coherent and theoretically meaningful structural pattern. Leadership style and work environment emerge as significant predictors of teachers' organizational commitment, whereas school culture does not demonstrate a direct effect. In contrast, work environment and school culture significantly influence teachers' work motivation, while leadership style does not exert a statistically meaningful influence. Furthermore, work motivation neither significantly affects organizational commitment nor mediates the relationships between organizational factors and commitment. Taken together, these results indicate that teachers' organizational commitment is shaped primarily through direct relational and environmental experiences, while work motivation operates as a parallel construct that is more strongly influenced by contextual workplace conditions and shared institutional values rather than functioning as a mediating mechanism.

4.1 Leadership Style, Work Environment, and School Culture in Shaping Teachers' Organizational Commitment

The findings indicate that leadership style and work environment significantly shape teachers' organizational commitment, while school culture shows no significant effect. This suggests that teachers' attachment is driven more by leadership practices and workplace conditions than by cultural values alone. Evidence across school and higher education contexts similarly shows that participatory and supportive leadership, along with safe and empowering environments, are associated with stronger commitment and positive work attitudes (Ergen et al., 2025). Conversely, autocratic leadership is linked to negative workplace experiences such as mobbing, which undermine teacher engagement and weaken organizational attachment (Yacon & Cayaban, 2023).

Mechanistically, transformational leadership can enhance commitment indirectly by improving quality of work life, including supportive supervision and work environment factors, although direct effects vary across contexts and model specifications (Mehrad et al., 2020). In addition, transformational leadership influences work outcomes partly through teachers' occupational perceptions, underscoring the role of everyday workplace experiences in shaping commitment (Nasra & Arar, 2020). Practically, teachers are more likely to develop loyalty and sustained engagement when leadership is supportive, participatory, and transparent, and when the work environment provides adequate professional and interpersonal support (Ergen et al., 2025; Mehrad et al., 2020; Nasra & Arar, 2020).

From an organizational perspective, leadership plays a central role in shaping employees' attitudes and behavioral orientations toward their institutions (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Effective leadership contributes to the development of trust, open communication, and professional respect between leaders and teachers (Tschannen-Moran, 2009). Leadership practices that emphasize participation, fairness, and clarity of direction strengthen teachers' emotional attachment to the organization (Leithwood et al., 2019; Yukl, 2017). When teachers are actively involved in decision-making processes and experience transparent communication, they perceive higher levels of organizational support, which reinforces affective commitment and reduces intentions to leave the profession (Allen & Meyer, 1991; Eisenberger et al., 2020). These findings are consistent with previous studies demonstrating that leadership behavior significantly influences teachers' organizational commitment by shaping organizational climate and professional relationships (Aritonang & Hutaaruk, 2024; Anawati & Mahayasa, 2023; Dinasti, 2021).

The work environment also emerges as a crucial determinant of organizational commitment. Teachers who operate within supportive environments characterized by adequate facilities, collaborative relationships, and institutional support are more likely to demonstrate stronger commitment toward their institutions. A conducive work environment enhances psychological comfort and professional stability, which in turn encourages sustained engagement within the organization. This finding aligns with prior research indicating that a positive work environment signals organizational support and recognition of employees' contributions, thereby strengthening organizational commitment (Asbari et al., 2021; Fitriastuti, 2020; Putra & Mardikaningsih, 2021).

However, the absence of a significant relationship between school culture and organizational commitment reveals an important conceptual and empirical gap. Although school culture is widely regarded as a key factor in shaping organizational behavior, its direct influence appears to depend on how cultural values are enacted through leadership practices and institutional structures. Cultural norms may remain symbolic if they are not operationalized into daily practices and reinforced through consistent leadership actions. This finding contributes to the literature by suggesting that cultural values alone are insufficient to strengthen teachers' organizational attachment, particularly in contexts where relational and environmental factors play more immediate roles in shaping teachers' experiences.

4.2 Leadership Style, Work Environment, and School Culture in Influencing Teachers' Work Motivation

The results indicate that work environment and school culture significantly influence teachers' work motivation, while leadership style does not demonstrate a significant effect. This finding suggests that teachers' motivation is primarily shaped by contextual and experiential conditions embedded in their daily work environment rather than by leadership behavior alone. Motivation among teachers appears to emerge from conditions that directly support their professional activities. A supportive work environment that provides adequate facilities, stable organizational systems, and positive collegial relationships fosters enthusiasm, engagement, and sustained effort in teaching activities (Ratnasari et al., 2024; Misnawati et al., 2020).

Empirical evidence consistently demonstrates that organizational climate constitutes a major determinant of teacher motivation (Misnawati et al., 2020; Ali et al., 2021). A positive school climate enhances both motivation and organizational engagement among teachers (Ali et al., 2021; Prasetyo, 2021). Research based on large-scale datasets further confirms that organizational characteristics such as collaboration, classroom climate, and institutional support explain a

substantial proportion of variance in teachers' motivation, often exceeding individual-level factors (Kolleck, 2019; Kouhsari et al., 2022). Consequently, factors such as adequate facilities, conducive working conditions, and collegial relationships function as foundational drivers of motivation (Ratnasari et al., 2024; Muhidin, 2019). While leadership practices may indirectly influence motivation through their impact on organizational climate (Soeprijanto et al., 2023; Gea & Putrawan, 2020), the work environment remains the most immediate and dominant determinant of teachers' motivational states (Kolleck, 2019; Muhidin, 2019).

School culture also contributes to teachers' motivation by fostering shared values and collective meaning within the institution. Cultural elements such as cooperation, discipline, and shared educational goals create a sense of belonging and professional purpose, thereby strengthening intrinsic motivation (Anawati & Sunarto, 2024). However, the absence of a significant direct effect of leadership style indicates that leadership influence on motivation may operate indirectly rather than directly. This finding highlights a conceptual distinction between leadership influence and motivational processes. While leadership shapes organizational direction and relational structures, motivation is more strongly embedded in daily professional experiences and institutional culture.

4.3 The Role of Work Motivation in Organizational Commitment

Another important finding of this study is that work motivation does not significantly influence teachers' organizational commitment and does not mediate the relationships between leadership style, work environment, school culture, and organizational commitment. This result highlights a fundamental distinction between motivation and organizational commitment. Motivation reflects the energy, enthusiasm, and effort that individuals invest in their work tasks, whereas organizational commitment represents a deeper psychological attachment to the institution itself (Moodie, 2020; Bam, 2023).

Teachers may demonstrate strong motivation in teaching and student development while maintaining relatively weak attachment to the organization (Yang et al., 2023; Bam, 2023). Evidence from previous studies indicates that educators can exhibit high professional commitment while displaying low organizational commitment, suggesting that these constructs operate independently (Moodie, 2020). Similarly, the availability of resources and recognition may enhance motivation without necessarily strengthening affective organizational commitment (Bam, 2023). This distinction is particularly relevant in educational contexts, where teachers' dedication to pedagogical improvement is often driven by intrinsic professional values rather than institutional loyalty (Yang et al., 2023; Capone et al., 2022).

From the perspective of social exchange processes, organizational commitment develops through reciprocal relationships characterized by fairness, trust, and support (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Blau, 1964). The findings of this study suggest that leadership practices and work environment conditions function as direct signals of organizational support, thereby strengthening teachers' commitment. In contrast, work motivation reflects professional engagement that does not necessarily translate into organizational attachment. This finding challenges the conventional assumption that motivation acts as a mediating mechanism and highlights the novelty of the study, demonstrating that commitment may emerge more directly from relational and structural organizational experiences.

4.4 Implications, Contributions, and Directions for Future Research

The findings of this study contribute to the literature on educational management and organizational behavior in several important ways. First, the study provides empirical evidence that leadership practices and workplace conditions function as primary drivers of teachers' organizational commitment in Muhammadiyah educational institutions. Second, it highlights that motivational processes may operate independently from organizational commitment, suggesting the need to reconsider the role of motivation as a mediating mechanism in educational research. Third, the study extends the application of Social Exchange Theory by demonstrating that organizational commitment emerges primarily from direct relational and structural experiences within faith-based educational contexts.

From a practical perspective, the findings emphasize the importance of strengthening leadership practices and improving work environments to enhance teachers' organizational commitment (Manla, 2021). A positive school climate has been consistently associated with higher commitment and improved school performance, as it fosters loyalty and long-term engagement among teachers (Manla, 2021). Educational leaders are encouraged to enhance communication, provide professional support, and foster collaborative environments that sustain teacher involvement (Liu et al., 2025; Ghasemi, 2025). Transformational leadership practices, mentorship, and continuous feedback mechanisms have been shown to improve teacher retention and performance (Liu et al., 2025; AQUINO & G. Salmon, 2024). Additionally, perceived organizational support plays a critical role in enhancing teacher wellbeing and engagement (Wang, 2024), while fostering a sense of belonging and collaboration strengthens institutional commitment (Ghasemi, 2025; Masoom, 2021).

Despite these contributions, the study also identifies several avenues for future research. Future studies may explore additional mediating or

moderating variables, such as job satisfaction, organizational trust, or employee engagement, to better explain the mechanisms underlying teachers' organizational commitment. Researchers are also encouraged to adopt mixed-method approaches to capture deeper insights into teachers' lived experiences within organizational settings. Expanding the research across different educational contexts, institutional types, and cultural environments would further enhance understanding of how leadership, work environment, and school culture interact in shaping organizational commitment within diverse educational systems.

5. Conclusions

This study highlights that teachers' organizational commitment in Muhammadiyah senior high schools is primarily shaped by direct relational and environmental factors rather than by motivational mechanisms. The key findings demonstrate that leadership style and work environment significantly strengthen organizational commitment, confirming that supportive, participatory leadership and conducive workplace conditions are critical in fostering teachers' loyalty and long-term institutional engagement. In contrast, school culture does not exhibit a direct effect on commitment, suggesting that cultural values alone are insufficient unless operationalized through leadership practices and institutional systems. Additionally, while work environment and school culture significantly enhance teachers' work motivation, leadership style does not directly influence motivation, and more importantly, work motivation neither affects organizational commitment nor mediates the relationships between organizational factors and commitment. This reveals a crucial conceptual distinction between professional motivation and institutional attachment.

The novelty of this study lies in challenging the commonly assumed mediating role of motivation and demonstrating that commitment emerges more directly from structural and relational organizational experiences, thereby refining the application of Social Exchange Theory in educational contexts. From a practical perspective, the findings imply that school leaders and policymakers should prioritize strengthening leadership quality, fostering supportive work environments, and translating cultural values into actionable practices to sustain teacher commitment. In a broader educational context, strengthening organizational commitment is essential for institutional stability, teacher retention, and educational quality, particularly in private and faith-based schools. Future research should explore mediating or moderating variables such as job satisfaction, organizational trust, and professional identity, and examine diverse educational and cultural contexts to better understand the mechanisms shaping teachers' organizational commitment.

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